

Counter conference

Energy is a moral question

The development of energy resources leads not only to political and economic questions but to moral questions as well, according to the speakers at Thursday night's Counter-Conference in Energy and Northern Development.

Dr. John Helliwell, dept. of economics, UBC, Neil Reimer, Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers, Bishop DeRoo, Bishop of Victoria, and John Olthius, Committee for Justice and Liberty (CJL) presided at the meeting held at Edmonton's First Presbyterian Church.

Bishop DeRoo thought the church had a role to play "in the authentic humanization of the northern development."

"I think there are real ethical questions involved because they determine the future of millions of Canadians," he said.

DeRoo told the audience that there were a multitude of questions involved "but it's almost as if the major decisions are already made and all that is left is to minimize friction as they are carried through."

"We know we do not have all the answers but we are coming upon some key questions and that, to me, indicates that we might come upon some better answers," he stated.

John Helliwell maintained that the predictions of Canada's energy demand by the National Energy board (NEB) revealed incorrect results and weak analysis.

What were once thought to be ample reserves in the Mackenzie Delta, says Helliwell, are now being continually revised downwards.

"If there's not really a very rich supply then there's a danger in early exploitation," he said.

As individual Canadians, Helliwell believed that our own behaviour in energy consumption can be modified via lower heating bills, different lifestyles and different industrial processes.

Canadians should pay the full environmental, conservation and social costs of energy, said Helliwell, so that we are conscious of its worth.

Applause greeted Neil Reimer when:

he stated that the development of oil and gas resources should involve the nationalization of the major oil companies.

Reimer also advocated the development of alternate sources of energy that would create more jobs than the oil and gas industry traditionally does.

Meanwhile, John Olthius of CJL said we should not be considering "how" to develop the northern energy resource but "if".

He proposed that the NEB adopt a new energy policy which would include:

- a substantial reduction in per capita increase in consumption
- solar energy
- honoring the wishes and land claims of natives
- the knowledge that the ecosystem wouldn't be harmed
- a system of royalties profiting the public more than the private sector
- stopping oil and gas exports to U.S.
- looking at energy prices below international prices for the developing countries..

Allmand denies federal decision

Indian Affairs and Northern Development Minister Warren Allmand has denied that the federal government has already made a decision to approve the Mackenzie Valley pipeline.

"Our options are open," he told a press conference in Edmonton. "We will hear input from the National Energy Board and the Berger Commission but the government will make up its own mind."

He said a government decision should be made on the matter within the next year.

A hint that perhaps the statement is not entirely accurate, however, was provided in a speech which Allmand delivered to a luncheon of the industry-sponsored conference on energy and northern development. "As regards pipeline construction in the north our most difficult task - and responsibility - is to gauge and ultimately cushion the social impacts of such a major project," he said.

Allmand acknowledged that at a time when all across Canada there is a growing awareness and sympathy for the emerging aspirations of northern peoples, there are also strong pressures to "get on with" major projects in the north. The basic question in northern development, he said, is how to pace resource development in such a way that it does not disturb unduly, or perhaps permanently, some very delicately balanced situations north of sixty - in both the natural environment and the life of the people living there. A key to the question is the potential of the northern frontier for oil and gas development at a time when all Canadians are concerned about future shortages, Allmand said.

He told the conference that the policy of the government, laid out in a February 1972, emphasizes the needs of people, living them priority over resource development. At the same time, the maintenance of the ecological balance has been recognized as essential.

The policy stresses the need to ensure equality of opportunity for all northern residents. Resource-related development, Allmand explained, is regarded as a means of strengthening the economy of the territories to both promote their self-reliance and to enhance their contribution to the national economy.

In addition, land use regulations call for a consultation with communities, interest groups and individuals whose interests are likely to be affected by specific land-use regulations, he claimed.

Mr. Allmand reminded his audience that Canadians are at the beginning of the year when the key decisions will be taken:

- whether and when to embark on the pipeline project
- when and how to respond to native claims
- what to do about foreseeable impacts on the environment, on communities, on the future of the state.

In a visit to Fairbanks Alaska where the Alyeska pipeline is nearing completion, Allmand said he had received a general impression that natives, pipeline people and municipal officers had weathered the experience to date and emerged optimistic about their future.

