

Judy Huntley, argument for CCWC, Mt Backus well and pipeline hearing

Sept-Oct 2007

### **“existing environment”**

In an appreciable number of its written responses to people’s written objections to this project (including Heather Taylor’s letters to Stan and Ann Judd, Sybille Manneschmidt, Sarah and Jonathan Spranza, Frances Riviere, and Ken Williams), Shell attempts to allay it’s neighbours’ concerns by saying that “the proposed project will not result in significant impacts on the existing environment.”

It is only possible to make this statement if what Shell is meaning is that cumulative impacts are of no interest to it. This large area, called the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem, is one of only two places in Western North America which is sufficiently ecologically intact for a reasonable continuity of species to exist across the Canada – US border.

The cumulative effects on this particular section of the Crown have been very large, and very rapid. Implying to the public that these impacts are of no concern is, in CCWC’s view, outrageous and unacceptable.

### **Quality of life**

Shell has engaged in many community activities and has employed many workers in this district. Yet “quality of life” continues to be a concern for the objectors.

One of CCWC’s members who works to improve the quality of life in our community, and who objects to this application, is Dr Sybille Manneschmidt, a psychologist who has worked in Afghanistan for the last several years and is now in Darfur. Another is Dr Cathy Scrimshaw, a local physician who has just received the Alberta Medical Association Medal for Distinguished Service.

It seems that Shell only responds to this concern in terms of dust, noise, and traffic issues. These are genuine concerns, and not mitigable, but our highest concern in this section is anxiety. We consider it to be obvious that most of the people who choose to live here do so because of their love of wild, beautiful, and healthy land: a peaceful place to live. Placing, or increasing, a burden of anxiety on them for the health of themselves, their families, their livestock, and the animals and plants which thrived on this land and should still thrive is not a small thing. The Board has a responsibility for these people’s well-being.

A number of CCWC members and their neighbours have been in distress or in danger from Shell’s mistakes. People in the district know about these unfortunate realities, and

their quality of life is diminished by anxiety resulting from current and potential activities from the gathering and processing of sour gas.

Some of these events were many years ago. Others are more recent.

Mr Tweedie and I were evacuated or excluded twice from our home near the confluence of Yarrow and Smith Creeks.

A family on the edge of Beaver Mines were near a leak that could have been disastrous.

People on Yarrow Creek learned about the spill into the creek only after workers in full protective gear crossed their place to test the creek.

James Tweedie had a serious encounter with leaked sour gas while hiking high up in Yarrow Creek near the boundary of Waterton Park. A young boy in the party was severely impacted, and other hikers less so. The people at Shell and at the EUB whom James contacted to report the event, which was real but had not apparently shown up on Shell's monitoring equipment, to were dismissive and remarkably rude.

A major snowstorm took out power sources which released H<sub>2</sub>S and came frighteningly close to a really major event.

A cow and calf were killed by a leak in the Screwdriver Creek valley, and the rancher riding out to check on them, being unaware that there had been a leak, was in danger of her life.

Individual cattle exposed to H<sub>2</sub>S and other problematic fractions of the gas stream are reported to respond differently to the same event. Livestock operators in the Lodgepole area said that after the long well burn they had to cull aggressively to find breeding stock that could survive if not fully thrive under the new conditions. Farmers near Sundre say they have to buy bulls from areas as polluted as their home place now is; otherwise the bulls cannot breed, or in some cases, even survive.

Some people in the Twin Butte area in the 1960s and 1970s were so physically effected by the emissions that they had to move away – a matter of “self culling”. This happened again a few years ago, even after many improvements had been made at the plant.

Chemicals used in processing gas at the plant have entered the ground water and spread far and wide through the ranches around.

Organic ranchers have been unable to get land near the plant certified.

Stories of the Main family's experiences are legion.

The stress on people who took part in ADR for this current application was severe.

This situation is not good. Stress and anxiety are not good things to impose on a community. Both the EUB and Shell must take responsibility to solve this problem.

### **Economic impact**

The Judds, Ms Riviere, Ms Ryan, Mr Tweedie, myself, and many, many other people, have made a living by sharing the wonders of this place with people from away, and doing so with the greatest possible joy and honour and the smallest possible negative impact. For First Nations people, it was and is an area of profound importance. The Judds and Ms Riviere are of the first non-native and Metis families in this district. Entrepreneurs such as the Kellys, the Voths, and Ms Latham, have invested in this community in order to live in this wonderful place while doing as little damage as possible.

We are sharing a world in which disregard for the future is no longer merely considered messy and unattractive, it is entirely unacceptable. Climate change is happening. Production and consumption of petroleum products is drastically damaging the future. Individual people can strive to cause less and less harm to the world, but we are not going to be able to make large and adequate change unless the people who play with large and corporate chunks of money do so in a way that makes people's choices and available options less harmful.

You, the regulators, must ensure that happens. We must make change. You must make sure positive change happens.

This is not a time of the world in which we can go on as we have been. We now know that much of human behaviour is vastly damaging to the earth and the beings we share it with. You, the regulators, must not go on as you have been. You, our corporate neighbour, must not go on investing ever more wealth in destroying ecological and community health. It is time and well past time to do better. The Waterton 68 proposal is not a way of doing better.