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FINE PRINT

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December 11, 1973 No. 4

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TRANSIT BREAKTHROUGH

YES FOLKS, CONTRARY TO POPULAR BELIEF, THE PEOPLE CAN WIN OCCASIONALLY.

The people in question live in the Carson Street housing development, located just past Spryfield along the Herring Cove Road. They number 1,530 - 330 adults, 600 school-age children, and 600 day-care children.

The closest supermarket, medical facilities, and laundromat are over one mile from Carson Street; schools are spread out over a radius of five miles. Since cars are not in great abundance in the development, and taxis are viewed as an impossible luxury, public transit is heavily relied on to meet peoples' transportation needs.

Inadequate Service

The development's existing bus service goes only as far as the bottom of Carson Street; from there, the people must walk one-quarter of a mile up a steep hill, carrying groceries, laundry, and babies.

On Oct. 9, 1973, the Carson Street residents submitted a petition to the Halifax Transit Authority under Section 16, Chapter 94 of the Statutes of Nova Scotia, entitled "An Act to Incorporate the Halifax Transit Corporation". The petition request was simply to re-route the existing Herring Cove Rd. bus, so that it would enter the Carson Street development, instead of stopping at the bottom of the hill.

Residents Convince Transit Authority

On Nov. 6, 1973, the Carson Street people invited Thomas McKim, general manager of Halifax Transit, and Darryl Wentzell, alderman for the area, to a public meeting to discuss the matter. At the outset of the meeting, it appeared that the petition received a negative response from the Halifax Transit Authority. As the evening wore on however, and as person after person arose to cite the real need for better bus service, Mr. McKim's position seemed to change. A committee of four Carson Street residents was selected to look into certain questions about the re-routing, e.g. is there sufficient turning space for the bus in the development?

On Nov. 20, the newly formed committee reported to Thomas McKim that it had found no reason that the bus could not be re-routed. Mr. McKim stated that he had yet to meet with the Board of Directors of the Halifax Transit Corporation, but that a meeting would be convened by the end of the first week of December. He also stated that, to his mind, he could see no reason why the bus service could not be extended into the Carson Street development, probably by mid-December.

A Right to Transit

So you see, it appears that a victory has been won. But why have not other petitions submitted to the Transit Authority by Halifax communities met with similar results? It is our belief that these petitioners were not aware of their rights, that they did not use the Halifax Transit Act, and that therefore the Halifax Transit Authority did not feel obliged to provide the requested service.

Extra service costs money, money allotted by City Council. Council has not yet accepted the fact that public transit is a necessary public service. Hence, the transit system is allotted a very limited annual budget.

The situation must change, and it can change, if the various Halifax communities which want better transit service submit petitions using the Halifax Transit Act, and if they call public meeting after public meeting. Then, perhaps, City Council will realize that, YES, the people of Halifax do want a viable transit system, and that, NO, they do not want more roads and bridges.

APOLOGIES FOR DELAY

The last newsletter - Fine Print #3, came out on July 25. The past four months have been very busy - with the Quinpool Road appeal and the 4th Estate supplement. In the future, we hope to be more regular.

A NUCLEAR POWER PLANT FOR NOVA SCOTIA ?

Stoddard Island is a name that has become increasingly more familiar to concerned Nova Scotians in the last year and a half. It is situated in the richest lobster fishing district in Nova Scotia, some 180 miles southwest of Halifax. This fishery, along with seaweed extraction industries, comprises the economic base of the region. But the basis of Stoddard Island's growing fame lies not in its lobsters, but rather in its possible future as the site of a giant nuclear power plant.

World's Biggest

With a projected capacity of 12,000 megawatts, the Stoddard Island nuclear power plant would be the world's largest, generating the equivalent of one-quarter of Canada's total output of electricity. Outsizing the controversial James Bay hydro project by approximately 4,000 megawatts, the Stoddard Island project represents one of the most reckless and dangerous energy schemes being flirted with in Canada today. Neither federal or provincial agencies have as yet acted decisively on the plan. Withholding outright approval, but showing no determination to reject the proposal, the two levels of government have left a concerned public in the dark.

