

Hannaford has his first crack at play writing

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by John Keery

It was Nigel Hannaford to the bone marrow complete with pretty girls, good food and Englishman's standard lines as Stage North players read out his satire play on the Site C issue at the Mackenzie Inn last night.

When it was all over a couple of the Stage North players provided a bit of bonus drama by taking a few clear shots at Hannaford and some of the Hydro officials present.

"Look at them, they are leaving, leaving, and they make \$35,000 a year," Michael Puttonen cried out. "At least Hannaford had the guts to try to present his views in a play - look at them they're leaving and they make more than he does. They won't even stay and answer any questions."

Dennis Szalai, who read the part of the officious judge, asked Hannaford if there would still be a Taylor and a Fort St John if the dam was built.

Hannaford replied that he was sure there would be.

SET IN 2181

The play was set two hundred years in the future when Western

Canada had become an independent state, the world had survived a nuclear war and the country, a major revolution.

Western Canada, known as Canada West, had a population of 100 million - including 50 million Chinese which it had been forced to take at the treaty of Manila at the end of the war - and was having difficulty feeding them.

The issue of progress had become not building dams, but pulling them down to expose much-needed agricultural land. But the vested interests represented by alderman Charlotte Grafton and the City of Fort St John - who had acquired a controlling interest in the Site C dam over the years - wanted to continue to reap the profits and wield the power that went with their control of this major energy source, and were opposed to pulling the dam down.

The revolutionary suggestion was made that there be a public hearing on the issue - something that had not happened for over 80 years.

And just to make matters a bit more interesting and to poke fun at the environmentalists in 1981, a so-

named Brummett Ridge appeared to be ready to fall into the lake and create a tidal wave amid rumors that the dam was cracking and unsafe.

However the point we must not miss is that this was supposed to be happening 200 years from now after the dam and the ridge had weathered near misses from atomic weapons in battles like the battle of Pouce Coupe, Taylor, Sikanni Chief, and so on.

WOULD NEED A CATASTROPHE

The whole point Hannaford appears to have been trying to make - and indeed said so - is that it would take a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions before we would need the land that would be flooded by the Site C dam for food production. Most of it is not now used for farming and Hannaford says he can't see how it could be economically so used in the foreseeable future.

Critics, including the theatre company's Buck Duckworth and the PVEA's Adrienne Peacock, attacked him for racism, sexism and insensitivity to the food needs of the third world because of what was said

in the play.

Hannaford replied that there was no suggestion that the 50 million Chinese shouldn't have been in Western Canada, even though it was admittedly hard to feed them, that human nature being what it is, there would always be sex differences, and that food could not be practically transported to the third world from here, given today's high fuel costs.

THE PLAY REFLECTS ITS AUTHOR

The part about the play that interested me, apart from the theatre antics after it was finished, was the way the character of the author came through in the play.

There was Janie McKinnon, the cute reporter - obviously a candidate for Town and Country.

She enjoyed eating good food with freelance prospector Gordon Armstrong - another of Hannaford's self-admitted weaknesses. He has a hard time resisting the lure of the hamburger.

Then there is the whole futuristic, science fiction-like setting - once again Hannaford to the backbone.



When Grafton tells secretary Brown that 'you don't yawn when I am talking to you' and 'just pour the coffee', and editor Cavendish tells a Hydro employee he is interviewing, 'now there's a good chap,' we could be back in the real news office.

Finally, to add to the fun in a very Hannaford-like fashion, we find an old book entitled 'Barrett's Confessions and Barrett's Repentances' being discovered.

It may not have been the best from the theatre people's point of view but I found the whole thing hilarious, even if it was a bit long.

Not bad for your first play, Nigel.