

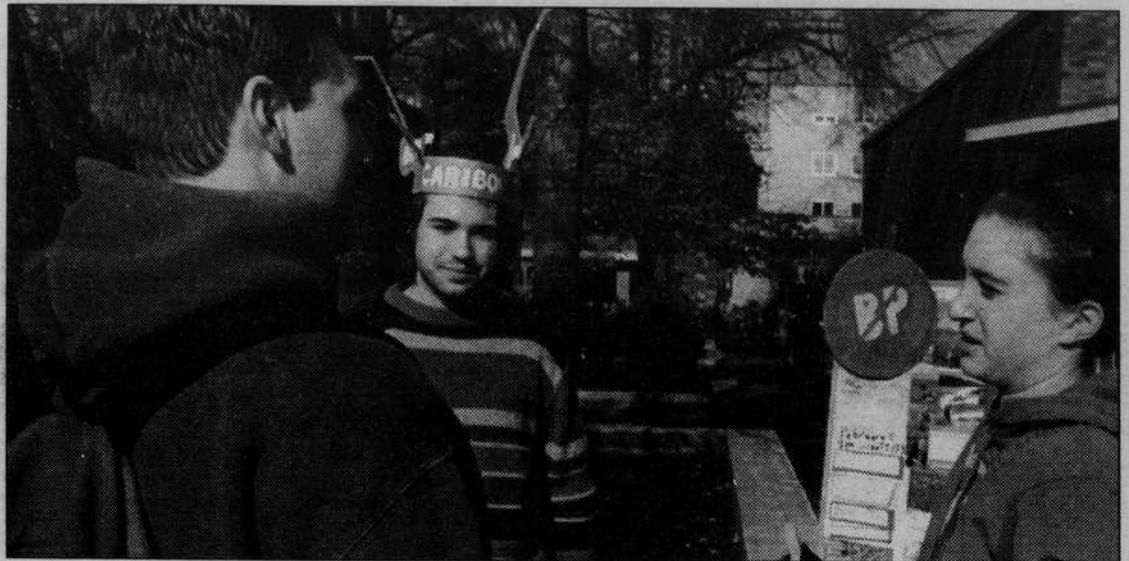
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Laura Smit Emerald  
Michelle Swank, an intern at OSPIRG, and Andy Ritenour (back), volunteer for OSPIRG at 13th Avenue and Kincaid. They take time to explain to junior Paul Lipska how the oil company British Petroleum has sights set on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

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**ANWR**

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have pushed for opening ANWR, an area located in Alaska's northeastern corner. The area is divided into 8 million acres of protected wilderness, 9 million acres of wildlife refuge and 1.5 million acres that the oil industry wants to open for drilling. ExxonMobil, BP, Chevron and other companies have made previous attempts to open the Coastal Plain, with the support of Alaska's governors and senators, who had hoped oil findings would boost the state's economy.

Former President Bill Clinton vetoed bills that would have opened the Coastal Plain, but Bush said he was in favor of revisiting the option during his campaign and after he was elected.

The Student Public Interest Research Group, OSPIRG's national organization, was quick to begin a campaign to prevent the drilling, as it has in the past. But this time, instead of trying to convince the administration not to allow drilling, activists are focusing more efforts on persuading Browne not to drill.

OSPIRG Campus Program Director Ben Unger said that because of Bush's "hard-liner" stance on the

issue, it would be nearly impossible to change the president's mind. He added that since Bush appointed Dick Cheney, a former CEO of an oil company, as head of the oil exploration committee, it would be especially difficult to sway the administration's interests.

"We have to find another way to make this happen," he said. "We think we can convince BP to do the right thing."

Dan Ritzman, climate campaigner for Greenpeace, said oil companies ignore the possibility that drilling for oil will disturb the wildlife, especially the caribou. He added that many oil companies are also known to cause unplanned oil spills.

But Cam Toohey, executive director of Arctic Power, a non-profit group that represents the oil industry's stance on ANWR issues, said most environmental concerns are built on myths. He said that based on evidence from the construction of the Alaskan Pipeline and with the high-tech equipment used, the area could be drilled without harming the environment.

"We're not choosing oil over the environment," he said. "We can have both."

But Ritzman also said the Bush administration is using the energy

crisis as an excuse to drill in the Coastal Plain, and that this solution is inefficient. He added that the administration should explore other options, such as decreasing gas standards for automobiles in order to preserve energy in the long run.

"Just by changing the mile per gallon standards, we could save 2-3 times the amount of oil we'd find in ANWR," he said. "It's ridiculous to talk about an energy policy and only search for new places to find oil. ... We'll never be able to meet our energy needs that way."

But Toohey said that the Coastal Plain's 1.5 million acres were specially designated for oil and gas discovery, and that if oil was found under the region's surface, it could mean lower gas prices nationwide and an overall benefit to Alaska's economy.

OSPIRG plans to explain the ANWR issue in depth at Sunday's event, with the help of members from the Gwich'in tribe.

Ritzman added that many people are supporting environmental groups' efforts, such as OSPIRG's, to prevent the drilling.

"Polls show that even though there are energy problems, a lot of people don't want to open ANWR," he said. "It's just not worth it to destroy such a beautiful wild place."

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