

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
Sent: Monday, November 21, 2011 8:29 AM
To: H
Subject: Fw: Jane Mayer's piece

----- Original Message -----

From: Hammer, Michael A
Sent: Monday, November 21, 2011 07:18 AM
To: Mills, Cheryl D; Reines, Philippe I; Klevorick, Caitlin B
Subject: Jane Mayer's piece

Just a couple passing references to us, none of the crazy stuff.

Taking It to the Streets
by Jane Mayer
New Yorker

November 28, 2011

Last spring, months before Wall Street was Occupied, civil disobedience of the kind sweeping the Arab world was hard to imagine happening here. But at Middlebury College, in Vermont, Bill McKibben, a scholar-in-residence, was leading a class discussion about Taylor Branch's trilogy on Martin Luther King, Jr., and he began to wonder if the tactics that had won the civil-rights battle could work in this country again. McKibben, who is an author and an environmental activist (and a former New Yorker staff writer), had been alarmed by a conversation he had had about the proposed Keystone XL oil pipeline with James Hansen, the head of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, and one of the country's foremost climate scientists. If the pipeline was built, it would hasten the extraction of exceptionally dirty crude oil, using huge amounts of water and heat, from the tar sands of Alberta, Canada, which would then be piped across the United States, where it would be refined and burned as fuel, releasing a vast new volume of greenhouse gas into the atmosphere. "What would the effect be on the climate?" McKibben asked. Hansen replied, "Essentially, it's game over for the planet."

It seemed a moment when, literally, a line had to be drawn in the sand. Crossing it, environmentalists believed, meant entering a more perilous phase of "extreme energy." The tar sands' oil deposits may be a treasure trove second in value only to Saudi Arabia's, and the pipeline, as McKibben saw it, posed a powerful test of America's resolve to develop cleaner sources of energy, as Barack Obama had promised to do in the 2008 campaign.

But TransCanada, the Canadian company proposing the project, was already two years into the process of applying for the necessary U.S. permit. The decision, which was expected by the end of this year, would ultimately be made by Obama, but, because the pipeline would cross an international border, the State Department had the lead role in evaluating the project, and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had already indicated that she was "inclined" to approve it. Both TransCanada and the Laborers' International Union of North America touted the construction jobs that the pipeline would create and the national-security bonus that it would confer by replacing Middle Eastern oil with Canadian.

The lineup promoting TransCanada's interests was a textbook study in modern, bipartisan corporate influence peddling. Lobbyists ranged from the arch-conservative Grover Norquist's Americans for Tax Reform to TransCanada's in-house lobbyist Paul Elliott, who worked on both Hillary and Bill Clinton's Presidential campaigns. President Clinton's former Ambassador to Canada, Gordon Giffin, a major contributor to Hillary Clinton's Presidential and Senate campaigns, was

on TransCanada's payroll, too. (Giffin says that he has never spoken to Secretary Clinton about the pipeline.) Most of the big oil companies also had a stake in the project. In a recent

National Journal poll of "energy insiders," opinion was virtually unanimous that the project would be approved.

McKibben concluded that the pipeline couldn't be stopped by conventional political means. So, in June, he and ten other activists sent an open letter to the environmental community saying, "It's time to stop letting corporate power make the most important decisions our planet faces. We don't have the money to compete . . . but we do have our bodies." Beginning in August, the letter said, volunteers would be needed to help provoke mass, nonviolent arrests at the White House. The activists called for civil disobedience, with the emphasis on the "civil": "Come dressed as if for a business meeting—this is, in fact, serious business." Waves of neatly outfitted people started showing up at the White House, and by the time the action ended, on September 2nd, more than a thousand had been arrested at the front gate for trespassing.

Still, the protesters didn't feel that they were being taken seriously, so, as the last of them were being handcuffed and led away, McKibben met across the street with a senior White House official. He said that although the environmental movement had supported the President, wherever he went now demonstrators would be there, too. "We're not going to do you the favor of attacking you," he said. "We're going to do the much more dangerous thing of saying we need to hear from the Obama who said those beautiful things in the campaign. We expect him to do what he promised." In other words, where the Tea Party took inspiration from the Revolution, the anti-pipeline activists would draw from "Lysistrata"; instead of going to war against the President, they threatened to get out of bed with him unless he shaped up. Knowing that Obama wanted their support in 2012, they would attract his attention by playing hard to get.

In the following weeks, while the President was on his jobs tour, he was confronted at practically every stop by people wearing Obama buttons and carrying signs that quoted him saying that we can "be the generation that finally frees America from the tyranny of oil." Major environmental groups, who had been working against the pipeline from the beginning—among them the Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth, and the National Resources Defense Council—led a broader campaign. Volunteers swarmed Obama campaign offices in almost every state, and placed calls to the finance chair of the Democratic National Committee. Ranchers and indigenous people—cowboys and Indians—whose lands would be affected united in opposition at public hearings. Nobel laureates denounced the project. The Republican governor and both senators from Nebraska, whose vulnerable water supply stood to be crossed by the pipeline, sided against it. So did the Dalai Lama. Meanwhile, the environmental movement was not without its own deep-pocketed heavy hitters, who now played an inside game: some Democratic funders, like Susie Tompkins Buell, the founder of the Esprit clothing company, signalled that they would withhold support from the President's reelection campaign.

On November 6th, exactly a year before the election, the protest returned to Washington. This time, twelve thousand people encircled the White House. President Obama was reportedly out, playing golf, but the message evidently got through to him. Four days later, he issued a statement saying that the decision on the pipeline permit would be delayed until at least 2013, pending further environmental review. In addition, in response to claims of conflict of interest, the State Department's inspector general launched an investigation into the permit process. Since then, TransCanada, which previously insisted that no other pipeline route was feasible, has announced a new route through Nebraska. "There are no final victories in a fight like this," McKibben acknowledged.

Yet the Occupy movement could do worse than to learn from the pipeline protest. The difference between the focussed, agenda-driven campaign fought by the environmentalists and the free-form, leaderless one waged by the Occupiers, the historian Michael Kazin says, is that the environmentalists grasped the famous point made by Dr. King's political forebear, Frederick Douglass: "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."

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