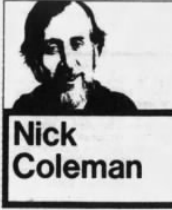


Lake Wobegon, Ga.? MPR takes cue from Twins, Vikings



Good for Calvin Griffith.

The old boy has sold the Twins but it looks like he's keeping busy over to Minnesota Public Radio. I mean, it must be Uncle Cal who gave MPR the idea to ask the state for \$1 million to help fix up the old World Theater in St. Paul because the deal has the Griffith Grasp written all over it.

MPR told legislators over the weekend that Garrison Keillor's "Prairie Home Companion," the live Saturday night radio program, might move to San Francisco or Atlanta or someplace more hospitable than Minnesota unless the state ponies up some tax money for the World Theater.

What the heck. It worked for Calvin and for Max Winter when they threatened to move the Twins and the Vikings to Tampa or Phoenix if someone didn't build them a domed stadium. But not even those twin paragons of thrift asked the state to give them a grant that wouldn't have to be paid back. No, the stadium was financed with bonds that will be retired with stadium

revenues.

The MPR plan takes public good will one step further than the domed stadium plan: It's a freebie. The state gives MPR (actually, a subsidiary called the World Theater Corp.) a matching grant of a million bucks and Garrison Keillor continues to tell Norskie jokes in downtown St. Paul on Saturday nights. If the state doesn't cough up, Keillor goes to San Francisco and makes jokes about the gay life style or moves to Atlanta and pokes fun at rednecks.

Oh, Keillor could continue to make fun of Minnesota from another city. It would be easy to make fun of a state that tries to cut off thousands of people from their monthly welfare checks while it spends taxes on an old theater. But it might be more fun if Keillor changed his humor to fit his new home.

Instead of making fun of the hot dish culture in "Lake Wobegon, Minn.," Keillor could lampoon the Moon Pie culture in



Coleman / 6C

COLEMAN: MPR borrows page from Calvin's manual

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Peanut Brittle, Ga. Of course, those redneck boys might not be as tolerant as Norwegian bachelor farmers. They might reach for their pellet guns while Keillor's national radio audience of 2 million listeners is laughing.

To be fair, MPR isn't the Minnesota Twins; it's a nonprofit radio service. But it isn't the Little Sisters of the Poor, either. It has an operating budget of almost \$8 million. It has headquarters in a \$7 million building it built in 1979 and it operates a number of nice money-making efforts such as marketing

gift items to fans of "A Prairie Home Companion."

So it's disconcerting to see MPR playing hardball at the Legislature. And when MPR pleads poverty and cultural significance while asking for a handout, it is borrowing a page from Calvin's manual. MPR says it hopes "A Prairie Home Companion" doesn't have to leave the fertile shores of Lake Wobegon. But, like Calvin, it isn't bashful about raising the prospect.

"We get some very nice offers all the time from other cities," said Cathy de Moll, MPR's director of promotions and public relations.

"Obviously, we want to be here but we also have a program to produce that's very important to public radio." Which means, she said, that if the state doesn't help renovate the World Theater MPR will consider other offers.

"It's not a promise or a threat but we'd have to look into the places that have offered us homes," she said. "We don't want to sound like Calvin Griffith. We don't want to play games with anybody and pour. But we have a problem and we have to deal with it."

The problem is that the ceiling of the World Theater, which MPR bought

in 1981, started to fall in on the heads of customers in 1984, forcing "A Prairie Home Companion" to seek temporary lodgings in the Orpheum Theater, also in St. Paul. Last year, MPR and the World Theater Corp. announced plans to raise \$1.5 million to restore the World, including installation of gaskets, the construction of theater boxes and re-creating the original plasterwork.

But two snags have arisen. First, only \$450,000 has been raised, including a \$300,000 grant from Carigil, Inc. Secondly, when the construction bids came in, the cost of the work was estimated at between \$2.5 and \$3.8 million, including \$300,000 for new broadcasting equipment.

For years, MPR has taken the position that it won't accept operating funds from the Legislature for fear that a state subsidy might affect its news coverage of state government or undermine its credibility as a news organization. But those concerns have been put aside in the case of the World Theater because MPR has found fund-raising for the project difficult.

That's not a good enough reason.

On Monday, members of the Senate's State Departments Finance Division indicated they will approve a \$200,000 grant to the World Theater project. But Sen. Carl Kroening, DFL-Minneapolis subcommittee chairman, said that other legislators favor increasing the amount "because of the prominence of the people involved" and that the amount might change upward. The senators are expected to vote on the matter today.

Kroening, however, revealed some of the problems with the proposal when he said he wasn't certain why the state should be paying for the World Theater.

"When you consider all the requests we have, I can't really say truthfully that this should be a No. 1 priority," Kroening said. Noting that there may not be enough money around to fund the budgets for the state's various operating departments, he added that any final decision on MPR's request will have to wait for agreement on the final budget figures.

MPR argues that the grant would be an economic development grant because "A Prairie Home Companion" brings tourists to St. Paul. MPR isn't able to say how many people come from other states to see Keillor's show but there's no doubt that its pull rivals that of the Iron Range Interpretive Center.

