

THE GRAND CANAL AND YOU

For many years engineers have been proposing major diversions of water from Northern Canada to the United States and to the Canadian West. Until recently massive water diversion schemes of this sort have been dismissed as unrealistic pipe dreams. Now, some of these schemes are gaining significant support from corporations and from high level politicians on both sides of the border.

One diversion scheme which is stimulating a lot of interest and is getting a lot of support is called the GRAND Canal Concept.

Your community is on, or near, the proposed route for the GRAND Canal and if implemented is going to effect your community - perhaps drastically. What this amounts to is a major corporate and government attack on Indian Land and Life.

WHAT IS THE GRAND CANAL CONCEPT?

The GRAND Canal Concept was developed by a Newfoundland engineer named, Thomas W. Kierans, between 1933 and 1959. It was first proposed to the Canadian government in 1960.

"Kierans envisions damming the mouth of James Bay, thereby trapping the run off from the rivers that flow into it, creating a fresh water lake. The water would then be pumped via Ontario and Quebec river systems, into the Great Lakes."¹

From there the "surplus", as he calls it, could be piped to water hungry American States and to the Canadian West via a colossal network of canals, aqueducts and reservoirs which would span the continent.

"He estimates the cost of the project at \$100 billion."²

"Early estimates suggest that the construction of dykes, aqueducts, pumping stations and power sources that may comprise the first phase of development could be accomplished in a decade."³

WHAT IS THE PROPOSED ROUTE FOR THIS PROJECT?

To begin with, a 100 mile long dyke would be constructed near the mouth of James Bay which would close it off from Hudson Bay and turn James Bay into a freshwater lake. Once this is accomplished the water would be "recycled" (diverted) South via a huge system of canals. The preferred route is as follows:

"the water would be pumped to a height of 950 feet via stepped reservoirs or aqueducts, for a total of 170 miles within the Harricana River Valley."⁴

This would reverse the flow of the Harricana River.

"From the height of land near Amos, Quebec, it could be transferred across a short canal to the Upper Ottawa River near Val D'Or. It would then flow Southward and be transferred to Lake Nipissing and then, via the French River, into Lake Huron. Some of the new water would be permitted to follow its natural course from the Ottawa River directly into the St. Lawrence---"5

"In time, the Ottawa River could serve as an alternative seaway to the Great Lakes."6

(Note: for more detailed information on the GRAND Canal Route please see the attached maps and diagrams.)

WHAT KIND OF CONSTRUCTION IS INVOLVED?

This mega-project will require the construction of dykes, reservoirs, canals, aqueducts, pumping stations, generating stations (possibly nuclear), baseload projects, work camps and a network of roads to move men and machines into your area. The influx of hundreds of thousands of workers from the South may involve town expansions and construction of all the facilities required to meet their needs.

WHERE WILL ALL THE ELECTRIC POWER FOR THIS PROJECT COME FROM?

Energy would come "from Quebec's hydro-power plants and from Ontario's nuclear plants."7

Additional power would also be needed and "this power would be provided by peaking facilities and new baseload projects".8 "One possibility", says Gilles Marnier, a former James Bay Energy Corporation Vice-President who is now closely associated with the project through SNC Corporation of Montreal, "would be to build nuclear stations along the canal."9

If nuclear power is used this will present a danger to anyone living near by. Also, the Uranium required to make fuel for nuclear stations will mean more Uranium mining on Indian Land in the U.S. and Canada. The Native communities at Wollaston Lake, Saskatchewan; Fort Franklyn and Fort Rae, Northwest Territories; Cutler, Serpant River, Massey and the North Shore region, Ontario; as well as Lakota, Laguna, Hopi and Navajo Indian communities in the U.S, are all presently being destroyed by continued mining of Uranium. An increased demand for Uranium can only serve to hurt them further. Cancer deaths, miscarriages by pregnant women, birth defects in babies and the poisoning of plants, birds and animals, earth, air and water have been well documented in Akwesasne Notes and the book "Indian Country".

