

***Yellow Cake Revue* by Peter Maxwell Davies**

Text by Ann Ellsworth

This text intentionally refers to the Indigenous people of the Lakota, Dakota or Nakota Nations as the "Sioux," a slang colonial misnomer that is no longer used but still appears on the Killdeer, North Dakota website as this program goes to print.

Killdeer was chosen randomly to represent a small city in North Dakota that might be affected by fracking.

Sunny Killdeer

Oh come to sunny Killdeer
Where prairie meets the sky
'Neath the gorgeous Killdeer Mountains
Where wild turkeys fly
Fishing walleye in Lake Ilo
Feel the rodeo cowboy's pride

On the shores of Lake Sakakawea
The revelers bask in the glow
But wait! Is that the sunset?
Or flames from the hell below?
The Sioux and Heavenly Father
Are the only ones who know

Oh the streams that we swam in
Flow back with a foamy brine
And the buttes where the children run and hide?
Are spoiled with hydrogen and sulfide!
And the surface spills from the oils drills
Fill our aquifers with chemi-kills

And the biocides fill our eyes with tears
And the natural gas kills the atmospheres
While the man camps offer great careers
For STDs and billionaires

Now Oklahoma's on the Richter scale
From the booming boom for Bakken shale
While oil tanks explode by truck and rail
It's another viral human epic fail
Thank God you can't hear yourself think
Past the squalor, waste, smoke, noise and stink

Oh come to North Dakota
And look upon our wounds
The saddest prairie stewards
Sending Killdeer to its doom
The Sioux called it "Tah-Kah-O-Kuty"
We killed them, we needed more room
And now we are killing dear Killdeer
It is sent to it's doom by a boom

Bakken Business

You've heard of the man Henry Bakken
A farmer in Tioga, North Dakota
It was on his land, sleeping 'neath the sand
Oil reaching north to Manitoba

They named it the Bakken Formation
Spreading under four states in two nations
The oil, mature in gestation
Yet so far from the towns' service station

Drill down to the Dolomite
Then take a sharp left with the big rig
Next, take it easy on the dynamite
Let hydraulics do the work on this big dig

Liquid takes the propping agents down
Into the shale under pressure
The earth cracks open, the props prop the cracks
And it makes a lovely fracturing fissure

Natural gas escapes in the hole
And climbs up the well into day
Not all the volume can be contained
So they burn a third away

The oil, too, exceeds capacity
Of pipes carrying crude to the markets
Sure, eighteen-wheelers with effed up tanks
Aren't safe but drive the profits!

The trucks need fuel, as do the drills
We burn half the fuel we're extracting

But Bakken business trades in future lives
We'll be dead before our children start acting

Regulations run the civilized world
With fracking laws in place to protect y'all
But North Dakota's Halliburton rules
Make frack a freaking freak free for all

Crime is at an all-time high
Unemployment at an all-time low-whoa-whoa
With jobs in service and jobs in sales
Blow me, blow you, buy blow

Kickbacks keep the legislature
Super funding slick toxic dumping
The pimps and hookers work overtime
To keep the oil men pumping

There's just one rule in oil-town
This wild western home on the range
Do what you want to, take what you will
But never mention climate change
Never mention climate change

Interview - The Train Engineer

Before we proceed with credentials
Let's address what must be your concerns
Our trains have a way of exploding
Our man prior died covered in burns

But please be assured we are taking the steps
To insure better safety for all
And just to be fair, in Lac-Megantic,
Half the downtown is still standing tall

We ship crude from here to New Brunswick
It's safer to pipe underground
Except for the underground earthquakes
Caused by fracking, I know how this sounds

But if you are here to make money
Not some tree-hugger hoping to end it

We'll pay you in spades, if you know what I mean
And we'll help you find fun ways to spend it

The Fracking Fluids' Daughter's Dance

They said when they'd extracted
The oil from the shale
The proppants in the fluid
Were harmless - what a tale!

In fact the fracking fluid
Is toxic as a snake
And the blow back from the flow back
Is as bad as Yellow Cake!

