



Saboteurs: Wiebo Ludwig's War Against Big Oil

Andrew Nikiforuk

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At Trickle Creek in northern Alberta, Wiebo Ludwig thought he'd buffered his tiny religious community from civilization, but in 1990 civilization came calling. A Calgary oil company proposed to drill directly in view of the farm's communal dining room. Ludwig wrote letters, petitioned, forced public hearings, and discovered the provincial regulator cared little about landowners. After the oil company accidentally vented raw sour gas, Ludwig's wife miscarried. Hostilities against the oil company began with nails on the roads, sabotaged well sites, and road blockades. They culminated in death threats, shootings, and bombings. The RCMP recruited a Ludwig acolyte as an informant, and in an attempt to establish the man's credibility the police themselves blew up an equipment shack. Ludwig was charged with 19 counts of mischief, vandalism, and possession of explosives, and he was later convicted on five charges. This taut work of nonfiction, first published in 2002, won both a Governor General's Award and the Arthur Ellis Award for True Crime Writing. With the escalation of oil and gas extraction over the past decade, the unsettling questions Saboteurs raises about individual rights, corporate power, police methods, and government accountability are more relevant than ever.



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