

## **Wait a minute, Arnold...**

*Mike de Martino*

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The election is over and everyone is cheering the Democrats taking the House and the Senate. Arnold Schwarzenegger has been elected governor of California by a 15 point margin. Everyone is talking about Arnold's move to the center, his rejection of right wing issues and his embrace of the Democrats in the state legislature. Arnold is a Centrist. Everything is hunky dory, everything except the fact that this governor is up to his ears in debt to the LNG industry. They have helped fund his campaign. Attorneys working for BHP Billiton, an Australian Mining company trying to build an LNG port off the coast of Malibu and Oxnard California, are his campaign consultants. He even has the support of key Democrats in the state. SB 426 was a bill introduced to allow for a review process of LNG to determine whether it is even needed in our state. It was killed in a back room deal thanks to Democratic Leader Fabian Nunez. A deal was made with the LNG devil.

So, what is LNG and why should I care? LNG is liquefied natural gas. It is cooled to 260 degrees below zero and loaded on 1000 foot supertankers. A shipment of LNG is equivalent to 20 billion gallons of natural gas. That is one hell of a lot of potential energy. Multiply Hiroshima by 25 and you have an idea of how dangerous an explosion of it would be. How would you like one of these tankers in your neighborhood? How about three or more a week for the next 40 years? The opportunity for terrorist attack is tremendous. Why worry about nuclear devices smuggled over the border when you have one of these babies's sitting there. Go see the movie *Syriana*, starring George Clooney, if you want to get a flavor of the potential danger presented here.

In addition, BHP Billiton wants to run a 36 inch pipeline through the fields and streets of the city of Oxnard and the County of Ventura. The pipeline will be filled with re-gasified liquid natural gas, compressed to 1100 pounds of pressure per square inch. That is a huge amount of pressure and a dangerous amount of gas. There are 500,000 volt high tension wires running along the route. There are earth quake faults running all through the area. People live and work there. This route is chosen because they are looking for the cheapest way to get the gas to the main pipeline, almost 15 miles away.

On Saturday, November 12, 2006 a 36 inch gas pipeline exploded in Wyoming killing a heavy equipment operator who hit it with his bulldozer. This tragedy illustrates the dangers inherent in this project. LNG burns hotter than native natural gas. Its molecular structure is also different than our local gas. House fires on the east coast of the U.S. have been linked to gas from LNG. Southern California Edison is concerned about its effect on their turbines.

California is not the only place where LNG terminals are proposed. There are community groups from Maine to Oregon working to prevent this new intrusion by the fossil fuel industry. The fossil fuel companies all have far reaching business plans. They depend on government officials to smooth the way, get rid of a regulation or stack a panel with friendly faces. The Bush administration intervened on BHP Billitons behalf to exempt

them from tough environmental controls. They need friends in high places. Friends like members of team Abramoff. Too bad the American people don't have any. Where is the American people's business plan? Don't look to the Bush/Schwarzenegger administrations.

There was a conference that started the day after the election, in San Diego California called "When East Meets West The unfolding of LNG trade in the Pacific". It was for all the LNG companies of the Pacific Rim that want to sell LNG to the American market. One of the key lines in their introduction talked about Hurricane Katrina and the fact that gas prices went up three fold. It was touted as a great arbitrage position. San Diego is also the home of Sempra Energy. They are building an LNG terminal in Mexico, just south of the border, where the permitting process is lax. The sole purpose of this terminal is to import LNG into the U.S. market. Sempra also owns the pipelines, the gas company, and the power plants. They are also building a 1600 mile pipeline from the Rockies to Ohio. They could then cut off the existing supply of local natural gas to the west coast and force California to buy LNG from foreign owned fossil fuel conglomerates. Thanks Arnold.

By the way Arnold, since Maria is in the business of making public service announcements about emergency preparedness, see if she can put in something about an LNG terminal explosion. Our firemen know we can't put out an LNG fire; maybe she can put it out for us.

You don't have to guess what Dick Cheney was talking to the fossil fuel companies about anymore. It was the conversion of the domestic gas industry into a system where the U.S. is dependent on LNG from around the world. The Bush administration is allowing foreign multinationals to have a monopoly on LNG ports around the country. Only they can use the port. We are dependent on crude oil from the Middle East, now they want to include LNG.

During the election campaign, Phil Angeledes, Arnold's opponent, came down to the coast of Malibu and said he would veto the BHP Billiton project. It got minor play in the media. Arnold came directly across the street to Pepperdine University, home of Ken Star, to sign his much vaunted energy bill. This was done with much fanfare. He ignored questions from the local press. They even went to the effort of removing a tee shirt from a 5 year old in the audience, which criticized the LNG terminal.

On October 22<sup>nd</sup>, Actor Pierce Brosnan, surfer Laird Hamilton, Halle Berry, Dick Van Dyke, Cindy Crawford, Ted Danson and a host of Hollywood stars turned out for a paddle out protest at the Malibu Pier. Susan Jordan, from The California Coastal Protection Network spoke of "the irony of the governor signing the clean air bill overlooking the very ocean that would be affected by this terminal." This project will be responsible for 25 million tons of greenhouse gasses per year. This illustrates Arnold's hypocrisy. How can you sign a bill to reduce greenhouse gasses and give approval for a project that increases greenhouse gasses; unless you don't intend to enforce the law.

Hundreds of people turned out for this demonstration including a Polynesian dance troupe from Oxnard California. The dancers drove down in the morning fog to show their support and to entertain the people on the pier. Some of the members of this group live at or near the poverty level. The LA Times choose to refer to a tasteless joke from long dead talk show host Johnny Carson about Oxnard in their article. This paper consistently ignores any documentation that suggests that we don't need this source of foreign fossil fuel.

I would like to coin a new four letter word Ffff. For, f \_\_\_ foreign fossil fuel. Haven't we been fighting a war in the Middle East for this very same issue? Haven't the American people said enough is enough? Let's not let the Bush administration achieve their real goal and yolk the American people to another source of ffff for the next 40 years.

Arnold, the next time you come down to the beach why don't you come down to Oxnard? It is the home to 192,000 people, mostly Latino. The people here have fought off LNG terminals twice already. We will be happy to take you on one more time. We know that you think Oxnard is a good place to put one. Do you really think that if you say you are waiting for the EPA report to decide that we believe you?

The EPA, the environmental pollution agency, has been perverted under the Bush regime. They are illegally trying to use a ruling, intended for the Navy to conduct certain temporary off shore maneuvers, to shoehorn in this LNG project. Under pressure from Washington, the local EPA was overruled. This action reversed stringent air pollution controls for Ventura County and lowered the standard for this project. On Nov 14 there is a meeting of the local air pollution agency to try and stop this invasion of sovereignty by the Bush presidency.

So America, shall we continue to warm the Arctic or should we put an end to the fascist manipulation of our government by the foreign fossil fuel industry? Is your pension worth the price of altering the climate of our world and imperiling the world's children for generations?

John F Kennedy once said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country, I ask Robert Kennedy Jr. to ask his cousin Maria to do for her country and get her husband to put an end to this greedy power grab by the foreign fossil fuel industry.