

Export decision election issue?

By JOHN R. WALKER
Southam News Services
SYDNEY — Sometime in mid-November a shipment of uranium yellowcake, the powdered ore which fuels nuclear reactors, may mule an Australian election.

Australians generally may be more concerned this weekend with the re-play of the Rugby Union final and the opening of the spring sailing season, but by mid-November they could be involved in the great uranium confrontation.

The build-up to this was the government's announcement Aug. 25 of the lifting of a four-year ban on uranium mining and export, and the reaction of the powerful Australian Council of Trade Unions last week to give the government of Malcolm Fraser two months to decide on holding a referendum on whether to proceed with further mining and export of uranium.

Prime Minister Fraser and his Liberal-Country party coalition colleagues have already rejected the referendum idea and are using the ACTU demand, which is supported by the opposition Labor party, as an excuse to call an election.

Unless reason prevails on both sides, after mid-November when a shipment of uranium oxide is sent from the Mary Kathleen mine in northern Australia to the port of Brisbane, left-wing transport or dockers union members will probably refuse to handle it and anti-nuclear demonstrators are likely to hit the streets again.

To Canadians, who have lived with not only the mining and export of uranium for three decades but also the manufacture and export of nuclear reactors, this may seem like attempting to slam the barn door after the cow has escaped.

But for Australians in the post-Vietnam war era and in the wake of the 1975 questionable unseating of the Gough Whitlam Labor government this has the makings of an issue of principle.

Whether Gough Whitlam and his Labor party want an election in December is questionable, but both his party and the Labor movement would like to see a year's moratorium on mining and export while the Australian people debate and express their view on whether nuclear safeguards are tough enough to prevent nuclear weapons expansion and whether methods of nuclear waste disposal are yet adequate for future safety.

Industrial leaders in Melbourne boardrooms may claim this is an issue cooked up by left-wing radicals and ecological freaks, while union leaders will concede the ACTU stand has split the Labor movement, but the man in the Sydney bar will agree with national opinion polls which suggest the safe, conservative action now is to leave it in the ground.

Actually, in lifting the ban on mining and export uranium,

the Fraser government, in close consultation with the Canadian and American governments, has laid down safeguard principles for export which are nearly, but not quite, as stiff as Canada's.

This isn't good enough for Gough Whitlam and the movement against uranium mining, and twice in the past three months there have been violent demonstrations at ship-loading docks in Sydney and Melbourne when yellowcake was being shipped aboard to fulfill old contracts.

While the Conservative-oriented government of Mr. Fraser may have been pushed into lifting the uranium ban by anxious mining interests who know Australia holds 20 per cent of the non-Communist world's uranium reserves, the Labor movement has been pushed into this reaction by the power of its militant left-wing unions.

And Prime Minister Fraser is apparently anxious to grasp the issue as the only one which may save his increasingly unpopular administration. It seems he would like to go to the country on a law and order campaign—Who is running this country, us or the unions? Since his sweeping defeat of the Whitlam regime in 1975, many Australians have begun wondering whether Fraser's government is running it at all.

With unemployment running at an unusual nine per cent, high for this country, with inflation still in the double digit figure of over ten per cent, and capital outflow unexpectedly high, the sooner he has an election—which has to be held by next year at the latest—the better it may be for him.

The Labor party opposition would prefer to hold off any election until next year, when the economic situation might help it more, although the party has been buoyed by recent Labor party gains in state elections in south Australia and the northern territory.

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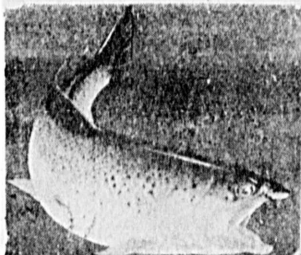
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OUTDOOR RAMBLINGS

Sept. 23, 1977
by Bob Melrose

The best time of year is now here. The beautiful fall colors and weather is hard to beat. Hunting season is in full swing with grouse, deer and moose opening locally a week ago Thursday. Ducks and geese are showing up in ever increasing numbers and over in Alberta much rain has fallen in the northern area creating bad problems for the farmers and great feeding for ducks and geese. Moose and grouse are up locally and it looks like a much better season. This is also the time of year that everybody's hunting and very few fishing and we're missing the best fishing of all. The trout have less food to choose from and aren't quite as selective. They also go on feeding sprees trying to fatten up for the winter and as I say it can really be good. Many outdoor people combine both. They'll catch the morning flight of ducks on their favorite lake and fish later on. It's great. Also on a more serious note, this is the time of year when hunters come under pressure of the anti-gun, anti-kill, ecology, conservation groups, etc. Most of the anti-hunter calls and letters are totally absurd. However, there are those calls or letters that are warranted from the gun slob who shoots up equipment, breaks into cabins, delights in shooting signs, etc. These kind of hunters most of us detest. However here are some facts that all of us who love the outdoors owe hunters (About 145,000 men and women in B.C. and 17 million in North America). The hunter has more reason to be concerned over wildlife than anybody else. Without the game we can't hunt. It is hard cash from hunters and fishermen that pays for wildlife protection, hatcheries and studies, etc. In fact we're putting our money where our mouth is. In the U.S. alone hunters have paid 2.5 billion dollars for conservation through taxes, permits and over 100 Million per year to develop habitats on privately owned land. Hunters have been one of the first groups to recognize interdependence of everything in nature. To pressure one point you must preserve the environment as a whole. Many hunters are members of Rod and Gun Clubs and donate materials and lots of volunteer labor to stream improvement or wildlife habitat. They are the groups who lobby politicians and step in to protect the environment from big non-caring corporations. And, I haven't even mentioned the other aspects of hunting, the quietness, the closeness to nature, the deep friendships, the pleasant memories of the camp and hunt.

Have a good weekend
Bob



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WASHINGTON (AP) — The transportation department announced Wednesday it has launched a major investigation of fuel-tank fires in all subcompact cars sold in the United States.

The action follows charges by Ralph Nader and others that in past models of the Ford Pinto, the gasoline tanks were located in a hazardous position.

The department's highway traffic safety administration said it has begun a crash-test program to measure the possible fire hazard of small-car fuel tanks.

Agency administrator Joan Claybrook said full-sized autos also will be tested for comparative purposes.

The agency said an initial survey showed that since 1975, 26 Pintos have been involved in fires that calimed 35 lives. The charges that prompted the investigation said 500 per-

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U.S. dept. probes fires in fuel tanks

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sons had died in Pinto fires since the car first came out in 1970. But agency officials say they have no figures to substantiate that.

The charges were made in the September-October issue of Mother Jones, a West Coastbased magazine with 150,000 subscribers.

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