

# SPUDS. . . .

## N.B. - Bolivia

Last December, Euclide Chiasson returned home to Petite Rocher, New Brunswick, after a year in Bolivia as a CUSO volunteer. But his involvement with the Bolivian people didn't end.

Bolivia is one of the poorest of Latin American countries; while the Acadia area of New Brunswick is an economic backwater of a province which is itself part of the under-developed Atlantic region. Chiasson came back determined to set up links between the Acadians and the Bolivians on a point of vital common interest: potatoes.

The Andean region of South America where Bolivia is situated is, after all, the motherland of potatoes. Almost 200 varieties of the plant grow there today, some so different as to be unrecognizable to all but a botanist.

Canadian farmers grow descendants of a few varieties of potato imported into North America and Europe hundreds of years ago. Now South American countries like Bolivia are attempting to grow the expatriate potatoes as an export crop for the northern market. Among the varieties being tried are the New Brunswick seed potatoes so popular to the palates of the affluent north.

Chiasson was convinced the two groups of farmers would have much to learn from each other about potato varieties, growing techniques, mechanization and marketing.

Last March, five Acadian farmers, all in their twenties or early thirties, left for Bolivia on the first leg of the exchange. Earlier this August, five Bolivians arrived in New Brunswick to participate in the annual potato harvest, Canadian style.

### Labour-intensive farming

"Potato-harvesting, even in New

Brunswick, is still one of the most labor-intensive processes in farming," Burgess says. "In Bolivia, even more is done by hand. Here machines are used to turn over the earth and then the potatoes are collected by hand on most farms; the difference in Bolivia is that hoes are used for earth-turning."

While in Bolivia, the Canadians took part in the potato harvest, visited research centres, talked with individual farmers and farming groups, visited Inca ruins and a major tin mine, and spent time at the International Potato Centre, a world-renowned research facility in Lima, Peru, which has collected varieties of potato from around the world and is still building its genetic bank.

The group also visited the biweekly markets where local people buy their food (there are no supermarkets), and drove out to the highest agricultural station in the world about 50 miles from Cochabamba. Situated at an altitude of 3,400 metres, the station is carrying out research on potatoes and sheep farming.

The first 11 days were spent in the Cochabamba region where the group visited a mountain community, Kuluyu, for a couple of days and helped with the potato harvest. The village, helped by Chiasson, had experimented with a new variety of seed potato.

### No luxury crops

The Canadians were particularly impressed with some of the native high-protein potato varieties.

"Even though their yields are about one-third of ours in production per acre, they are getting every bit as much protein," says Darrell McLaughlin, one

of the farmers. "They have some very primitive varieties and these give three times the protein. The director of research at the International Potato Centre observed that here in North America we are not really concerned with growing food but with cosmetics—we have to have something which smells good and tastes good, and it doesn't matter too much about nutrition. Their potatoes have deep eyes and odd shapes and they are more mealy and dry than our potatoes, but they are concerned with the nutritional value. They have no

luxury crops."

"The trip was something we will remember for the rest of our lives," says McLaughlin. "Bolivia is like rural New Brunswick of 25 or 30 years ago before the impact of the automobile and mechanization. From the way people work together there it's obvious that somewhere along the line we took a wrong turn."

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During the New Brunswick farmers' visit to Bolivia they travelled throughout the country meeting potato farmers and others involved in food production. Here, the farmers from New Brunswick watch as the children of the village of Kuluyu play with a ball made out of rags. The photo was taken by SUCO Bolivia volunteer Yves Langlois.

## Nova Scotia

# Finally, bargaining begins

The start of the negotiations in January between Nova Scotia Woodlot Owners and Operators Association, and Nova Scotia Forest Industries (which owns the pulp mill at Port Hawkesbury) is a landmark in the 10-year struggle by woodlot owners in Nova Scotia to win the right to bargain for pulpwood prices.

