

The Liaison Medium (Or What's an International Liaison Committee Good for?)

by R.B. Cridlebaugh, SR/WA

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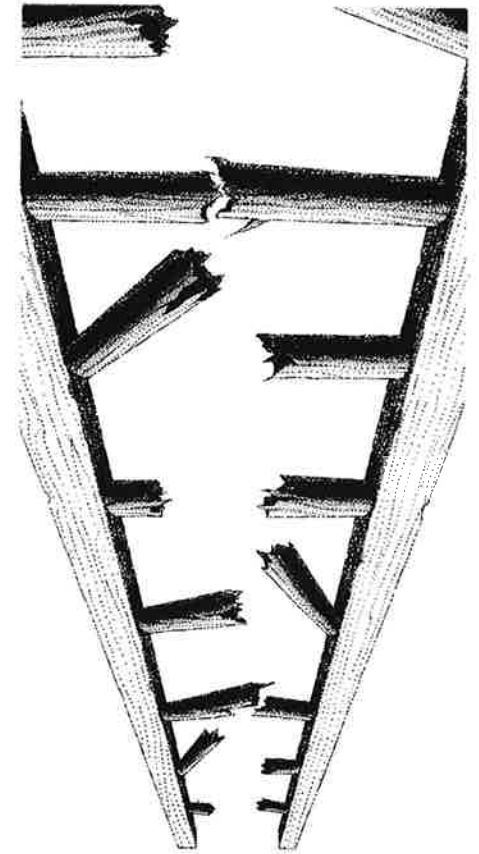
This article is based on a speech given at the 1985 Educational Seminar in Nashville by Mr. Cridlebaugh. Richard Cridlebaugh, SR/WA is chief appraiser for District 4 of the Illinois Department of Transportation in Peoria. He has been in the right of way profession for 25 of his almost 29 years with the Department. Currently he served on the International Liaison Committee, Railroad Ad Hoc group. His other activities with the Association include the International Education Committee, course coordination, course material review and local chapter work. He is also a registered professional engineer in Illinois. His other professional duties include negotiations and railroad liaison with the State.

There is, in right of way mythology, an admonition to stay out of each other's way — to keep off each other's property. We've all experienced it. We all have permits and licenses and easements and we all have difficulty at times speaking to each other in civil tones about each other's turf. Many times our reluctances have been validated by past horror stories of broken cables, collapsed highways, irate owners — even injuries. We've seen gas transmission lines ablaze, the phone company tearing up brand new pavement, the highway ditches deepened just where the cable went in, petroleum all over the place — on and on. So we do have very valid reasons for protecting our right of way.

BUT...we all need to be somewhere. We would all like to have our own corridor unadorned by anybody else who may interfere. The cold truth is that a scarcity of space under, on and over the land, especially in urban areas is starting to exist. Even in some rural areas we see a proliferation of high voltage transmission lines, gas storage, and other uses, which, in part, restrict land uses. New highways take their share of land. No one user can be singled out as the culprit.

Yet we have to be somewhere. The problem and the challenge are obvious. If it can't be here, then WHERE can it be??? When one lists the possible areas of debate, conflict, and physical problems and the interrelationships among the public works, the utilities, the railroads, it is easy to see why problems exist. Then throw in the federal agencies — the Corps, B.L.M., USFS and you have an infinite number of challenges for occupancy of space. ("The pole set in record time is in the middle of the proposed driveway," says the local power company.)

We have, consciously or not, set up almost traditional adversary positions. These are gradually changing as needs



dictate. Many times the barriers fall simply because of expediency. The railroads certainly learned quickly to live with the fiber optics people. The needs now exist for innovative approaches and new ideas.

The International Right of Way Association has as one of its standing committees a group called Liaison. The Liaison Committee was formed primarily to encourage cooperation of the various user disciplines occupying space for various right of way needs. Representatives serving on this committee are from those users — power, gas, highways, railroads, and other utilities. The committee is a basis for any and all discussion, pertinent to potential dispute. Also it is a vehicle for implementation of cooperation, innovation, and hopefully avoidance of consternation.

The dictionary defines liaison as "communication for establishing and maintaining mutual understanding."

The general philosophy which we are seeking to implement happens to be the two very things mentioned in the definition — "communication" and "understanding". We communicate to exchange ideas and compare notes through which understanding of posi-