

Barnes Expresses Concern Over Pittston Proposal

N. B. Fishing, Tourism Threat Cited

AUGUSTA, Me. (CP) — A proposed deepwater port and oil refinery at Eastport, Me. on the Canada-United States border poses threats which are viewed with "justifiable concern" by the New Brunswick government, a representative of the province said Tuesday.

Appearing before the Maine Board of Environmental Protection, Brian Barnes, assistant deputy minister of the New Brunswick Fisheries and Environment Department, said the Pittston Co. proposal for the port and 250,000-barrel-a-day refinery threatened fisheries and tourism along the province's Bay of Fundy coast.

Basically the same arguments were presented to the U.S. government earlier this year when Ottawa objected to the New York-based company's proposed tanker route through Canadian territorial waters leading to the Eastport site.

Mr. Barnes said New Brunswick and Maine had both worked hard to develop employment opportunities for their residents.

"However, we must ensure



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that new industrial development does not jeopardize existing established employment opportunities if we are to make any real progress in upgrading the standard of living and quality of life."

Roughly 3,000 people in New Brunswick's Charlotte County, adjacent to the site, were dependent on the fishing industry, either as fishermen or fish processing companies.

The value of fish landings exceed \$4.4 million each year and \$25 million was generated annually from 28 active fish processing plants, eight handlers and 18 lobster ponds.

"An oil spill will cause a direct loss to the fishing industry in terms of a reduction in fish landings and fish processing and in lost wages."

In addition, it was estimated tourists spent \$10 million in Charlotte County last year and \$2.8 million of that total was directly associated with shoreline use.

Currents in Head Harbor Passage, the proposed Pittston approach route through Canadian waters for the 250,000-ton tankers bringing crude oil to the Eastport site, and other waters in the area were so strong that it would be "virtually impossible" to contain oil spills despite existing or foreseeable technology.

The Fundy shoreline in Nova Scotia and the U.S. seaboard as far south as Cape Cod could be threatened under some conditions, he said.

Oil spills would also threaten the many varieties of birds which nest and feed along the coastline.

Mr. Barnes said the Canadian government developed a simulation model of tanker movements in and out of Eastport under various assumed environmental standards for navigation.

A tanker was assumed to arrive at five and seven-day intervals. The model kept account of the number of tankers that were able to dock, the number of tanker-days spent outside waiting for conditions to improve and the number of days of refinery shut-down for lack of crude oil.

In conditions of good visibility in daylight with light winds, the model projected that approximately 70 per cent of 1972 high slack water periods would be unsuitable for passage, 130 tanker-days would be spent waiting outside and 20 refinery days would be lost for lack of supply.

"Consequently, we suggest that strong economic pressures would develop for relaxing environmental navigation standards from those proposed initially. If so, one can envisage more and more tankers traversing the passage under increasingly difficult conditions and a consequent higher risk of accident such as groundings."

Mr. Barnes said the New Brunswick government did not oppose the location of an oil refinery in Maine and would not oppose a refinery at Eastport providing there were no environmental hazards to New Brunswick.

"However, we believe there is a definite hazard which could jeopardize the

established way of life of a significant number of our citizens."

A consultant for the New Brunswick Development Corp. Rejected nearby Passamaquoddy Bay as a deepwater port site in 1970 because of the absence of a suitable safe passage for large tankers.

An updating by the consultant this year advised that Head Harbor Passage was so narrow that tanker manoeuvring distance was affected and, consequently, accident risk was increased.

The New Brunswick representative said resources and capital would be better invested in development and enhancement of existing assets in the area rather than establishing new risks.

He also voiced concern for the Canadian government's fisheries biological station at nearby St. Andrews, N.B. which was dependant on fresh seawater supplies.

Captain Amos Mills of Portland, who says he's the only person in Maine licensed to pilot vessels into Eastport, said Monday that he doesn't know of any port between New Brunswick and Puerto Rico that compares with Eastport for difficulty in maneuvering currents.

Mills testified that the strength of ebb currents at Estes Head, near the proposed refinery site, are such that some of the buoys are towed underwater "and of no navigational use to anyone. No one can safely predict the currents off Eastport . . ."

Earlier Monday, Commissioner Spencer Apollonio of the Sea and Shore Fisheries Department, said that oil spilled off the Canadian coast from the tanker Arrow in the late 1960s had a "complete wipeout" effect on seaweed.

Seaweed, he said, is a direct food source and an important marine cover on which various marine animals are dependent. He said even three and a half years after the Arrow spill, there has been no plant recolonization of that area.

In discussing Eastport currents and tidal flow along the coast, Apollonio said: "If we wanted to pick an area to mix oil thoroughly with tidal water and spread it over a great area that's an area we'd pick."