

MACKENZIE VALLEY PIPELINE Violation or violation

means of transportation such as the proposed Mackenzie Valley Guided Ground Transport. It claims many thousand jobs created and less damage done to northern ecology. For these two reasons the proposal deserves serious consideration.

Without doubt the most crucial issue affected by northern development is that of aboriginal rights. These rights are those property rights which native people retain as a result of their original use and occupancy of lands.

In some cases the government has entered into treaties with the native peoples. Treaties number 8 and 11 were signed with the 6,500 Indian people of the Northwest Territories with respect to the Slave Lake and Mackenzie River area. Although several specific obligations have not been fulfilled, the most important area of concern relates to land settlement. Some 3,000 non-treaty Indians of the Northwest Territory and the 13,000 Inuit have never signed treaties although all claims based upon the law of aboriginal rights.

The present government policy is one of upgrading the importance of aboriginal and treaty rights in order to place emphasis upon economic, social and cultural advancement. However, it is felt that achievement of the latter can only be attained through recognition of the aboriginal and treaty

The Federal Government, however, has committed itself to oil and gas exploration and production. Consequently, the government is presently pursuing with irresponsible haste a grand "Mackenzie Valley Corridor" concept which includes an all-weather highway to the Arctic Ocean and a pipeline right of way. This rapid encroachment on the land which is the subject of treaty number 8 is totally unjustified considering that the legal right to the land still remains with the Indian people. By the same token the granting of exploration permits over the Arctic islands and water blatantly disregards Inuit rights.

Of greatest urgency is the establishment of a procedure for considering the Mackenzie Valley proposals. As the government boasts, such a project represents one of the largest capital investments ever undertaken by industry anywhere in the world.

The most immediate concern is the excessive speed with which the federal government seeks to solicit and process a pipeline application before all interested persons will have an opportunity to present their views and influence the final decision.

It is essential that hearings be held to consider all aspects of the pipeline proposals at an early stage before large sums of money have been invested and the project has gained such momentum that no rational consideration of the merits will be permitted.

For the pessimist, this stage has already been reached. Nevertheless, the proposed northern gas pipeline could be used to establish decision-making procedures that could lead to a rational system of consultation for all future northern development projects.

Implementation of such a procedure [of public hearings], in the pipeline case, would necessitate substantial revisions to the Northern Inland Waters Act and the National Energy Board Act. Conceivably, a comprehensive hearing structure could be established under the Territorial Lands Act having application to all development proposals.

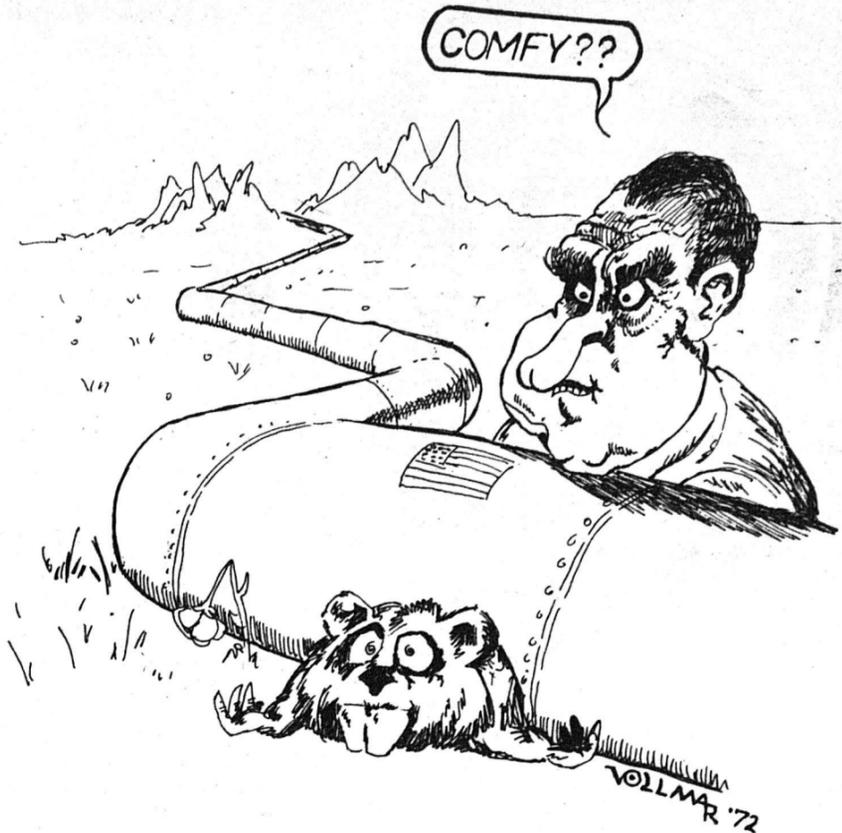
The important aspect is that all northerners and southerners should have an opportunity to influence the course of northern development and derive benefit from it. The attitude of the public in the south is a crucial factor in aiding native northerners, in particular to alter the course of northern development in a beneficial way.

