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Because of these fears, when Aquitaine Ltd. (later known as Kidd Creek Mines) called a public meeting to "allay public fears", the result was a packed meeting hall of people looking for answers. What they weren't prepared for was the spectacle of people flown in from Calgary and Toronto telling them there were no risks—absolutely none—associated with uranium mining in their area.

"If they had just been willing to say, 'there are some risks, however we are willing to do these safety things', I think more people would have been willing to say well, perhaps...." says Donna Smyth, still struck by that meeting's revelations. "They took a line which would later become familiar, which is just absolute denial of anything which might be a risk to public health or degradation of the environment."

Soon public pressure brought to bear on Nova Scotia's Tory

government forced a moratorium on uranium exploration—until a one-man commission of Provincial Court Judge Robert McCleave could examine the issues and file his report. That report has yet to be made public, but when Dr. Leo Yaffe toured the Maritimes as President of the Chemical Institute of Canada giving his speech entitled "The Hazards of Not Going Nuclear", the McCleave commission was big news. The doctor and Donna Smyth were on a collision course.

The Players

Donna Smyth isn't sure quite how or when she developed her driving passion for social justice, but it may have been during her childhood in the foothills of the Rockies. In touch with a wild natural setting and the "social-democratic tradition" her working-class family provided, Smyth eventually felt compelled to work for an alternative to the

status quo. "I suppose growing up in that kind of an environment leads you to have certain expectations about the way people live," she says.

From an involvement with the peace movement which began while growing up in the '50's—"I think many of us were children of the bomb"—Smyth grew into fighting for women's rights during and after her university education. While living and studying in B.C., Toronto, and London, England, she saw how interrelated the causes for feminism and peace were. Ironically, the first stirrings which connected a love for the environment with her other beliefs came in the middle of grimy London—during a garbage and sewer worker strike.

After moving to Hants County, "falling in love with this place," and beginning to teach at Acadia in 1973, Smyth shored up her personal beliefs by working on her

small Ellershouse farm and striving for self-sufficiency. When not tending to the goats, chickens, corn, or her students, she found time to be an active member in NAGS, an all-woman political performance group of the Voice of Women, and write articles for progressive publications such as *This Magazine*.

"We all have a deference to authority because of the way we're trained," she says, refusing to bow down to that impulse. "As a teacher I realise there's something wrong with our educational system if those of us who've gone through still have to overcome a sense of awe, especially in questioning scientists and scientific matters."

Enter Dr. Leo Yaffe. Yaffe, who refused to comment when contacted is a study in contrasts from Donna Smyth. Professor Emeritus, MacDonald professor of Chemistry, and a former Administration Vice-President of McGill, Yaffe is nothing if not establishment. Since 1952, Yaffe has worked at McGill in advanced nuclear chemistry research, but prior to that, his life led him in a direction so far from Smyth's it would be difficult to invent a greater antithesis.

From 1943 to 1952, Yaffe was a research worker on a project which was little-known at the beginning, but whose beginning has had a shattering impact on us all. Known as the Canadian Atomic Energy Project, it is also known as part of the Manhattan Project, the invention of the Atomic Bomb.

"Canada's involvement was twofold," says Gordon Edwards. "We supplied uranium, and had a research team at the Université de Montreal working on the most efficient way of separating plutonium." Yaffe was among that team.

Since then, Yaffe has been an outspoken proponent of Nuclear Energy, with his career probably culminating with the assemblage of his "Health Hazards" lecture. Published in the December 1979 issue of *Chemistry in Canada*, it vigorously promotes the use of nuclear energy and lists what it presents as the dangers of the alternatives. He had given the speech many times before, in many parts of the country, so the stops in Halifax, Antigonish, Sackville, Fredericton, and Wolfville may have seemed nothing unusual for him. But for Donna Smyth, it was something which could not go unchallenged.

She was far from the first to question his paper's assumptions. Dr. David Brooks, a resource economist for the American institute Energyprobe, testified at the trial that Yaffe's paper was "predominantly political". According to Gordon Edwards, it paints a horror story of a world dying as a result of burning fossil fuels, then offers nuclear power as the only alternative without really discussing its dangers. "It attempts to prove one thing is good because another thing is bad," says Edwards.

All that was left after Donna Smyth's opinion piece was nearly three years of waiting for the trial.

Endgame

After taking so long to come to trial, the court case proceeded quickly during its two days. The case eventually centered around Smyth's use of the word "paraded" in the sentence cited by Yaffe as libellous. "The prosecution said it meant he was in the pocket of the nuclear industry," says Eleanor MacLean, a journalist who covered the trial. In his letter to the *Chronicle-Herald* demanding a retraction, Yaffe stated, "Since 1952, I have not received a penny, research grant (or other considerations) from any nuclear agency or institution—governmental or otherwise."

In his attempt to prove Yaffe's reputation was damaged by Donna Smyth's article, Yaffe's lawyer called only one witness to the stand. As that witness, Dalhousie Senate Chair Dr. William Jones, said the article would not affect Yaffe possibly being invited to lecture at Dalhousie. It is questionable how much value his testimony had to Yaffe's case.

