

Mike Doyle is the President of the CAGC – the Canadian Association of Geophysical Contractors - representing the business interests of the seismic industry within Canada. The CAGC website may be found at [www.cagc.ca](http://www.cagc.ca).

*The Times They Are a-Changin'* by singer-songwriter Bob Dylan is one of Dylan's most famous; many felt that it captured the spirit of social and political upheaval that characterized the 1960s. Written in the mid 1960's – fast-forward 45 years or so – we are there again. The global movements skipped a generation or two (including mine) reflecting a relatively healthy world economy and most people having the ability to live a relatively status quo life (steady as she goes with a slight upward trend).

Over the past year we have seen a number of uprisings around the globe – in the Middle East and in Northern Africa. These date back to dictators who have been in power for 30 to 40 years – perhaps as well reflective of a “quiet” generation. Certainly changes in the world have driven dissatisfaction to the point of civil unrest. We have seen economics yo-yo around the world. In order to sustain growth in world economies prices have to keep moving upward and of course that means salaries must be raised to meet the higher cost of living. If these forces are largely neutralizing then one way to create growth is through debt financing – whether that is at a local level (consumerism) or at a higher level – government debt. The Americans have furthered enhanced this concept through large military spending – in effect also adding to the US economy through direct spending internally but in the end it still remains debt financed. Leah Lawrence writes an interesting column in Septembers' Oilweek magazine titles Debt-ceiling drama. She refers to an online program called Budget Hero located at marketplace (Google this) in which you can attempt to balance the USA debt through various fiscal measures. Good luck – very difficult – considering the political realities of recent uprisings in Greece over Government austerity measures.

Even locally we are seeing a change in the general direction of Canadian politics. The NDP has become the official opposition federally. Calgary Mayor Naheed Nenshi represents a new type of younger progressive politician. And most recently the Provincial Progressive Conservatives elected Alison Redford to become the next Premier of Alberta. Alison represents a definite shift towards the center for the PC's – a “Red Tory” if you will – defined as "socially liberal, fiscally conservative".

The new generation is speaking (even if it represents a mixture of other generations). We have seen great economic turmoil in the past couple of years. These politicians have tremendous challenges ahead of them (note Obama's challenges with enacting social and environmental reforms given economic realities). My father always said there is only one type of person paying the bills and that is me (as in the taxpayer). As with a business or any type of financial enterprise the only way to improve the balance sheet is to increase revenue (Governments tax) or decrease costs. Living on credit tends to be only a short term stop gap.

In light of this new world I did want to write about some of our issues – in particular fracturing. First of all I would like to point out that CAPP have does a tremendous job in changing the face of the debate over OilSands. Over the past couple of years CAPP have

spent a great deal of effort on the issue and the face of public consciousness. The Keystone Pipeline debate certainly has some reflections on the OilSands but even accepting that suggests the debate is of a much lower key than what others may have expected. The vast majority of the media seems to be focused here in Alberta – celebrities being arresting in front of the White House – is only reported here. When interviewing local Washington correspondents, CBC Radio found that the pipeline protests were not really news – a few hundred to a thousand protesters in front of the White House is a daily occurrence over one issue or another. A “twitter” arranged protest in Ottawa only saw a couple of hundred show up (but it was well covered by media in Alberta). Hearings in Nebraska ended up seeing more pro-pipeline people show up demanding jobs that those who protested against the pipeline.

This summer we saw protests in New Brunswick and blockades of one of our seismic companies over frac’ing (water issues). Despite seismic have nothing directly to do with later developments the company sustained some \$140,000 plus in damages and theft. The protest movement began slowly but over time gain momentum becoming better organized and attracting more credible voices to the cause. The Government was caught very flat-footed. They really had no idea how to react. The RCMP would not show up until a crime was committed and were reluctant initially to press charges. The Oil Company ended up shutting down the seismic work early in the end. And since that time we have seen other Oil Companies move ahead with seismic and both the Government and RCMP become more proactive in dealing with the situation(s) before it gets out of hand.

There is lots of coverage on the NB issue on the Internet and also we are seeing it show up in various Industry columns. Oilweek’s October edition – Wes Reid’s Rock Ramblings column titled *Pommelling possibilities* subtitled *Roar of emotions echo to develop New Brunswick’s shale gas ramp up*. Dale Lunan’s editor’s note in Unconventional Gas Guide (October 2011) titled *Hot Summer* with a sub-note “Although not quite to the scale of Freedom Summer; shale opponents are sounding out.”

And finally some higher level coverage on the issue itself. See the Roughneck Buy & Sell – August 2011 – Peter Glover’s “Canada’s Economy could miss out in the coming Age of Gas”; Dave Yager’s column in September’s Oilweek titled *Irrational Wealth* subtitled *In the debate over energy sustainability, lost is any discussion of the alternative*; and Dave Collyer’s Association Corner column in August’s Oilweek titled *Meeting the Gas Challenge* subtitled *Natural gas can be our most successful and profitable fuel, if market challenges can be addressed*.

Interesting times lie ahead. Cheap fuel and environmentalism are not easily compatible. Couple this with growing global economic instability and we really do need some new and fearless leaders. It isn’t going to be easy.

From the Thursday Files

*A civilized society is one which tolerates eccentricity to the point of doubtful sanity.*

**- Robert Frost, *Poet***