

Utility should look hard at alternatives

Connecticut Light & Power would be crazy to try forcing through its proposed new 27,500-volt power line over the objections of Winsted selectmen and residents. Robert Dobson, CL&P district manager, acknowledged that fact during Monday night's selectmen's meeting. The utility will look first at alternatives, he said, for improving service reliability in the northern Winsted-Riverton area.

In that connection, columnist (and former legislator) Joel Gordes's suggestion, made on today's op ed page, seems generally sound. Before plowing money into new lines which not only raise health risk fears but drive up CL&P costs — and rates — in general, it surely makes sense to look vrey hard at conservation and load management strategies which could possibly meet customer needs without new construction.

The Winsted Community Lawyer's office and selectmen have played useful roles in alerting the public and putting CL&P on notice. Area

residents must now hope that others show similar responsiveness. The Department of Public Utility Control, for example, is in a position to insist that the utility focus more of its efforts — and investment — on conservation. DPUC commissioners seemed to show during the Torrington Bio-Gen controversy that they are not totally deaf to concerns of the public.

That, in turn, puts it up to those elected to represent people in these towns and those seeking such office this fall. People will be looking to them to make the DPUC aware of their concerns.

One need not paint CL&P as the villain here to see the need for public pressure. The company has indeed invested effectively in many energy conservation projects over recent years. It has tried to work with local officials to ease concerns such as that now heard in Winsted. It doesn't hurt, however, to give CL&P some fresh encouragement along these lines.