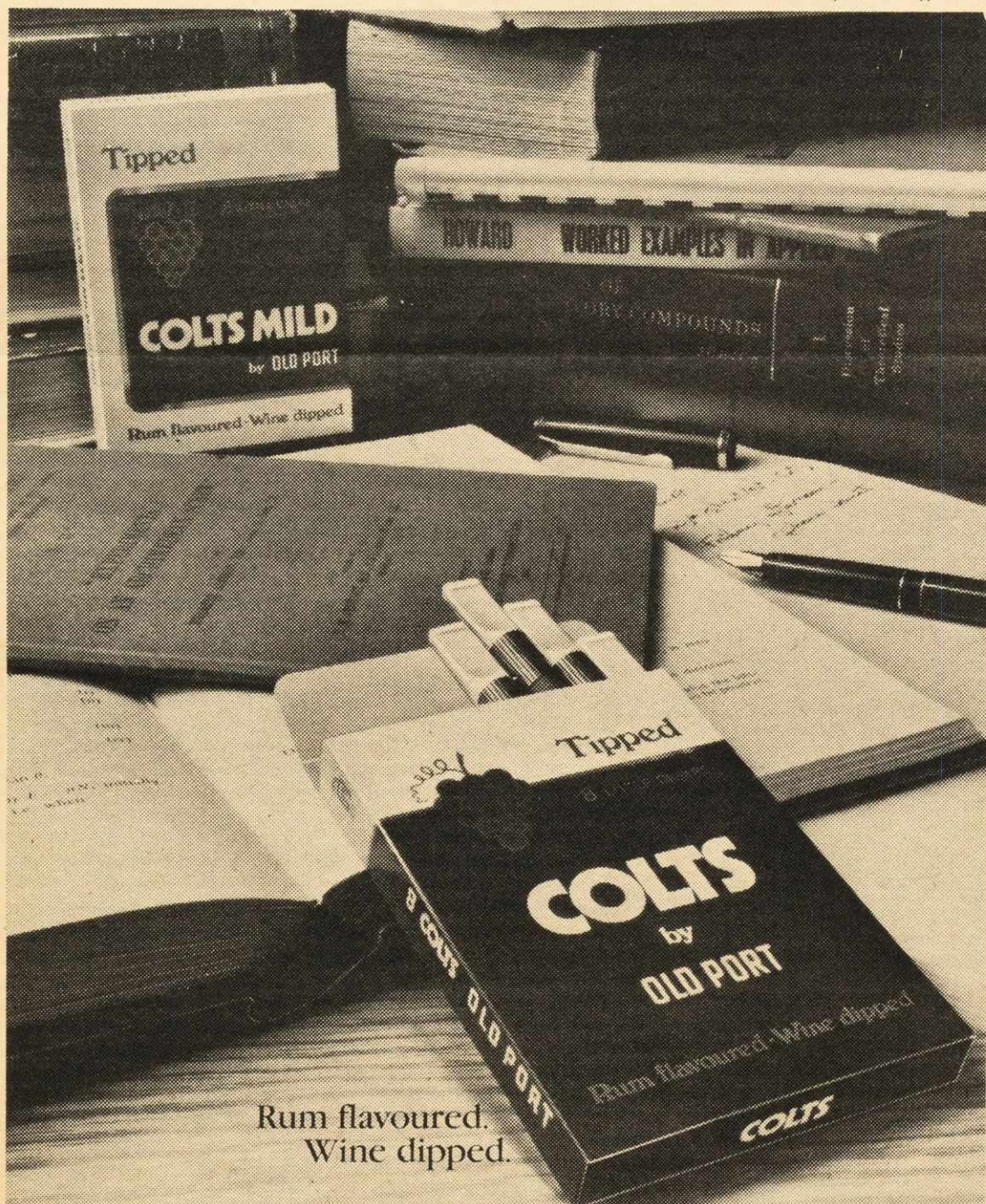
Another move on behalf of the plaintiffs may have been much more effective—for Donna Smyth. Among the exhibits entered for Yaffe's case was a letter by a University of Toronto professor which asked Yaffe about his "exchange with some anti-nuclear people in Nova Scotia". "We have to find some way to deal with these people," it noted, and said that his upcoming retirement would leave him time to "nail" these "socio-political adventurers." A letter by Yaffe wishing him luck was also entered into the record.

"It may have been a sign of how sure they were of their position," says MacLean.

Smyth countered with witnesses who debunked the nature of Yaffe's lecture, established the credibility of lay experts, and related how scientific reputations are made and unmade. After being grilled on the stand, Smyth watched as the judge termed her article's wording as "strident" in his final statement. "He did give some indication he considered that they should find her guilty," says Eleanor MacLean. But partly due to the past record of Nova Scotian judges' decisions, Smyth had opted for a jury trial.

"I think the jury were trying to suppress their smiles because they realised the verdict rested with them, not the judge," says MacLean. Their verdict of not guilty was unanimous.

It all somehow adds up to a happy, if qualified, ending for Donna Smyth. The other endings will come when her legal bills are paid, when uranium mining is finally banned in the province, when Canada refuses to participate in the arms race, and so on off into the distance. But right now, chalk up one small victory for Donna Smyth.



Rum flavoured.
Wine dipped.

Crack a pack of Colts along with the books.