

Editorial

NAME AND ALL DAY LONG
milwaukee.bizjournal.com
PAGE A54
AUGUST 23, 2002
THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

Letters, with writer's name, address and daytime phone number, should be sent to:
Editor, The Business Journal
600 W. Virginia St., Suite 500
Milwaukee, WI 53204
E-mail: editors@bizjournal.com
Fax: 414-278-7029

All submissions become the property of The Business Journal and will not be returned; subscriptions may be edited and may be published or otherwise re-used in any medium.

Tilting at wind farms

Wind farms may be the environmentally — and economically — correct source of electric power generation, but they're an eyesore.

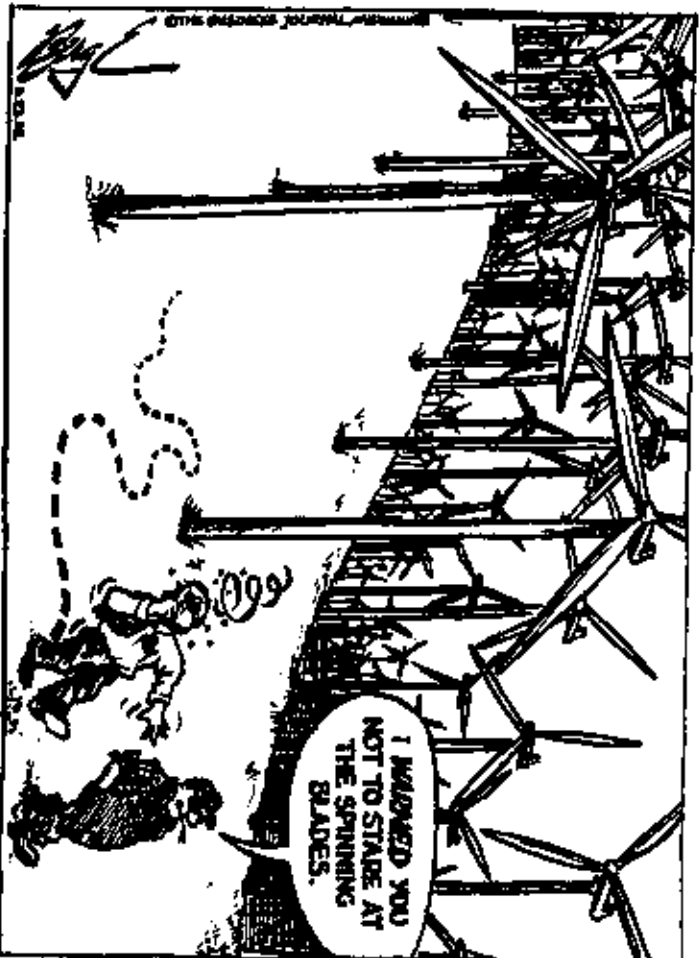
It appears Wisconsin and the rest of the Midwest will get a glimpse of energy conservation multiplied by 6,500 as wind power developers plot ways to fan out with new wind farms. That's the estimate for the number of wind power generators needed to meet the

Wouldn't addressing nuclear waste concerns be preferable to tilting our state's energy policy at wind farms?

near-term demands of electric companies like We-Energies for more "alternative" forms of power. As The Business Journal's Pete Millard reported Aug. 16, the largest wind farm in the state is under consideration near the southwestern Wisconsin community of Darlington. The scenic rolling hills could soon be lined not only with sites and trees but also 133 futuristic-looking turbine-blade towers that stand more than 300 feet tall.

Anyone who has witnessed the massive wind farms in California can't help but shudder at the vision of polluting Wisconsin's countryside with tall, white machines.

It's fair to point out that the veritable windmill forests of California, many of



them built in the 1980s, would not be repeated in Wisconsin, thanks to new technology that allows tower farms that are less densely arranged.

Wind power is on the rise because it is a so-called renewable energy source and doesn't pollute. Electric companies' thirst for wind is further whetted by continuing declines in the cost for wind-generated electricity.

Indeed, no easy answers have emerged for our nation's ever-growing energy needs. Despite improvements in pollution controls, coal power still spews carbon dioxide and sulfur dioxide. Despite not polluting the air, nuclear plants produce

not-in-my-backyard-or-Yucca-Mountain waste. Natural gas is outrageously expensive for power plants. Wind farms are ugly.

A plan for the Darlington-area wind farm would require approval from the Wisconsin Public Service Commission. The PSC needs to weigh both whether the project would meet the state's energy regulations and its impact on the public good.

How many wind farms will we tolerate in Wisconsin? Wouldn't addressing unclear waste storage concerns be preferable to tilting our state's energy policy at wind farms?

Little energy competition

In her guest column in the Aug. 9 Business Journal, Fredi Greenberg agrees with Bill Skewes's previous guest column in that "Wisconsin's energy value is among the best in the country." From reading her article, I gather the impression that she believes that this is a desirable condition which should continue.

However, I disagree that this is the result of competition. Wisconsin has intentionally taken the slow and careful approach toward electrical energy competition.

Less than 10 percent of the electric energy generated in Wisconsin is generated by independent power producers. Most of those plants were built in the last five years under long-term contract arrangements with specific utilities. This is roughly the extent of "wholesale competition."

There is no retail competition in Wisconsin. As a result, one could say that competition is virtually nonexistent here.

I would ask the question, "How can something which is virtually nonexistent be the force which results in low rates?"

I would submit that today's low rates are the result of prudent utility management under the regulatory oversight of the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin.

Although there may be many valid arguments supporting the value of competition, I don't believe that attributing the current low rates to competition is one of them.