NSFI has vigorously fought any attempt by small producers to restrict its right to unilaterally set pulpwood prices, and has been aided time and again by governments of every stripe. In this article, Sue Calhoun traces the history of the conflict.

Attempts by woodlot owners in Nova Scotia to have some control over the marketing of their pulpwood began in 1961, when the first of the multinational pulp and paper companies came to the province. The Swedish-owned Stora Kopparberg, whose subsidiary here is called Nova Scotia Forest Industries (NSFI), built a \$40-million mill at Port Hawkesbury designed to produce wood pulp used to make newsprint.

At the time governments in the Maritimes were looking at large-scale industrial development as the answer to economic problems; so the company was welcomed. It was given almost all the Crown land in the province's seven eastern counties, on a 50-year lease, for the low price of a

dollar a cord. Faced with the unfair competitive situation of the company having been given so much land so cheaply, small producers formed the province's first Woodlot Owners Organization.

At first, the organization attempted to establish a bargaining relationship with NSFI on a voluntary basis. When this failed, it petitioned the government to change the Nova Scotia Natural Products Marketing Act to include forest products, so that a Pulpwood Producers Board could be established. The act was changed, but rather than setting up a board, the government initiated the MacSween Royal Commission to investigate prices and marketing of pulpwood in Nova Scotia. Toward the end of 1964, that commission concluded that woodlot owners must be brought together in an effective association if their economic problems were to be solved.

That was easier said than done. Nova Scotia is unique compared to other provinces in that more than half the forested land is owned privately. Typically, the survival of the farm unit has been based on an integration of agriculture, fishing, woodcutting and periods of waged work. Woodlot owners were farmers, many of whom sold wood only occasionally, particularly when times were tough.

In 1965, with help from repre-

sentatives of the Federation of Agriculture and the St. Francis Xavier Extension Department, and a grant under the federal Agriculture and Rural Development Act (ARDA), the association began signing up woodlot owners on a county-by-county basis. By 1969, the NS Woodlot Owner's Association (NSWOA) was officially established with a paid-up membership of 1,200 woodlot owners.

In 1970, the association submitted to the provincial government a series of policy proposals on woodland taxation, land tenure and consolidation, forest improvement legislation, silviculture and trucking regulations. It also began work on developing a new proposal for a Pulpwood Producers' Marketing Plan under the Natural Products Marketing Act. This was how small pulpwood producers in New Brunswick had been organizing since 1963.

But in Nova Scotia, the large pulpwood buyers (the big three were NSFI, Scott Maritimes Pulp Limited at Abercrombie Point, a subsidiary of Scott Paper Co. of Pennsylvania, and Bowaters Mersey Paper Company Limited of Liverpool, a subsidiary of Bowaters, London) were opposed to a board with price-fixing powers. They made their views known to the government through the Nova Scotia Forest Products Association (NSFPA—an organization which also included large

contractors and sawmill owners and operators) and through the Forestry Sector of Voluntary Economic Planning—VEP—a voluntary advisory group to government made up of industry representatives.

In February 1971, with the blessing of the Nova Scotia Marketing Board, the Woodlot Owners Association began a province-wide campaign to register potential voters on its marketing plan. Some 8,500 woodlot owners returned application-to-vote forms to the association. But because of the combined opposition of VEP and NSFPA, the Woodlot Owners Association revised its definition of woodlot owner (you had to own at least 50 acres of land), and began re-registration. A total of 4,827 were returned this time, and in a vote held on July 15, 1971, 85.9 percent of these voted in favour of the plan.

But industry was still opposed to it, so rather than ratify the proposed marketing plan, the Liberal government of Gerald Regan established a Conciliation Committee to try to bring the two sides together. The report by committee chairman Ian MacKeigan Q.C. explained the companies' position:

*"The buyers claim that it is much too dangerous to place price-fixing power in the hands of virtually one man, the board chairman. The whole pulp and paper industry would be subject to his whims and could be ruined by bad judgement. They emphasize that the product involved is quite different from food products*

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