

# Canada's Energy Crisis

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information and an evaluation of available petroleum to "policy makers and the general public" the chances of achieving this aim have to be evaluated in this review. In my opinion they are nil. And what would be a great pity because here we have as unbiased a consensus of opinion about Canada's petroleum resources as we can get. It demands a vigorous following-up by means of press releases, popular articles, radio and television programmes and other tricks of the trade of public relations people. Not only needs this to be done with the country-wide information in this book but with regional and even local data of interest to only a limited lay audience. Let the Canadian Society of Petroleum Geologists give all this information wide distribution.

How many legislators are aware of where we stand with respect to past production and future potential of regions in Canada and in their own province? From personal experience I am convinced that a substantial number is fascinated by such an elementary fact as "approximately 47 per cent of the total area of Canada within the continental shelf edge is underlain by unmetamorphosed sedimentary rock" and the implications of that fact on debates concerning resource policies. A lack of awareness appears to be coupled to a willingness to learn; but there is a dearth of instructional material tailored to the general public.

What about the answer to the question raised in the first sentence of this review? Before giving a quantitative answer, the qualifying statements made in this book have to be presented. For one, the oil sands of Alberta are not included in the evaluation. Neither are the sources of oil and natural gas that may occur in the continental slope and rise deposits. More importantly, it should be stressed that no studies were made to determine at what time in the future the resources believed to exist will become economically exploitable. The authors take pains to state and repeat that the various potential estimates are not to be regarded as inevitably part of the future supply. Without extensive economic studies and much looking into a crystal ball it is impossible to

say what supplies will be available at various times in the future. With these caveats then let us have a look at the nation-wide picture.

Canada is believed to have the fairly large future potential of 85 billion barrels (one barrel equals 35 Imperial gallons) of oil and 577 trillion cubic feet of gas. But as recent estimates put the world's resources at the most likely value of 2,000 billion barrels of oil and 12,000 trillion cubic feet of gas, Canada possesses only about four per cent of the world's oil and five per cent of its gas.

Our country has only 32 per cent of the hydrocarbon potential of the United States. To a large extent this apparent Canadian deficiency can be explained in terms of geological differences which become evident to the reader of this book once he is familiar with various types of basins here and across the border.

The bulk of major future conventional supplies is expected in geographically remote areas: the Mackenzie-Banks region, the Arctic Islands, and the Baffin Bay-Labrador Shelf. Compared to the potential of these regions that of the Prairie Provinces is relatively small as can be seen from the following summary, which shows the ultimate recoverable potential of all oil and gas expressed in billions of barrels of oil equivalent.

Western Canada	43.0	} 147.7
Mackenzie-Banks	22.5	
Arctic Islands	52.2	
Baffin Bay-Labrador Shelf	30.0	

Given these estimates there remains little doubt that the oil seekers will intensify the trek northward started in the early 1960s. The economic, political, and environmental consequences of this search are of great importance, not only to the inhabitants of the Prairie Province and those of the North, but to all Canadians.

MS received, August 12, 1974.

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James Laxer  
*James, Lewis and Samuel*  
 Toronto, 136 p., 1974.  
 \$3.95.

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No geological document, this!

This book is mistitled, as its author, a leader of the Waffle group, must be well aware. A more appropriate title would be "The Geopolitics of Petroleum, and Canada's Place in It".

The basic thesis of the book, argued persuasively and well documented, is that if the great leap in the world price of oil had not taken place in 1973, the giant US oil companies would have had to engineer it, or accept for the United States almost total dependence on imported oil in the near future. Not only does the new price make possible the exploitation of hitherto uneconomic conventional domestic hydrocarbon deposits and alternative sources of petroleum (oil shales, liquification of coal); it also raises the manufacturing costs of foreign business competitors of the US to the levels that US manufacturers must suffer through use of high-cost domestic oil.

Laxer argues that too much of the new high price of exported Canadian oil goes to the producing companies as profit (the export tax notwithstanding), and that the only answer satisfactory to Canadian self-interest is public ownership of the oil business.

The book is a political document, but even for those who reject its main conclusions, it brings together in a slim volume much of recent world economic history, and through the references, facilitates individual investigation of the questions treated. It also provides an entertaining evening's reading.

MS received, September 16, 1974.