

'Day of Concern' needs your support

The New Brunswick Federation of Labour has called for a 'Day of Concern' march and rally in Bathurst on January 16 to protest the large scale layoffs facing the workers of the North Shore. The president of the N.B.F.L., Mr. Paul LePage, has estimated that up to 10,000 workers, students and other New Brunswickers will be participating in the 'Day of Concern' actions. The layoffs from seven companies could affect more than 1,600 workers and would severely cripple the entire economy of the region as well as having an adverse effect upon the province as a whole.

BREAKDOWN OF THE COMPANIES INVOLVED

Consolidated-Bathurst Ltd., that cities largest employer, is laying off 320 workers from its pulp and paper mill and cutbacks are expected to continue.

A strike at Nigadoo River Mines ended when management's stand that it could not afford wage increases was backed by an industrial inquiry commission and the firm suspended operations, laying off more than 300 workers.

Anaconda American Brass Ltd.'s wholly owned Cariboo Mines is laying off 110 men, all but the handfull required to legally maintain their mineral rights.

East Coast Smelting and Chemical Co. Ltd. is laying off 230-280 workers in a reduction of operations from lead and zinc processing to simply lead processing.

Belledune Fertilizer Ltd. has laid off 65 workers until March when "most, if not all" will be recalled for the peak market period. Belledune will likely layoff more shortly afterwards.

Gorton Pew Ltd. is moving its fish plant at Caraqueet to the Magdalen Islands because of better facilities and increased assistance from the Quebec government. If a buyer cannot be found 280 seasonal workers will be unemployed.

Fraser Co. Ltd. has suspended operations at its Atholville pulp mill for the sixth time in the past year resulting in the temporary layoff of 350 workers. The future operation of this mill is anything but assured.

ORGANIZED LABOUR AND OTHER GROUPS RESPOND TO THE CRISIS

In response to the appeal for support issued by the N.B.F.L., district labour councils and union locals throughout the province have been issuing statements of solidarity and drawing up plans to organize contingents to march in Bathurst on the 16th. It appears, to date, that the Day of Concern will be the largest mobilization of labour in New Brunswick in over thirty years.

In Fredericton members of the local Labour Council, the York-Sunbury New Democratic Party; the Young Socialists, the Voice of Women; high school, junior high and university students; women's liberationists; independent socialists; professors and housewives have united to form the Fredericton Day of Concern Committee (FDCC). The FDCC steering committee represents the diversity of the coalition. Steering committee members are - Jay Baxter (a UNB student), Phillip Booker (a vice-president of the NB Federation of Labour and a regional representative of the Canadian Union of Public Employees), Greg Corey (a F.H.S. student and a member of the Fredericton Young Socialists), Ron Gaudet (organizer of the Fredericton Young Socialists), and Ron Lees (a member of the NB New Democratic Party and a Waffle supporter). During the past two weeks the FDCC has active in mobilizing support for the 16th and has received province wide publicity.

The FDCC, although giving full support to the NBFL's call for a Day of Concern and for a moratorium on layoffs feels that the Federation's leadership has not gone far enough in its demands upon the companies and the provincial

and federal governments. The FDCC also feels that the Federation should clearly and publicly oppose suggestions that 'Department of Regional Economic Expansion' (DREE) grants to the companies is the best, or even a viable, solution to the problems of shutdowns and cutbacks. DREE assistance would amount to little more than providing the forest and mining industries with 'free' money (taken from the pockets of working people through taxes) to continue their super-exploitation of the forest and mineral resources of the province. In three years time the workers of the North Shore could find themselves in the same position as they are in now.

The FDCC feels it is necessary to publicly oppose all suggestion of DREE aid and to present an alternative means of keeping the plants in operation.

OPEN THE BOOKS!

Several of the companies involved are pleading high production costs and other factors leading to low profits, as an excuse for shutdowns and layoffs. Why should the people of New Brunswick take the company's word at face value? The FDCC challenges the companies to open their financial records (including those of parent companies) to public inspection by the workers of the North Shore and New Brunswick in general. If the companies are telling the truth, they have nothing to hide. The FDCC call for this step in the case of Fraser's, Consolidated-Bathurst, Belledune Fertilizer and East Coast Mining and Smelting Companies.

NATIONALIZATION!

The saving of hundreds of jobs in the Sydney area of Nova Scotia through the nationalization of the DOSCO steel mill shows what can be done. Corporations whose only interest is a fast buck can never run forest and mining industries in a way that will guarantee jobs and prosperity. After much thought and discussion the members of the FDCC are unanimous in calling for the nationalization of Cariboo Mines and Nigadoo River Mines, and the return of all their claims to the province--which granted them to the companies (often at little or no charge) in the first place.

If an examination of the books of Consolidated-Bathurst--and those of its real owners--shows it needs massive public money to continue in Bathurst, why should the taxpayer stand good for a free gift--most of which will go out of the province (and out of Canada) as profit?

Doesn't it make more sense to nationalize the operation, and take back its forest holdings (among the richest in the Province)--build a new mill and start a properly planned program of cutting and replanting? That way, New Brunswick's most precious resource is steadily renewed, and steady jobs are always there for the workers, while profits don't drain continuously over the border.