It is also worth noting that spent fuel from nuclear plants is used for making bombs which threaten the entire world.

WHAT EFFECTS CAN BE EXPECTED IF THE GRAND CANAL PROJECT GOES AHEAD?

Mega-projects damage the natural world and harm Native People. This has always been the case. Examples are endless. The James Bay Hydro Project, the construction of the Bennet Dam, the building of the

St. Lawrence Seaway, etc., etc,...the list goes on and on. All these were mega-projects. What happened? Land was flooded, plants and animals were wiped out, Native People were relocated, traditional livelihoods like trapping, hunting and fishing were wiped out, social breakdowns occurred, Native People died.

This has a name. The name is Genocide or Omnicide (destruction of all life).

The GRAND Canal Concept involves changing saltwater bays into fresh water lakes, flooding land, reversing the natural flow of huge rivers and constructing huge man made structures such as reservoirs and possibly nuclear power plants. It is the opinion of the Canadian Alliance in Solidarity with Native Peoples, C.A.S.N.P., that such a massive project cannot be accomplished without destroying Land and Life. This project may wipe out traditional economies, hurt tourism and hurt Native People who lie in its path.

Building a mega-project can be a messy business. Pollution is bound to result. We believe this will impact on the natural world and on its natural peoples.

The influx of hundreds of thousands of workers from the South is also likely to cause significant problems because they will bring their Southern lifestyles with them.

Here in Toronto there used to be clean rivers, deer, eagles, moose and many fishes. Now the rivers are poisoned, the animals are gone, and we can't even eat the fish because they are full of toxic chemicals like PCB's. This sad state of affairs is due to our lifestyle. That is what we mean by "Southern Lifestyle".

According to Mr. Kierans "it is expected that the new freshwater lake and its water recycling GRAND Canal will be a magnet for general development."¹⁰ Toronto is an example of "general development" and so we have no animals, the rivers and lakes are poisoned and the fish are inedible - another reason for diverting Northern waters.

The impact of the GRAND Canal on your community is likely to be a negative one. What we would really like to know is how you feel about this project. You are the only ones who really know what effect it will have on your community.

WHAT IS THE GRAND CANAL COMPANY LTD. (GRANDCO) AND WHAT IS IT UP TO?

This company was recently formed "to develop the GRAND Canal Concept."¹¹ Some of the investors in this company include "crown corporations such as the hydro corporations of Ontario, Quebec, and Manitoba."¹²

"GRANDCO now has an agreement with a Joint Venture of four leading Canadian engineering and construction management companies who are carrying out engineering studies and providing related services directed towards the development of a project embodying the Concept. The Joint Venture is sponsored by SNC of Montreal. The other participating companies are; Bechtel Canada Ltd. of Toronto; The UMA Group of Calgary; and Rousseau, Saune and Warren Inc. of Montreal."

GRANDCO is currently preparing a project statement and assessment which "will cost in the order of \$1.5 million and will be completed in 1986".¹⁴ GRANDCO also plans to spend \$100 million on additional studies which are expected to take five more years to complete.

What this all means is that major corporations (some government owned) are taking this project seriously enough to invest substantial amounts of their, and our, money in it. The logical conclusion is that these corporations and governments involved expect an equally large return on their investments; and, it follows that they want this project to happen.

WHO SUPPORTS THE GRAND CANAL CONCEPT?

Former Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa, who is currently running for election to his old post again, whole heartedly endorsed the GRAND Canal Concept in his new book "Power From the North" (launched in April at receptions in Montreal and Washington). His book includes an entire chapter about the GRAND Canal and all the wonderful "things" it will do for the people of Quebec. If elected, Mr. Bourassa can be expected to push for the implementation of the GRAND Canal Concept. He is no stranger to mega-projects. He is the man responsible for the James Bay Hydro Development Project which hurt the lives of many Native People.

