



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #92 — MAR. 12, 2012

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INDEX: Click here.

My Papá Roger (Feb. 10, 1933 — Mar. 10, 2012)

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Mar. 12, 2012)

Early Saturday morning, when Roger Antonio Escalante Mansilla, Sr. took his last breath, I lost a friend and my second father. My wife, Marcela, and her five brothers and sisters lost their first father. Aquina, his bride of 55 years, became a widow, and the world is now a place with a little less light.

When I first came to Bolivia as a complete stranger, almost eight years ago, I was a Gringo who spoke hardly a word of Spanish, was living with the beautiful second daughter of a proud family (though we were soon to be married), and had probably every reason to be treated suspiciously, but Papá Roger--and therefore everyone else--welcomed me with warmth into the large, extended family circle that formed around Papá Roger and Mamá Aquina. They treated me as a son and, in a strange land, entering a new life, having lost so many of my own family, that was a very welcome gift.

Time passes more slowly in Bolivia. The rush is not so constant. There is time to sit and get to really know people, like I remember it used to be in the U.S. Time for just sittin', like I used to do as a kid with my Uncle Joe, while he'd sit and chew his tobacco and spit in his spittoon. People used to actually "make time" for that, for just sitting and talking, can you imagine? They still do that here.

The *siesta* brings the day to a screeching halt right in the middle, from about noon to three. Then there is "tea" which starts about 5:00—essentially just a social occasion where talk is of friends and family. Then, at night, there can be a languishing heat in the air that ripples slowly through the curtains on a cooler night breeze that must be sent from heaven. This is the perfect time to sit and sip a little whisky and talk of all manner of things, late into the long tropical night.

So I got to know Papá Roger in ways that, perhaps, I didn't even get to know my own father. My Bolivian second father was interested in absolutely everything, read a lot, knew some smart, famous people, and never lost his boyish curiosity. He would ask me questions about the U.S., and I could usually fill-in some details he didn't know, but the subjects were almost always things he already knew a lot about, had formed opinions on, and wanted to know mine and why. I never knew him to be dogmatic, though he could certainly be eccentric and even, at times, a little cantankerous. But he could change his mind. He could listen to reason. He could make you change your mind too.

He grew-up in, literally, another world. I will be honest with you, dear reader, the stories about his father, Sr. Juan de la Cruz Escalante, seem mythical, though I know they are true. He and his wife came from old Cruzeña families, his farm of legendary size. Though I have never seen that land, I know that it was big enough to divide into five large farms for his children. He also left each of them a big house in the heart of the city of Santa Cruz. In those

days, there were barely roads and few motorized vehicles. Horses and oxen ruled. Swollen rivers often prevented travel and this country is immense, even though it might seem small by U.S. standards (it's actually about the size of Alaska).

At one time, my wife's grandfather sort of "owned" his own entire tribe of Guarani Indians. See what I mean? Mythical in scope. I understand that they were migrating through his land and were captured or simply decided to stay, we're not sure of the details. The system was totally feudal in those days, not that long ago, and with some landowners, was out-and-out slavery. Papá Roger's father had a full-time blacksmith, a weaver, a baker, a cobbler, etc., who all worked on the farm. I think it sounds more like a small town than what we think of as a farm. They made just about everything from scratch.

Some of the unfairness of those days, unfortunately, still exists in parts of Bolivia, especially the Chaco, where ranches are entire counties, similar to the huge spreads in Texas or Montana.

On Papá Roger's farm things are still a little feudal, but no one is indentured, people commonly come and go and change jobs or go to make their way in the city, all the children go to school, wages are low but food, housing, medical care, transportation, and clothing are all provided. The work can be hard--milking by hand, riding herd on cattle, even catching a chicken for lunch can be tough in my estimation. If it were up to me, I think I'd just shoot one, but they never seem to resort to that. With all the work, though, as I mentioned above, there are many breaks in the Bolivian day, especially on the farm. It is a sweet, very social, relaxed lifestyle. A better life than the city, in many ways.

When I think of someone in the U.S. forced to work part-time at K-Mart because that's the only job they can get, with no benefits, minimum-wage doesn't apply, and even two people in a family working like this would have to live in the street and eat garbage, literally, it makes me think the trade Papá Roger makes for labor with his workers is one of the fairest on the planet. The workers seem very happy to me and say they are, and I've asked. The system provides productivity at a lower level of existence than a giant factory operation, something we may need to learn to do better in the future ourselves. To me, the most important part of what the workers are paid is the security and a life that has a good chance to bring happiness.