Few Jobs Provided

Nuclear power plants provide few jobs to local populations. Shelburne County would, no doubt, experience accelerated economic activity during the construction phase of a Stoddard Island installation. But enormous physical and social disruption would have to be suffered in a region with a well established way of life. In addition, the rich lobster fishery in the area would run the risk of being compromised by the daily discharge of millions of gallons of hot water from the reactor complex.

Safety Questions

A nuclear power installation on Stoddard Island would pose an unprecedented threat to our Nova Scotian environment. The safety of current "allowable radiation emissions" from nuclear power plants has been questioned by an acknowledged body of scientific opinion in North America. The Emergency Core-Cooling System, the last line of defense against a major reactor accident, has been shown to be unreliable in light water reactors, the type proposed for Stoddard Island. Problems of monitoring, transporting, and storing tons of radioactive wastes remain unresolved. The Achilles' heel of the nuclear power community is disposal. No means of storage has yet been developed which can outlast the potency of radioactive wastes, some of which are "alive" for thousands of years.

Energy for Export

The electricity generated by the ten reactor complex on Stoddard Island would be transmitted by underwater cable to New England. Nova Scotians are being asked to provide a home to a development which is currently unacceptable to the American public. Our geography is to be used by an American firm for American energy consumption at high risks for Nova Scotia.

Opposition Mounting

Meanwhile, the proposal has become the subject of heated public debate. Nuclear power proponents, fond of predicting that fission-powered plants will capture the public imagination, have found, rather embarrassingly, that the prospect of a nuclear power plant on Stoddard Island sticks uncomfortably in the public craw. The local reaction to the proposal has been consistently unfavourable:

1. The Municipal Council of Barrington passed a resolution this spring voicing their opposition to the project.

2. The local Fishermen's Association, representing some 6,000 fishermen, have gone on record as categorically opposing consideration of the proposal.

3. On Oct. 11 of this year, a public meeting in Barrington saw the formation of a committee of residents from the three counties in southwestern Nova Scotia. The organization, called the South Shore Environmental Protection Association, will actively press for a strong government stand against the project.

4. The Nova Scotia Resources Council has expressed concern over the lack of public information available on the project.

Public Pressure Effective

Any decision on the Stoddard Island scheme is an important one and must be made by a well-informed and involved public. For months, the Regan government took a jaundiced view of any discussion of the Stoddard Island proposal. It is only recently that the premier, in a belated response to public pressure, has guaranteed that public consultation on any renewed Stoddard Island negotiations would take place. Regan's concession, while somewhat muted, must nevertheless be seen as an outcome of the public's determination to involve themselves in projects which affect their human and natural environment.

NUCLEAR POWER FORUM

On Wednesday, Nov. 28, a public forum on nuclear power was held at the McInnes Room of the Dalhousie Student Union Building. The forum, organized by the Ecology Action Centre, the Dalhousie Student Union, and the St. Mary's Speakers Committee, was a response to the widespread public controversy under way in the province concerning the pros and cons of developing nuclear power.

On hand to debate the issue before a crowd of close to 400 were Robert J. Phinney, author of a handbook on nuclear power, Dr. Henry Kendall, a nuclear physicist from M.I.T., G. C. Baker, a nuclear power advocate from Kentville, and Dr. J. E. Blanchard, president of the Nova Scotia Research Foundation.

A transcript of the panel discussion will be published, and copies will be available free of charge from the Ecology Action Centre in January.

NON-RESIDENT LAND OWNERSHIP

As the world population grows, land becomes scarcer and great pressures are placed on our food supply, recreational facilities, environmental safety, and life-styles. It is therefore essential that the government become involved in the usage of this resource.

The public hearings, recently held in Halifax, Yarmouth, and Sydney on non-resident ownership of land emphasized that the major area of concern should be land use rather than land ownership. Without land use and maintenance controls, ownership restrictions would be of little benefit to Nova Scotians.

