

OPINIONS

Hydro-Quebec threatens environment and community

By Greg Western

The people of Vermont know what it feels like to be victims of irresponsible action that takes place far away. Pollution produced in the mid-west falls as acid rain in Vermont. Understandably, this state does not feel that it should be sacrificed for the benefit of others. Yet some Vermonters are willing to sacrifice the well being of others for their own selfish purposes. There is a plan to devastate the land and people of northern Quebec to produce energy. Should Vermont support this plan? If we do, then we should tell the mid-west smoke stacks that they can dump as much acid rain on us as they please.

What is Hydro-Quebec?

Hydro-Quebec's James Bay Project Phase II, in northern Quebec, will be one of the largest hydroelectric projects in the world. On April 23 the Vermont Public Service Board will decide whether or not to sign a twenty year contract to buy electricity from Hydro-Quebec. Vermont's purchase would give Hydro-Quebec incentive to develop the James Bay Project Phase II.

Does Vermont need electricity from Quebec?

A study by the New England Energy Policy Council concludes that New England currently has more than enough electricity for future needs. The predicted levels of economic growth and personal comfort can be maintained while decreasing energy use through available methods.

Three electric utilities in the nation—Tampa electric, Public Service Electric & Gas Co. (NJ), and the Sacramento Municipal Utility District—have undertaken efficiency improvement programs which they predict will reduce by 50% their customers' demand for electricity in the next ten years. Through the use of better insulation and high-efficiency cooling and heating equipment, the Massachusetts State Transportation Building in Boston uses a million dollars less electricity per year than a comparably sized conventional office building.

The state of Maine has prohibited Central Maine Power from contracting power from Hydro-Quebec. Several Maine utility board commissioners stated that New England has a surplus of power.

Governor Kunin said last Friday when she spoke on campus that Vermont will implement efficient technology, and that the state's overall demand for energy will decline by ten percent by the year 2000. However, she said, this decline will take a few years and in the mean time Hydro-Quebec is the least destructive source of power. But Hydro-Quebec is very destructive. Vermont should not contribute to the destruction of a huge wilderness and an ancient culture just to get a few years of power.

What will happen if Hydro-Quebec Phase II is developed?

Eight major rivers will be dammed and diverted. This will flood an area the size of Vermont, Maine, and New York State combined—drowning and killing wildlife habitat and commercial forest land.

The Green House Effect will worsen. Trees which usually convert the green house gas Carbon Dioxide into Oxygen will be replaced by water.

In addition, the burning of forests before flooding, and the rotting of drowned plants, will release greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

Plants will not be able to reestablish themselves along the shores of the new lakes because of fluctuations in water level that result as water is selectively let out of the dams.

Fish living in the new lakes will be poisonous to eat. The lake water will leach naturally occurring mercury from the flooded soil. This mercury becomes concentrated in the food chain at toxic levels.

While the areas upstream from the dams will be flooded, the areas downstream will be denied water. Rivers will shrivel to ditches and support less life.

If Phase II is developed, every river that supplies the eastern side of James Bay will be dammed. The Bay will be denied water, and will lose nutrients carried by rivers. With these nutrients James Bay is currently

extremely productive, supporting large fish populations, rare fresh water seals, and even occasional whales.

Because the Bay is so rich in food, birds use it as a staging ground for their migrations. Most migration routes funnel through the Bay's shores. Without the nutrients of the rivers this richness would decline. Fewer birds would be able to find enough food to fuel their long flights. We would be accomplices to a new "Silent Spring."

Birds are not the only animal's whose migration will be disrupted. In 1984 10,000 Caribou were drowned when a dam upstream released a sudden flood of water.

What do people living in Quebec think?

The Cree and Inuit of Quebec will lose their means of livelihood and source of food (hunting, trapping, and fishing) as well as their homes. In exchange they will be given relocation

settlements where they will be allowed to live with no jobs, poor food, and declining health.

The Cree and Inuit, though equal citizens of Quebec, have been given no say in the future of their land. They have been denied information, even about Hydro projects. The government ignores their rights. After the development of Phase I of the James Bay Project the Cree and Inuit sued the government of Quebec and made any further development contingent on their approval. But the government has chosen to disregard this in planning Phase II.

What they say...

Chris Dutton of Green Mountain Power says Hydro-Quebec is "very cheap, very reliable, and very attractive."

Hydro-Quebec has already killed thousands of square miles of land and water. CALL THAT CHEAP!?!?

Because Hydro-Quebec was seriously in debt, they laid off many

workers. This resulted in a deterioration of transmission lines and other equipment. A billion dollars in repairs is needed to correct this damage. Quebec suffered 19,000 power outages between January and November of 1988. Between April 1988 and April 1989 the whole province was totally blacked out three times and had to buy power from Vermont! CALL THAT RELIABLE!?!?

Former Canadian Energy Minister Charles Caccia recently toured James Bay and described it as a "Pornography of power." CALL THAT ATTRACTIVE!?!?

What do you say?

Middlebury students are presenting a petition to Governor Kunin and Public Service Board to express our opposition to contracting for power from Hydro-Quebec. There are copies of this petition in the mail room and the dining halls if you want to sign one.

Why no Islam on Middlebury curriculum?

By Junaid Jafar

Islam is one of the most misunderstood of world religions in the West. It is therefore a dilemma for me to see no courses here in the curriculum on Islam. I had always been aware of this fact, yet an incident that occurred a few weeks ago concerned me. Conversing about religion with a friend, the discussion led him to ask me what was the difference between Allah and God. I realized then that he, along with others on this campus, did not know that both were different names for the same Entity.

Considering the contemporary Islamic world and the issues that it raises, it is a wonder why an institution of such high repute has no courses on

Islam. Christianity, Judaism, Taoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism are all on the curriculum and taught in more than one course. However, not a single course is fully orientated to teaching and explaining the Islamic tradition, philosophy and way of life. The Rushdie Affair, the hostages in Lebanon, the militancy of Iran, the revival of Islam in Soviet Central Asia, and the Palestine conflict are but a few of the issues broadcasted by the media almost daily. To fully understand these incidents it is essential to understand the common denominator behind them.

Islam arose in the sixth century A.D., and spread with lightning speed across the then known world. In just

two hundred years the Muslim Empire spread from Southern France in the west, to the islands of Malaysia and Indonesia in the east. For the next thousand years, Islam remained unparalleled in its world power, culture, scientific knowledge, and affluence. In the late fourteenth century, Christendom brought an end to seven centuries of Muslim rule in the Iberian Peninsula. Two centuries later with the rise in power, Europe was able to subjugate and colonize much of the Muslim World. Since then, it has gone through changes of momentous significance with varied results.

The discovery of oil and the emergence of the Middle Eastern

Arab country as an economic power, brought with it the image of the sheikh flaunting his wealth. Turmoil in the Levant conjured up images of hooligans with checkered scarves waving their AK-47's. The Gulf War was associated with zealots and religious fanatics, who viewed women as second class citizens. These images, however, are only a stereotype of the Muslim world. In reality, the 900 million Muslims around the world (at least one out of every six persons is a Muslim) live a very different life.

To fully understand this way of life and the change and development that is occurring in the Muslim world, I hope that not too far in the future, courses on Islam will be on the curriculum.