Papá Roger had a worker who, unfortunately, died not too long ago. His name was don Feliciano, but Marci and I always called him Tarzan. He lived off by himself, far into the jungle where he had a little house by a lovely little river. His job was to raise the fruit needed to feed everyone on the farm. He tended huge mango trees, papaya, pineapples, yuca, plantain, bananas, achachairú, oranges, lemons, limes, guayabas. He had a wife and family in town and would visit them once in a while, but he preferred living by himself, alone in the jungle. A couple of times a year troops of monkeys would migrate through. The river sometimes had fish. Tarzan would sit by his fire, listen and talk to the jungle. He trained bees to dance to his beat.

Papá Roger was so proud of everything on his farm...he loved to take me to his waterfalls, to visit Tarzan, to see the barns and how the cheese is made, his mountain, and the source of water for the farm way up on the mountainside, reachable only by hacking through thick jungle with machetes.

He went to the farm and worked a little the day before he died. He still hadn't retired at 79, though two of his sons have pretty much taken over most of the chores now. He was the boss until the end and all the work he did he loved and did with love. There can be no doubt about that.

Papá Roger had his unique way of looking at things. I guess you'd have to say he was Catholic, but he didn't care much for the authority and hierarchy of the Church. He didn't like anything made of plastic and didn't want plastic to touch his food. It turns out he might have been on to something. I thought it was cute anyway. He had his young children each drink a glass of raw cow's milk every day to make them strong. It doesn't seem to have hurt. He loved poetry. He cherished the Spanish language. He loved music all of his life. He nurtured those loves in his family and those he chose as friends.

Once, Papá Roger taught me to chew coca. We had had conversations about America's seemingly insatiable appetite for cocaine. Perhaps some of you know that leaves of the plant from which cocaine is made, the coca plant, are legal in Bolivia. Its leaves have been chewed by the Indians for centuries to cure altitude sickness, to

work hard in the silver mines, or to stay awake on a long trucking run (more recently). Chewing these leaves is not something Papá Roger would usually do, but he decided that I should learn. It's really quite a process and I can't figure out how it ever happened to be discovered. First of all, you have to chew the leaves, which though not awful are not that pleasant tasting. I suppose you get used to it. Did ancient Indians go around chewing every kind of leaf to see what would happen? And the thing is, nothing happens! Nothing. The cocaine cannot be released from the leaves by simply chewing or even eating them. To extract any cocaine at all, you first have to set-up a little, very specific chemical factory in your mouth. You have to add a little baking soda or grey wood ashes to the mix. Then the mouth becomes numb, any bad taste disappears, and you experience the sudden urge to work like a beaver. Many of the Indians from the *altiplano* chew the stuff all day long. They always have a big lump in one cheek. Baking soda is a controlled substance in Bolivia. Did ancient Indians chew everything in the jungle mixed with everything they could think of to see what would happen? Why? How many poisoned themselves? Did they trick the dumb kids in the tribe into doing it for them?

Anyway, we had some excellent conversation that day--with some help from my truly bilingual wife--and I treasure the memory. Just a month ago, we celebrated Papá Roger's 79th and last birthday. We decided we would take him and Aquina out for dinner and invite the whole immediate family for a little party. Papá Roger decided he wanted seafood, so we found a little place near us downtown that did a great job and we had wine and talked late and he was so happy and lively and alive, surrounded by his beloved family. Where he belonged and made others belong. Where we all belong.

The last gift the dying give the living is to cause them to think about the nature of death and life and love. Papá Roger became wise in his lifetime. And he shared his wisdom with generosity of spirit and love. He actually cared about everyone, most especially his beloved family, and everyone who knew him noticed, and what he gave was and will be returned a thousand fold, though it will take some time.

Ciao, ciao, my Papá Roger, may God bless you. Losing you makes me miss my own, first father that much more. You have reminded me so much of him and I thank you for that. I will miss you and many others will miss you even more, but we are all happy and proud that you lived your life and your death with honor and goodness. We thank you for touching us with your beautiful voice and spirit.

We're not going to be in as much of a hurry to get the cookie business going as I wished, but that's OK. I can work hard, but I certainly don't mind taking it easy, either. With our work, we haven't been able to travel as much as we like since we returned to Bolivia about eight month ago--just a couple of little weekend trips to San Javier and the farm near there. I think we'll take a trip to Tarija and maybe on to Buenos Aires via train. The *FotM Newsletter* might vanish for a few days, maybe later this week, but I hope you'll keep corresponding. I love hearing from you all.

Thank you and may your lives be as blessed as my Papá Roger's. All it takes is to let the love in your heart out, give it away freely, squander it like there is no tomorrow, because there are only so many wondrous tomorrows in this gift, in this life. Anything else after that will take care of itself. All we can know about death is that it certainly is not *this* life. *This* life is all we know and all we need to know. Be good. Love.

