

'War on pollution' hopes to reclaim Chinese skies

BY ALLISON STALBERG
STAFF WRITER

Imagine every breath you take being a hazard to your health. Picture rarely seeing the blue sky because it is blocked by a cloud of pollution hovering over your city every day.

China has been struggling with pollution for years. This year on March 5, Premier Li Keqiang began the annual Chinese Parliament meeting with a "declaration of war" on pollution.

"We will declare war against pollution and fight it with the same determination we battled poverty," said Li during a State of the Union style address, according to The New York Times.

"Pollution started when (reformist leader) Deng Xiaoping launched the economic reform in 1979," said George Guo, professor of political science.

Others in China agreed with Guo. "The pollution problem started over 20 years ago," said Fred Engst, professor at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, in an email interview with The Guilfordian. "As China is becoming more industrialized, the pollution problem is worsening."

Former resident of Beijing Ann Tompkins taught in the nation's capital from 1965-1970 and continues to visit China.

She recalled pollution being an issue in the 1960s. "People used small stoves for their cooking and heating," Tompkins said in an email interview with The Guilfordian. "These stoves used coal cakes made to fit into the stoves. That meant that, every winter especially, a great deal of pollution could be seen hanging over Beijing."

"On the other hand, there were impressive recycling, reusing and reducing practices," said Tompkins. "Animal manure was collected off the streets, and human waste was also treated and used as fertilizer. All old metal, cloth and paper ... everything was collected and put to another use. My favorite was learning that the padded clothing we wore in winter was recycled into toilet paper."

These eco-friendly methods, however, could not stop China from becoming one of the world's most polluted countries.

"The pollution aggravates our respiratory illnesses, prolonging the time it takes to recover from colds," said Engst.

Smog in the cities forces many citizens to wear protective masks. For others, pollution is a reason to leave China.

"More people are leaving China because of the pollution, and multinationals are having a harder time getting people to take on assignments in China," said Jerel Bonner, a citizen of Shanghai, in an email interview with The Guilfordian.

Many agree that government officials have consistently attempted to curb pollution.

"China has issued many rules and regulations to reduce pollution since the 1980s," said Guo. "The government has made the effort to cut emissions from its power plants, factories and cars."

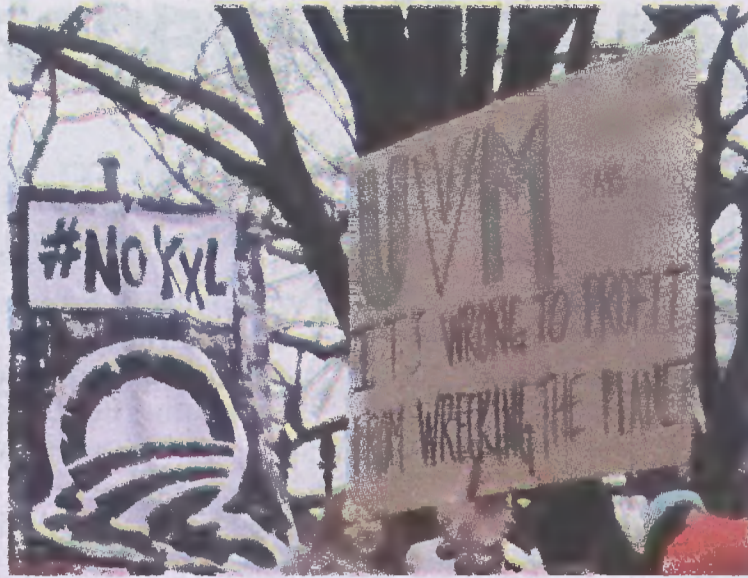
However, another difficulty arises from the government's vested interests in the industries causing pollution.

"Steel plants, for example, are one of the main sources of pollution and are also the main source for local government revenue," said Engst.

"The plant owners often bribe inspectors and make their pollution control devices work only during the daytime when people can see smoke (rising) from their factories," said Engst. "But during the night, the devices tend to be turned off in order to save money."

"So, during the day, we see white smoke, and in the night, the smoke is black."

Where, then, lies hope for a cleaner future in China? "To solve the pollution problem, there has to be a consensus," said Engst. "To bring about the consensus, (the problem) has to be really bad, making everyone realize the severity of the problem. That's the way Western countries learned to take pollution seriously earlier."



NICOLE ZELNIKER/GUILFORDIAN

On March 2, students marched to protest the building of the Keystone XL pipeline. The project poses serious environmental threats.

Keystone Pipeline protests rage on

BY NICOLE ZELNIKER
STAFF WRITER

On March 2, thousands of students gathered on the streets of Washington, D.C. in what is said to have been the largest student protest since the Vietnam War.

They marched in dissent of the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline.

"Three phases have already been completed," said junior and Guilford College Democrats President Josh Weil. "We're protesting the fourth phase: the pipeline actually being built."

Students voiced concerns about the fact that more fossil fuels are generated by the oil in the Keystone Pipeline System than by oil produced in the U.S.

"The company that wants to build the Keystone has a very poor environmental reputation," said sophomore and Sustainability Committee head Lily Collins. "We want to stop the building of fossil fuel infrastructure due to the carbon that's released from fossil fuels."

Many believe that the construction will affect everyone from bird and reptile species to human beings.

"The potential for destroying wetland areas and major aquifers is really high," said Allison Bressler, intern at Sierra Club's Beyond Oil Campaign, in a phone interview with The Guilfordian.

"Tarsandsemitaboutthreetimes

the gases as conventional oil," said protest organizer Nicholas Stracco to The Guilfordian. "It erodes oil pipelines, (and) we have no proven way to clean it up."

During the protest, 372 people were arrested after voluntarily zip-tying their arms to the fence in front of the White House.

"At first it was exciting, then the weather turned cold," said Warren Wilson College first-year Christopher Feidler-Cree in an email interview with The Guilfordian. "Our spirits were not diminished and rounds of chanting broke out often. There was an amazing sense of community."

Cheering from the crowd remained consistent from 10 a.m. to the last arrest at 7 p.m.

"When the policeman placed handcuffs on one of us, the rhythmic chant of, 'We love you! We love you! We love you!' roared from the crowd," said Warren Wilson sophomore and protest organizer Jamie DeMarco in an email interview with The Guilfordian. "It was hard to feel anything but inspired."

Students were inspired by the fact that this was a youth-led protest.

"This is our future we are talking about, and I think it is important to be informed about issues like these that can directly affect us," said first-year Davia Young.

Although no Guilford students

were arrested during the protests, they showed support of the protesters who were.

"It's hard to watch these people who care so much about this cause that they are willing to be arrested," said Weil. "They're willing to sacrifice their futures."

First-year Devon Murphy-Anderson believes that the protest symbolized her generation's high-mindedness.

"The protest (won't) stop Obama from signing the bill enabling construction of the fourth installment of the Keystone pipeline," said Murphy-Anderson. "This protest was about showing America that our generation is listening and that we care about our earth and our future."

DeMarco is more hopeful of the results.

"We sent the message, 'No Keystone XL pipeline,' as loudly as we could," said DeMarco. "President Obama has heard us, and now the question is: will he listen?"

Students must remember, however, that the power to construct the pipeline does not rest solely with Obama.

"It's not like the president can just snap his fingers and shut it down," said Weil. "There are a lot of working parts. Although Obama is a major factor, there are many people at play that also need to be moved into making the right decision."



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