

# Effects of oil not necessarily disastrous

by Michael McCarthy

The oil industry has very damaging potential for the offshore environment, but it need not be disastrous, says Dr. Robert Fournier, Dalhousie Professor of Oceanography.

Speaking Tuesday in a talk sponsored by the Ecology Action Centre, he said that the ocean is a very large, self-renewing system which is capable of handling oil. He made an analogy with man, who can generally recover from the detrimental effects of alcohol on the short term, although chronic or massive consumption can have serious effects.

Fournier said that he had no specialized knowledge of the subject, but was a concerned citizen who had investigated the matter and was attempting to place in perspective the dangerous aspects of the very active oil boom which is coming to the Atlantic Provinces. He also explained that his remarks applied only to the effect of the industry on the offshore environment, and that the onshore environment involved different considerations.

Although the debris from the actual physical presence of the industry offshore is not negligible, and can interfere with trawling, for instance, it is no more serious than the equipment left or lost by the fishing industry. The main concern is the introduction of oil into the water through errors in exploration, extraction, or transportation.

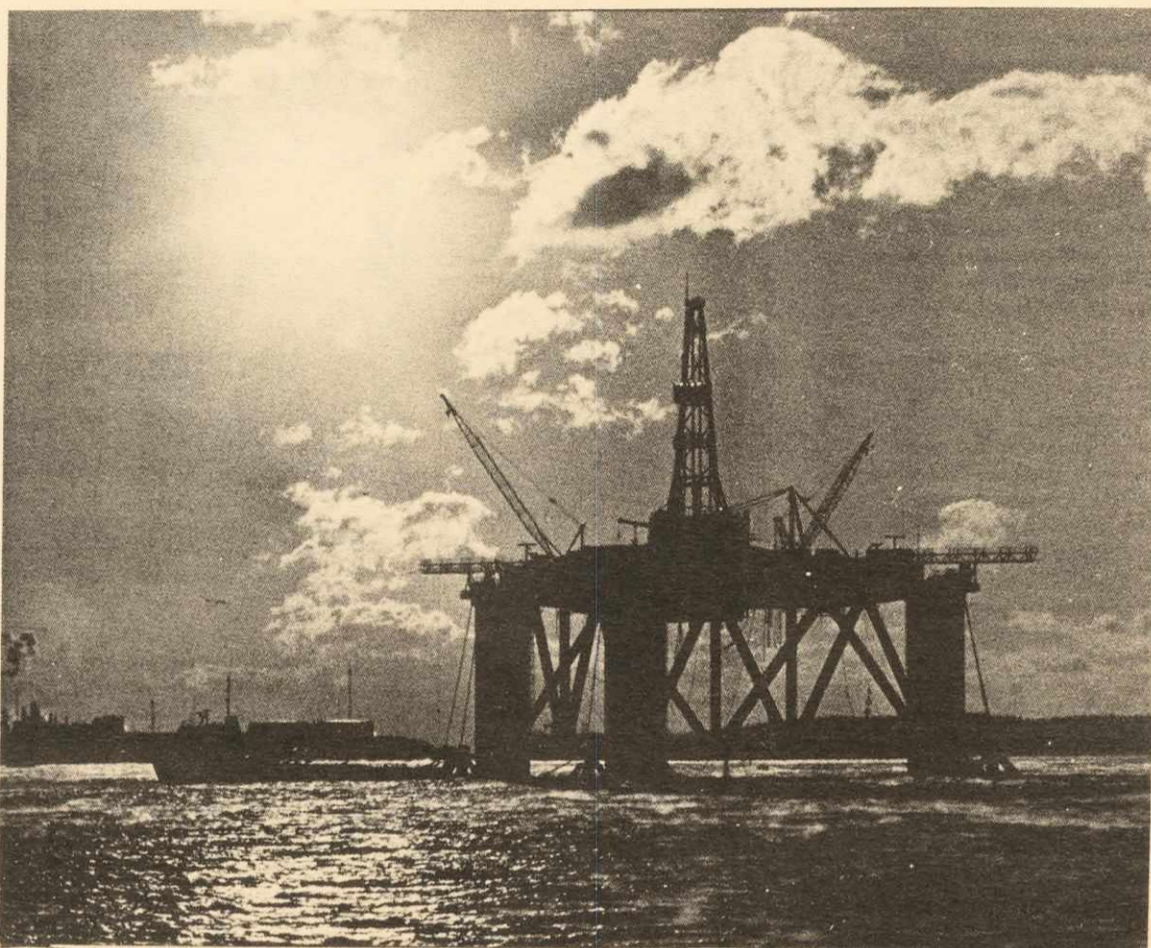
There are several potential fields under the continental shelf in the region. By 1985 several should be in production, including 30 rigs in Hibernia alone. There will always be the possibility of a spill or blowout, because of the human error factor. Conditions in this area may be somewhat more risky because of the weather and icebergs.

The fields are located in the midst of important fishing areas, such as the Grand Banks. Oil could be moved away from the fish stocks by currents, but if storms drove a slick into a mating area during the breeding season, a whole year-class of fish could be destroyed. Incidents like this would affect local and international fisheries.

