

Pickets, prickly questions, heat greet Environmental Hearing Bd.

Three members of the Ontario Environmental Hearing Board are well aware that feelings against a partial study of the proposed hydro corridor between Georgetown and Bradley Junction does not sit well with residents along the route of the 250 foot wide way.

Meeting in hot humid Hillsburgh Community Centre Thursday night, they were greeted by dozens of pickets brandishing signs asking for an independent study of the entire corridor and suggesting that Ontario Hydro was the tail that wags the Ontario Government dog.

The corridor and its six storey high towers would cross the escarpment at Limehouse and proceed north across highway 7, just east of Acton, along the middle of the Fifth Concession and into Erin township on its way to Bruce.

Board chairman D. S. Caverly, Almyer, vice-chairman A. Moodie of Nepean twp. and member Dr. Carl Martin of Milton did not seem ruffled by the demonstration or by the displays of hostility in the meeting, but the sometimes tumultuous proceedings were not ordinary fare in the hamlet of Hillsburgh.

Villagers seem puzzled by the display by pickets and those who oppose the corridor, but a four man team of experts from Ontario Hydro found it difficult to wrest the meeting away from the disputants who hooted their displeasure, argued with their conclusions and demanded an independent study of the proposed route from the junction of the east-west line near Milton to Bradley Junction, in Bruce County where the corridor swings into the Bruce nuclear power plant.

Energy Minister Dennis Timbrell ordered a review of the information concerning the alignment of the corridor from Point 95 to a point north of Ballinacra to Point 33 which is west of Shelburne, following meetings with the interested citizens group, headed by Erin township resident William J. Mann.

However, the group claims Mr. Timbrell is trying to divide the people of the 15 townships along the possible route of the hydro corridor with four different proposals for a route. They would prefer an independent study such as the one done by Bruce Howlett for the controversial east-west 500-kV corridor from Nanticoke to Pickering. It aroused the ire of the concerned citizens led by Lee Symmes of Terra Cotta, and resulted in a change of route for the original corridor Hydro proposed.

Ontario Hydro's team, headed by Art Mosher, who headed the team which designed the route of the corridor, was assisted by Don Fraser, Al Bisschop and Allan Vaughan in defending Hydro's proposed route which jogs at one point over three concessions.

The jog Hydro claims is to avoid top farm land and follow a route least damaging to the environment.

The jog represents a different view to some interested citizens. They claim it is avoiding the properties of influential people and has nothing to do with environmental values.

The Environmental Hearing Board's chore is to sort out the evidence and come up with conclusions based on meetings which start in Hillsburgh Community Centre at 10 a.m. July

15, 1975. Chairman D. S. Caverly told the more than 200 people crowding the community centre that meetings will be held until he is satisfied all the written and oral briefs pertaining to the corridor are presented and all questions answered.

Halton Hills farmer Reford Gardhouse told the board, however, that the hearings could go on ad infinitum unless there was an independent study of the entire route. He said Ontario Hydro misrepresented their case by claiming they had consulted planning boards along the route.

"I was a member of the Esquering planning board and know there was never a study of criteria done in our area," he said. Gardhouse lives on the Fourth Line of Halton Hills, north of Five Sideroad. He was indignant the Government would order a review of the route between a point just north of Ballinacra to a point near the hamlet of Colbeck and forget about residents in his area and along the rest of the route. "How can you study the middle and not either



William Mann

end?" he asked the members of the Board.

Erin township farmer Bill Brouwer, wagging his finger, at members of the Hydro team, said it was time the corporation foot about figures and dollars and remembered there were people who lived along the line. He charged many of his neighbors along the route never had the opportunity to answer questionnaires Hydro sent out.

Mr. Brouwer lives on Lot 22, Con. 2, Erin township, and he acknowledged the corridor went "right behind his barn."

"Why don't you want an independent study?" Is it because other people have more money and more influence?" he asked Hydro members.

"We are creatures, we aren't material to be shoved here and there," he said in an impassioned address to loud applause from the audience.

That's a good indication of how the people here feel," said the interested citizens group chairman, William Mann, rushing to the microphone.

Earlier the group sparred with the chairman over the terms of reference for the hearing and asked if they would be restricted to the corridor between Points 95 and 33. Chairman Caverly said he never unduly restricted discussion on points of reference. He pointed out the Environmental Hearing Board would make a recom-

mendation to Energy Minister Dennis Timbrell.

