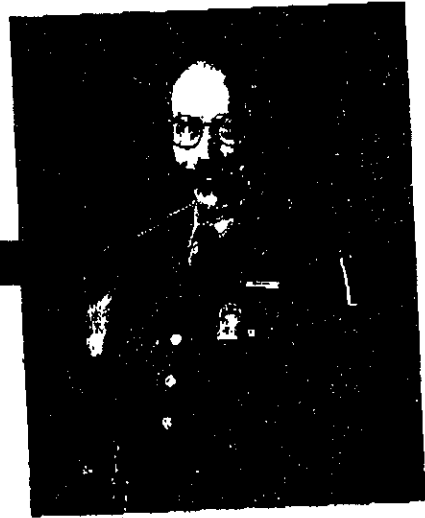


President's REPORT

Corporal Timothy Jensen - MSPTA President



Blackmailed

I had only been assigned to Clay County for about a year and a half as a new trooper when the news flash came on a calm Sunday afternoon: Two federal marshals had been shot and killed and several other persons were wounded in a shootout near Medina, North Dakota.

That Sunday in February 1983 was my first introduction to the world of violent tax protesters. While attempting to serve a warrant for a probation violation on a tax protester named Gordon Kahl, Federal Marshal Ken Muir and Deputy Marshal Bob Cheshire were executed on a North Dakota highway. Ken Muir was a true gentleman, nearing retirement, who lived just a few miles away from our home in Moorhead. He and the law enforcement officers assisting him that Sunday were not out to harm Gordon Kahl and his band of thugs. Ken Muir and Bob Cheshire were there to do their job. They planned to serve a warrant and take Gordon Kahl to jail for not paying his taxes. When the Kahl vehicle was stopped, the marshals were met with a barrage of rifle fire from Kahl, his son Yorie, and Scott Faul, as Kahl's wife and friend David Broer watched. As Bob Cheshire lay dying on the road, Gordon Kahl walked over and shot Bob twice, point-blank, in the head.

Kahl and his followers were not rational people. They belonged to a group identified as Posse Comitatus, who espouse a Christian Identity the-

ology and join it to a very particular set of right-wing beliefs about the Constitution and the legal system. It is an organization that is viciously racist, anti-Semitic, and anti-government. However, the Posse adopts the rhetoric of patriotism, individual rights, local control, and defense of the Constitution to sell their poison to the public. In June 1983, after killing a sheriff in a shootout in Arkansas, Gordon Kahl assumed the consistency of charcoal when his hideout was burned to the ground. While the murder trials were going on in Fargo, I remember following the Faul family through our patrol station and watching for other Posse members who might suddenly appear. Anxiety ran high among the law enforcement community in the Red River Valley in those years.

During my time in Clay County, I remember several confrontations with Posse members. One confrontation still haunts me as a near-death experience. I stopped a Posse member one evening in a rural location, knowing the thug had an outstanding warrant. The man was well known to law enforcement as a problem bully. With no assistance available for miles, I confronted the man alone. He decided he would not be taken into custody and the fight was on. We fought on the blacktop, on the shoulder, and in the ditch. He broke away and ran into the woods, where I followed him and tackled him. We fought until we could not fight anymore. As he pinned me in the dirt, I

drew my gun with every intention of killing him before he killed me. For some reason, he suddenly broke away and ran further into the woods. I returned to my squad thinking, "What the heck am I doing. I'm going to die because this slug didn't pay his taxes?" For 22 years, I have had no use for radical tax protesters. They are irrational and a danger to a democratic society.

I know you are wondering, what in the world is he rambling about now? Here is my point: As radical as the Posse Comitatus is about protesting taxes, we have a radical anti-tax organization within our own state that advocates some of the same Posse principles. Where the Posse uses violence and irrational right-wing beliefs to advance its cause, our Minnesota organization uses money, threats, and political blackmail to enforce its anti-tax, anti-government agenda. The organization is proud of its "no new taxes" pledge it has blackmailed many of our elected officials into signing, and posts its conquests prominently on its Web site. Although the organization isn't obviously violent, its final result is just as dangerous. We have radicals dictating how our quality of life will be affected.

Hey, I'm a conservative who would rather not pay taxes. However, I have grown to expect a certain quality of life that is somewhat dependent on our government. Government doesn't run on air and promises, it runs on citizen

President's Message

contributions in the form of tax dollars, which fund valuable public employees, expected services, and quality of life issues. My wife and I pay a generous amount of taxes, and we will pay more taxes if it means maintaining or advancing our quality of life. Taxing has been around since biblical times, and taxing will be around when we have all assumed room temperature. We are living in a state that is falling behind the times in its infrastructure, public safety, educational system, health care systems, and other areas. State department budgets have been cut to bare bones over the past two years, hundreds of employees have been laid off, services have been cut, most of us received no wage increases for two years, employee benefits have been reduced, and working conditions have become downright dangerous in some jobs. Money is

needed to correct these problems. Like it or not, this money needs to come from tax contributions.

I can still remember President George H. W. Bush making his 1988 campaign declaration, "Read my lips ... no new taxes!" With the national economy in the dumps, it only took a couple of years for him to realize his speech was a mistake. He approved new taxes and the economy began to turn around. It's time for some of our state politicians to admit they were blackmailed into signing a "no new taxes" pledge. If the enormous budget deficits we have in Minnesota are going to continue to be solved by letting our quality of life slip away, then rest assured our population will also be slipping away to other more desirable states. All Minnesota state employees took a tremendous economic loss over the past two

years due to pay freezes, benefit erosion, and layoffs. We have done more than our part to solve the state's deficit. It is now up to those elected officials, who were blackmailed into the bogus tax pledge, to set aside what seemed like a good idea at election time and get on with funding government services properly. Part of that funding needs to come in the form of new taxes.

Whether you dress a tax protester in camouflage with an automatic rifle, or in a business suit with a laptop computer, the protester is still nothing more than a radical. Our Minnesota quality of life is too precious to be lost over a blackmail pledge. Come on, 2005 Legislature: Let's get on with the people's business. Our quality of life is slipping away.

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