

The best Senate money can buy

By FRANCIS BROADHURST

When powerful men in the U.S. Senate successfully cut a back-room deal to torpedo Cape Wind's five-year effort to build the first offshore wind park in America, many of us were appalled but not surprised.

One could imagine the cheers that went up among the anti-wind farm folks in the Alliance to Protect Nantucket Sound and other Luddite organizations, which seem terrified of any advancement of technology if it benefits a profit-making business.

"Wow," they might have exclaimed, "we have the best United States Senate money can buy!"

Indeed, we have. And opponents of wind energy, especially those out to stop the Nantucket Sound project, have lavished millions of dollars directly and indirectly to make sure it doesn't happen.

The Senate, doing the bidding of Alaska's Congressman Don Young and its Senator Ted Stevens, sneaked a rider into the Coast Guard Authorization Bill that ought to be offensive to any reasonable person who expects fair play from our Congress. The House rejected Young's attempt to kill the Nantucket Sound project. The Senate - with behind-the-scenes support from our own Senator Ted Kennedy and his friend Senator John Warner, R-Va., both of whom came out early and often in opposition to Cape Wind - defied the chairman of the Senate Energy Committee, Pete Domenici, R-Ariz., to put the crippling language into the bill.

Someone wrote that the rider amounts to a "Bill of Attainder," which is prohibited under our Constitution. It certainly comes close to being either that or "ex post facto" legislation, also prohibited by our Constitution.

A Bill of Attainder was a device used by kings and parliaments to condemn their enemies to death by a special act. It was used by corrupt monarchs as a hammer over the heads of those who might make trouble. Ex post facto legislation criminalizes actions taken before the new law passed.

The back-room deal targeting Cape Wind's project is being hailed by the anti-wind forces as wonderful news. If allowed to stand, no enterprise will be allowed unless those who support the "Nanny State" are completely satisfied that their interests are taken care of.

Is that any way to show respect for the rule of law? I think not. Those who say Jim Gordon and Cape Wind were operating in back rooms appropriating public land for private profit are just plain wrong. The proponents have been open and above board seeking to bring state, local and regional governing bodies aboard. In return, they got the back of the hand from organized opponents, who have refused to wait until the facts are in. For five years, Cape Wind has patiently responded to every argument made by opponents. When they refute the bogus arguments, the opposition invents new ones and spends millions to lobby key legislators to do

their bidding.

From the outset their game has been to delay, delay and delay in hopes of bankrupting the project and driving away any investors.

There are sincere opponents of the Nantucket Sound project, but there is a reek of insincerity about others who are supported by coal, gas, and oil producers. They simply want no competition from clean, renewable energy sources.

If Cape Wind is allowed to succeed, it could open the door to development of more offshore wind parks, including some in deep water where there are more serious obstacles of engineering and electrical transmission to overcome.

The latest straw being grasped by opponents is a report that the wind turbines might (not will, but might) interfere with military and aviation radar transmissions. That claim is being evaluated by not only the British government, which brought the problem to light, but by others who believe technology will solve any problems that might arise. I'm on their side.

We must work to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and foreign sources if we are to survive as a producer nation and retain the many benefits that science and technology have provided us in abundance.

As the late Robert Kennedy said years ago about another important issue: "If not here, where? If not now, when?"

Francis Broadhurst is a Cape Cod Times columnist. Write him at 88 Stony Cliff Road, Centerville, MA 02632 or e-mail him at fibcape@comcast.net

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