

Mackenzie valley pipeline 'Who are we fighting?'

"Southerners always ask if we're united on this. We are. We are opposed to the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline right now. We want a moratorium on this issue until Dene Land Claims are settled", Steve Kakfwi of the Indian Brotherhood told a Halifax audience on Wednesday, March 9th.

Steve Kakfwi and journalist Hugh McCullum of Project North were in town to address a public meeting on the controversial issues of Dene land claims and the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline. The meeting was sponsored by the Halifax Support Group For Native People, Coalition For Development, and Catholic Social Services Commission.

After short speeches from Kakfwi and McCullum the meeting was opened to the floor for questions. McCullum tried to reach the heart of the issue. He cast aside blaming others such as the multinationals and the Feds.

"Who is it that we're fighting? Is it the huge gas and oil companies bent in profit at any cost; is it the federal government who seems to be bedmates of these multinationals; is it Southern Canadians with their energy wasteful lifestyles or the Americans who are finally the ones who are to receive the

gas...just who is it?", a member of the audience asked.

McCullum's reply was, "Who are we fighting? Well it's an attitude more than anything — the attitude that says, 'It's much too complex an issue for the average person to get into. Leave it to the experts, the faceless and unaccountable civil servants — it's their job!' that's what we're fighting."

Currently in Ottawa, the National Energy Board is conducting hearings to determine whether "the public convenience and necessity" requires a gas pipeline in the North and, if so, who will build it.

By Sept. 1, 1977 President Carter will be recommending to Congress a plan for the transportation of Alaskan gas to the U.S. Canada has promised to inform the U.S. of its own pipeline decision before that time. Both government decisions are heavily interrelated.

Organizers of Wednesday night's presentation hoped to stimulate interest in Halifax over these issues. With the report of Justice Thomas Berger to the Department of Indian Affairs coming due the second week of May, this public information meeting was held to publicize the issues so that people here may be in a better position to understand that implications of



"If you don't like it here in Canada, why don't you go back where you came from?"

Berger's recommendations.

If, in fact, Berger does recommend a moratorium on development in the N.W.T. until Native land claims there are settled a great deal of public interest and public support will be needed. Supporters of the Native position fear Berger's report may be shelved as have been so many Royal Commission reports in the past.

Kakfwi suggested that one route for citizens to take in involving themselves would be to talk to one's M.P., inform him of the issues and elicit a stand from him and the reasonings behind this stand. Another suggestion was self education, i.e. getting the facts and arguments together yourself. For a look at some of the evidence presented to Berger, read the CJL Newsletter available from John Kearney at the Catholic Social Services Building, 1546 Barrington Street, (429-2362). Also available

from the same place is Hugh McCullum's new book, **Moratorium** at a cost of \$4.50.

There is fear of the pipeline and a feeling of helplessness and hopelessness in the North. However, McCullum pointed out that the Berger hearings have delayed pipeline construction already for 4-5 years.

The issues are eloquently summed up in the **Moratorium** by McCullum: "First of all we must call a halt to the mindless reliance on experts, the unplanned growth that exists only for multinational profit, the irresponsible use of non-renewable energy resources as if there were no tomorrow, the oppression of Native people in the North in the 'National interest', the destruction of the delicate environment and ecology of our last frontier, and the ruthless demands of a technology that places things ahead of people."

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workers found it impossible to check off names. Many polls never even bothered to check off names or check IDs.

One case of total irresponsibility was quoted in the "Elections Challenge" report. "At some polls (Grad House for example), the ballot box and ballots were left unattended for periods of time leaving numerous unused ballots in full view and within easy reach of any person who wished to exploit the situation."

After the polls were closed and ballots counted there was significant difference between the number of ballots cast and the number of people who were checked off on the list. Election scrutineers, the people who monitor the counting of the ballots, say that the difference was 655 votes, approximately one-third of the votes cast. However, MacNeill said the difference was "only" 345 votes.

Finally according to the consti-

tution (reg. 26, section 13) candidates are allowed forty eight hours to make any appeals on the election. But before the 48 hour period ended MacNeill returned home to Cape Breton. Since there was no election committee as such this made any appeal impossible.

Although we have alleged that many of the irresponsible acts of the elections came as a result of negligence on the part of Chief Elections Officer, MacNeill, the final responsibility rests directly with the Student Council.

Because Council felt that they had more important business, a motion to declare the elections 'null and void' was defeated at their last meeting by a vote of 10-9-1. Council asks us to believe that any organization which cannot handle a simple matter such as their own elections can handle more important matters as efficiently.

The question we ask is can they? Alas, all this is academic, for the election report sits safely but not peacefully in the 'presidential file'.

ATTENTION

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