

Group not even certain there should be pipeline from Alberta to Kitimat

ENBRIDGE IS premature in advancing its pipeline plans to carry oil from Alberta to an export terminal at Kitimat, say some local people who attended a company-sponsored session here last week.

That's because there first needs to be a decision made on whether there should be a pipeline at all, says Julia Hill, who works for SkeenaWild Conservation Trust and who attended the session as co-chair of Northwest Watch, a group focussed on regional environmental impacts.

"This is a discussion that first needs to happen at a community level, at a regional level, at a provincial level, at a national level - where this fits our vision for the future," she said.

"And it's why this can only happen with a public inquiry," Hill continued.

She said there were broad issues tied to energy use and climate change which need to be addressed.

Instead, Hill said, Enbridge's June 24 session here for what it's calling a community advisory board was more aimed at defining the shape of the proposed \$4 billion-plus project.

She said the presence of a phalanx of Enbridge staffers and consultants made it difficult to get any kind of point across other than one that had to do with how the project would look.

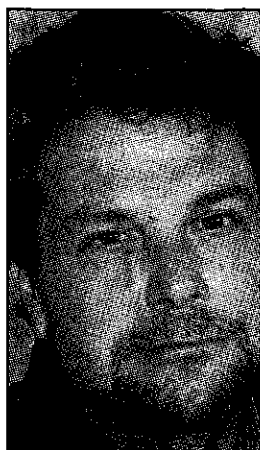
"They would not



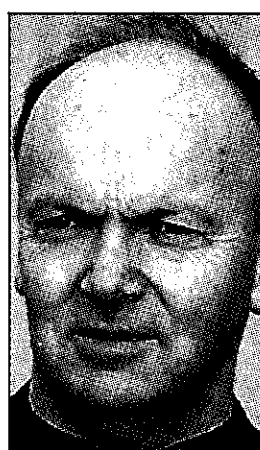
Julia Hill



Carla Briggs



Brad Zeerip



Roger Harris

even say which oil companies are backing them," said Hill of reports that 10 companies have provided Enbridge with \$10 million each to finance ultimate regulatory approval for the Northern Gateway pipeline.

"Who is trying to sell this project. That's what we should know," she added.

Another person at the session, angling guide Brad Zeerip from the Skeena Angling Guides Association, said the session was incorrectly billed as one in which the community was being asked for advice.

"Enbridge was putting a propaganda spin on this. It was sheep down a path to slaughter. To call it any kind of community process is a joke," he said.

Zeerip likened the Enbridge approach to that of large tobacco companies which denied for years smoking's adverse effects on health.

"They would say don't worry, it's OK. We're going to do this

and this and this," he added of the Enbridge session.

A third person, Carla Briggs, another member of Northwest Watch, felt Enbridge should have been in a position to give out more information than it did.

"I had asked how many hectares of deforestation there would be along the route. And they couldn't answer. But I said you do know. They've been studying this now for eight years. They've been out in the field," she said.

Briggs also felt that having such a session on a weekday, when people are at work, reduced the number of those who would otherwise attend.

Roger Harris, the company's vice-president of communications and aboriginal partnerships, said while some attendees had environmental concerns about the project, others wanted details about the economic benefits to the region like employment information.

"There are other peo-

ple in the room here that have other issues, and they think it's equally important...so we're going to treat that as we're going to treat everything else," he said.

"There's obviously people in the room with significant points of view and significantly different interests," he explained.

"The room is very diverse, so there's lots of different opinions."

He said that while some people saw it as a public review process, it was not intended that way. "It really is a project-driven proponent. We've put it together to find another way to engage people to make sure people have another way to comment," Harris said.

"The intent was to identify the issues so we can develop work plans for the future," he said.

The main reason for the meeting was to see if it was possible to have these conversations, identify the issues, and go about dealing with them.

He said there were about 40 to 50 people at the meeting in Terrace, and around 80 people at the meeting in Kitimat to talk about the marine side of the project.

"The first one (meeting) we really just set up the process and identify the issues, and the next ones...are more substantive issues," Harris said.

Categories will be grouped off and developed into a work plan to see which issues will be tackled first.

Harris is anticipating the next meeting to take place in the fall after all the information has been compiled and circulated. Other advisory boards took place in Prince George, Grande Prairie, and Edmonton.

Harris says that while the groups can talk about any issue they want, they usually change dramatically depending on the region, pointing out that the coastal regions concentrate more on the environment, while inland regions' concentrate more on economics.