

Strong Words Issue Forth from Canadian Indian Chief

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Indian chief Frank P'selei of Fort Good Hope says that he will lay down his life rather than see a pipeline built down the Mackenzie River. The chief, appearing before the Berger

pipeline enquiry last week, attacked the pipeline applicants and Robert Blair, president of Foothills Pipelines Ltd. in particular.

Foothills plans to build an all-Canadian Mackenzie valley pipeline, while Canadian Arctic Gas Ltd. would build a larger line to carry American and Canadian gas. Arctic Gas president Vern Horte did not attend the Fort Good Hope hearings.

'If Jammed Down Their Throats'

"Foothills does not choose to install a pipeline through any location if the land owners are strongly opposed or arguing their claims.

"I think what has struck me most is the community of it (the native opposition).

"We don't put on bullet-proof vests and run over them and we don't call for the Mounties.

"I don't think anyone here is close to violence. But I can see if this thing were really jammed down their throats there could be sabotage and sniping.

"It's quite possible the critical factor that may require more time than anything else is good progress toward settlement of land claims."

particular, are concluding pipeline construction will be the first stage of massive development to meet southern needs that will destroy the Indian people.

The pipeline companies and federal government, contend native people will benefit from the projects, but also argue the

decision must put the interests of the Canadians first.

Using this principle, they conclude the need for gas in the south outweighs the damage a pipeline could cause in the north.

To press their point home, the native people of the territories insist a pipeline be deferred until a land claims settlement is complete.

Blair's willingness to delay construction recognizes that determination, but also seeks to avoid entangling his company in the legal web that would be created by construction over contested land.

V.L. Horte, president of Canadian Arctic Gas rejects deferral of construction out of hand, terming Blair's suggestion "self-serving."

Arctic Gas proposes a 48-inch line to move gas from both Alaska and the delta to markets in Canada and the U.S.

In a press release Horte said, "A pipeline is required in Canada's interests as soon as it can be built." Horte reiterates Arctic Gas' view that the line can be built before land claims settlement.

"Construction of the pipeline could proceed without prejudice to a settlement, and should proceed without delay if it is found by the government of Canada to be required in the

interests of Canadians."

Horte claims Blair's ability to offer to delay the project simply recognizes the fact insufficient reserves are available at present to justify an all-Canadian line.

Blair's flexibility of timing may give him an important advantage in the eyes of government officials anxious to avoid clashes with the people of the territories.

If the native people have their way, the pipeline will be delayed, perhaps indefinitely.