FotM NEWSLETTER #92 (Mar. 12, 2012)—HYPERTEXT INDEX

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120312-00		SteveB	My Papá Roger (Feb. 10, 1933 — Mar. 10, 2012) by Steven W. Baker / SteveB
20120309-01	10:45	SteveB	Re: Inspirational Quotes by a Great American or <i>Mierda?</i> (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #91)
20120309-03	11:55	SteveB	Re: Inspirational Quotes by a Great American or <i>Mierda?</i> (reply to Pam, above)
20120309-02	11:53	SteveB	Re: Inspirational Quotes by a Great American or <i>Mierda?</i> (reply to Pam, above) & Fw: Daily Kos Action: Hit Rush's Advertisers
20120309-04	12:11	Pam	Re: Inspirational Quotes by a Great American or <i>Mierda?</i> (reply to SteveB, above)
20120309-05	13:02	SteveB	Re: Inspirational Quotes by a Great American or <i>Mierda?</i> (reply to Pam, above)
20120309-06	15:06	SteveB	FotM Announcement
20120309-08	20:06	Art	Re: FotM Announcement (reply to SteveB, above)
20120309-07	16:04	Charis	Video: Risking It All in Bolivia
20120310-01	07:57	MarthaH	"How Much Would Keystone Pipeline Help U.S. Consumers?"
20120310-02	21:45	Pam	Re: "How Much Would Keystone Pipeline Help U.S. Consumers?" (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120310-03	18:19	SteveG	Fw: Change.org Petition: No More 'Pink Slime' or 'Mystery Meat!'
20120311-01	05:56	SteveB	Re: No More 'Pink Slime' or 'Mystery Meat!' (reply to SteveG, above)
20120310-04	18:21	SteveG	"Three Ways to Beat Corporate Giants"
20120311-02	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Baby Hedgehog

20120309-01	10:45	SteveB	Re: Inspirational Quotes by a Great American or <i>Mierda?</i> (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #91)
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That death road is something else. It says a lot about you that you love driving on it. I don't even want to look at the pictures, let alone drive on the thing. I close my eyes and hold my breath when I go over the Golden Gate bridge.

I am astounded by Rush's comments. I never listen to AM radio or watch Fox News, so I'm spared most of his venom and only get a taste when someone quotes him. He's a horrible human being, getting rich by giving voice to the worst aspects of American society. He's worse than an embarrassment; he's evil. His selfishness and arrogance know no bounds. I don't find him amusing or ironic or anything redeeming. He's a bloviating (love that word) blowhard with a heart like a lump of coal. I hope he loses ALL his sponsors. He makes me want to use the f-word.

20120309-03	11:55	SteveB	Re: Inspirational Quotes by a Great American or <i>Mierda?</i> (reply to Pam, above)
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But, gee, those pictures are the good, safe parts of the Death Road...it's when someone is passing on the inside and you have one wheel almost off the edge that it gets hairy...

20120309-02	11:53	SteveB	Re: Inspirational Quotes by a Great American or <i>Mierda?</i> (reply to Pam, above) & Fw: Daily Kos Action: Hit Rush's Advertisers
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I couldn't agree more about Rush Limbaugh. It looks like we're doing a little good, though. I just got this:

from Daily Kos:

Spurred on by more than 120,000 members of the Daily Kos community like you, this week over 50 companies and organizations pulled their advertisements from Rush Limbaugh's radio program.

Yesterday, the results of your action could be heard in the form of beautiful, long silences during the commercial breaks in the online streaming of Limbaugh's show on WABC, the flagship station for his broadcasts. Here are the amazing stats:

- A total of 86 ads aired during WABC's online streaming broadcast of The Rush Limbaugh Show yesterday.
- 77 of those ads were public service announcements donated free of charge by the Ad Council.
- Of the nine paid spots that ran, seven were from companies that have said they have taken steps to ensure their ads no longer air during the program.
- WABC's online feed included about 5:33 of dead air when ads would normally have run.

Click below to listen to the silence during the commercial breaks on Rush Limbaugh's program, and be sure to share it with friends over Facebook, Twitter, or something else. This is your accomplishment, so please be sure to savor it.

<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2012/03/08/1072469/-Dead-air-flocks-to-advertise-on-Rush-Limbaugh-s-show?detail=hide>

20120309-04 12:11 Pam Re: Inspirational Quotes by a Great American or *Mierda*? (reply to SteveB, above)

Yesterday he said losing 28 (the count at that point) advertisers was like taking a drop out of the ocean, or some such metaphor. 80 has a bit more bite to it. I hope he gets his show cancelled. Then he can join Imus and Stern on a marginal station no one listens to. What a bunch of creeps.

20120309-05 13:02 SteveB Re: Inspirational Quotes by a Great American or *Mierda*? (reply to Pam, above)

It's been quite a while since I've seen or listened to any of the screamers of doom.

