

Northeast Avalon Times January 2019

**Rex Murphy and corporate oil journalism
Birds I View
Bill Montevocchi**



Erik Raude exploration drill rig

Rex Murphy's pen and tongue are much sharper than the sword. Though always astute, clever and eloquent, what is most telling is where Mr. Murphy aims his cuts.

In his recent end-of-the-year diatribe in the *National Post* (<https://nationalpost.com/opinion/rex-murphy-time-is-wrong-todays-journalists-are-not-guardians-of-the-truth>), Mr. Murphy takes *Time Magazine* to task putting Jamal Khashoggi and other journalists on its cover as Persons of the Year. While making some telling points about Mr. Khashoggi's background, it is of no consequence to Mr. Murphy that Jamal Khashoggi was killed inside the Saudi Arabian Embassy in Turkey (where 68 journalists are imprisoned) apparently at the order of the Saudi crown prince, that the murder was publically lied about and that his body which was presumably dismembered has never been recovered.

According to Mr. Murphy's assessment, Myanmar journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo who were arrested for reporting on the government's massacre of Rohingya Muslims were not guardians of the truth either. If so, then why would the United Nations call for the reporters' release and issue a report that Myanmar's military had carried out mass killings and gang rapes of the Rohingya with "genocidal intent"? Myanmar has rejected the call for the journalists' release and the findings of the UN report. Last week the reporters lost an appeal for their release in the supreme court of Myanmar.

On 13 December 2018, CBC's *The National* reported that the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalist released its annual count of imprisoned journalists around the world, finding that 251 journalists are currently behind bars for the offence of doing their jobs

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/thenational/national-today-newsletter-journalists-arrest-china-1.4939072>). Clearly this is a vitally important issue of international concern about human rights and due democratic processes, as *Time Magazine* has emphasized.

Yet moving right along and never one to waste an opportunity, Mr. Murphy goes on to instruct us in what journalism is and what it is not. Swinging into one of his favorites Mr. Murphy launches an attack on what he refers to as environmental journalism which he regards as an impossibility, or rather in terms of Mr. Murphy's vernacular, is an "impossibility" (you can check his definition if you feel the need).

Mr. Murphy has penned long-standing and consistently outlandish attacks on climate change and environmental scientists. Might there be any hint of impossibility in Mr. Murphy's journalistic tactics?

Let's consider that in 2014, the Press Progress reported that since 2009, "Big Oil booked Murphy as a paid speaker 25 times since 2009, while [he was] railing against environmentalists on CBC's flagship newscast The National"

https://pressprogress.ca/cbc_paves_way_for_more_rex_murphy_big_oil_pep_rallies/).

CBC took criticism seriously and on 2015, General Manager and Editor in Chief Jennifer McGuire wrote on her blog "We were disappointed some people were willing to believe that ... Rex Murphy's opinion is for sale." Referring to an ombudsman's report on the issue, she went on "When it comes to freelance hosts, we will be updating their contracts so that they are compelled to disclose their paid events to us, and we in turn will disclose them to you. ... We're confident that these measures will answer the concerns about perceived conflicts of interest." <https://www.cbc.ca/newsblogs/community/editorsblog/2014/04/review-of-speaking-engagements.html>).

Well, taking this at face value and accepting that we are not dealing with a conflict of interest, could be dealing with an "impossibility"? Or could Mr. Murphy's corporate oil journalism be something even worse?

Birds in and around the area

Oiled birds have been showing up along the east coast. At the end of December an oiled long-tailed duck was shot near Carmanville (Nicholas Easton), and an oiled herring gull was seen on Quidi Vidi Lake (Ron Ash). Oiled great black-backed gulls have also be seen at the lake, and an oiled Iceland gull was at Robin Hood Bay (Dave Brown). The heavy oiling on the birds looks like Bunker C fuel oil that is at times discharged in the bilge water of ships. Usually when sea ducks and gulls are oiled it is from vessels travelling relatively close to shore. When out hunting or hiking along the coast during the winter months, it is a good idea to stay vigilant.

Hairy woodpeckers and flickers have been gorging at the multi-suet feeders at the Mayo's by Neary's Pond. In early January, Rex Porter has red-breasted nuthatches visiting his feeder for the first time. Interestingly on almost the same day Harry Sheppard called from Stag Harbour on Fogo Island to tell me about the first sighting of nuthatches at his feeder. Has there been a recent

influx? Nuthatch numbers may be down this winter, we had our first ever so brief sighting of a nuthatch at our feeders during 2018 on 30 December.

Rex Porter's feeder also supports a small contingent of the local over-wintering population of mourning doves in our area, with four doves visiting until Christmas and two since then. American goldfinches are flocking about the area, a lone individual brightened our resident junco flock after the lovely early December snowfall. And speaking about brightening feeders see the column photo of the rainbow lorikeets at a friends' feeder in New South Wales Australia where my family and I spent a warm sunny Christmas. What a pleasure to enjoy the sun and to be beyond the reach of the USA commercialized Xmas noise.

Nick and Katie Montevecchi picked up a freshly killed magnificent bohemian waxwing that appeared to be the victim of a window strike on Boulder Lane in Portugal Cove on 8 December. In early January a flock of evening grosbeaks were seen on Neary's Pond Road in Portugal (Janet Montevecchi) and in Stag Harbour on Fogo Island (Harry Sheppard).

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