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The Newsletter of the Ecology Action Centre

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No. 2

CANSO

Following the announcement of a 200,000 barrel per day oil refinery to be built by Shaheen Natural Resources Co. in the Strait of Canso, there was much apprehension on the part of the general public and local municipal leaders that this type of development was not going to be what they wanted. This apprehension was restricted to an apparent concern for the local environment and calls went out for the government to conduct environmental impact studies - something which they blatantly admitted they had not considered doing.

Citizen Response

Since this initial flurry of activity, vocal opposition has died down somewhat. Mr. Regan has said that environmental studies will be completed prior to announcing any more refineries in the area, and it appears as if the Shaheen refinery is at least financially committed to pollution control. In the meantime, some people have had a chance to organize:

- A group of professors at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish have formed the Strait Area Interdisciplinary Research Association to study the local effects of past and future development.
- A group of St. F.X. students have received an O.F.Y. grant to conduct an environmental impact study of development.
- When government expropriated 14,000 acres of land, affecting about 70 residents, the residents formed the Melford Property Owners Association and hired a lawyer to negotiate a financial settlement for them.
- Initially, the municipal leaders of the area united to confront the provincial government with questions about the development, but were silenced after a closed meeting with Premier Regan.

This activity points out some of the obvious failings of the provincial government. Their lack of response to legitimate questions and concerns of people in the area has led to the waste of a lot of human energy. Mr. Regan's name calling has generated a cloud of suspicion and mistrust which has gone a long way toward obscuring some of the more basic issues behind

Canso development - issues which are just now beginning to be identified.

As Linden MacIntyre, a staff reporter for the Chronicle Herald, said in a recent article:

"We have not defined the needs of the Strait area and we have defined the potential of the Strait only in general and extravagant terms. We are now committed to a half-billion dollar industrial cure for social and economic ills that haven't even been identified. Perhaps it is time now that the country's political and economic surgeons take time for a diagnosis of their patient's ills."

Lack of Planning

Unfortunately, it may be too late for the type of diagnosis required, as current developments in the Strait may be making a bad situation worse. The longer term economic implications (beyond simply the absolute number of jobs); the effect on Nova Scotia's potential for oil and gas development; the effect on this region's manufacturing ability; the effect on Canada's national energy policy.... Such questions go far beyond simple environmental implications.

And yet, the people of the Strait area may very shortly be committed to what Mr. MacIntyre calls "a life style many of them can't visualize, and, in the final analysis, don't want." Perhaps it is time to demand a moratorium on the heavy industrial boom that the government is planning until they can answer some of these most basic questions to the public's satisfaction, and until they can demonstrate that this, above all other forms of economic, social and environmental development will lead the present and future populations of the province toward the quality of life which they expect.

Public Forum

Tentative plans have been discussed for a public forum on some of these questions to be held near the end of June. It will take place in the Strait area and will include members of government, industry, and members of the general public. The details should be settled shortly and we will keep people informed of what occurs through newsletters.

We also intend to produce information from a variety of sources on the issues of Canso development to promote public debate. If you want to receive these information packets, give us your name and address (unless you're a member of the Centre in which case you'll receive the material automatically) and we'll put you on our mailing list.

Membership-Publications

E. A. C. publications and further information on topics mentioned in this newsletter can be obtained by contacting the Ecology Action Centre, Forrest Building, Dalhousie University, Halifax N.S. You can receive the publications listed on the right by checking them off, clipping out this form and sending it to us. Publications are free unless otherwise specified.

Much of our literature is sent automatically to our members. Our membership list helps give us an idea of the support we have; and membership fees help pay our expenses for supplies, printing, mailing etc. You can become a member of the Ecology Action Centre by checking the appropriate box on the right and sending \$2.00 to the above address.

ENERGY FORUM TRANSCRIPT, copies of speeches delivered April 16, 1973, by Premier Regan, Eric Kierans, Mel Watkins, David Furlong and Roland Harrison the issue of energy resources in N.S. and Canada.

POLICY STATEMENT on the nuclear power installation proposed for Stoddard Island.

INFORMATION PACKET (No. 1) on nuclear power.

STRAIT OF CANSO DEVELOPMENT - general information as it becomes available.

"KEEP IT CLEAN", a manual for the preservation of the cottage environment (Pollution Probe, Toronto)

"RECYCLING!", complete questions and answers on present and potential recycling practices in the Halifax-Dartmouth area.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION KIT for teachers of grades 4, 5 & 6 (80 pages) - \$2.00.

