

UMRA U NEWSLETTER

A Communication of the University of Minnesota Retirees Association

FEBRUARY 2006

February speaker Vernon Ruttan asks “Is War Necessary for Economic Growth?”

At UMRA's February meeting, Regents Professor Vernon Ruttan will discuss, “Is War Necessary for Economic Growth?”

Most people of a certain age remember watching Sputnik streak across the night sky in 1957. The Soviet Union besting us in the satellite game ignited an orgy



of national soul-searching and inspired a huge public investment in science and technology. The most dramatic payoff was putting men on the moon only 12

years later. Such a rapid deployment was possible only because the U.S. government, lead by the military, had already spent a lot of taxpayers' money to develop jet- and rocket-propulsion, computerized control systems, and many other technologies needed for sending a spacecraft to the moon. In this and many other cases, public funding of science and technology spawned military and commercial applications that fueled economic growth and created “the world's only superpower.”

When he speaks at our February lunch, Regents' Professor Emeritus Ruttan will pose two related questions. With recent deep cuts in public support for commercially oriented research and development, will U.S. economic growth falter, resulting in a lower standard of living? Perhaps

more disturbing is his second question: Is war or the threat of war necessary to mobilize the technological and financial resources needed for continuing economic and military dominance?

As a student of productivity, Vern is the very embodiment of it. In an early book with Yujiro Hayami, *Agricultural Development: An International Perspective* (Johns Hopkins, 1971), he created the concept of induced innovation to explain differing paths of agricultural development in Japan, the U.S., and other nations. Other pioneering works followed and, in six years since retiring, he has published three notable books: *Technology, Growth and Development: An Induced Innovation Perspective* (Oxford, 2001), *Social Science Knowledge and Economic Development* (Michigan, 2003) and *Is War Necessary for Economic Growth? Military Procurement and Technology Development* (Oxford, 2006).

Vernon W. Ruttan is Regents Professor Emeritus in the Departments of Applied Economics and Economics and adjunct professor in the Humphrey Institute. A fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, he was elected to the National Academy of Science in 1990. He holds a B.A. from Yale, a Ph.D. from Chicago, and honorary degrees from Purdue, Rutgers, and Christian Albrecht University.

We welcome Professor Ruttan to UMRA's February meeting.

—Frank C. Miller

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

FEBRUARY
LUNCHEON MEETING

Tuesday

February 28, 2006

11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Featured Speaker

Vernon Ruttan, Regents Professor Emeritus, Applied Economics, University of Minnesota
“Is War Necessary for Economic Growth?”

Location

Conference Room ABC
Campus Club, Fourth Floor
Coffman Memorial Union,
East Bank Campus, U of M

Cost

\$12 per person (tax included)

Reservation Deadline Thursday, February 23

To reserve your place(s) send a check, payable to the University of Minnesota Retirees Association, to **David Wark** at 1313 5th St. S.E., Mpls., MN 55414; call 612-379-3854; or e-mail him at wark@umn.edu. Reservations requested after Feb. 23 will be on a waiting list. Cancellations must be received by noon Wednesday, Feb. 22. (Note: In Feb. David Wark is standing in for Ben Zimmerman)

Parking

Parking is available in the East River Road Garage at UMRA's membership discount, which is \$4 for the entire day.

Board Meeting at 10 a.m.

UMRA NEWSLETTER

FROM THE PRESIDENT

At its January meeting, the UMRA Board discussed, among other items, the report from the ad hoc committee on membership chaired by John Howe. The committee raised a number of issues, which it will revisit in future meetings, but its first item of focus is the most effective means for contacting prospective new members for UMRA.

The approach taken to date begins with a list of recent retirees—faculty, P&A, and civil service—that Human Resources provides to UMRA monthly. Currently, the able person of Al Linck mails packets to individuals on the list. The packet contains a letter describing UMRA, its purposes, benefits, and programs; a brochure describing retirees' continuing relationships with the University; a recent copy of the UMRA Newsletter; an invitation to join UMRA; and a membership application form with a stamped return envelope. New members typically respond over the months following this contact.

According to University policies, UMRA is entitled to one single contact with individual retirees. In recent years, our approach has maintained UMRA at roughly 500 members—no mean accomplishment given the circumstances under which we operate.

