K.C.IRVING -a fairly influential man

By JUDY GRIEVE

It would seem fairly obvious, to me, anyway, that anyone who has ever had the doubtful privilege of seeing any of the province of New Brunswick, that K. C. Irving is a fairly influential man here. The countryside is festooned with Irving Oil signs, oil tanks, and gas stations..

Although this is a slightly exaggerated picture, Irving has influenced New Brunswick in a vast number of ways. He has done immeasureable work in the development of a relatively backward province. Yet in doing so he seems to have gained great power which it is doubtful is totally beneficial to the province.

All of us are concerned, at least to some extent, with the contemporary problem of air pollution. Students of former years at UNB must have noticed, at some time or another, how much pollution was caused by the old heating plant previously centrally located on the campus (by the Nursing Building). You could almost taste the sulfur, walking past it. It is a fact that the university purchased a large percentage of the oil for the plant from Irving Oil. It is also a fact that Irving Oil has almost a 3 per cent sulfur content, while the other alternative companies from which the oil could be purchased, Imperial Oil, and Gulf Oil have 1.8% -2% and 2%-3% sulfur contents respectively.

G.P. Semeluk, professor of chemistry here, last year made a study on the availibility of low sulfur fuel oils, and the moral, health and probably genetic dangers involved in continuing to use high sulfur fuels in our heating plants. While the Irving Oil Company was unco-operative in giving out information concerning their oil, Professor Semeluk obtained from a friend, an Irving employee, the almost 3% sulfur content statistic.

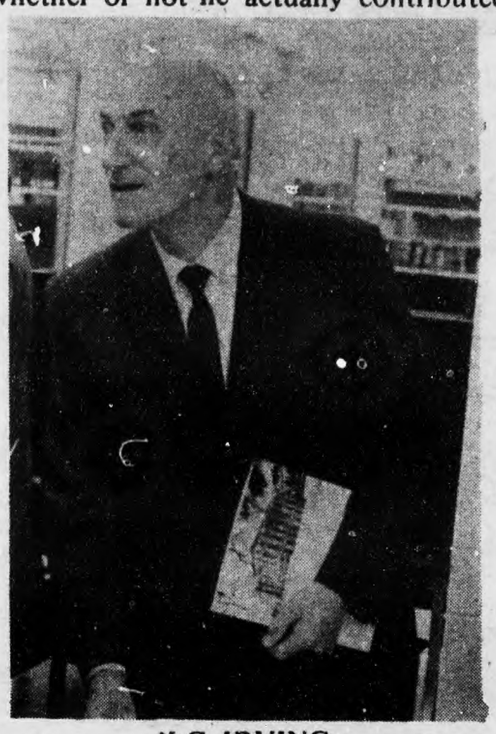
In the same study, Professor Semeluk made the recommendation that the university enter into yearly contracts with the oil company which sells the fuel oil having the lowest sulfur content.

Yet the university continues to purchase the fuel oil from Irving.

Why? Perhaps it is a result of Mr. Irving's personal influence with the university administration.

Irving himself has a great deal of involvement in our university. He was a member of the board of governors for more than a decade, retiring in 1969. While on the Board he was apparently very conscientious in performing his duties, and attended meetings regularly. During all this time Irving obviously gained influence and prestige with the administration of the university.

He has also, at one time or another, donated sums of money to UNB. The Harriet Irving Library, officially opened in 1967, was named after his wife, and while it appears somewhat doubtful whether or not he actually contributed



K.C. IRVING

to the library, he has made monetary contributions to UNB. Such contributions would, naturally, serve to increase anyone's influence here.

This, then, is one example of the power Irving possesses. But I wonder how many of us are aware of the control Irving has over the media in New Brunswick. How many of us know that Irving has gained control of all five English-language newspapers in the province?

Not many people did, until Charles McElman, previously executive assistant to Louis Robichaud, revealed it after his recent elevation to the senate. And the newspapers are not the only section of the media controlled by Mr. Irving. New Brunswick Broadcasting is owned 99.5% by the New Brunswick Publishing Company Limited, (CHSJ) which in turn is owned 99.7% by K.C. Irving Limited, which is owned 100% by Irving himself.

The Fredericton Gleaner was the last private English paper in the province. The purchase of this was kept secret, the deal being closed May 5, 1968. When Gleaner employees were informed of Mr. Irving's ownership of the paper some months later, they were totally surprised, and, in some cases, shocked.

The implications of the situation are stated most explicitly by the Toronto Daily Star:

> "Mr. Irving has in effect created a private empire of New Brunswick, complete with its official press-print and electronic."

For many years New Brunswick industries played off the various municipal governments against one another for special tax deals. It must be pointed out that the Telegraph-Journal, probably the leader of the Irving group of papers, never editorialized against this practice. When the New Brunswick government finally brought it uniform assessment and tax deals throughout the province, and all such future deals were stopped, Irving raised such a strong protest that existing deals were not cancelled as had originally been intended.

There are doubtless many incidents unfavourable to Irving's interests which for various reasons have not been given much or any publicity throughout New Brunswick. The Irving Company, has been involved in shipping incidents causing pollution for example, oil spills, on the high seas, and in the St. John harbour area. Yet how much, if anything, is heard of any of these incidents in New Brunswick? In fact, there does not seem to be as much reporting or editorial comment by New Brunswick papers as there is elsewhere on pollution from incidents such as oil spills at all, and especially by ships belonging to the Irving group of companies.

There was very little mention, and almost no public outcry over the sinking of the Irving Whale, and the subsequent contamination of the water of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. That ship still lies on the floor of the Gulf where it sank. Why has Irving not been forced to remove it?

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