It seems people become immune to invective, so Limbaugh et al. have to constantly escalate.

The result to me is nearly as bad as yelling "Fire!" in a crowded theater. It could have a worse long-term effect.

The amazing thing to me is not so much Limbaugh, but that people eat this stuff up and he's some kind of king-maker or breaker in the Republican Party.

The jerk actually has power! Which I'm sure he never fails to use in an infantile manner.

(I want to take you for a ride on the "Death Road" someday and show you that it's not.)

20120309-06 15:06 SteveB FotM Announcement

AS OF TODAY, MAR. 9, 2012, FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE IS CEASING ALL ADVERTISING ON THE RUSH LIMBAUGH RADIO AND TELEVISION PROGRAMS.

WE THINK HIS ACTIONS TOTALLY SUCK AND WE'VE HAD ENOUGH. WE'RE PULLING THE PLUG. GOOD-BYE, RUSH!

Thank you.

20120309-08

20:06 Art

Re: FotM Announcement (reply to SteveB, above)

Well done, Sir!

20120309-07

16:04 Charis

Video: Risking It All in Bolivia

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZEN-qA0e94&feature=youtu.be>

[Pam and Ann will love this! –SteveB]

20120310-01

07:57 MarthaH

"How Much Would Keystone Pipeline Help U.S. Consumers?"

FINALLY...an article I can depend on with the aspects neglected by the commercial ads for the politics of it all. *CSM* is a good source,, in my opinion.

"How Much Would Keystone Pipeline Help U.S. Consumers?" by Mark Clayton, *Christian Science Monitor*

Mar. 9, 2012, (<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2012/0309/Inside-the-Keystone-pipeline-How-much-would-it-really-help-US-consumers>) (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/46689167/ns/us_news-christian_science_monitor/)

(Canadian firms behind it say it will supply Gulf Coast export markets.)

Often lost in the political wrangling over the controversial Keystone XL pipeline – on hold after President Obama rejected TransCanada's initial construction proposal – are some key findings that run counter to the rosy picture of abundant supply and lower prices so often painted by U.S. politicians.

Canadian companies backing the Keystone XL – touted as enhancing U.S. energy security with a big new surge of imported Canadian oil – actually expect it to supply more lucrative Gulf Coast export markets as well as raise Midwest oil prices by reducing "oversupply" in that region.

These little-publicized findings are contained in the studies and testimony of experts working for TransCanada, the company that wants to build the pipeline from Alberta's tar sands across America's heartland to Gulf Coast refineries.

Some of these concerns popped up, albeit briefly, in U.S. congressional testimony last year on the pipeline project, and have given rise to a recent proposal to bar the sale of Keystone oil overseas.

In the latest round of Capitol Hill fighting over the pipeline, Senate Democrats on Thursday defeated a Republican amendment to the transportation bill that would have fast-tracked the project by stripping the State Department of its approval authority and giving it to Congress.

In February, legislation to force U.S. approval of the pipeline passed the House 237-187. That bill would strip the president of authority to block the project and give the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission 30 days to approve the pipeline.

But most of the heated partisan rhetoric over job creation and gasoline prices glosses over what Keystone would or wouldn't do for the U.S.

TransCanada's case

"Keystone will bring many benefits to the United States, but I believe the most important role that Keystone will play is to bring energy security to the United States during what has been recently some very unsettling times overseas," Alex Pourbaix, TransCanada's president for energy and oil pipelines, said in a congressional hearing in December.

So, would TransCanada support U.S. legislation requiring Canadian oil and products refined from it, such as diesel, to be sold only in the United States, asked Rep. Ed Markey (D) of Massachusetts, "so that this country realizes all of the energy security benefits your company and others have promised?"

"No, I can't do that," Mr. Pourbaix said.

In an e-mailed statement, TransCanada spokesman Terry Cunha writes that Keystone XL could help cut U.S. reliance on Mideast and Venezuelan imports "by up to 40 percent." He cites a 2010 U.S. Department of Energy study that he contends says more Canadian oil would "help reduce U.S. imports of foreign oil from sources outside of North America."

Most analysts agree that more Canadian oil flowing south would help reduce imports from other regions. Less obvious, however, is the fact that the Keystone XL pipeline is not actually needed to bring all that new Canadian oil to the U.S. – a flow now projected to rise to 1.7 million barrels per day by 2030, according to the same DOE study. Often characterized by proponents as validating the need for the pipeline, that study actually found that Canadian oil import growth will go on at "almost identical" levels through 2030 using existing and new pipeline capacity as well as rail shipments – whether or not Keystone XL is built.

