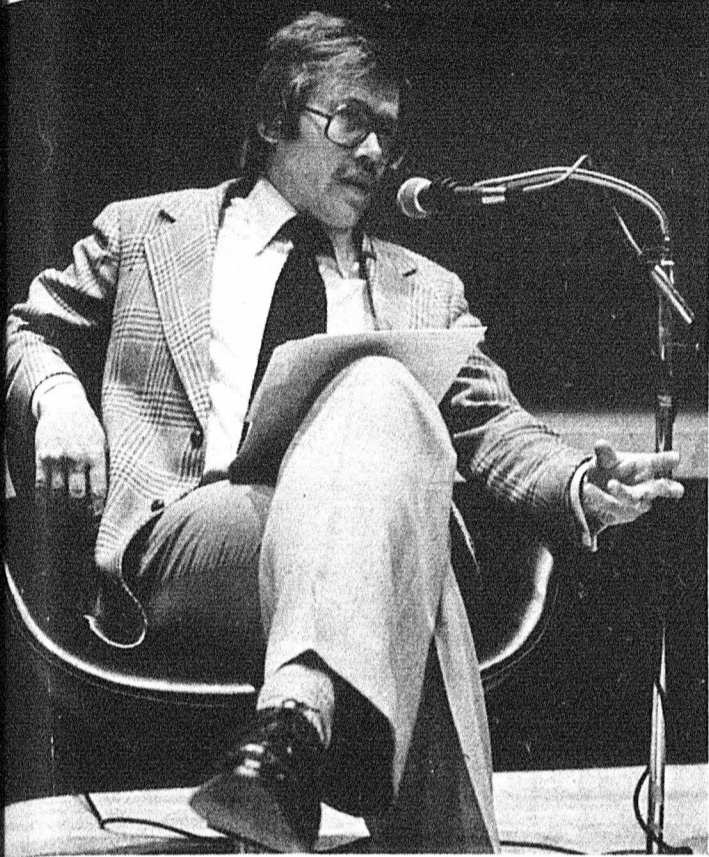


Panel member John Barr defending Syncrude against criticism.



The Syncrude Project once

by Mary MacDonald

The oil industry is interested in profits for themselves and risks for the public, claims Larry Pratt, author of *The Tar Sands*. Pratt addressed a Thursday SU forum in The Politics of Syncrude. In Part 1 of the forum in SUB theatre foyer Pratt spoke of Syncrude interests.

"Their primary criteria is profit ability. Syncrude was set up to serve the US market," says Pratt. "The companies that want to develop the oil sands demand a high price from the public to develop it. These companies are interested in spreading the risks and getting the public to pay for

These risks, Pratt says, are political and economic in nature. OPEC, he says, may fall apart due to competition among these countries. Oil prices would then go down and Syncrude would become a white elephant.

He believes the federal government could regulate prices, increase taxes and royalties on national oil projects.

"These companies wish to push most of the risks on the backs of the public. The public builds the infra structure - the new roads and bridges," says Pratt. In Fort McMurray, the community and the province have paid for these.

"The companies want to see the government directly involved in these new and risky projects," he says.

Political risks are reduced for the company if there is

government interest in the projects.

The federal government is interested in balance of payments, regaining oil self-sufficiency and reducing imports, says Pratt. "They don't want to cut off the US immediately and foresee a day when they will pay for oil imports by gas exports."

Pratt feels oil company interests are in gaining maximum return on their investments. The companies are interested in new energy in stable areas like Canada, building new sources of Canadian supply, new expensive technology such as oil sands plants, and a return on their tar sands investments.

"There is an increasing degree of state participation in the economy," says Pratt. "There is the problem of accountability."

Environment risks, in particular, are great and there should be more stringent control of emissions. Those who are given the task of cleaning up the environment have vested interests in the project causing the pollution. "Syncrude was given a license to dump more SO2 than allowable." The government has a vested interest as well, Pratt says and they will not impose stricter rules.

The solution to the accountability problem is "far more intervention by public groups.

"To ask politicians is wrong. The solution must come from the grass roots not the top down."

...And yet once again

Syncrude executives took the hot seat in Part 2 of Friday's SU forum.