Financing the Mackenzie highway and pipeline will also create enormous problems for this country. The road, alone, is to cost several billions to be drawn from the public treasury and the Canadian taxpayer. The highway's primary purpose is to facilitate construction and then maintenance of the pipeline which in turn is designed to help meet the energy crisis in the United States—not Canada.

But the economic cost of this road to Canada will be massive.

Billions of government funds will be diverted from housing, hospitals, or industrial incentives to build this oilman's freeway.

The problems in financing the pipeline will be even greater for here the



excerpts from a brief presented at the C.I.C. convention held in Edmonton this fall.

billions will have to come from private Canadian or American sources. If the Americans were to finance the project a key transportation artery would be controlled by foreign interests unconcerned with Canadian priorities for arctic development. In addition such a massive inflow of American capital would push the value of the Canadian dollar higher. As a result, our exports would be less competitive on the world market and Canada would lose industrial production and jobs.

If the other alternative was followed and the pipeline was financed in Canada, there would still be serious problems. This project would use a huge chunk of the available Canadian capital for a project which would not add to the industrial potential of Canada. We do not need these energy resources yet, hence, it would be an unproductive use of capital in terms of Canadian needs. The project would spark a temporary construction boom but most of the skilled labour and all the heavy equipment would be imported.

Ecologists have also warned of great problems which will be triggered by this road and pipeline. They will be built across permafrost which may gradually melt and become unstable.

Engineers can only guess at the effects as yet and it will be several years until serious estimates can be made. Faulty construction techniques or unstable foundations could lead to recurring breaks in the line with oil spills or gas emissions.

In addition, the primary benefit is for those international petroleum giants who hold huge land leases in the Canadian arctic. By exploiting now they can gain cash income and profits in the United States market for the capital invested in Canada. If these energy reserves were developed more slowly it would help to keep Canadian prices down for future decades.

Therefore, for reasons of ecology, the native peoples and finance, the Canadian government must stop the Mackenzie Valley Energy Corridor (road and pipeline) until Canadian needs require such energy and Canada can finance the project easily from internal sources.

SECRET

An attempt to find out about the U of A's contribution to the Mackenzie Valley pipeline debate has floundered—temporarily—on the rock of "secrecy".

The Boreal Institute of the U of A has just completed a study of native people who might be affected if the pipeline were built.

According to R.S. Jamieson, acting director of the Boreal Institute, the research, done under contract to Canadian Gas Arctic Studies Ltd., was begun at a time when there was great rivalry between two companies who were both applying for the right to build the pipeline. As a result, he says, the contract requires the Institute to keep its research confidential until after the research consortium has made its bid to the

National Energy Board at Christmas time.

On the other hand, the University's research grants officer G.A. Holmes, insists that there are clauses in the contract which specifically protect the researchers' right to publish their findings as they wish. Moreover, he says, it is a university policy not to undertake research the publication of which would be restricted. According to Holmes, the Institutes' findings will be conveyed to the government by the researchers themselves, "without the consent of the gas companies."

Jamieson has agreed to make general background information available as has Willard Allen, associate vice-president academic, one of the administrators to whom the Institute is responsible.

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