One wonders, however, why MPR doesn't raise the money through other means, such as raising ticket prices (tickets to "A Prairie Home Companion" priced at \$8, sell out two months in advance) or making greater efforts to win small donations from the program's 2 million listeners.

MPR also hasn't made much of a case that the World Theater Corp. should be treated differently than other nonprofit organizations in the state and receive a grant directly from the Legislature for renovation. Nor has it pointed to any precedents where the Legislature has issued such grants.

The city of St. Paul gave the World Theater Corp. a \$4.2 million loan to cover the cost of the theater repairs last fall. But the money can't be borrowed from the city until the resources are found to pay it back. In other words, MPR needs money from the state to pay back a loan from St. Paul.

The Legislature can decide if that's good public policy. But you have to wonder how the folks in Lake Wobegon would react if they saw that Keillor's show might pull up stakes if the state doesn't fork over.

Some might think the whole business has gotten a bit out of hand. They might even want to skip the next "Prairie Home Companion" and go see a baseball game at the Dome. Maybe they can spot Calvin Griffith.

Today's TV

Broadcast / Morning

	6:00	6:30	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30
(2) College / Sports	Business Report	Earth Explorers	Mister Rogers	Sesame Street	Electric Company Contact	5-5-1 Hour Magazine	Flight Along	Oil Painting	Las Quieting	Sesame Street		
(3) Morning News	Donahue						The Price Is Right	The Young and the Rubidoux				
(4) News	Good Morning America											
(5) 30 Min. Workout	Morning Stretch	Supper Friends	Tom & Jerry	Flash stories	Robert	House Calls	Tatillates	As-Star Bits	Family Feud	All in Family	Everly Second	Search
(6) NBC News	News Today						Switched at Birth	Fantasy Island	Wheel of Fortune	Scrabble	Make a Deal	
(7) Radar Weather / All Weather (5-30)												
(8) Cartoon Central	Ultaman	Fal	Votron	Porky Pig	Heckle & Jackie	The 700 Club			Jimmy Douglas	Jim Bakker		
(9) News on Air	Richard Roberts	Richard Roberts	Richard Roberts	Daniel Boone					Road to Berlin (1971)	Robert Walker, Rita Hayworth		

Broadcast / Afternoon

	12:00	12:30	1:00	2:00	2:30	3:00	3:30	4:00	4:30	5:00	5:30
(2) Sesame Street	Mister Rogers	High Springs	Lovers of the Lake	1948: The American Film Institute Salute to Gene Kelly	Frugal Gourmet	Mister Rogers	Sesame Street	5-5-1 Contact	Business Report		
(3) News	As the World Turns	Coach	Guiding Light		Healthy and...	Jeopardy!	People's Court	PM Magazine	News	SAC News	
(4) All My Children	One Life to Live	General Hospital	Good Company				Trapper John				
(5) News	Love Connection	John's World	The Tac Dough	Health-off	Scooby Doo	He-Man/ Masters	Little House on the Prairie		The Love Boat		
(6) Days of Our Lives	Another World	Santa Barbara	Name / Tune	One Day at a Time			Three's a Crowd	WKRP Company			
(7) Radar Weather (5)											
(8) Love Laid	Heart's Men and the Tiger (1958)	The Pink Panther	Bugs Bunny	Inspector Gadget	Votron	Brady Bunch	Mark & Mandy	Severly	Severly		
(9) CNN News	The Salt	Family	Carson	Carson	Transon	Inspector Gadget	Votron	Fennville	Lavenna	Shirley	

Broadcast / Evening

	6:00	6:30	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30
(2) The MacNeil / Leher	Return of the Macneil / Leher											
(3) News	Wheel of Fortune	Wheel of Fortune	Wheel of Fortune	Wheel of Fortune	Wheel of Fortune	Wheel of Fortune	Wheel of Fortune	Wheel of Fortune	Wheel of Fortune	Wheel of Fortune	Wheel of Fortune	Wheel of Fortune
(4) News	Estimates Tonight	There's a Four-Up Show	Who's the Boss	Halt to the Cloud	99 Ways to Attract the Right Man	News Highlights	News Highlights	News Highlights	News Highlights	News Highlights	News Highlights	News Highlights
(5) NFL Post Strides	Taxi	American Squares (1977)	Richard Diamond, Private Investigator									
(6) NBC News	The A-Team	Reptile	Remington Steele									
(7) Radar Weather	Archibald's Place	Archibald's Place	Archibald's Place	Archibald's Place	Archibald's Place	Archibald's Place	Archibald's Place	Archibald's Place	Archibald's Place	Archibald's Place	Archibald's Place	Archibald's Place
(8) M*A*S*H	The Rockford Files											

Cable / Evening

	6:00	6:30	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30
WBTV	Benon	The Run to Rebecca (Part 1)	David Soul, Lisa Raymond									
TBS	Baseball: Atlanta Braves at New York Mets											
NSH	Video-Country	You Can Be a Star	Fan Club	Nashville Now								
A&E	William Shyren	Spider's Web	Phenace/Kath									
WBTV	Video-Country	You Can Be a Star	Fan Club	Nashville Now								
WBTV	Video-Country	You Can Be a Star	Fan Club	Nashville Now								
WBTV	Video-Country	You Can Be a Star	Fan Club	Nashville Now								