



A Message From The General Manager/CEO

By Daniel G. Laws

"A New Year's Message."

"The new year holds promise, and a chance to make things different -- better."

Well, we have made it through to another new year. I know that statement sounds a little negative, but doesn't it feel that way? The Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays are wonderful, but they are also hard work and stressful. For that reason, we often end up wondering if we will survive.

As with any new beginning, the new year holds promise, and a chance to make things different-better. We can evaluate our past and consider where we find ourselves today. Then, having done so, we can propose to change. We can heal worn or damaged relationships, undertake new relationships, and determine to be more than what we have been. After all-the only thing that will live beyond our earthly existence is the difference we made in the lives of others.

Here at the Cooperative, we respond to the new year in much the same way you do as an individual. We review last year and we consider what we did well and what we need to improve on and then we make plans to be better. To that end, our Board of Directors will enter into a time of strategic planning during the first quarter of 2002. The purpose of strategic planning is to evaluate the services the cooperative offers, consider opportunities that may lie on the horizon, and determine what threats we face. As they consider these things, they will begin to formulate plans to address each issue.

Tantamount to every plan we devise is a singular question - "What is best for the membership?" During strategic planning, the Board steps back and tries to take in the big picture, with a focus on what will best serve the greatest number of members. As you can imagine, in every plan or policy, there will be those that are not satisfied with how a particular provision affects him or her personally.

Where those situations arise, we will endeavor to work out the best solution consistent with sound business judgment. Nevertheless, there will be those that are dissatisfied. As a result, the Cooperative gets "beat-up" during morning coffee shop gatherings. I would encourage each of you to carefully evaluate only facts when someone tells you that they feel they have been mistreated by the

Cooperative. I would also ask that you keep in mind something my Dad once said to me, "There are two sides to every story, and then there is the truth."

In these local pages, you will see a discussion about some of the new things that will happen this year. You will read about some of our plans and how they may impact you and you may even see a planned system improvement in your area that will benefit you directly. Each and every item is aimed at maintaining or improving your quality of life and, therefore, should be encouraging to you. But perhaps the best test of the effectiveness of our planning is when you flip on your light switch. If the light comes on, perhaps you can agree that Rio Grande ECI is your

"Home Team Advantage".