Higher Taxes for Farmers

Non-residents using land for recreational purposes are often willing to pay higher prices for land than Nova Scotian farmers. The rise in market values of land is reflected through the property assessment system in a greatly increased tax burden. The result is that many marginal farm-forest-fisheries families are forced to sell their property.

These farmers should be protected, particularly since Nova Scotia is not richly endowed with prime farmland. In terms of meeting its own food requirements, it is a deficient province. Agricultural production must be preserved and maintained.

Recreational Land Use

Equally as important is the need to preserve our limited land resources such as beaches, forests, scenic regions, camping and wildlife areas. The prospect of the subdivision of the shoreline into densely populated cottage developments is a major point of concern. Cottages with inadequate effluent disposal facilities could destroy our shore. Uncontrolled urban-industrial developments pose the same problem. Dredging and the removal of sand and gravel from beaches also can have serious consequences for the recreational use of our shoreland resources.

Legislative Action Needed

The Ecology Action Centre, in its brief presented at the Halifax public hearing, recommended that the government:

1. define non-resident to mean any person who resides outside the province for a period of 6 months or more in any given year.
2. place a ceiling on the amount of prime recreational land which can be acquired by non-residents, and designate points of public access to privately-owned shoreland areas.
3. establish a tax system whereby properties are assessed on a uniform basis; but owners who are permanent residents would be eligible to claim a "homesteaders' exemption".
4. impose a minimum maintenance requirement on all non-residents, in order to stimulate a more productive use of land with positive benefits to both the economy and landscape of the province.
5. establish a Provincial Land Commission which would set up and regulate reserves of agricultural, green belt, and shore land. Thus agricultural land would be restricted to farm use.

These are possible solutions to the problems of non-resident ownership and land use. The government must take a stand on the issue now, before it is too late. The public hearings were a start, but legislative action is needed soon.

FINE PRINT is meant to inform people of what the Ecology Action Centre is doing, of the publications and information available through EAC, and of events of environmental significance throughout the province. You can have FINE PRINT sent to you free by writing or calling the Ecology Action Centre and asking to be put on our mailing list, or by becoming a member of the Ecology Action Centre.

RECYCLING STUDY DELAYED

In mid-summer, the Ecology Action Centre approached DREE with respect to bringing a recycling industry to Halifax. The federal agency followed up on the idea, and since then, a number of firms from across Canada have indicated strong interest in locating in Halifax-Dartmouth. Pending the results of a study to explore the economic feasibility of establishing a reclamation plant, Metro may have much of its garbage reduced substantially within a couple of years. Thus much of the paper, glass, and metal from our solid waste would be converted into material for new products.

Delay Costly

The possibility of a recycling plant is exciting news for all those concerned about reducing both our burgeoning solid waste stream and our frightening rate of resource depletion. However, large-scale recycling may never become a reality in Halifax because the feasibility study has been delayed many times. Not only has the study not yet begun, but its terms of reference have not even been definitely established. The delay may prove costly. The firm which demonstrated the greatest interest in locating in Halifax has guaranteed markets for its reclaimed waste, and the delay may cause them to look to another municipality.

The Ecology Action Centre is continuing to press MAPC and the Tri-level Committee responsible for authorizing the feasibility study.

JOIN

If you would like to continue to receive this newsletter and other publications, and if you would like to show your support of the Ecology Action Centre, become a member by sending \$2.00 and your name and address to:

Ecology Action Centre,
Forrest Building,
Dalhousie University,
Halifax, N.S.

QUINPOOL ROAD AGAIN

The Quinpool Road Development is back in the news. The disappointing decision of the Planning Appeal Board sparked citizens of the area to seek a way to have the project reconsidered by our municipal politicians.

The problems of spill-over traffic from the development are of great concern particularly to the residents south of Quinpool Road. A group of these people south of Quinpool Rd. drew up and circulated a petition which protested the increases in traffic in their area. This petition gathered 1,058 signatures, and was presented to Council on October 11.