MEMBERSHIP - \$2.00.

Name _____

Address _____

Recycling

About 200,000 tons of material were wasted in Halifax - Dartmouth last year - one ton for every resident.

Most of this material was turned into troublesome and unhealthy air pollution. The Halifax incinerator is one of the region's ten worst sources of air pollution. Residents in the city's north end have complained about dirt on their clothing and houses, caused by the incinerator, since it began operation in 1960.

The remainder of our trash was buried. The Halifax dump is a notoriously ugly scar on the shore of the Bedford Basin, as well as a major source of chemical and organic pollution in the Basin. The Dartmouth incinerator and the dump where its residue is buried are polluters as well, on a smaller scale.

These problems, similar to those found in cities across North America, can and must be eliminated. Instead they increase - in the ten years from 1960 to 1970, the volume of material incinerated in Halifax doubled.

Local Government Steps

Recycling can be a part of the solution. The Recycling Committee will soon call on the cities of Halifax and Dartmouth, and the county of Halifax, to:

- a) publicly support recycling,
- b) investigate the magnetic separation of tin cans for recycling, (The more materials reclaimed, the less waste and pollution there will be. Extensive recycling is not now possible in Halifax-Dartmouth because there are no nearby companies ready to use most of the available material. However, the Ecology Action Centre has uncovered a potential market for tin cans in Amherst. Magnetic separation is now successfully carried on in over 20 American cities.)
- c) insist on stationary containing post-consumer recycled waste paper. (This simple step will help create "markets" across Canada for waste paper.)

EVENTS

ARBOUR DAY - June 1 - Schools and organizations throughout the province will commemorate Joseph Howe and our natural heritage by planting trees and flowers and cleaning up. Recycling information was included in the literature mailed out by the Nova Scotia Museum about the event.

SCHOOL RECYCLING - June - Two teachers are organizing a collection of disposable textbooks and other waste paper from Halifax schools.

DARTMOUTH PAPER DRIVE - June - A United Church is sponsoring a paper collection in an area of Dartmouth.

Book Box

The Ecology Action Centre is collecting used books for resale. Books can be dropped off at the Recycling Depot on Cogswell St., at the Ecology Action Centre office in the basement of the Forrest Building at Dal, or in the Book Boxes located in the Student Union Buildings at Dal and St. Mary's. Donations of all kinds of books are appreciated.

Dial-a-bus

DIAL - A - BUS: A system used to connect local communities to express transit routes. It entails a fleet of mini-buses each capable of seating 12 to 20 passengers.

A commuter leaves his/her address and time to be picked up with the fleet's dispatch office. In the morning a bus collects its passengers and carries them to the express bus terminal. In the evening the mini-buses collect their passengers at the terminal and return them to their homes.

Canada's first dial-a-bus system began in Bayridges, five miles from Toronto, in July, 1970. In this system, commuters are carried from their homes to the Go (train) Station which runs a service into the heart of Toronto.

Regina was the next Canadian city to pick up on this system - funded through a cost-sharing program with DREE and the Saskatchewan provincial government. That city's service

carries between 1,400 and 2,000 passengers a day. The service is taking \$120,000 OFF Regina's transit deficit each year. Fares for the complete trip are: adults - 35¢, students - 25¢ and children - 15¢.

The population of Regina is about 140,000 people, somewhat smaller than the Halifax-Dartmouth metropolitan region.

The Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MAPC) regional transit plan is suggesting that several dial - a - bus systems be introduced in the greater Halifax-Dartmouth region to be cost-shared with the municipalities, the province and the federal government. At the present time, MAPC is negotiating with DREE for funds for a demonstration dial-a-bus project to be established in the Northwest Arm area.

Dial-a-bus projects are not considered in the "Halifax Transit Proposal and Future Transportation" released by City staff last month.

City Hall's Case 'Against' Public Transit

Never Judge a Report By Its Cover

"Halifax Public Transit Proposal and Future Transportation" is the title of a document published last month by Halifax City staff. Apparently, the proposal is a response from the City to all the talk that's been going on about the need for a better public transit system in Halifax. From the report's cover, and from the tables and drawings inside showing monorails, special bus lanes and a clean, quiet, futuristic looking Halifax, you'd think the City had suddenly gone all-out in favour of public transit. Upon reading the proposal, however, the bias of the author becomes clear; it also becomes clear that the report tries its best to make a case against public transit - not for it.

