

BY EMAIL
15th July 2003

Dear James,

Thank you for your email replying to our letter about the planned workshop on the BTC project. I am replying for the Corner House but other signatories to the original letter will also be replying. Friends of the earth is currently on a retreat. I have however discussed the contents of this letter with Phil Michaels of FOE and Kerim Yildiz of KHRP.

I am afraid that your justifications for the one-sided choice of speakers fail to convince us.

We are aware that there have been occasions on which Chatham House has invited a single speaker to speak at a meeting or speakers from just one side of a debate. We recognise that it would be inappropriate, for example, to invite the Burmese government to a meeting that is intended to provide an opportunity for Burmese opposition groups to discuss the future of democracy in Burma. However, such meetings are the exception rather than the rule. Nothing in your letter has persuaded us that the BTC meeting merits such exceptional treatment.

BP is a company that has stated publicly that it is committed to dialogue with its critics, and BTC consortium has expressly stated that it is seeking such dialogue with all stakeholders in the BTC project. Neither company should therefore have a problem with sharing a platform with others who have different views and should welcome a programme that ensures that the audience is fully informed of different perspectives on the project prior to debating the issues. At the moment, this is not the case: the workshop gives the impression of being simply a PR event.

As you will be aware, this is a deeply controversial project. All the more reason, therefore, that steps should have been taken to ensure that the structure of the meeting allowed for the audience to be fully and properly informed of the issues from different perspectives. We do not believe that this was done: certainly we are unaware of any critics of the project having been asked for their views on the proposed workshop. We also note that the invitations were sent out at such short notice that many of those who would have liked to attend are unable to do so.

Leaving aside the question of whether or not the current structure of the workshop breaks Chatham House's charter - for our part, we are still convinced that, at the very least, it tramples on the spirit of Chatham House - we do not believe that it is either right or fair that the

project's promoters should have been accorded such a dominant role in the workshop's proceedings, benefiting unjustifiably from the patina of authority that is conferred on a panel that is held at Chatham House.

We would therefore request that you give urgent consideration to inviting other experts to speak from the platform at the meeting alongside those from BP/BTC.

Yours Sincerely

Nicholas Hildyard