Would the recommendation be for an independent study of the entire corridor? The chairman said it would depend on the evidence presented at the hearings.

Interested Citizens' spokesman William Mann said people of the area always thought previous hearings had been stacked in favor of Hydro. Residents had to face the tremendous resources of the Hydro team, often sophisticated and this had hobbled their group in the past.

Gordon Kidd of Halton Hills asked the hearing if the line which was to tap off the Bradley to Georgetown line and thence to Kitchener would be included in the review.

The chairman pointed out this was not in the terms of reference. He also told Mr. Kidd they were prepared for evening meetings as well, if necessary.

Jo Schneider asked the board why they couldn't go back to Mr. Timbrell and ask for a study from 401 to Bradley. "Can't it be done?" she asked.

"All things are possible," the chairman replied. "We don't commit ourselves until we hear all the evidence. When everything is said then we will ask Mr. Timbrell to do this or that."

Chairman Caverly said the possibility of a fifth alternative for a route was not included in the terms of reference for the board. This brought William Mann to his feet demanding to know who was running the meeting and charging Hydro was dictating the terms of reference.

Earlier the chairman told the meeting references to Limehouse in the evidence



Placard carrying protesters greeted members of the Environmental Hearing Board when they appeared at Hillsburgh Thursday night.

were really only confusing the issue because it was not included in the study area. At this point Ontario Hydro started their presentation with senior planning engineer Art Mosher leading off. Many of the people in attendance started to leave, charging they were going to hear the same old thing that had made them so angry in the first place.

The chairman asked for order and requested those with signs to leave them at the back and extend the courtesy of listening to the Hydro presentation. The order got one enthusiastic clapper—slightly embarrassed when no one else joined in.

Mr. Mosher outlined the history of the corridor from

the time it was conceived, reviewed the history of the Solandt Commission and the recommendations which proceeded from it.

He said the proposed route was first outlined in March, 1974. It is 250 feet wide and will carry one line to start. Additions will have to have Ministerial approval and were being considered by the Commission on Long Range Planning headed by Dr. Porter. Towers on the route are 162 feet high and spans about 900 feet apart.

Hydro representatives defended their choice of one of the four routes outlined along the defined area and pointed out the most sensitive areas were crossings of the Eramosa and Grand Rivers. They claimed they selected a

route which would do the least damage ecologically, especially in wet lands. Hydro official Don Fraser said any intrusion into the Eramosa River valley would affect the environment because it was biologically sensitive.

Questioned, Fraser admitted he did not know where the headwaters of the Eramosa were but he estimated the width of the Eramosa River valley to be about 2,00 to 3,000 feet.

That brought John Schneider, long-time exponent of another alternative to the route, to his feet, pointing out to the board why they had requested an alternative be investigated. Now, he said, we are saddled with problems on problems on problems, because it had not been done.

Why save bogs and wet lands? asked Judy Patterson, and go through agricultural land-saving land that is no good and ruining land that could feed us later?

Hydro officials replied they also worked under restric-

tions from the various Government ministries in biologically sensitive areas. They were asked to avoid them. The Ministry of Natural Resources defined the areas through the conservation authorities and using the Toronto Centred Region Plan for a guide.

The Hydro team said every attempt was made to avoid Class A farm land. The statement was greeted with loud boos.

Katharine O'Donnell, fiery spokesman for ratepayers in the Orton area, challenged the response to hydro questionnaires as being indicative of the feelings of people of the area, she pointed out only 99 answered them while there are 4,355 voters in the township of Erin. However, Mr. Mosher said there were 1300 rural hydro customers in Erin, excluding the larger centres, and it was considered a fairly adequate representation. Two hundred and twenty-eight questionnaires were sent out.

Hydro's team, questioned by John Schneider, said they had studied each of the Eramosa River but admitted it had been under their own terms of reference. Art Mosher told the meeting he was chairman of the Hydro

team charged with finding the most direct route from Georgetown to Bruce.

Why wasn't the Essa route considered then? was the question. It is closer, I say the map is misleading, said John Schneider. Mosher replied that the issue had been discussed by the Solandt Commission.