Myth of Balance

The choice for Halifax according to the proposal is a "balanced transportation system" - one which would permit transit exclusive rights of way free of traffic congestion while the remaining traffic in cars, trucks, etc. would be left to contend with traffic congested streets. In theory, the system would result in a 25% to 30% transit usage for all non-pedestrian trips in the city. The trouble is, if you look closely at the report, you find out that what it actually recommends is that \$25 million - out of its entire \$35 million budget - be spent on building more roads and widening old ones.

It would seem from these figures alone that this "balanced transportation system" actually favours the construction of roads and is heavily weighted on the side of cars. But the whole idea of a "balanced transportation system" as it appears in the report is a meaningless and phoney concept in the first place. The very fact that the construction of new roads in the city is encouraged means that more city traffic will be the result. This defeats the whole purpose of public transit.

If a "balanced" system means that half of the trips will be made by car and half by bus, then we have a long way to go (right now over 80% of the trips in the city are made by car); if a "balanced" system means giving people a choice between cars and transit, then a real alternative to cars - one that is equally fast, efficient and comfortable - must be made available.

From the folks who brought you the Cogswell Interchange....

Roads and transit serve opposing interests and purposes. As long as cars are encouraged to flood the city, transit ridership will remain at its present low levels. No city can afford to pay for both a road and transit program if both are to reach a reasonable level of efficiency. One of the most ridiculous and telling aspects of the Halifax Transit Proposal is that it was written by the Engineering and Works Department - not by Halifax Transit Corporation. It was written by people whose job it is to build highways, not people whose job it is to provide transit.

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CARS vs ENVIRONMENT

The citizens of the greater Halifax-Dartmouth region should be provided with a real alternative to the private automobile in order to meet their transportation needs within the urban framework. We believe that the City has been dominated for too long by the private automobile, and that for the following five environmental reasons, the present situation should be changed. To quote Ontario's premier Bill Davis, "The city belongs to the people."

1) The private automobile puts far too great a demand on the city's valuable land space both for the construction and widening of streets and for parking. Further land is devoted to garages, car lots and traffic signs. Halifax devotes 20% of its land space to streets while only 12% is devoted to parks (even this 12% "park" land includes schools and school parking lots).

2) Car exhaust accounts for the highest percentage of air pollution in cities. Other cities have reached such dangerous levels of air pollution that they are now taking steps to place a partial, and in some cases complete, ban on the car within the downtown. Other cities in Canada which, like Halifax, have not yet reached the levels of smog ridden Los Angeles, are now taking measures (like banning the car in certain areas) to ensure that that problem never arises.

3) The world's crude oil reserves are diminishing at an increasingly rapid rate. Petroleum resources cannot be renewed once they are gone. Since public transit is 24 times more efficient than the urban auto in terms of passenger miles per gallon of fuel, citizens should be thinking more and more in terms of riding public transit, and cities should be thinking more and more in terms of providing it.

4) The same argument is true concerning the resources used in the construction of the automobile. While about 2,800 lbs. are used in a car's construction (average passenger occupancy - 14), a bus contains about 360 lbs. of material for each of its 40 passengers.

5) One final consideration rests with the fact that over 5,000 Canadians are killed each year in automobile accidents. For Canadians 34 years and under, the automobile is the greatest single cause of death.

The above points are not the only arguments against the use of automobiles in the city, and they are not necessarily the most important ones. Equally important are the effects on people of the constant noise generated by city traffic, the destruction of homes and neighbourhoods to make way for freeways, and the degeneration of city living conditions caused in part by the automobile.



What the proposal calls for

"The proposal calls for a skeleton network of trunkline express bus routes operating at high frequencies between major destinations on the Halifax peninsula, and park and ride lots on the periphery of the city and at centres of concentrated population."

The main innovation proposed is a "line haul" system - i.e. a special rapid bus loop connecting the city's major activity generators. The buses are to run on transit-only lanes, and the proposal devotes much of its time to a discussion of the special transit lane idea. But while transit lanes are a good concept as a time saving device, they are far from necessary 24 hours a day. Transit-only lanes are needed only during the two rush hour periods, from 8:00 to 9:30 am and from 4:30 to 6:00 pm. With this in mind, contra-flow lanes become much more reasonable than specially built EXTRA lanes for transit, especially in terms of construction costs. (Contra-flow lanes: during the morning rush hours one outbound lane would be converted into an inbound lane for buses only; during the evening hours, the situation would be reversed.)