The gel-based liquids have an edge
Said Zuber in the eighties
With polymers and surfactants
Hear this, my gents and ladies!
Butoxyethonal and biocides with foam have hopes
Of carrying with it radiated tracer isotopes

Hydrochloric acid will put you in the clinic
With radioactive half-lives and a BTEX carcinogenic
It leaches into wellsprings and into reservoirs
They recommend before you drink it to say your "au revoirs"

And that's not even mentioning
The props slick-waters carry
Permissiveness and mesh size
Interstitial space may vary

They're made of treated sand,
Sintered bauxite or ceramics
And they're shaking the mid-continent
With earthquakes and semantics

Slick-water's not for drinking
I can hear the barman snicker
With all our ground water full of salt
The safest drink is liquor

Interview - The Truck Driver

So you're here for a job as a truck driver
This must be your lucky day
Most guys will tell you it's men's work
Me? I'll hire a female or gay

Just as long as you take care of business
And can handle the stress of the load
It don't matter to me who's behind the wheel
In a blizzard with ice on the road

You'll be pumping the waste from the holding tanks
Into the tank on your rig
Then driving it to the disposal wells...
You sure you still want this gig?

The fumes from the tank can be deadly
You will puke for week within hours
The hydrogen sulfide is lethal
If the tank isn't cleaned right and sours

Most of the truckers wear sensors
And gas masks help not getting sick
With a mask and your fire proof jump-suit
The guys might not know you're a chick

It is foul, murky work, you still want it?
Yeah, I figured - a mortgage, two kids...
Unemployment ran off with your husband
So it's Bakken or back on the skids

Ocean Breezes

The ocean breezes fan the plains
Salty Gulf Stream zephyrs
A strange perfume from distant seas
Mixed with the smell of heifers

The plains are land-locked o'er the Bakken
Water here is scarce
They pump the fresh to do the frackin'
And drink the brackish arse

The Bakken beckons, "bang for buck,"
We all know it's perversion
But greed makes even good men suck
The lifeblood from their children

It makes no sense, this self-destruction
It challenges acumen
They must place blame, they beg for unction
It's all so fracking human

Interview – Climate Change Denier

Thank you for coming, a climate change expert,
As you know, plays a critical role
In clearing our conscience and raising moral
As we dig ourselves into this hole

The guys need more rationalizations
To keep them from feeling like asses
Even red states can start feeling blue
Just because we produce green house gasses

We're not doing anything wrong here
The world has a need and we fill it
We're just folks putting food on the table
You have gas in your car 'cause we drill it

You have no right to judge, it's good money
P.S. we didn't cause the recession
And if saving the whales paid the mortgage
We wouldn't need your profession

Global warming's a snow job, agree?
You will need some kind of degree
Your resume says you're a doctor, that's good
In the field of...podiatry

Don't worry, it's fine, it's all about spin
Tell them they're saving the planet
We'll start fresh with clean energy sources
Once we drink through the liquor cabinet

So the sooner we burn up the oil
The sooner we're on the right track

Let's just hope that the ocean won't boil
While we hit rock bottom and frack

Seismicity City

In Youngstown, Ohio
Some youths felt the earth move
At a New Year's Eve celebration
These 4.0 students
Felt 4.0 tremors
Like those left leaning parts of the nation

Their land before fracking
Was stable and settled by
God fearing Quakers, movers not shakers
They prayed that earth would
Receive their kindness
Now all pray for history's blindness

The underground damage to oil pipes and gas lines
Won't leave us with greasy sea birds
Seals with their doe eyes pleading
Save us from drowning in your sleaze
We are hiding our secret Valdez
And pretending the human race is not a disease

Wankan-Tanka, forgive our sins
With the understanding we have no intention
Of quitting killing and drilling, fulfilling our need
Guilt and money are just so yummy, come and seal our deal with a handshake
Oh, Great Spirit, dispense your penance
We have sealed our fate with an earthquake to pay for our greed