

Claire Hoy ? Balance nowhere in his agenda

You've probably never heard of Tim Moen. Don't worry, I hadn't either, until reading a small blurb in a local newspaper about his experiences filming the Fort McMurray area with Canadian-born rock star Neil Young and his movie star pal Darryl Hannah. That's the same Young, you may already know, who called Fort McMurray ? home of the controversial Alberta oil sands ? a ?wasteland? and compared it to ?Hiroshima.?

You've likely heard of Hiroshima, however. That's the Japanese city where the U.S. dropped an atomic bomb late in the Second World War, killing well over 100,000 people and devastating the city.

Days later, Japan announced its surrender and the war officially ended. Whatever your views on the bombs ? and the fact is, brutal as they were, a land invasion of Japan (which, let's not forget, started the war against the U.S.) would have taken many more lives on both sides.

But that argument is for another day. Let's just say that comparing Fort McMurray, or anywhere else, to the nuked-out Hiroshima is beyond odious. It's also the kind of comparison guaranteed to give Young the headlines he's craving ? and it certainly did that ? but undermines his cause by making him look like the complete ass which he seems to be when it comes to promoting his side of the issue.

Which brings us back to Tim Moen.

He's a fan of Neil Young's music. Me too. I recently read his memoirs and must say, given the lifestyle he and his cronies have adopted, it's amazing he's still around doing his music.

Besides being a fabulously successful ? and wealthy ? musician, of course, Young is also an ardent environmentalist.

He has been working on a documentary for many years focusing on his classic 1959 Lincoln Continental, the car he calls his Lincvolt after hiring a group of engineers to turn it into a hybrid using cellulosic ethanol, which, thanks to his wealth, he is able to ship at considerable expense to wherever he happens to be.

Fair enough. He's preaching the gospel and putting his money where his mouth is.

What isn't fair, however, is that he clearly decided in advance that his depiction of the oil sands would be totally devoid of any balance whatsoever.

We know this because Moen ? having been hired to shoot aerial footage for Young from a helicopter ? was instructed, among other things, to take some of the Lincvolt driving on the highway near Syncrude and Suncor, using the oilsands as a backdrop, and also to shoot tailings ponds and industrial plants.

But Moen was also instructed NOT to show footage of any reclaimed land or any new extraction operations using green technology, which is quite widespread in Alberta these days. He was also told not to film the diesel-burning bus that his crew was driving around in. Nor was Young at all interested in speaking to some environmentally conscious oilsands supporters whom Moen ? having lived in Fort McMurray for 13 years ? had lined up in advance to brief Young on the environmental advances in the current extraction methods. ?That wasn't on his agenda,? says Moen.

And, of course, there was no time to talk to any industry experts to seek out their perspective, perhaps out of fear that some real facts would get in the way of his pre-supposed agenda.

Young did manage to interview some First Nations chiefs who are critics of the oilsands, but apparently made no effort to seek out First Nations people who are benefitting from the more than one billion in investments into the First Nations which have flowed so far from this massive development.

Young's ?Hiroshima? comments, naturally, made news both at home and abroad, no doubt helping to spread the false news that the oilsands are ?dirty oil.? They're not, actually. What's more, they're Canadian, and surely a damned sight better than depending upon such OPEC stalwarts as Iran for our oil supply, at least for those of us who can't afford to spend hundreds of thousands converting our cars and importing environmentally-friendly fuel to run them.

And while Young got to bask in the glory of striking another blow for environmentalism, the other side of the story ? Moen's side ? was pretty much ignored by the mainstream media. Moen himself wrote a piece for the Huffington Post on it and ? get this ? the Toronto Star ran a short blurb buried in its entertainment spotlight feature on Page E11 last Friday.

To repeat, I like Neil Young's music. And I'd be interested in his view if he really took the time to study both sides of the issue ? and there are two sides.

In the meantime, I wish he'd just shut up and sing.