On November 7, 1985, Mr. Bourassa was asked whether the second phase of the hydro project, (\$25 billion cost), is threatened by the opposition of the Cree People living in Northern Quebec since Chief Billy Diamond has expressed his opposition to the plan (involving the GRAND Canal scheme). His reply was;

"There are serveral thousand Crees but there are six million Quebecers and the territory belongs to them. I don't think that the Indian Question is as important now as it was in the seventies."¹⁵

In short, Mr. Bourassa is not very interested in Native Peoples' concerns about the GRAND Canal.

President Ronald Reagan, when he was Governor of California, "made it clear that he was anxious to talk to anyone who might have surplus water available to diversion south."¹⁶

Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and his conservative government are committed to free trade with the United States. According to Simon Reisman, who is Canada's ambassador for U.S. free trade talks; and, who has also worked as a consultant to the GRAND Canal Company, the GRAND Canal project "could provide a key to a free trade agreement with the United States..."¹⁷

Prime Minister Mulroney's position was indicated in a recent interview with freelance journalist Rod McQueen. Mr. McQueen reported that "the Prime Minister indicated he might be prepared to sell some of Canada's abundant water to the U.S."¹⁸

All of this high level interest and support for the GRAND Canal makes it more than likely that this project will go ahead. These men view Water as a commodity to be bought and sold. They do not have respect for Water.

ARE LARGE SCALE WATER DIVERSION PROJECTS, SUCH AS THE GRAND CANAL, REALLY NECESSARY?

Certain regions in Canada and the United States are presently experiencing water shortages. These local deficiencies are predicted to worsen in the coming years if present trends continue.

These water shortages are largely due to waste and mismanagement of local water sources. Another contributing factor is pollution which makes large quantities of water useless and dangerous and may never be able to sustain Life again.

"Canadian water experts say that the dry west has two options. One is to limit its growth and live within the constraints of a dry climate. The second is to direct water from northern rivers southward to allow continued expansion of population, agricultural production and industry.

Canada's problems, however, pale beside those of the United States which has 10 times the population and half the water." ¹⁹

In short, massive water diversion projects such as the GRAND Canal are not necessary if people in the dominant society become water conservers rather than water wasters and water polluters. Maybe it is time that the non-native People on this continent started paying attention to Traditional Native Ways which were once common the world over.

The Hopi Indian People in Arizona have been growing corn in a desert environment since the beginning of time. They don't even use any irrigation yet they have enough to eat. These People have perfected agricultural techniques which are suited for a land with very little Water. Hopi People, through their Spiritual Way, maintain Balance and Harmony with the Natural World. This lifestyle has many things to teach us.

The Hopi People are water conservers. They have Love and Respect for the Natural World because they know that they are part of that Natural World. They are taken care of by that Natural World. This is a good and responsible Way to live.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Grand Canal Concept is, first of all, unnecessary if people in the dominant society become water conservers rather than water wasters and polluters; and will permanently damage/destroy communities in its wake.

If it becomes a reality the Canal will seriously damage plants, fish, birds, animals, water and land. If the Natural World is damaged then Native People will be damaged. The evidence for this is that Native People have always been hurt when mega-projects have been built on Indian Lands.

Due to corporate and political support at the highest levels, the GRAND Canal has a good chance of going through. Not only is it being supported with words but with millions of dollars so that the concept can become the reality. They are very serious about this project.

If this project goes through; your community may be seriously affected by it. Our only chance of preventing this project is to join together now and voice our strong opposition to it. One small community standing alone against this project will have little chance of success. We must all stand together because we all share this one earth. There is no other way.

ENDNOTES

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5. Ibid., p. 150.
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13. Ibid., p. 3-4.
14. Ibid., p. 5.
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16. Richard C. Bocking, "Canada's Water: For Sale?", James Lewis & Samuel; Toronto, Ontario; 1972: p. 1.
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