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Pipelines & Tankers - ELIZABETH MAY

The campaign to prevent the expected rubber-stamp approval of the Keystone XL Pipeline by the Obama Administration was not given good odds of success. The proposed pipeline would bring bitumen crude from northern Alberta to the Gulf of Mexico where it would be processed and either sold in the US or shipped abroad.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had spoken favourably of the likely approval. Canada's prime minister has lobbied the US and called the decision a 'no brainer'. The Canadian company promoting the pipeline, TransCanada Corp, had promoted the tens of thousands, even hundreds of thousands, of jobs it claimed would be created. And they seemed to have the approval all but sewn up with a positive environmental review conducted by the State Department.

Then in June, a joint letter from Canadian and US opinion leaders, Maude Barlow, Bill McKibben, David Suzuki, Naomi Klein, among others, and respected scientist James Hansen, former head of science at NASA, called for volunteers ready to be arrested in the cause of addressing the threat of the climate crisis. Thousands responded.

Arrests began in late summer in front of the White House. James Hansen got arrested. So too, my friends Bill McKibben and Natural Resources Defense Council's lawyer Susan Casey-Lefkowitz. And an impressive roster of Hollywood stars—Darryl Hannah and Mark Ruffalo. I am something of the eternal optimist and while inspired by their commitment, I didn't think stopping Keystone was on the cards. My pessimism had more to do with seeing President Obama as a massive, heart-breaking disappointment, than with any logic to the pipeline itself.

But then the Keystone case for approval began to unravel. The *New York Times* revealed that the Texas consulting firm that conducted the environmental assessment (EA) for the State Department had been recommended to the US government by TransCanada Corp. Worse, it appeared that the EA consultant has a financial interest in the pipeline being approved.

Cornell University released an independent assessment of the jobs to be created by building the pipeline. The study

found a fraction of the promised pipe dream put forward by TransCanada. In Canada, the union representing oil sands workers, the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union, also attacked the jobs sloganeering. CEP pointed out that exporting unprocessed bitumen crude would export Canadian jobs to the US—over 40,000 jobs.

And then there was the opposition building far from the White House. Nebraska farmers and ranchers, part of the Republican base in the US heartland, mobilized in their opposition to building a pipeline through the sensitive Sandhills area and to putting a major pipeline—transporting 830,000 barrels of bitumen crude per day—anywhere near the Ogallala Aquifer.

TransCanada Corp had used a bulldozer approach to roll over local opposition. Suddenly, the political calculus shifted. The legitimacy of the environmental review was fundamentally compromised. President Obama announced that, for the pipeline to be considered, it would have to be rerouted and avoid the sensitive areas in Nebraska. That effectively puts the final decision after the November 2012 election.

Canadian media focused on the alleged rift in Canada-US relations. The cynical latched on the idea that the decision was purely political. There is no question it is a political dodge, but none of that would have been possible if not for the multiple miscalculations and arrogant overconfidence of the proponent. TransCanada has put the best face on the set-back, promising to complete a new review of a new pipeline route.

The Canadian government rebuke to the US government was to suggest we would find new markets and cut the US out of access to Canadian oil. That kind of talk naturally made the national media start paying more attention to the threat of the Gateway project, bringing bitumen crude across northern British Columbia to Kitimat and a new oil tanker port. The crude would then be shipped to Asia, or equally likely, south to the US. It is not as though anyone boosting production from the oil sands had suggested the oil patch only wanted one or the other of the Keystone and

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Island Tides Publishing Ltd, Box 55, Pender Island, BC V0N 2M0 • 250-629-3660 • islandtides@islandtides.com • www.islandtides.com

Gateway projects. Those who are promoting the growth in oil sands production from our current 1.3 million barrels of oil per day to 5-6 million barrels of oil per day argue for both and more.

I know of no other issue that so unifies British Columbians as opposition to the threat of oil tankers and spills on our coast. We cannot allow this scheme to be approved. Right now the Enbridge Gateway process is at the early stages of a Joint Review Process under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. Thousands have already signed up to participate and oppose the project. Fortunately, for those of us who do not want the project approved, it is opposed by every First Nation along its route.

This pell-mell pressure for more production is taking place in the absence of any energy plan, climate plan or jobs plan. We could, if we were thinking about domestic energy

sovereignty and self-sufficiency, end the current situation in which Canada imports 54% of the oil we use (from Venezuela, Nigeria and OPEC), meanwhile shipping most of the bitumen to the US. We could stop the growth in the tar sands, but expand jobs by processing in Canada. We could develop a sensible climate plan that creates more jobs by investing in aggressive energy conservation and renewable energy.

The Keystone Pipeline delay gives Canada the chance to stop and think. Isn't it time to develop our energy policy in Canada, or do we want to continue letting other countries effectively determine our future based on their own domestic considerations?

Elizabeth May, O.C., is the Member of Parliament for Saanich-Gulf Islands. She will be in Durban for COP17. ☞