Political backlash

Even so, supporters in Congress continue to call Keystone XL "a no-brainer" from a U.S. energy-security standpoint, also arguing it would benefit consumers by lowering gas prices, too. Keystone XL's "supplies from reliable sources leads to lower costs, thereby putting downward pressure on prices," one study on TransCanada's website says.

According to this premise, Keystone XL would move up to 830,000 barrels of Canadian crude south each day, boosting economic activity by billions of dollars and creating thousands of new jobs – though their precise number is hotly disputed.

Yet in January, Mr. Obama, under pressure by Republicans, reiterated his previous decision to deny permission to build the Keystone XL – at least for now. The pipeline "would not serve the national interest at this time," Dr. Kerri-Ann Jones, an assistant secretary of State, subsequently told the House subcommittee on Energy and Power, citing "unresolved concerns" including energy security, economic effects and environmental impacts.

TransCanada replied to the denial by saying it would resubmit its construction proposal to address the environmental concerns, and on Tuesday a company executive reportedly said new plans that rerouted the pipeline away from the sensitive Nebraska Sandhills region would be ready in weeks.

But the president's denial unleashed a furor as GOP presidential candidates and oil industry backers lambasted the White House for denying the U.S. economy oil and jobs.

"The president demonstrates a lack of seriousness about bringing down unemployment, restoring economic growth, and achieving energy independence," GOP presidential hopeful Mitt Romney said in a statement.

Newt Gingrich said the decision "weakens America's national security and kills thousands of well-paying American jobs," while oil industry advocate Jack Gerard, president and CEO of the American Petroleum Institute, called the project "essential," and said, "It must be approved and built."

Higher oil prices in the Midwest?

But others, including environmentalists who oppose the pipeline mainly because extracting oil from tar sands releases more greenhouse gases than other methods of harvesting oil, also argue the pipeline will do little or nothing to boost U.S. energy security and will actually lead to higher oil prices in the Midwest.

"Rather than providing the U.S. with more Canadian oil, Keystone XL will simply shift oil from the Midwest to the Gulf Coast, where much of it can be exported to international buyers – decreasing U.S. energy supply and increasing the cost of oil in the American Midwest," concludes a new study by the Natural Resources Defense Council, a New York-based environmental advocacy non-profit group, citing numerous TransCanada studies and the transcripts of Canadian federal hearings.

But it's not just environmentalists who are howling in the wilderness.

"The firms involved have asked the U.S. State Department to approve this project, even as they've told Canadian government officials how the pipeline can be used to add at least \$4 billion to the U.S. fuel bill," Philip K. Verleger, president of PKVerleger LLC, a Colorado consulting firm that specializes in research on oil market economics, wrote in a Minneapolis Star-Tribune commentary last March.

U.S. farmers who spent \$12.4 billion on fuel in 2009 could see those costs rise to \$15 billion or higher if the pipeline goes through, he projects. At least \$500 million of the added cost "would come from the Canadian market manipulation," he wrote.

"Millions of Americans will spend 10 to 20 cents more per gallon for gasoline and diesel fuel as tribute to our 'friendly' neighbors to the north," the highly respected Dr. Verleger wrote. "The Keystone XL pipeline will move production from Canadian oil sands to a deepwater port from where it can be exported."

But that is not merely Verleger's opinion. It's based on findings of the economic consultants hired by TransCanada – contained in their analyses of the pipeline's impact on Canadian oil producers and in official testimony before Canada's National Energy Board.

"Existing markets for Canadian heavy crude, principally [the U.S. Midwest], are currently oversupplied, resulting in price discounting for Canadian heavy crude oil," concludes a 2009 analysis on behalf of TransCanada by Purvin & Gertz, Inc., an oil economics firm based in Houston. "Access to the [U.S. Gulf Coast] via the Keystone XL Pipeline is expected to strengthen Canadian crude oil pricing in [the Midwest market] by removing this oversupply. This is expected to increase the price of heavy crude to the equivalent cost of imported crude."

Gulf link to global markets

As a result of those increases in the price of heavy crude in the Midwest and sales of higher-margin refined products shipped out from Gulf Coast refineries to other markets, Canadian oil producers could be expected to reap \$2 billion to \$3.9 billion more each year, the analysis says.

"Shippers on the Keystone XL Pipeline have contracted for access to the [U.S. Gulf Coast] market for their oil sands production and refining needs," the Purvin & Gertz study concludes. "Not only will this directly benefit these shippers, it will also provide a benefit to all [Western Canadian] heavy crude producers by increasing the price they receive for their crude, as well as providing significant pipeline capacity to an alternative market" on the U.S. Gulf coast.

Why Canadian crude oil producers would choose Keystone XL when other pipelines to the U.S. are running well below capacity has much to do with diversifying away from the U.S. market to more lucrative markets in Europe, China, and other Asian countries, Verleger and others argue. Trends seem to support this thesis.