The panel consisted of Syncrude men Frank Spragins, Chairman of the Board; Dr. Ron Goforth, Director of Environmental Affairs; Ron Gray, Director of Engineering; and John Barr, Manager of Public Affairs.

The forum opened with a short presentation on the project by Spragins.

"Syncrude is owned by 3 oil companies - Imperial, Gulf, and City Service," he explained. "The province of Alberta owns 10%, the province of Ontario 5%, the Canadian government 15% and the oil companies 70%."

Canada faces a coming energy crisis and there is no time to bring in oil from new resources. He feels we must develop our other oil sources. "The insurance of long range oil potential is up to Alberta," he says.

Environment

To a question regarding SO2 emissions from the Syncrude plant Dr. Goforth said, "We have a permit from the Alberta government to emit 287 long tons of sulfur dioxide per day."

He said the first year emissions would be 70 long tons, building to a maximum of 287 in several years.

When questioned by STOP (Save Tomorrow Oppose Pollution) about limit violations and inadequate monitoring, Goforth said, "There is no Canadian standard on 30 minute emissions. We have a permit to construct the project under the clean air act and we do have elaborate monitoring detail." There is a research program to detect oncoming vegetation stress.

Regarding environmental damage, Goforth said, "There are going to be significant changes. We are not preserving the environment."

After Syncrude leaves, he said, relatively clean sand will be replaced in the pit and the soil rebuilt.

The reason for a differing federal government report on the impact? "The Federal Department of the Environment did their own critique on the impact. In their review they totally failed to include our supplementary information. Their critique was out of date when the public saw it," he said.

Techology
Syncrude Director of Engineering, Gray, was asked

about their technology for combatting sulfur dioxide. "Syncrude is designed to meet the Alberta standards which are the highest in Canada," he said.

If other methods were used, Gray believes there would be a "significant loss of efficiency."

According to Federal reports technology is available to reduce emissions to 40 long tons per day. Provincial reports suggest 60 long tons. Syncrude says 287.

Goforth commented "What constitutes the best practical technology is not theoretical ideas but demonstrated technology. technology available, the need for it and economic feasibility. In our case we are employing the best practical."

Tax Concessions

One questioner charged Syncrude is a front for owner oil companies who receive tax concessions - \$672 million is a subsidy, \$504 million is rebated, so the total company outlay is \$520 million.

In reply Spragins said, "You're right Syncrude is a cost

company with no tax problems. The \$600 million is a loan by the government which will have to be repaid. It is not a write off on corporate taxes but a tax delay or postponement which will have to be repaid."

Part of the money is a depletion allowance allowed by the federal government for oil exploration. "One third of the depletion allowance is set aside for research," said Spragins.

Public Affairs

"We are in the business of buying people. We are selling ourselves. Our purpose is to broaden public knowledge of Syncrude and to recruit skilled people," said public affairs manager Barr.

When it was noted no Syncrude opponents were on the panel Barr answered, "Our critics have had more than equal time. We would be fools to give our critics more time. This is an opportunity for Syncrude to state its case and get a fair hearing. I have debated many times but this does not mean I'll spend the rest of my life debating."

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Sow wild oats

Somebody out there is trying to stop the sowing of wild oats. Early in September, the department of plant science has given a \$20,000 research grant to study wild oat control. The grant was a result of serious concerns aroused by the extensive grain losses which western prairie farmers suffer from wild oat infestation.

The total loss from wild oat infestation has been estimated at about 350 million bushels (of approximately nine million dollars).

The grant was provided by the United Grain Growers.

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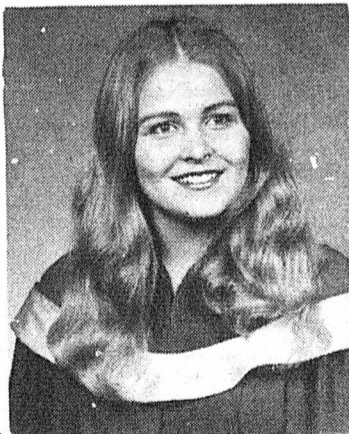
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