

Nader speaks on Kyoto, citizen empowerment

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News Editor

After standing at the podium of the Horowitz Theatre for two hours on Friday night, Ralph Nader waved away SU Eco-Conference organizers who signaled time for only a few more audience questions.

"We have more time, what's the matter?" he said, as the packed house erupted in applause.

As the keynote speaker for the SU Eco-Conference, Nader's extended speech demonstrated the spirit behind his 40 years of tireless advocacy for citizen empowerment, responsible government, and consumer rights in the United States.

Animated, articulate, and straightforward, Nader spoke out on topics like the Albertan outcry over the Kyoto greenhouse gas accord and citizen responsibility and action in the Canadian political environment.

Referring to the similar dependence on oil industries in both Texas and Alberta, Nader said any government with such dependence is only vulnerable to instability and corporate demands.

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Nader blasted the Alberta govern-

ment's resistance to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, saying accords like Kyoto encourage economic diversity that would only strengthen economies in the long run.

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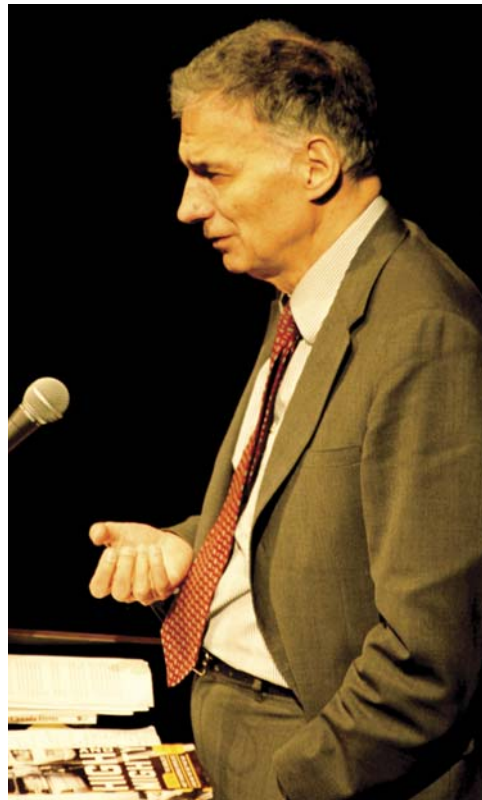
RALPH NADER

He argued against the defenses coming from Alberta that suggest implementation of Kyoto would only increase expenditures for the oil industry, and said British Petroleum Corp, the third-largest oil company in the world, has recognized the issue of global warming as real and have met Kyoto standards in five years with a \$200-million reduction of costs.

"Industry is always exaggerating costs and minimizing benefits," said Nader.

Real sustainability, said Nader, is to avoid current trends of "development without growth," where short-sighted solutions mortgage the future for the next generations.

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PHILIP HEAD

CRUSADING ON CAMPUS US activist Ralph Nader spoke Friday to a full house.



PATRICK FINLAY

CIVIC SKILLS AT WORK Ralph Nader captivated the Horowitz Friday night.

Students should be active citizens in university, says Nader

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Lifestyles and manufacturing based on overconsumption, waste, and temporary gains should be cut down, with decision-makers aiming to preserve a healthy environment and encourage innovation.

Nader cited the Canadian commitment to reducing ozone-depleting gases as an example of a forward-thinking initiative, saying it has resulted in 95 per cent reduction in emissions over 15 years, well under cost while increasing efficiency and profitability. He championed such examples as the way to encourage sustainable growth.

"Always look at our successes of the past to blaze the way for the future, so that our descendants will praise us, not curse us," said Nader.

Nader exhorted the audience to harness their power as citizens and make

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changes in their political environment. He urged the honing of "civic skills," a general term describing the awareness of political avenues to change a system, and the skills required to turn knowledge into concrete public policy.

Growing up civic, said Nader, is

crucial to combat "growing up corporate," the tacit acceptance of a corporate-imbued status quo as a static world which cannot be changed or questioned.

And university students, said Nader, were especially poised in their positions to be active in their communities and make changes before commitments and moral quandaries of real-world jobs took hold.

"University students have a relatively high level of idealism, but also have access to technical laboratories, libraries, in ways lots of people historically have never had access to. But when are you going to have your own newspaper, or radio station, or gathering places?" said Nader.

"Ask yourself, are you taking sufficient advantage of it. Or are you basically accepting the premise of university that it's preparing you for a job?"

RALPH NADER BACKGROUNDER

- Since 1965, Ralph Nader has been recognized as one of America's most outspoken social critics. His first book, *Unsafe at Any Speed*, was responsible for a series of federal auto safety legislation passed in the US, and later work led to auto safety standards including seat belts and airbags in vehicles.

- Besides auto safety, Nader has been responsible for seven other major US consumer protection acts:
 - the Safe Drinking Water Act

- the launching of federal regulatory agencies such as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Environment Protection Agency (EPA), and Consumer Product Safety Administration
- the recall of millions of defective motor vehicles
- access to government through the Freedom of Information Act of 1974

- Running for president in 2000 for the Green Party, Nader has been

- accused of winning the election for President George W Bush. As Nader and Democrat candidate Al Gore appealed to left-leaning voters, Nader was seen as a spoiler in Gore's bid for the presidency (Nader argues that the votes he gained were from people who would not have voted in the election anyway, though many still argue against this theory).

- Nader has given up much of his personal life to pursue his political interests.