Over the past five years, exports from the U.S. Gulf Coast have soared as refiners sitting in tax-free zones near Port Arthur, Texas, have shifted production away from gasoline and toward higher-margin diesel. Since 2007, overall U.S. exports of diesel and other products have jumped 134 percent, the U.S. Energy Information Administration reports. Of U.S. exports, two-thirds is shipped abroad from Gulf Coast refineries – now more than 2 million barrels a day and up from just a quarter of today's level a decade ago.

That trend was captured in testimony Sept. 17, 2009, before Canada's National Energy Board. Seven Canadian companies were willing to pay higher pipeline tariff costs for using the Keystone XL pipeline, the testimony showed, in order to bypass Midwest refineries by sending 500,000 barrels per day, the lion's share of the pipeline's capacity, to Gulf refineries.

Valve to relieve Midwest oil "oversupply"

In addition to winning higher prices for Canadian oil in the Gulf, the pipeline would boost revenues by shuttling existing oil supplies out of the Midwest – boosting prices, the Canadian study and testimony also show.

"So seven shippers or seven producers are, in your view, pursuing this strategy in order to increase the [Midwest oil market] and Ontario prices. Do I have it right?" D. Davies, a Canadian energy board examiner asked Thomas Wise, the Purvin & Gertz expert who authored the economic analysis for TransCanada.

"If a minority of the barrels were sold at the Gulf Coast at a Gulf Coast price, that would have the effect of raising the price not only in the Midwest and Ontario but in Western Canada," Mr. Wise responded.

In hearings last May and December, TransCanada officials admitted to U.S. legislators that the pipeline will indeed increase the price paid for Canadian oil in the Midwest – but suggested those higher crude oil prices would not necessarily mean higher gasoline prices in that region.

The pipeline would reduce the "discount on Canadian oil" currently paid by U.S. refiners – an oil price increase for U.S. refineries, Pourbaix said in a congressional hearing last May. Even so, "that crude will still remain the cheapest source of crude by a long shot that U.S. refineries have access to," he testified.

"If you add significant new supply to a static demand for a product in a market, you should see the price go down," Pourbaix explained. "So it is my absolute expectation, that over time, with incremental supplies of Canadian crude oil coming into the U.S. market, you will see downward pressure on refined products prices, throughout U.S. markets."

In his e-mailed response, TransCanada's Mr. Cunha cites a June 2011 report by IHS CERA, an energy economics firm that reached similar conclusions. "Prices at the pump will drop when America's largest refining region (the Gulf Coast) becomes less dependent on the world's highest priced crude (OPEC)," he wrote. "Foreign importers will have to cut their prices if they want to compete with the cheaper Canadian crude.... We would argue the overall U.S. price per barrel will drop as refiners pay less for foreign and domestic oil competing with a higher volume of cheap Canadian oil."

Testimony and supporting documents north of the border stating that Keystone XL would raise Canadian crude prices has set off alarm bells with several U.S. legislators – while leaving others unmoved.

Legislators react to findings

Rep. Ed Whitfield (R) of Kentucky, who chaired two hearings into the Keystone XL, heard positive testimony about the pipeline – as well as contradicting testimony that it would do little or nothing for energy security while raising Midwest oil prices. He still likes the project, however.

"If our president decides that sending aircraft carrier strike groups to the Strait of Hormuz to defend oil flow is in the national interest, then one would also think a pipeline from Canada that would help eliminate our Middle East oil imports also serves the national interest," Mr. Whitfield said in a prepared opening statement for the hearing he chaired.

In an e-mailed statement, Whitfield's press secretary adds that the pipeline "will help lower the price of gasoline by bringing more oil supply to the market" and says the Department of Energy "specifically states that gasoline prices in all connected markets would go down."

But Sen. Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat, was alarmed enough to call last year for a Federal Trade Commission (FTC) investigation into the matter based in part on the Canadian National Energy Board testimony.

"While the full nature of the arrangements agreed upon by the Canadian shippers is unclear, there is clear indication that there is a coordinated 'strategy' among Canadian suppliers to gain higher prices," Senator Wyden wrote Jonathan Liebowitz, chairman of the FTC in an April 6, 2011, letter. "This will have the effect of manipulating supply levels allowing prices of oil refined in [the Midwest oil market] to rise and ultimately benefitting the Canadian companies with higher prices."

On Thursday, it was Wyden who put forward an amendment to the transportation bill that would have prohibited the sale of the Keystone oil overseas and imposed other regulatory requirements. His amendment was defeated 64 to 34.

Reacting to Obama's previous decision to bar approval for Keystone XL, TransCanada made it clear it considered the project too vital to delay for long.

