

Mackenzie Valley Pipeline

We pay the bill

by Mike Bradfield

Most of us recognize the importance of the decision to build or not to build the MacKenzie Valley pipeline. It is important to the North since construction will impose horrific social, economic and environmental costs on the Native People of the Valley. We are told it is important for the South since the energy it carries will keep us from freezing in the dark. It is important to the oil companies and banks because it will mean hundreds of millions of dollars in increased profits.

Many people want the pipeline delayed because of the damage to native peoples which hasty construction would cause. How many realize that it will bring heavy burdens to southern Canadians too? Have the oil companies pointed out that even Atlantic Canada, which will never use the energy the pipeline carries, not even to light a single 60 watt bulb, will pay and pay dearly for the pipeline? We will pay higher energy prices, fewer jobs, higher taxes, and increased inflation. Can we afford the blessing of the pipeline?

WINDFALL PROFITS

The pipeline will take money from our pockets in several ways. Since northern energy is very expensive, the government must guarantee higher fuel prices to cover the costs—close to double the current Canadian price. But that higher price is not on just the new, northern energy, it's on *all* oil and gas. The National Energy Board (NEB) apparently is willing to give the oil companies huge windfall profits on their cheap southern reserves by letting them increase their prices for *all* their energy! Up goes *your* fuel and electric bill.

The oil companies are also asking for the federal government to cover unbudgeted costs. Given the unique difficulties of northern construction, these unbudgeted costs may be in the billions of dollars. The people of Atlantic Canada will have to pay their share of the taxes to cover these costs.

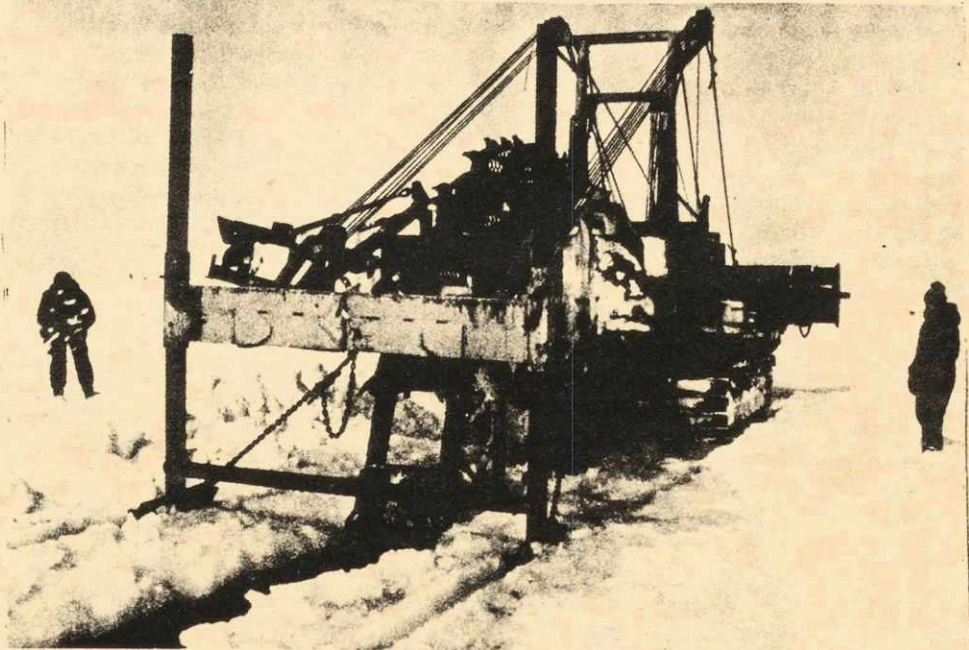
But it's going to be hard for us to pay those taxes, since we will experience higher unemployment because of the pipeline. Impossible? After all Sydney Steel may get some orders out of the pipeline and why should anyone else suffer in the Atlantic provinces? The reason is that the oil companies will bring foreign funds to Canada to finance the pipeline (and maintain control over it). Those foreign funds must be converted to Canadian money and that process increases the demand for Canadian money. But when the demand goes up, so does the price, even for money itself.

Foreign investment for the pipeline will drive the Canadian exchange rate up. That will make Canadian exports more expensive and less competitive on world markets. It will then be harder to sell our fish and pulp and gypsum in the world market. If we can't sell our exports, that means unemployment. No one begrudges the workers at Sysco extra work, but don't kid

yourself that there won't be others who lose their jobs in other parts of the Atlantic economy.

Foreign financing of the pipeline also means an expansion of the Canadian money supply. An expanding money supply will fuel any inflationary fires in the economy. And these will exist since resources will have to be drawn from other uses to the pipeline construction. That means increasing prices for those resources, higher costs, and therefore higher product prices. So be prepared to pay more for the goods you buy.