At the same time, a second group of residents from both the south and north sides of Quinpool Road, became aware of the consequences of a project of this magnitude. While these people were not opposed to the development in itself, they felt that it must be scaled down if the quality of life in their neighbourhood is to be preserved.

Residents Take Legal Action

Luckily for the residents of the area, it appears as if there is some question about the procedure that the city followed when it authorized the granting of a development to Centennial Properties on May 17. Two local residents, S.L. Richard of Lawrence St. and Paul Brodie of Jubilee Road have given the city notice of their intention to go to court over the matter.

If the court decides that the decision was made improperly, the city will be required to go through correct procedure before a development permit is authorized. The important point is that the project will be reconsidered. Council and citizens will be able to judge the project on the facts, many of which have been revealed since Council made its May 17th decision.



DEPOT NEWS

The depot for waste paper continues to operate every Saturday from 10 AM to 4 PM at the Trade Mart on Brunswick Street. Citizen support from the Halifax-Dartmouth area is still growing. There are possibilities that a second depot may be set up to operate in Dartmouth.

New Project

During the past few weeks, the Recycling Committee has begun a project that will increase public awareness of, and involvement in the depot. Members of the Recycling Committee are making presentations to junior and senior high school classes on the topic of recycling. It is hoped that the students of these classes, or other environmentally-conscious groups, will operate the depot for four or five Saturdays. By doing so, the students will become (a) more aware of the general need for extensive recycling, and (b) active participants in the operation of the depot.

The first school class approached was from Sidney Stephen Junior High, and they operated the depot for the month of October.

Interested students and teachers are asked to contact the Ecology Action Centre (422-4311).

NON-REFILLABLE BEVERAGE CONTAINERS

On Aug. 7, the Recycling Committee submitted a brief on non-refillable beverage containers to a meeting of the Maritime Ministers of the Environment. Thus far, no decision has been announced by any of the Maritime governments concerning future legislation. The Minister of the Environment, for Nova Scotia, Glen Bagnell, stated in mid-October that no legislation will be presented on non-refillables in the next session of the Legislature.

Dairy Milks Public

While the Department of the Environment hesitates, Twin Cities Dairy Ltd. has announced a decision to phase out refillable milk bottles. Over the next seven months, Twin Cities plans to completely withdraw glass bottles from all home delivery routes in Halifax-Dartmouth.

The refillable beverage container system makes an important contribution to reducing garbage to our municipal dumps (currently milk cartons in Metro account for about 800 tons annually) and contributes to air pollution as a result of incineration at the dump. For every refillable bottle which is withdrawn, 20-35 cartons will unnecessarily take its place in the garbage stream.

A return to refillables would eliminate an unnecessary wastage of resources and energy, and provide savings for consumers. Pollution Probe in Toronto estimates that Ontario consumers annually save \$7.2 million by purchasing refillable milk containers. In addition, more employment would be created, since refillable systems rely heavily upon manpower rather than technology.

Opposition Begun

A first step toward solving N.S.'s litter and solid waste problems should be a ban on those non-refillable beverage containers for which viable alternatives already exist. The Ecology Action Centre, in conjunction with the local Consumer's Association of Canada, has begun a campaign to oppose the phasing out of refillable containers for milk packaging. Until the provincial government brings in legislation, the citizens of Halifax-Dartmouth can show their disapproval of the Twin Cities Dairy's decision by writing letters to:

H.F. Curry,
General Manager,
Twin Cities Cooperative Dairy Ltd.,
2645 Windsor St.,
Halifax, N.S.

and
Hon. Glen Bagnell,
Minister of the Environment,
Province of Nova Scotia,
P.O. Box 456,
Halifax, N.S.

The Ecology Action Centre needs people to help in various types of jobs: helping to run the Recycling Depot; folding, stapling, and distributing leaflets; sketches, photographs, paste-up, and other art work; mailing and telephoning. If you would like to help, please phone 422-4311.