"Until this pipeline is constructed, the U.S. will continue to import millions of barrels of conflict oil from the Middle East and Venezuela and other foreign countries who do not share democratic values Canadians and Americans are privileged to have," Russ Girling, TransCanada's president and chief executive officer said in a statement.

"This project," he continued, "is too important to the U.S. economy, the Canadian economy and the national interest of the United States for it not to proceed."

20120310-02 21:45 Pam Re: "How Much Would Keystone Pipeline Help U.S. Consumers?" (reply to MarthaH, above)

I heard an interview with a historian on NPR yesterday. I don't recall his name, but he's a professor somewhere who has written a book on the role of African Americans in the Civil War, including attitudes toward slavery, then and now. He drew a comparison between those Southerners who deplored slavery but were still part of an economic system that depended on their labor. As we know, most of them continued to go along with the "peculiar institution."

It's like today when we all know that our use of fossil fuels is ruining our planet and endangering our future, yet we all still drive cars and fly to distant places. We're part of a system we can't imagine doing without--just like the antebellum Southerners. I have a feeling that 100 years from now, the sight of a meat counter in a supermarket will make our descendants toss their cookies. If you really think about it, doesn't the idea of eating live flesh creep you out just a little? It does me, yet I continue to eat lamb shanks when I can get them.

Something big enough to disrupt the system has to occur before change will happen. Boehner and his fellow oil investors will never give up oil so long as the pipelines continue to spout huge profits. I just asked myself whether it will take a war to bring on change, then I answered my own question. Yes, it will. We are engaged in it already. What else is the Middle East all about? We're sure not in Afghanistan because we want Afghan women to have the right to go to school and vote. All the instability is a result of a struggle over oil money. The dictators want to hold onto their most valuable commodity, and the rest of the world wants it cheap. We're all driving off a cliff as fast as we can go.

20120310-03 18:19 SteveG Fw: Change.org Petition: No More 'Pink Slime' or 'Mystery Meat'!

3-4 petitions that follow each other – all worth signing.

from Change.org:

Pink slime is gross. It's connective tissues of cow and other beef trimmings, heavily treated with ammonia to kill pathogens like salmonella and E coli.

Experts say it's "a high risk product" that lacks nutritional benefit. Even fast food giants like McDonald's and Taco Bell dropped it years ago.

But the USDA is about to buy 7 million tons of pink slime to put in school lunches.

Bettina Siegel, a lawyer and mother to two school-aged kids, started a petition to get the USDA to cancel its order ASAP, and it's gaining national attention.

If tens of thousands of people sign, the media and lawmakers will take notice and pressure the USDA to cancel the order.

Click here to sign Bettina's petition asking the USDA to keep pink slime out of school lunches:

http://www.change.org/petitions/tell-usda-to-stop-using-pink-slime-in-school-food?utm_medium=email&utm_source=action_alert

Thanks for being a change-maker, Corinne and the Change.org team

Here's more information from Bettina:

"Pink slime" is the term used for a mixture of fatty meat scrap and connective tissue (formerly used only for pet food and rendering) that is treated with ammonia hydroxide to remove pathogens like salmonella and E coli. These so-called "Lean Beef Trimmings," are produced by Beef Products, Inc.

Two former government microbiologists claim that, for political reasons, pink slime was approved for human consumption by USDA over serious safety concerns.

Government and industry records obtained by The New York Times in 2009 showed that "in testing for the school lunch program, E. coli and salmonella pathogens have been found dozens of times in Beef Products meat, challenging claims by the company and the USDA about the effectiveness of the treatment. Since 2005, E. coli has been found 3 times and salmonella 48 times, including back-to-back incidents in August in which two 27,000-pound batches were found to be contaminated. The meat was caught before reaching lunch-rooms trays."

Even apart from safety concerns, it is simply wrong to feed our children connective tissues and beef scraps that were, in the past, destined for use in pet food and rendering and were not considered fit for human consumption.

Due to public outcry, fast food giants like McDonald's and Taco Bell have stopped using pink slime in their food. But the federal government continues to allow its use in school food and has just authorized the purchase of ground beef which collectively contains an additional 7 million pounds of pink slime for consumption by our nation's children.

Tell the USDA to STOP the use of ground beef containing pink slime in the National School Lunch Program!

20120311-01 05:56 SteveB Re: No More 'Pink Slime' or 'Mystery Meat!' (reply to SteveG, above)

I read this the other day and thought about putting it in the next FotM Newsletter, but I was so grossed out...

Then I found myself telling the story to a couple of people. Now you send a petition, which is better than just an article, because you can take action other than vomiting.

God, I hope I never run into any of this crap!

