



## A New Year's Message From The General Manager/CEO

By Daniel G. Laws

A new year brings new challenges, new opportunities, and most likely new responsibilities. It sounds a little exciting when you put it like that, doesn't it? I have lived long enough to know that the road ahead may be fraught with pitfalls and snares, however. It's kind of interesting that most steps we take in life are quite literally in the dark. We start down each path of our lives not seeing the end from the beginning, and yet, we are none the less filled with hopeful expectation.

When you consider your life in these terms, it tends to give clearer meaning to the expression "a leap in faith". Whether it is marriage, parenting, a career or the next endeavor you undertake, along the way there will most assuredly be many twists and turns. You will find surprises, both good and bad, that you could never have anticipated - and things you initially felt were bad, will end up a benefit.

Coach Lou Holtz, of Notre Dame football fame, once said that winning is all about understanding what the word win means. He said that win is really an acronym for "What's Important Now?" Coach Holtz suggests that at every fork in the road you ask yourself this simple question. For example, if you are driving down the road as you read this article, what's important now? The article, of course-Just kidding! To further illustrate, you may regard Monday night football as being pretty important, but if it conflicts with helping your son or daughter with a school project, what's important now? It's a simple concept that will either help us avoid the pitfalls of life or prepare us to deal with them.

Here at the Cooperative, we ask ourselves that question often. This year, just as it has been in the past, there will be many issues to deal with. Here are just a few of them:

### [Electric Utility Restructuring \(deregulation\)--\*What's Important Now?\*](#)

It's important that we not react in knee-jerk fashion and rush into retail competition before the rules are developed and the market is tested. You may have read of states where restructuring has not lived up to its promises. In Texas, cooperatives can choose to expose their members to retail choice or to remain out of competition. We have chosen to wait and see how the market and rules develop. We are not convinced that rural folks will see any benefit from restructuring.

### *Electric Rates--What's Important Now?*

We believe that it is very important to hold the line on rates. Our last rate increase was in 1987. Since that time we have lived within our means, continually making improvements while holding the line on expenses. How long can we go without a rate increase? I don't know. Ten years ago I was paying 90 cents a gallon for gasoline. Today, I am paying as much as \$1.50. In other words, the price I am paying for gasoline has increased 150%. Your price per kWh has not increased during that same period of time and in fact, depending on your class of service, it may have decreased.

### *Wholesale Power Supply--What's Important Now?*

We believe it is necessary to continuously evaluate our wholesale supply agreements to insure they are fully exploited. We also believe that small generation facilities distributed strategically around our service area will play a significant role in Rio Grande's future. We believe that we must maintain a high degree of flexibility in all of our wholesale supply arrangements.

### *Technology--What's Important Now?*

There are new technological advances that hold the potential of vastly improving Rio Grande's operations. We are currently installing devices known as "turtle meters." Utilizing power line carrier communication technology, they will allow us to read all of Rio Grande's meters from Brackettville without radios or telecommunications links. By the end of next year, every substation will be equipped with receivers.

What is implicit in the "What's Important Now" question is our focus. We are not attempting to meet the earnings requirements of far off stockholders. Nor are we trying to build a huge multinational conglomerate. We're only interested in bringing you safe, reliable electric energy at the lowest possible price. We call that your

**"Your Home Team Advantage".**