William Mann summed up the four hour meeting for the board by suggesting previous Hydro information had been misleading, the data had, and

people would not be satisfied until they got an independent study.

Karen Glenn

An error in the June 25 edition of the Free Press credited Shelly Young as being valedictorian for the M. Z. Bennett graduation class. Karen Glenn was the student who delivered the valedictory. This newspaper apologizes for the mistake.

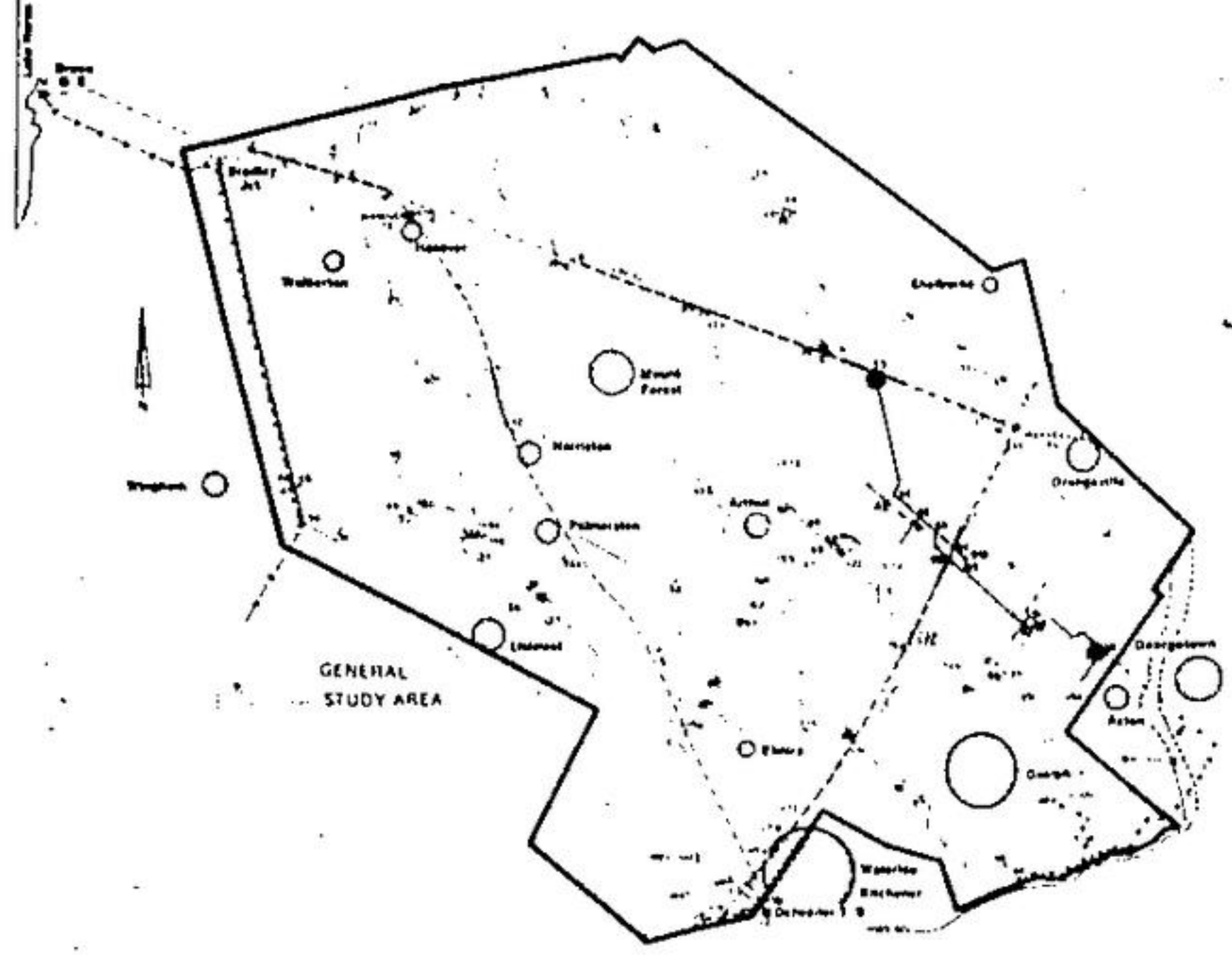
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