The situation is extremely variable. Because of factors like weather, locale, and type of oil, it is impossible to generalize and say for certain what will happen. At another time, the oil may have no effect, or it may be carried seaward harmlessly.

Fournier pointed out that the ocean is naturally oil rich. Also, it has many organisms in it which feed on oil and either break it down or remove it from circulation. In fact, it may be that the ocean could eliminate oil better on its own, without the addition of harmful chemicals used in clean-up operations.

The ocean is so large that it can disperse large amounts of oil in a short time. An accident may raise the oil concentration from 1 part/billion to



350-500 parts per billion. In the first day, 25%-50% of the oil will evaporate. After 3 or 4 days, dispersion will have lowered the concentration to 50 parts/billion. After 3-4 weeks, the concentration will likely have been returned to normal through the combination of evaporation, dispersion, oil-feeding organisms and ultraviolet rays from the sun.

In 1975, 10% of all oil in the ocean came from natural

seepage (unrelated to man). 30% came from the transportation of oil, and 1% from production accidents. 44% came from rivers carrying industrial waste. In light of this, and the ability of the ocean to assimilate the amount of oil likely to be introduced through offshore industry, the effect on the offshore environment does not seem so catastrophic. Nonetheless, because the situation is so variable, and

because of the dangers of chronic oil spillage, care must be taken to see that the situation does not get out of hand.

Fournier said that consideration must also be given to the effect of oil onshore and in the atmosphere, which was beyond the scope of his talk. As well, the oil industry may cause irreparable social disruption among the many fishing villages in the Atlantic Community.

## Disarmament subject of vigorous debate

by Paul Creelman

The Green Room was the site of a vigorous question and answer forum on Friday at lunchtime. Mrs. Peggy Hope-Simpson, coordinator of Project Ploughshares Nova Scotia, and Professor Donald M. Munton, from the

Dalhousie department of political science, both spoke on the topic of Canada and disarmament.

"The advances in the arms race have always been made on the U.S. side first," said Munton in reply to questioning

by one of the outspoken members of the audience.

"This is in true talking about new weapons development and deployment in general. Traditionally, the U.S. have

always been one step ahead of the Russians, while the

Americans have always been fearful of having them catch up."

This was only one of a number of surprising facts revealed during the discussion.

The forum, which was co-

sponsored by Sodales, the department of Community Affairs, CKDU, and the Dal Gazette, was opened by Dr. Munton. Speaking briefly about Canada's history in disarmament negotiations, Munton outlined four stages of Canada's relations with disarmament.

The first of these periods was during the cold war era, when Canada almost completely supported the U.S. position. During the 1960s, the Canadian position on disarmament at the International level was either largely ineffective, or else not vocalized. Finally, during the most recent period of time, during the SALT talks, Canada has taken a stronger position for disarmament. Dr. Munton notes that while many Canadian observers consider the Canadian position to be strongly influential, nobody else seems to consider it so important.

"I've talked to several sources in Washington concerning this aspect, and the general consensus is that in the SALT talks, the Germans count a little bit, but the Canadians don't count worth a damn," said Munton.

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## Baldry threatens \$50,000 lawsuit

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**Baldry concert cancellation confirmed**

In another problem related to Entertainment, a group of Student Council Representatives voted Tuesday to confirm the cancellation of a Long John Baldry concert which was arranged for the Winter Carnival. The concert, which had to be arranged before the Winter Carnival Chairperson was elected, was questioned by Lee Lathigee when she was appointed to the job.

"Problems originally arose between Fay who booked it, and when we appointed Lee to the Winter Carnival Chairperson," states Owen.

"When they couldn't come up with a workable solution among themselves, that's

where we had to intervene." The problem of whether or not the Student Union could make any money on the concert was the main reason for the cancellation.

One consideration was a possibility that the agents for Long John Baldry might sue the Student Union for cancellation, but this was considered unlikely, says Owen.

"We decided to cancel Long John Baldry because it is financially infeasible to book it", said Owen.

"The big events must make money to subsidize the smaller events we also sponsor which lose money. In order to bring in Long John Baldry at even a break even basis, however, we would have to charge a ticket price of \$6-8 per ticket. The week before he

was scheduled to play here, Baldry is scheduled to play at the Moon, and you can get in there for \$5. In view of these facts, we decided to cancel."

Owen states that a letter was received from Baldry's agents stating that the total cost of Baldry's tour in this area was expected to be \$50,000, and that there was a possibility that they might decide to cancel the whole tour and take the matter to court.

"However, in fact they only stand to make \$4,500 from Dalhousie, so if you ask me it wouldn't be in their own interests to do that."

Owen also questioned whether or not Baldry would have legal grounds for such an action.

"Entertainment as a whole has lost a fair amount of

money in the last few months. I think the figure was \$11,000 as of Nov. 31st. It may certainly lie in the bottom lines of the budget, but I think it is really in that lack of flexibility I was talking about."

Marie Gilkinson, chairperson of the entertainment committee, does not feel that Pickrem was made a scapegoat of more general entertainment problems.

"Well, I certainly hope that she wasn't referring to me when she said there was a bad working relationship with Council", said Gilkinson.

"I feel that we've been very supportive of Fay and had a good working relationship. There may have been problems with the executive of the council."