

MAD AS HELL ABOUT BOGUS HYDRO RATE INCREASES¹

Rafe Mair[©]

It must be a good line because this is the third time in a week I've used H.L. Mencken's great line "Every normal man must be tempted, at times, to spit upon his hands, hoist the black flag, and begin slitting throats." After reading the news item that BC Hydro is asking to raise its rates by 27% for upgrading their facilities, then reading the next day it was 55% for "badly needed projects" I found myself once more reaching for my trusty cutlass.

Is there no end to what we're asked to believe? John Horgan, NDP Energy critic, was bang-on when he linked this to the outrageous \$50 BILLION that BC Hydro owes Independent Power Producers (IPPs) for dams that destroy our rivers and send power not to BC Hydro but to the United States. Would that the NDP deals with private power in stark, unadorned English instead of the sloppy diarrhea that oozes from its program as laid down a few days ago by their now soon to be former leader. How dumb do they think we are? Are we to believe that there's a magic energy fairy at the bottom of the garden who will give Hydro that \$50 Billion and rising? This is close to, if not there, plain fraud.

The plain fact is that every householder not courting bankruptcy knows that you cannot hide a massive debt that is going to build IPPs on our dime, then soak Hydro (meaning us, folks) to the heavens when it's forced to buy private power that they don't need. I want to say this succinctly and in plain English:

"Our BC Hydro, one of the best energy companies in the world, has no need of more energy yet is forced to buy power from IPPs that they don't need - meaning they either sell it on the market for 1/2 or less of what they pay for it or use it instead of their own power at 12 times their own cost of making it."

All together, now, let's read that paragraph again and march to our nearest antique shop for cutlasses.

One would think – at least an outsider not au fait with BC politics might – that some politician would take up the cudgels on our behalf! (By the way, if you're sensitive to bloodshed, buy a cudgel rather than a cutlass). Here we have a Liberal leadership with half a dozen or more candidates and not a word will be uttered about the following: IPPs, farmed salmon, destruction of agricultural land, oil pipelines and tankers filled with Tar Sands sludge. Not a peep will you hear! Not a word even in defence because none of them has the guts to even defend Liberal policies much less oppose them.

In the unlikely event that the NDPs recover enough to be in the hunt in the next election, where the hell is their courage? I'll tell you where. The NDP's now soon-to-depart leader, Carole James, has been reaching out to the business community, as if that has a chance, and doesn't want to unduly worry the captains of industry who look upon the environmental disgraces given us by Pinocchio Campbell & company as great steps forward. Ms James has talked about the IPP fixes in terms of "sanctity of contract." These deals are more like those of a hoodlum mayor of a city who hands out plush contracts to his brother-in-law – they would make "Boss Tweed"

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of New York, “Boss Prendergast” of Kansas City, or Chicago’s Richard Daleys, pere et fils, blush with pride yet the NDP position is “sanctity of contract!”

What are the options we’re left with? One is to join one of the major parties and try to make them change their policy. That should be a remedy but, alas, it won’t work. Political parties are run by the few at the top and all resolutions they don’t like are either not brought forward for debate or are so watered down as to be pre-digested mush.

Another would be to support the Greens, something I would do in a flash if I thought they could even win a seat but they can’t and won’t. The Greens, decent honourable people who want to save and protect the environment often get angry with me at public meetings when I say this but have no answer when I point out that after 25 years they haven’t elected a soul, indeed haven’t even been close. (At a recent speech I gave in Courtenay, a “Green” lady went to the floor mic, obviously annoyed at what I had said, and said this:- the reason the Green Party hasn’t elected anybody is that they don’t get enough votes!” God’s truth!

You could encourage and join a third “middle-of-the-road” Party if one comes forward. The logical people to make this happen are Chris Delaney and/or Gordon Wilson. Delaney already has a party, BC First, and if meat can be put on those bones it becomes a rational option.

There is something, however, we all can do and indeed must do – raise Hell; such Hell that whoever runs for office will know that the electorate is white hot with anger. We must show all politicians that we will take action no matter where the latest environmental abuse occurs - action even including civil disobedience. We must do this even if it isn’t the particular “outrage” that grabs us most. Damien and I have started to tour the province and starting next February we will bring our presentation, including videos, a local voice, and my own.

Let me close with this: you can always get rid of a bad government and restore the economy with another. What you can’t do is get the environment back – once lost it stays lost. If you haven’t started to fight yet, now’s a very good time to start. If you have started, it’s a great time to intensify the fight and encourage others to do the same. We have a long way to go and the bad guys have all the money. Yet, if we all do decide with sharpened cutlasses to get into the fight and stay with it, we can and will beat the bastards and leave a legacy for future generations.