

CLIMATE CHANGE CHRONICLE 21

The Shocker

I'm eighty years old. Looking back over my career, I didn't think there was much that could still shock me.

I saw poverty and violence while working in Spanish Harlem in New York City and in the notorious Manhattan Correctional Center (known as "The Tombs") in lower Manhattan. I saw poverty and desperation in Dublin's Canal Communities. Heroin was rampant and people were being kicked out of homes slated to be demolished. Many people had nowhere else to go.

I worked for four years in Milwaukee's East Side drug community, welcoming home heroin addicted soldiers from the war in Vietnam. Later I worked in the Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Center in Alberta and helped phase out Oakalla in Burnaby British Columbia. I retired early from the project. I had heard what the senior managers were telling me they were doing. But then I happened to visit "the hole" for solitary confinement underneath a barn on the property. There was a complete disconnect between what they were telling me and what they were allowing to happen within their institution.

Finally while working in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories for many years, I saw much of the damage caused by the Residential School System.

Then last week came a new shocker. I read a story in the National Observer about the Trans-mountain Pipeline. Apparently the new National Energy Board has decided to recommend approval of the pipeline. Here is how they justified their recommendation.

*"Likely to cause **significant** adverse environmental effects on the Southern resident killer whale and on Indigenous cultural use associated with the Southern resident killer whale."*

*"Greenhouse gas emissions from Project-related marine vessels would likely be **significant**."*

*"While a credible worst-case spill from the Project or a Project-related marine vessel is not likely, if it were to occur the environmental effects would be **significant**."*

*"While these effects weighed heavily in the NEB's consideration of Project-related marine shipping, the NEB recommends that the Government of Canada finds that they can be justified in the circumstances, in light of the considerable **benefits** of the Project and measures to minimize the effects."*

This is not the same kind of shocker I experienced earlier in my life. The NEB's recommendation tries to use a more sophisticated approach but it is not too hard to find the real message buried within the verbiage.

Here's the real message. The oil tankers would likely wipe out the killer whales, not only by bumping into them but also by poisoning the waters they depend upon for food. Destruction of the whales would also do real violence to peoples whose culture has depended upon these creatures from time immemorial. (Instead, the NEB in their smarmy phrase "indigenous cultures associated with killer whales" tries to *downplay* the real damage to Indigenous cultures.)

The significant greenhouse gases we are leaving to future generations is unconscionable—especially after making a promise to the world at the COP 21 event that Canada would become a leader in the struggle to deal with climate change.

And, with all those marine vessels (read humongously huge ships playing dodge ball on the ocean) how can they predict that a "credible related" incident (read a huge spill) is unlikely?

Trudeau's statement about this project being of "National Interest" is a blatant excuse for justifying a 4.5 billion dollar purchase of an old pipeline that nobody wanted. His "National Interest" designation is the closest thing we have in Canada to what Trump called a National Emergency. (This reminds me of what one commentator said about Trump calling his southern wall a "national emergency": *It is like dialing 911 and complaining about a pizza delivery being late.*) I feel the same way about "National Interest" as a justification.

It is said that everything Trump does is for the benefit of his base. Well, I have been part of the Liberal base all of my life. But if Trudeau approves this decision to support the Trans Mountain Pipeline for the benefit of his Liberal base, I'm "outta here". I can't support what he is doing.

Mike Bell, Comox Valley Climate Change Network

Note. CLIMATE CHANGE AND EARTH SPIRITUALITY DISCUSSIONS. Beginning on March 13 and continuing over the next 5 consecutive Wednesdays in March and April we will be holding a small group discussion over lunch. The sessions will take place at the Comox United Church, 250 Beach Drive, Comox. They will start at 11:45 AM and end at 1:00 PM. Bring your own lunch. If you are interested please contact me. My phone number is 250-890-3671; my email is mikefbell@shaw.ca