Construction of the pipeline will mean higher prices and jobs in some parts of the economy and unemployment in other sectors. It will distort the economy, and when construction stops the economy will not be able to move back to its old



Development in the north: a trenching machine lays pipe in the ice. Steelworkers say a smaller-scale pipeline, built over a longer period of time, would cause less disruption for industry, and allow land claims to be settled.

shape. There will be an extended period of unemployment after completion.

Americans will benefit, not Canadians

It is Americans, not Canadians, who will benefit from the pipeline. American oil companies will get higher profits. American energy consumers will get a few more years' supply to support their energy habit. Canadians will get a lot of problems but very little energy from the pipeline. Despite what Gillespie and the oil companies claim we do not face an imminent energy shortage.

After all, the oil companies and the National Energy Board said in 1971 that we had 923 years' supply of oil and 392 years' supply of gas. That was when the oil companies wanted to increase their exports to the U.S. Now their position has changed, and so have the statistics. And, as usual, the NEB appears quite willing to accept those statistics, despite the obvious bias of the oil companies who supply them.

How reliable are the supply and demand estimates on which predictions of an energy crisis are based? Since it is in the companies' interest to export energy, no one is considering stopping exports, even though it is only our "excess" energy that we are supposed to be exporting. Since it is in the interest of the companies to slow down the rate of development of cheap southern supplies until the price has risen to cover the cost of northern energy, the NEB has not considered an increase in the output of southern energy.

Demand overestimated

While underestimating the southern supply of energy, the companies and NEB are overestimating the growth in demand. They are assuming demand will continue to grow at rates similar to those of the past, even though prices have climbed drastically in the last few years. They are assuming that people will continue to waste energy and that government policies will continue to encourage such waste. They are assuming that we will not develop rational policies of conservation of energy, of developing al-

ternative (renewable) sources of energy. They are assuming that OPEC' prices will continue to climb—despite the break-down in OPEC control and the predictions that international oil prices have peaked and may even begin declining.

The oil companies (and the banks) are using their political clout and massive advertising power to convince Canadians that an energy shortage is inevitable, unless the companies are given the profit and rights to exploit northern energy supplies. They already convinced the government. Are you convinced that Canadians—in the North, South and in the Atlantic—can bear the costs of this pipeline? Are you willing to let the oil companies and officials who created the problem resolve it this way? If not, you'd better write your M.P., the Prime Minister, Energy Minister, and tell them what you're thinking. Right now they're listening to the oil companies—who don't even vote! It's up to us to stop this disaster.

continued from page 4

organize community laundries and kitchens. However, a massive restructuring of household chores means also a large change in women's position within the family and the economy.

Paying women to do housework within the present structure would make women's traditional functions only more rigid.

Unlike work outside the home, a housewife's work is tied to her personal and sexual commitments. Women are taught that personal satisfaction can come through their own unique performance of household chores, and so women become vulnerable to advertising urging them to keep searching for that sweeter-smelling furniture polish and that ever more exotic recipe for meat loaf. That finally finished set of chores, and the thunder of external praise to go with it, is one of our culture's great myths; the very structure of housework destined this goal to be always sought and never caught.

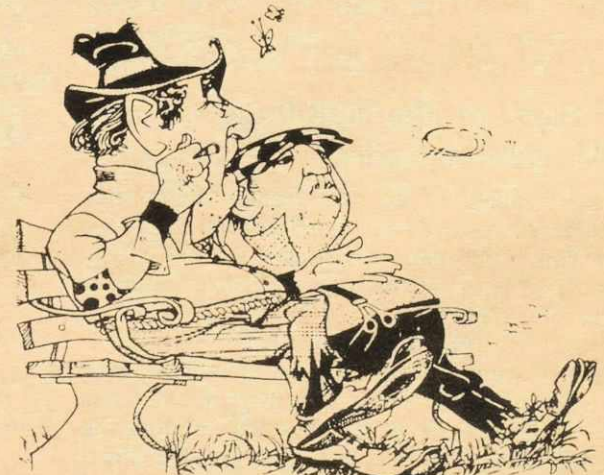
Women's position at home has been explained as an extension of women's natural, even mystical ability to cope with housework, to be wonderfully creative at it. This is largely

because women's natural ability to bear children has been redefined as women's natural ability also to wash a baby's bottom, the floor the child crawls on and the dishes the child eats from. Women, whether they work outside the home or not are given inevitable and ultimate responsibility for housework.

Wages for housework, however, would not help most women change their lives. It might create some financial independence and flexibility for certain women, especially those whose husbands' income is already adequate for daily needs. Most women would put wages for their housework back into family expenses. The total family income could increase, without the government bearing responsibility for the creation of more and better-paying jobs.

Meanwhile women at home would continue to work in isolation, missing a shared working experience and the challenge to their ideas and the mature support to change their lives which such daily contact outside the home often brings. A paid homemaker would be no less married to her house than an unpaid one is now.

Ultimately women must invent new roles for themselves, roles that don't tie the knot to the house tighter, but instead free them to get a divorce from centuries of sex-stereotyping.



"On the other hand, inflation don't erode the value of the money we ain't got."