Can we, should we, try to do better? Given the constraint of a single contact, what should be the form of that contact, and when should it occur?

We all know from personal experience that there are myriad concerns that claim our attention during the period just before retirement and perhaps in the first year following. Joining a new organization at a time when we might be departing from others with no particular regrets may not be a priority before and immediately after retirement, but it may become an attractive option when the “nuts and bolts” of our new status have been attended to.

At the January meeting the Board authorized an experiment with a different approach: that we invite prospective retirees to a reception this spring and, depending on the assessment of its effectiveness, consider yet another in the fall. The Board and officers of the association welcome your comments and suggestions—as always.

Warren Ibele, President

Wanted: U of M retirees to apply for part-time University positions

The University is seeking retirees with proficiency in administrative skills to work on a temporary, as needed, part-time basis.

As you may be aware, the University of Minnesota is actively engaged in a systemwide strategic positioning plan—a process that, at this time, involves the merger of several colleges. Because of the changes occurring within departments in these affected colleges, there is an immediate need for temporary employees to work on a part-time, as needed, basis. The Office of Human Resources (OHR) recognizes that the best source for filling these temporary positions is experienced University retirees.

To meet the challenges of temporary staffing issues and allow departments to be flexible, yet efficient, during these times of transition, the OHR Creative Staffing Initiative is actively recruiting U of M retirees for positions in the following areas:

- Financial Systems – HRMS, PeopleSoft, Payroll, CUFS, or Forms Nirvana
- General Administrative – MS Office, word processing, spreadsheets, database, or customer service
- Accounting – budget preparation/maintenance, contracts/grants administration, or accounts payable/receivable
- Communications – writing, proofreading, manuscript editing, or scientific/technical typing

To complete an online application, go to <http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/strategic/temporary>. When you have completed the application, click on “Submit.”

For more information or to request a paper copy of the application, contact Melinda Soderberg, Creative Staffing coordinator, at 612-625-4050, or send an e-mail to soder020@umn.edu.

For current information on the Transforming the U Strategic Positioning, go to http://www1.umn.edu/systemwide/strategic_positioning.

1666 Coffman condominium unit for sale

One bedroom, 2 baths, large LR/DR, kitchen, balcony – #307 Morris. Includes hall storage locker and heated garage space. 1018 sq. ft. List price \$199,900. Available immediately. Contact realtor: Cherryl Kachenmeister, 612-720-0724. For information: Go to the 1666 Coffman website at <http://www.plpa.agri.umn.edu/~thork>

Update on U of M Health Benefits plans for retirees and request for feedback

The results are now in for this year's open enrollment and they pretty much reflect little change from 2005. According to Ted Butler, analyst for Employee Benefits, some 1902 University retirees (1364) and/or their spouses/domestic partners (538) ages 65 and over enrolled in one of the four medical plan options available under the U Plan for 2006. Despite its higher premium cost, Blue Cross/Blue Shield's U of M Retiree Plan remained the most popular choice (970 enrollees, or 51 percent), followed by Health Partners Freedom (536 or 28.2 percent), U Care for Seniors (246 or 12.9 percent, up 5.1 percent) and Medica's Group Prime Solution (150 or 7.9 percent).

As for dental coverage, Delta Preferred/Premier continued to be the top pick (1136 or 55.8 percent) followed by Health Partners Dental (295 or 14.5 percent), Delta Preferred Option (202 or 9.9 percent), University Choice (182 or 8.9 percent), Health Partners Dental Choice (162 or 8 percent), Delta Preferred/Premier Greater MN (56, 2.5 percent), and Delta Out of State (2, 0.1 percent).

Overall, this year's registration went relatively smoothly, aided in large measure by the decision by Employee Ben-

efits not to require retirees to re-enroll if they wished to stay with their current plan option 1.

Implementation of the new Medicare Part D Prescription Drug program, on the other hand, did not go as smoothly—plagued with considerable confusion and numerous glitches reported both nationally and locally, as readers of the daily press are well aware.

Nor, might we add, were our participating plans immune. In our own case, for instance, we experienced a disconcerting problem with my wife's enrollment in Blue Cross/Blue Shield's Medicare Blue Rx program.