Thanks, hope you're having a great weekend

"Three Ways to Beat Corporate Giants" by Jim Shultz, NationofChange

Mar. 10, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/three-ways-beat-corporate-giants-1331390970>)

From insurance companies lording over our health care to global conglomerates taking control of our water, corporate giants wield more and more influence over our lives and our environment. So how do we fight back? How do we take on corporate power and actually win?

The Democracy Center recently published a new citizen's resource that looks up close at the strategies that people and communities are using worldwide to successfully tackle corporate giants. We call it *Beating Goliath* and you can download a free copy here: <http://democracyctr.org/corporate/resources-for-action-2/3876-2/>.

As Occupy and other movements across the world take up anew the question of how to combat corporate power, here are three good lessons from the front lines.

1. Make it Personal: The Battle Against Bechtel

The global campaign against Bechtel's anti-Bolivia lawsuit was based on one key principle: Make life miserable for the corporation's namesake and CEO, Riley Bechtel, and other company officials. Corporations are designed to shield their top executives from accountability. Anti-Bechtel campaigners gave Mr. Bechtel no such luxury. They bombarded him with emails to his personal account. They lambasted him by name over and over again in the media. Protesters shut down access to his San Francisco headquarters and in Washington picketed the home of one of his subordinates.

In January 2006, Bechtel officials flew to Bolivia to sign an agreement dropping their case for a token payment of thirty cents, the first such capitulation ever by a major corporation in a global trade case. The lawyer who represented the Bolivian government in the negotiations, when asked by the Democracy Center why the company had capitulated, said, "The CEO told the lawyers to make the case go away." In the end the damage to Bechtel's reputation outweighed what it hoped to win from the Bolivian people.

2. Add Humor to Your Protests: Switching off Coal Plants in the UK

In 2006 E.On (a German energy company) announced plans to replace a coal-fired power station in Southeast England, with yet another climate-threatening coal-fired power station. A two-year campaign was waged by grassroots groups and climate activists to stop the company's plan. Campaigners took actions ranging from online pledges, to mass civil disobedience, and at one point completely shut down the existing power plant with protests. It was the addition of humor, however, to their protest actions, which helped gain the campaign widespread positive public attention. Activists dispatched a team of 'cleaners' to scrub coal clean outside an E.On office (to call attention to the company's claims of 'clean coal') and invaded a company office with a posse of Santas delivering coal to "naughty" company officials. Finally, the campaign 'occupied' a company-sponsored replica of the coal plant at Legoland, unveiling a banner saying "STOP CLIMATE CHANGE" down the length of the tiny tower. In 2009, under mounting public pressure, E.On announced that they were shelving the plans for the new Kingsnorth power station. The UK government also announced that it would not approve the development of new coal-fired stations without 'Carbon Capture and Storage' (a promised future technology that has not yet been successfully implemented in any working power plant.)

3. Go After the Shareholders: Taking on Occidental Petroleum in Colombia

In the early 1990s Occidental Petroleum set its sights on developing a set of major oil fields in Colombia's biodiversity-rich cloud forest, home to the indigenous U'wa people. The indigenous community's opposition to Occidental's drilling plans was rooted in a spiritual belief that oil is the blood of mother earth, and the knowledge that oil infrastructure in their lands would become a magnet for armed violence and the

country's FARC rebels. With the Colombian government eager to support the project, the U'wa, alongside international allies, undertook a global campaign to block Occidental's drilling plans. With dreams of vast profits dancing in their heads, Occidental executives seemed immovable, so Amazon Watch and others mobilized for a companion strategy—target the oil conglomerate's current and potential shareholders. Campaigners staged protest actions at Fidelity Investments, a major Occidental stockholder, and sponsored shareholder resolutions against the project at other companies. The targeting of investors coupled with the unshakable dedication and unity of the U'wa people helped convince the business community that Occidental's oil plans in the cloud forest faced too much opposition to be a good business investment.

The campaign eventually took its toll on Occidental. Fidelity, the target of 75 protests in just 6 months, withdrew \$400 million dollars of its investments in the oil firm. Eventually Occidental announced that it would return control of its main exploration site to the Colombian government, claiming that it had failed to find the oil deposits it had expected. Whether Occidental cared to admit it or not, the U'wa and their global allies had won.

(Jim Shultz wrote this article for YES! Magazine, a national, nonprofit media organization that fuses powerful ideas with practical actions. Jim is the executive director of the Democracy Center, which works globally to help citizens become effective advocates on environmental and social justice issues. Read more about these anti-corporate advocacy campaigns and others in the Democracy Center's new campaigner's resource, *Beating Goliath*.)

20120311-02

23:59 SteveB

Photo: Baby Hedgehog

<http://www.worldmostamazingthings.com/2011/04/amazing-hedgehog-hedgehogs-facts-photos.html>



—Friends of the Middle,
Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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