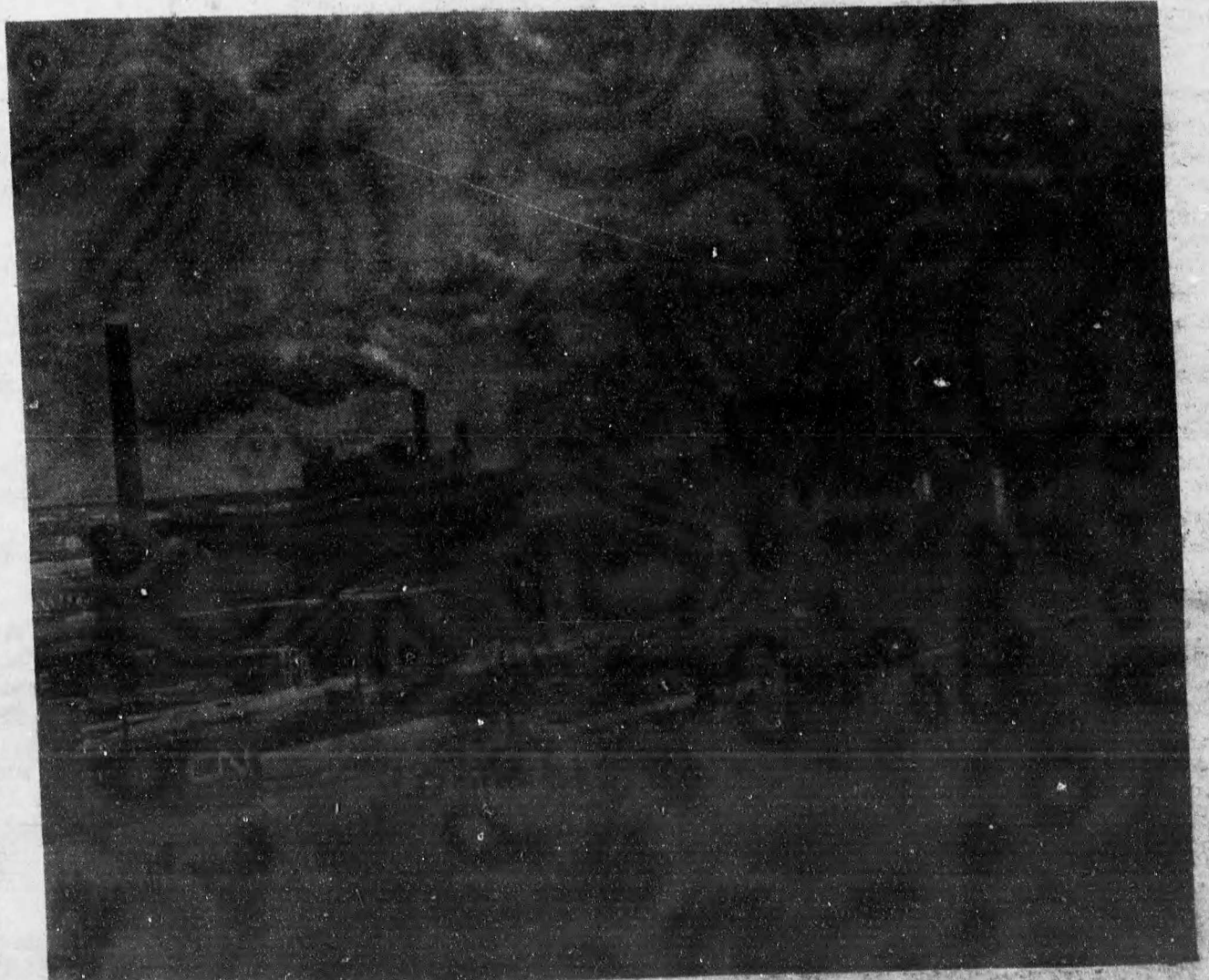
The FDCC also calls for the nationalization of the Gorton Pew fish plant whose owner said recently, 'it was a good buy'.

ALL OUT ON JANUARY 16!

Negotiations and talks between representatives of labour, business and government have been tried without avail. The march and rally called for January 16 is an attempt to force government and management to respond to the needs of the North Shore workers by a show of strength. As such it will be only a successful as the workers themselves and those who support them make it. The FDCC calls upon the students of UNB to support the workers of the North Shore and the New Brunswick Federation of Labour by joining them in their demonstration in Bathurst this Sunday January 16. Transportation (either free or with a minimal charge) to and from Bathurst is being arranged by the FDCC. For information about time and place of departure phone - MONDAY to FRIDAY 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. 454-4419 and in the evening 5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. 454-9270 or 472-9907. There will be a car pool leaving Sub parking lot at 8:30 a.m. Sunday January 16 to return at night. Financial contributions to help cover the costs of publicity, transportation and placards are desperately needed - make cheques payable to the Mr. Ron Lees, c/o Physics Department, UNB.

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Consolidated - Bathurst mill in Bathurst.

Courtesy of Bathurst Tribune

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