

Power Corporation cannot refute Lovins

by Trish Aikens

If you weren't previously aware of the difference between a man who could talk sense and a man who, if you will pardon the expression, could really shoot the bull, then you certainly should have attended the lecture on energy futures by Amory Lovins last Friday evening. Granted, you may have wanted to do something else with those previous hours between 8:30 and 11:00 p.m. however, I'm certain this lecture would have been of benefit to all. It would have made you aware of the kind of people we have running this province's huge corporations. Representing the Nova Scotia Power Corporation at the lecture was the 2nd guest speaker Mr. Laffin who is assistant to the president of the NSPC.

Amory B. Lovins is an internationally respected physicist who in 1971 resigned from a Junior Research Fellowship of Merton College, Oxford to become a British

representative of Friends of the Earth Inc., a non-profit U.S. conservation group. He has been a consultant physicist since 1965 and now concentrates his efforts on energy and resource strategy, serving as an energy consultant for the OECD, several U.N. agencies and the International Federation of Institutes for Advanced Study.

It is Mr. Lovins belief that the present system of multitudinous power corporations across the country is too expensive and not economically feasible. He suggests instead, a cheaper and more efficient programme of energy technologies. If Nova Scotian's were to look at Denmark, a country structured very similar to this province, they would perhaps be amazed to learn that the Danish are living just as well by conservational energy methods as we are here but for half the price! In Denmark, if you were building a house, it would cost you half as much to have it

completely solar heated with no backup as it would cost to make it electrically heated. Mr. Lovins firmly believes that solar heating could work in Nova Scotia. "Solar energy even in a cloudy place like this is not out of the question for industrial process heat."

According to Mr. Lovins, it's also beneficial for both the consumer and the power corporation. For example; suppose you wanted to put a solar collector on your roof. Suppose NSPC finances it acting as a bank. You pay them back through your electric bill. In the long run you will save money. The NSPC also benefits: (1) it saves them money because they're spending less than they'd have if you went electric. (2) the pay back time on that investment is half or one third as much as if they build a power station. (3) they're also avoiding social obsolescence. And those, feels Mr. Lovins, are pretty good incentives!

Mr. Lovins refers to our present energy sources, such as oil and electricity, as hard technologies and says they are too expensive and

too risky to be dependable. However, he says, energy sources such as solar, wind, organic conversion, and cogeneration, which he refers to as the soft technologies, are less expensive, more productive, and of more benefit especially to the poorer people.

One particularly well versed audience participant was Bill Zimmerman, an American currently residing in Port Medway, where he is building a solar heated home. Here is a sample of the kind of dialogue that went on between Bill and Mr. Laffin:

Bill: Nova Scotia has no body that's really responsible for energy policy and it's unfortunate that all the focus of attention goes to the Power Corporation. But the point is there's no other place for the focus right now. There is no leadership in the province, apparently, except whistling in the wind about high oil costs.

Laffin: I don't know everything that you're doing in your business and it's quite apparent you don't know everything we're doing in our business.

Lady: But you're a public utility and we're not.

Bill: We own you! This public utility is less open for investigation by outside people than a privately owned one which is the most discouraging aspect of it being a public utility.

Obviously Mr. Laffin did not handle very well, the questions which were fired at him. At one point he even flared out at Bill Zimmerman, accusing him of being an American while he was a Nova Scotian! In comparison, Amory Lovins was exceptional. He also let the concerned audience know what he thought of Mr. Laffin's statements by every once in awhile making very convincing facial expressions and other manual gestures in response to Laffin's answers to audience questions.

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D'Orsay to remain in Community Affairs, Nick Pittas as Member-at-Large, or Jim O'Neil as Treasurer - that is, if these people can even be persuaded to apply for a position). This may prove doubly difficult, especially when it is rumoured that Gillis has already decided who will get what positions, before applications are even open.

Gillis, for her part, has an even greater burden to overcome. In her year as President of Shirreff Hall she was seldom active, and had to convince a skeptical audience at Shirreff Hall that, should she win, that "next year would be different". Second Year and up Med students don't believe that (they didn't vote - if you don't believe that, check the Directory for the Tupper poll) - Anne is going into 2nd Year Med next year, which is acknowledged to be the hardest year, and the cynics on the Lower Campus say she won't spend two hours a week in her Vice-Presidential office.

An Interesting Year Ahead

So, dear readers, as you can see, things are shaping up into something a little more interesting than the campaign even was. The question to ask is this - can Neal and Gillis face reality and incorporate the losers into the fold, and can the losers be persuaded to offer their services, especially when the Neal-Gillis advisors have already demonstrated their vindictive spleen and will oppose any such conciliatory move? Gord and Anne won - on a mandate to be popular. That kind of election victory doesn't keep fees down, or the Union bureaucracy from growing still larger and less productive. Dan O'Connor's platform has been disemboweled by Russell and Smiley; from where will the ideas (and money) now flow?

Next year's Council should prove to be most interesting, indeed.

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