"I do not suggest that our Canadian answers will be identical with those that emerged in Alaska," he emphasized. "But I do suggest we have something to learn from them."

Natives want freedom

by Mary MacDonald

The native people of the north want northern development but with the freedom to run their own affairs, according to a SU forum, held in SUB Friday.

The forum's panel consisted of Wally Firth, MP for the Northwest Territories, Jim Arvalak of the Inuit Tapriisat (Eskimo brotherhood), and George Barnaby, vice-president of the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories.

"What we are struggling for is not just land claims or property," said Barnaby, "but the right to be self-reliant. We can't be responsible for protecting ourself and the land if we don't have control."

Barnaby said the northern people have their own culture and what they want is recognition of this - their right to protect their culture.

"Our people are made to fit into a system they do not understand," said Barnaby, "and thus they do not participate."

Many decisions concerning the north are made by outsiders in the name of progress maintained the Indian Brotherhood vice-president.

"For the government this is progress but for us it is anything else but. We are losing control over our way of life and responsibility," Barnaby said.

Wally Firth referred to northern development as the recognition of the claims of the people living in the North. When the north is under discussion, Firth said, the attitude is always an



SUB Forum on natives and the north.

Left to right: George Barnaby (Indian Brotherhood), Jim Arvalak (Inuit Tapriisat)

photo Mary MacDonald

exploitive one in which the north is referred to as a storehouse, "something to be used."

A Mackenzie Valley pipeline, said Firth, would be just the beginning of many other such ventures which could lead to pollution of the environment.

Before non-renewable energy sources are taken from the north, renewable resources such as hydro power and wood should be looked at.

In Old Crow, he explained, wood is used as the heating fuel for the school. This has created many jobs for firemen and woodcutters, he maintained. There is also a tremendous hydro-electric potential on Slave Lake and various other areas, he said, which could serve

as alternatives to gas and oil.

"First settle claims of the native peoples and give the native people control to decide," said Firth.

"Our philosophy of northern development is in terms of social and human development," stated Jim Arvalak. "If the government would cooperate with us we could help them with northern development and avoid the dangerous social implications."

Barnaby concluded: "We are fighting for future generations, to leave them something that will last."

"We are not selling out for our own benefit to save the land."

"We owe something to the children that follow us."

Energy alternatives should be examined

Energy; the supply and the shortage of it, the need for it, and the over-consumption of it, dominated the discussion of three panel members speaking in SUB Thursday.

Tom Chambers, (MLA Edmonton Calder), Mr. Nick Taylor, provincial leader of Liberals and Grant Notley, provincial NDP leader, formed the panel. The panel meeting was held in conjunction with the Citizens Counter-Conference on Energy and Northern Development that was held at Edmonton's First Presbyterian Church.

"Alberta is not short of energy," said Chambers. "We have ample supplies of oil, gas and coal to supply our own needs. However, the national level is an entirely different picture. And I don't think it's exaggerated to say that Alberta has most of Canada's energy resources."

"Canada is a cold country with vast areas and vast distances. So maybe it's

not unusual that Canadians have the highest per capita consumption of energy," said Chambers.

He suggested that the development of solar energy should be pursued but he doubted that the level of technology needed for this could be found soon enough.

"The only practical alternative is our Alberta oil sands and our coal reserves and I think we should be developing these as quickly as possible," he concluded.

Notley announced his support of a one-price policy for oil and gas in Canada.

He suggested that in regions of the country where the energy costs are severe such as in the Atlantic provinces, there should be some sort of compensation.

"It should be the role for the Alberta government to help alleviate the disparities in the Atlantic provinces," he asserted.

Furthermore, he said, if there is going to be a two-price system then there should be some type of trade-off for Alberta in terms of tariffs or freight rates.

Notley criticized the major oil companies whose after-tax revenue increased by 91 per cent but whose expenditures for oil and gas exploration increased by only 45 per cent.

Energy should be under public control, he said, "for no other reason than to set future priorities and to be able to place the proper emphasis."

Meanwhile, Nick Taylor said he would advise the native people in the north to let the pipeline go through because it would increase their bargaining power.

Once the south becomes dependent upon the supply of energy, said Taylor, then any threat to that supply will strengthen the bargaining position of the natives, not weaken it.