Demolition in Spryfield

One of the roads slated for widening for transit lanes in the proposal is the Herring Cove Road. This would mean:

- a) a large number of homes would have to be destroyed to permit construction of the additional lanes
- b) buses would still not go very fast because of tie-ups at the rotary and the frequency of stops along the Herring Cove Road itself.

Instead of using this route, transit lanes could more easily be built into the design of Dunbrack Street which would pass adjacent to a Spryfield bus terminal. Express buses could then be fed by a dial-a-bus system. This alternative, which is suggested in the MAPC transit study, makes sense for a number of reasons:

- Transit lanes can be provided without the destruction of any homes,
- use of the Springvale by-pass would overcome the congestion problems that a bus would encounter at the rotary,
- dial-a-bus would provide a more acceptable pick-up service to residents, and
- use of Dunbrack Street for transit from Spryfield would open up the possibility of an express bus from Spryfield directly to Bedford as these two communities grow.

It is almost as if the City's proposal deliberately chooses the most destructive and least effective route in order to make public transit seem less appealing.

'Friendly neighbourhood chauffeurs'

The proposal does not seriously consider the need for an efficient local collector service. The proposal mentions the need for transporting people in neighbourhoods to the line-haul system, but ends up by saying:

"Since the local service is the most costly, perhaps the public can be encouraged to find their own ingenious ways of getting to the "line-haul network" - car pooling, friendly neighbourhood chauffeurs, taxi, etc."

If you find this attitude to be regressive, isolating and contrary to the expressed purpose of encouraging public transit, you're not alone. If a city that

can afford millions upon millions of dollars for an expanded highway system can't come up with an "ingenious" method of getting people to buses, how are individual citizens, who are dependent on public transit, to arrive at such ingenious solutions themselves? The quote assumes that all citizens have equal access to private transportation. What about the poor, the young and the old?

Conceived in a vacuum

The biggest flaw in the Halifax Public Transit Proposal is that it confines itself mainly to the Halifax City limits. As a result, it is unable to deal with the existing problems of no link up, divers fares, inadequate service, and the uneconomical competition of the bus lines with one another.

The two ferries between Halifax and Dartmouth have the capacity to carry 1.3 million persons annually. With the addition of two more ferries, the system has the potential of carrying 6.75 million persons annually. But this form of transit will continue to operate below capacity unless it can be hooked up to the bus routes at both transfer points. Such a link up would be contingent upon agreement among the Halifax Transit Corporation, Dartmouth Transit (privately owned) and the Dartmouth ferries run by the City of Dartmouth.

A person travelling between Halifax and Dartmouth could conceivably pay as many as four fares - 3 different bus lines and the ferry. Since there is no transfer option between the various types of transit, it is often more economical to use a car than to use public transit. The cost of this poor planning falls back on the taxpayer, who is subsidizing the continuing construction of highways for the vast number of people who find it more practical to drive their cars. This also means that increased percentages of the small Halifax Central Business District (CBD) will be turned into parking space.

Regional Authority

The lack of a regional transit authority gives rise to uneconomical and unnecessary competition between bus lines. In the Kearney Lake area, Halifax Transit Corporation cut its service after finding it unfeasible to compete with Acadian Lines. The residents now have only Acadian Lines, and they pay higher fares than they would if Halifax Transit were operating in the area. The people who are subjected to these higher rates also pay taxes which subsidize the publicly owned system.

The Halifax Transit Proposal doesn't even begin to solve the problems of a fragmented transportation system. It recognizes the need for regional improvements but it is unable to make concrete proposals. For instance, it suggests the construction of a Mill Cove Terminal park and ride facility to service the Bedford - Sackville area, but because it would be outside Halifax, the proposal contains no discussion of who might finance the building.

The Halifax Transit Proposal cannot effectively deal with most of these problems since they do not lie within its jurisdiction. Because transportation plans are limited to the city area, the proposal is not always able to suggest the most efficient transit alternatives and is bound to give a falacious view of the type of transportation system needed.

Increasing the role of public transit and decreasing the number of cars in the city is an important worth while goal. And certainly, some of the things in the Halifax Transit Proposal will help in improving transit. Many, although probably not all of the proposal's deficiencies will be corrected by the MAPC regional plan, scheduled for release soon. What is needed is a comprehensive review of both reports. Then the best aspects of each, with perhaps a few additional improvements, could be incorporated into a single detailed regional plan.

When the "Halifax Transit Proposal and Future Transportation" was received by council early in April, a series of public sessions for discussion of the proposal was also agreed upon. As of this writing, no day has been set for any such meetings.