With this in mind, we would like to receive your feedback on any problems or difficulties you may have encountered to date with your prescription drug coverage through any of our four plan options. Your comments, of course, will be treated in strictest confidence. I look forward to hearing from you.

Ted Litman, litma001@umn.edu;

UMRA Representative to Benefits Advisory Committee;
3301 Gettysburg Avenue S., Minneapolis, MN 55426

Retirees relate stories about their experiences and the joys of volunteering

In January we began a series of articles written by retired colleagues who are sharing some of their experiences with the volunteer assignments they are enjoying. The volunteers made their connections with assignments through the University Volunteer Center. The second in this series is from Marion Watson, whose story is proof that University folks can do more than volunteer, they can do good deeds, as well.

Sometimes when you volunteer, you get more than you bargained for, and it is all to the good. Just before Christmas two years ago, a volunteer called the office to say she couldn't make it to her assignment in the Mayo Building for the Red Cross Bloodmobile. I decided to take that shift myself.

I got to the Mayo Building where a table was set up in the lobby. There were no official medical department desks in the area. The Bloodmobile bus was outside. I was dutifully checking off the blood donors, getting them to fill out forms, and sending them to the bus, when a cab arrived, and the driver began bringing suitcases into the lobby. He was delivering a woman with an infant in a blanket. She apologized for having so many bags, but said she was prepared to stay for a couple of weeks. She asked me where to go to be admitted. I didn't know.

As we talked, I learned that she had been brought by cab from somewhere around St. Cloud, to be delivered to the

Ronald McDonald House on Oak Street. Her baby was too ill for her to take any other mode of transportation. The cab driver had just unceremoniously dropped her off at this building—a good six blocks from her destination.

Fortunately, I get most of my medical care at the University Medical Center, and I know the ropes. I called the hospital police to ask what to do. They said they would send a van to take her to the right place. The snow was piled high at the curb, and the van driver sat in the middle of the street waiting for her to come out. I got him to pull in to the curb and help with the bags. About then, the hospital Santa Claus happened by, and I asked him to take a couple bags, also.

The next day I called the Ronald McDonald House. I was told that the cab driver was mad because he didn't like the assignment and that "the public was paying for the transportation for an American Indian woman." I inquired about the woman, but they said her child was very ill, and she was at his bedside in the hospital. I asked that my complaint be registered with the proper agency.

I realized that I had been in just the right place at just the right time. That mother needed someone who knew what to do in a tight spot. It was a huge added bonus for that volunteer assignment!

Planning under way for reception to recruit new members to UMRA

As Warren Ibele notes in his presidential column, planning is under way for a spring reception aimed at recruiting new UMRA members from recent faculty, civil service, and P&A retirees. Believing that “growing” our membership will strengthen UMRA’s ability to speak on behalf of all retirees and better serve the University, the Board has decided to invite prospective members to a reception at the Campus Club on Friday, April 21, where we can explain what UMRA has to offer and personalize our recruitment. Details about the reception will be forthcoming as planning goes forward. In the meantime, members interested in helping out on the venture should contact Warren at 612-625-7527 or ibele001@umn.edu.

—John Howe, Past President, Membership Committee

For additional information about
UMRA and its activities, visit the association’s
Web site at www.umn.edu/umra.

Want to help manage UMRA’s website?

Needed: a volunteer who is interested in keeping the UMRA website up to date or interested in making improvements to it. We use DreamWeaver for the updating and have assistance from the University Relations Office where our website is housed. If interested, please contact Judy Howe at j-howe2@umn.edu.

Many volunteer opportunities available with University Retirees Volunteer Center

Whatever your skills and interests, the Volunteer Center will welcome you to join in our many ongoing projects. Please call the Volunteer Center office at 612-625-8016 for more information or to register your interest.

—Helen Briggs, URVC Communications Chair

University of Minnesota
McNamara Alumni Center
Room 264, Suite 250
200 Oak Street S.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55455-2002

 **UMRA**
Retirees Association
University of Minnesota

Have you changed your address, e-mail, or phone?

1. Print new information below.
2. Cut out this form **and address label**.
3. Mail both to the address above.

Name _____
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip _____
Phone _____
E-mail _____
Other Info _____

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U.S. Postage
PAID
Mpls., MN.
Permit No. 155