

Q) Describe the Second Cooperative Principle, what it means to you and your community. Give specific examples of how the second cooperative principle has played a prominent role with your electric cooperative and its members.

The Second Cooperative Principle states: "Co-operatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and cooperatives at other levels are also organized in a democratic manner."

I have been able to witness this first hand. I attended the Oconto Electric CO-OP's (OEC) annual meeting this past spring. Being an FFA member and officer, I really enjoyed watching a meeting being conducted using Parliamentary Procedures. I have learned that this is how companies and businesses run meetings, but it really did not sink in to me until I witnessed this meeting. I really enjoyed how people in the crowd would make the motion or second the motion followed by voting. For me, this really showed how the OEC demonstrated democratic control. Not only were their board members active in this process but many patrons who also attended the meeting.

Being a young person who has always had the privilege of having power, I really found it interesting how OEC came about. From what I read, in 1935, Franklin D Roosevelt formed REA - Rural Electrification Administration. REA provided loans to cooperatives for the purpose of electrifying the rural areas. A few farmers in the Gillett, Oconto Falls, Underhill and Suring areas were sick of working without electricity. These rural areas had a group of leaders who met and signed up 144 other members to draw up an Articles of Incorporation. This allowed other farmers to sign up to get electricity for their farms. Originally the loans from the government only supplied electricity to farmers in the areas of Oconto Falls, Green Valley, Gillett, Maple Valley, Underhill and How, but more people wanted electricity. In 1937, North Eastern Electric Cooperative's charter dissolved and the Oconto Electric Cooperative was born. In February of that year, OEC was able to service parts of Marinette and Oconto counties to serve about 1000 members. Currently, OEC has over 9600 members and services about 1400 miles.

Living on a farm and having lived through a few storms that ceased power for a few days, I understand the struggles the farmers had. Although I am lucky as we had generators that allowed us to water our cows, farmers back in the 1930's did not have this luxury. I know that I take things for granted and reading OEC's history reminded me how fortunate I am. I am always able to energize my phone or



computer, take shower and use a toilet each day. I am also thankful that the board is democratic and not in the form of a dictatorship. This allows the members to have a say instead of being told what to do.

Lastly, I want to share that I learned about the Second Cooperative Principle when I attended this summer's Youth Government camp at UW-Stout during the Broadband presentation, the speaker would ask us during the presentation "does this make sense to you" or "what did we learn". He then would take what was suggested or said and elaborate more so that we understood his topic better. To me, this shows the Second Cooperative Principle. By his asking questions and asking for other's input, he is allowing others a choice in their learning.

In summary, I feel that it is great that OEC uses the Second Cooperative Principle of democratic roles by all participants. I think this allows for people to voice their opinions. When people feel they are a part of something they are more likely to comply and support. OEC does an amazing job of supporting the local communities. They provide opportunities for high school students to learn about Co-OP's through the leadership camp, provide scholarships to students whose parents are members of OEC, they have an annual picnic and meeting, they came to my school to demonstrate what to do if lines are down.