



NEWS ARCHIVE:

Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

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“No Nukes, Go Renewables” rally held Oct. 4 in Saskatoon

By Blake Sittler

Some 500 people of all ages gathered Oct. 4, 2009 to protest the province’s move toward the use of nuclear energy and the University of Saskatchewan’s research and support of the nuclear industry. The “No Nukes Go Renewables” rally was also a call for the more serious development and investment in renewable energy.

The rally was sponsored and promoted by the Coalition for a Clean Green Saskatchewan, an umbrella organization of interested individuals and organizations.

Jesse Best, with Rooted, an urban-organic farmers group, was one of the first speakers at the University of Saskatchewan campus, where the march began.

“What we’re here today for is to tell the government is that ‘no’ doesn’t mean ‘we’re hesitant’... ‘no’ means ‘no,’” said Best. “There is a serious problem when our government sees us as consumers rather than people...we need to talk about renewable energy”.

Jeh Custer of the Sierra Club critiqued the University of Saskatchewan for their role in the nuclear industry.

“We don’t want [the nuclear industry] being supported by our university. We want the nuclear phase out studies to be happening on campus. Why aren’t we studying renewable resources on campus instead of perpetration of the nuclear model?” asked Custer.

Lindsay Telfer, of Sierra Club of Canada, drew attention to concern about how the energy created by a proposed nuclear power plant in Saskatchewan would be used. “This energy isn’t to power our homes...it’s to power the oil sands and corporations up north and in Alberta”.



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Several local musicians kept the growing crowd entertained with music while the protesters marched through light rain and wind from the campus across the river to the Vimy Memorial Bandstand.

Masters of ceremony Cathy Holtslander and Janis McKnight reiterated the sentiment that began the rally on the university campus, “Minister Boyd, the light is red. The people of Saskatchewan do not want nuclear power and do not want a nuclear waste dump.”

Holtslander explained that in October 2008, the Saskatchewan provincial government commissioned the Uranium Development Partnership to recommend ways to add value to Saskatchewan's uranium. At the same time, Bruce Power, one-third of which is owned by Cameco, was looking for land along the North Saskatchewan River to build a power plant.

“Sure enough,” Holtslander began, “when [UDP’s] report came out at the beginning of April, it recommended government investment in nuclear power, nuclear research, nuclear waste, and a reduction in royalties paid by companies mining Saskatchewan's uranium.”

Holtslander and McKnight then invited up an Aboriginal elder who prayed for wisdom to care for the earth and its resources.

Keynote speakers included Saskatoon family doctor Ryan Meili, who challenged those gathered to get involved politically. Both retired NDP candidate Peter Prebble and Larissa Shasko of the Green Party of Canada spoke on the need to develop a green economy. Jim Harding, author of Canada's Deadly Secret: Saskatchewan Uranium and the Global Nuclear System spoke to water concerns around the nuclear industry.

Native American activist, environmentalist and author Winona LaDuke was the featured keynote speaker. She is the founder of the White Earth Land Recovery Project in Minnesota,

“You know, we have a chance to do something really stupid or really great. I’m thinking it would be a good time to do something really great,” said LaDuke.

“If you open up Saskatchewan to nuclear waste...there’s 90,000 shipments of nuclear waste south of the border with nowhere to go,” she warned. “No one can tell me that nuclear power is clean; it’s filthy. The only way to be safe is to leave it in the ground”.

LaDuke perceived that the placement of nuclear plants and its waste sites was indicative of structural racism both in the US and in Canada.

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“The [US federal] office of nuclear waste negotiator [in the 1980’s] went around with 20 separate proposals; 16 were Indian reservations. It’s such an example of racism. ‘Let’s put it somewhere where people won’t resist.’ But you know what? [We] fought off those utilities,” she said to applause.

“We beat them because they can’t afford their idea. You put wind turbines up...and you can project the price of your fuel into the future. The price of fuel for wind is whatever the Creator gives us”.

“We have been given two choices...two paths: One is well-worn but scorched and the other is green,” concluded LaDuke.