

# AIB denies New Brunswick workers aid

OTTAWA (CUP) - If there was any question whether the Anti-Inflation Administrator might take a fairer stand on wage settlements than the Anti-Inflation Board, and even reverse AIB decisions, then we now have an answer.

The ruling of AIB Administrator Donald Tansley February 13 on the Irving Pulp and Paper contract settlement shows clearly the administrator intends to enforce AIB rulings, not review or question them.

The AIB had ruled on December 17 that the contract concluded by Irving and the Canadian Paperworkers Union and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers was in excess of the guidelines.

The union and company arguments supporting the contract, which provided for 23 percent in the first year of a two-year agreement, were rejected without reasons being given. The AIB ruled that any settlement over 14 percent in the first year would be unacceptable.

Both the company and the unions wanted to appeal the decision, but the appeals tribunal had not yet been ap-

pointed and the Anti-Inflation Act itself is misworded. Under the Act, the only way an appeal can be launched is to actually break the law and fail to comply with an AIB ruling.

Irving did just this. The company agreed to pay the rate specified in the contract retroactively to April 30, 1975, the date the old contract expired. But instead of putting the money in the workers' pay envelopes, the increase above the 14% level was put in a special "escrow account."

The main reason for this was to have the money available in case the Administrator ordered a fine equal to the amount of the "overpayment", but there was another reason too.

According to NDP MP John Rodriguez, who recently toured the strike-bound pulp and paper industry in the Maritimes, union and company officials thought it might be possible to avoid a non-compliance ruling by means of the account.

The workers' paycheques would not exceed the amount stipulated by the AIB, and the remainder would be held "in escrow" until the termination of

the wage control program or of employment by the employee, when the money would be given back to the workers.

Administrator Tansley's ruling met this possibility head-on. Not only was the \$100,000 escrow account seized, but the Irving company was fined \$25,000 for "having knowingly contravened" the AIB ruling, even though contravention was necessary if an appeal were to be launched.

The message from the administrator is clear: his job is to enforce, not question, AIB rulings; to penalize any employer who provides pay increases in excess of what the AIB feels is justified; and to seize any money which the AIB feels represents "an overpayment."

The reaction from the Canadian Paperworker's Union was swift and pointed, CPU president Henry Lorraine called it "an outrage," said it was "strikebreaking" pure and simple, and threatened to "raise political hell." The CPU would appeal the decision to the Cabinet, he said.

CLC president Joe Morris released a statement calling the

decision "vindictive," and said the administrator's action "indicates his commitment to kill whatever was left of the free collective bargaining process."

In response to a question as to whether the CLC would change its historic opposition to the use of strikes as a political weapon, Mr. Morris replied that he may be moving in that direction. A special meeting of the CLC executive committee was called to decide what action to take, he said.

Canadian Director of the United Steelworkers expressed the general outrage of labour at the decision. William Mahoney told reporters: "Now I'm saying to over 180,000 members that if they don't want fascism to take over, they're going to have to confront Trudeau. We may have to shut down some industries."

NDP leader Ed Broadbent issued a statement which said Irving is facing a large fine for supporting its workers, asking "Is this a preview of Trudeau's 'New Society'?" He said the NDP would press its case in the House for an emergency debate to reverse the original AIB ruling against the Irving settlement.

## Mill owner thinks he's different

OTTAWA (CPA-CUP) - A week before the Administrator came down with his ruling against the Irving Company contract settlement, MP John Rodriguez (NDP, Nickel Belt) toured the strike-bound pulp and paper industry in New Brunswick.

On February 11, he reported in an interview on his three-hour discussion with J. Irving, president of the Irving Pulp and Paper Company.

He said Mr. Irving made clear he will continue to support the union and participate in joint appeals seeking to reverse the earlier AIB ruling. He called the present AIB program "stupid" and said he had to former Finance Minister John Turner this when they met last year.

Mr. Irving said any anti-inflation program should be simple, of short duration, and include an excess profits tax, but none of these characterized the present program.

He was also openly critical of the business practices of his competitors in the pulp and paper industry. The Irving Company is the only major pulp and paper company which is not a member of the Canadian Pulp and Paper Association, which is controlled by the multi-nationals. Mr. Irving said he has been pressured in the past to join but has refused.

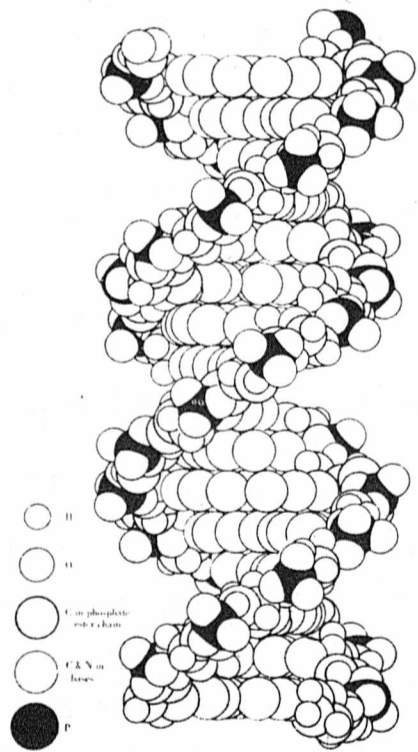
He feels that the way his company operates is significantly different from the practices of the multi-nationals. Although there are no conservation laws in New Brunswick the Irving Company does have an ongoing reforestation program. While Irving will soon plant its six millionth tree, the multi-nationals have yet to plant any.

The same goes for his relations with employees and the community in general. While Irving recognizes a long term commitment to the province and its employees the multi-nationals are only interested in immediate profits.

Consequently, the other companies have strenuously opposed the settlement which Irving made with its employees and have supported the government's roll-back order.

Mr. Irving is not surprised by this, but finds himself in a rather odd situation. As owner of the firm, he knows he can afford to pay the workers what they need to live on. But the AIB won't let him.

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