

Voice of Women suggests effective action

The Fredericton Voice of Women/La Voix des Femmes joins with those who are expressing their concern at the vast number of people who are or soon will be without work in Bathurst, New Brunswick, area. Our immediate concern is for these people and the community of Bathurst who are the victims of forces they do not control. The provincial and federal governments do have some power not only to ameliorate the present situation but to influence the economic forces which created a town dependent primarily on one industry. We strongly urge go-

vernment to take effective action to meet the immediate crisis. We further urge government to exercise their power as they have not done in the past to insure that some of the profits of primary resource industries be used to create secondary and tertiary industries in the communities involved.

We recognize that the problem is a large one and that some of its causes are international. We believe, however, that there is much that government could and should do. We suspect that there are three primary factors behind the layoffs at Consoli-

dated Bathurst: a depression in the market, some obsolescence in the physical plant, and the large holdings of this company outside the province. It is in the self interest of locally owned industries to try to survive during a period when the demand for their goods is depressed, whereas it is in the interest of companies with large holdings elsewhere to close down some plants at such a time. Our government is continually frustrated in its attract outside capital to provide jobs, and what capital it does attract nearly always involves primary resource industries

which may, well result in situations such as that at Bathurst. Surely the people of New Brunswick would be better served if their government owned the majority interest in such companies.

Further, government could encourage and support modest community enterprises which are labour intensive. Government could help communities to acquire the majority control of such existing industries as fish plants and to look within their own people for management. It could assist in the setting up of small tourist and craft industries (pottery, boat-building, etc.) also involving community ownership and management. Although we are a depressed region, there are many people who wish to live and work in New Brunswick. The government could do much more to insure that its people profit from their industry.

The Fredericton Voice of Women is also deeply concerned with the broader problems which lie behind unemployment in Canada. It is outrageous that a country as relatively prosperous as Canada should tolerate any unemployment at all; it is unacceptable that, while some Canadians enjoy one of the world's highest standards of living, others are denied the opportunity to work, many lack proper housing and the other amenities of a decent life, and all must endure an endless spiral of recession and inflation. That government,

despite obvious effort, is largely unsuccessful in solving these problems suggests that they are not due to a malfunction of our economic system but are a necessary part of our system as it now functions.

The central purpose of the Voice of Women is to work for peace. It is a horrible irony that only in war-time does Canada seem able to achieve full employment without inflation. In peace-time our economy, to the benefit of some and the social distress of others, is an integral part of an international economy dominated by multi-national corporations and fuelled to a large extent by production for war. It is a priority of our present government to compete successfully within this economy. We sell arms and the vital materials for war production to dozens of countries. Moral outrage is muffled, as in the case of South Africa, when it interferes with 'good business'. The argument that a country which becomes prosperous by such means will be a stronger voice for peace seems hollow indeed when we look at social distress at home and the continued threat and practice of war throughout the world.

We believe that our government should have as its first priority the creation of a decent life for its people in a peaceful world. We have some to believe that this will only become possible if Canada makes substantial changes in its domestic economy and in its economic relations to world economy.

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Management vs Labour.....

"Although seasonal and cyclical factors may account for some of this unemployment there seems to be little doubt that the heart of the matter is structural in nature. In other words, the economy of the Northeastern region has not been sufficiently diversified; it has been based almost entirely on two industries which are facing soft markets in the short run and eventual phasing out (or at least an inability to absorb an ever-increasing labour force) in the long-run.

The Federation has arrived at specific short-run and long-run suggestions to alleviate the situation in the northshore area.

In the short-run they suggest:

1. an immediate freeze on layoffs
 2. an amendment to the Regional Development Incentives Act so that its provisions extend to the pulp and paper industry and to all stages of mineral processing.
 3. designation of the counties of Gloucester, Restigouche, Madawaska and Northumberland a Special Area under the DREE legislation and thus upgrade the capital equipment of the paper mills of Consolidated-Bathurst and Fraser's in Bathurst and Atholville through RDIA investment. Under this legislation the Federal Government should immediately make available sufficient capital to build a modern zinc refinery.
- A federally sponsored Forest Products Marketing Board and a comprehensive plan for the development of the mineral

industry were cited as short-term necessities in the brief.

For the long-run solutions to the areas employment problems the Federation makes three suggestions:

1. the formation of an Export Marketing Board to determine suitable markets
2. a feasibility study on an industrial complex for the area with the inclusion of modern shipping facilities
3. the establishment of a tripartite Industrial Commission to define the areas in which the regions natural competitive advantage lies.

These suggestions will be presented by the President of the N.B. Federation of Labour, Paul LaPage, in an address at the "Day of Concern" in Bathurst on January 16.

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Crisis in

they are free to maximize profits at the expense of the workers. Brunswick, Nigadoo River and Anaconda use high-grading methods of extraction. That is they mine only the purest ores, until the best deposits are depleted, and then beg for massive government support to underwrite the losses in mining the cheaper grades. The rational manner of mining is to extract both the better and poorer grades at the same time, underwriting the losses on the latter with the profits of the prior, thus assuring a longer term operation and more efficient use of the resource. However, this method doesn't earn as much profit.

Still, the ore being mined is sufficiently rich to make a profit for at least another five years of high-grading. All three companies are planning on continuing operations in the future, when the market price rises. Anaconda is maintaining a skeleton staff legally required to hold their mineral rights, while having suspended all work.

Consolidated-Bathurst's mill requires \$100,000,000 worth of modernization in order to remain competitive. The reason is that they have allowed the mill to become obsolete without spending money on continual modernization or maintenance so that they can hit the government to underwrite the extra costs by pleading poverty, when the estimate rises above what they can afford. Thus they make greater profits.

The cutting practices of Consolidated-Bathurst are of the worst sort. They cut in concentric circles away from the plant and do not even attempt token re-forestation. This is, of course, the cheapest manner of cutting, with no concern for the geological damage done or the future of the forest resources and the jobs they provide.

Both Consolidated-Bathurst and Fraser are known to be behind schedule on a deadline for pollution control devices. They are using the layoffs as a bargaining device against being forced to spend money to fight pollution.

The move of Gorton Pew Ltd. to Quebec because of higher government benefits is indicative of the type of blackmail practised by the companies in underdeveloped regions seeking the most profitable assistance from local and provincial governments.

The most blatantly horrendous elements of the operations of these companies, however, is their subservience to the whims of the market fluctuations of international capital. They are but the mere tip of the tentacles of a system so far-reaching that few individual companies can exercise control over their own operations any longer.

Given this information, it is obvious that government aid is only giving in to the companies own interests, at the tax payers expense. Further, it does nothing to assure the continued operation of these plants, and thus continued employment, for more than a few years at best.

TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM APPLIED

The Young Socialists are actively involved in building for the "Day of Concern" in Fredericton, as members of the Fredericton "Day of Concern Committee". The FYS supports the call of the New Brunswick Federation of Labour for the Bathurst mobilization on January 16 and the demands of the FDCC united front for a moratorium on layoffs, opening of the books of East Coast Smelting and Chemical, Belledune Fertilizer and Fraser, the immediate nationalization of Cariboo, Nigadoo River, and Gorton Pew, and opening of the books of Consolidated-Bathurst with serious consideration of nationalizing it.

The only answer to the problems posed by these companies, which are basic contradictions of the capitalist system, is the establishment of

a socialist society. The task of revolutionaries in this struggle is to win the working class to a socialist perspective. This is achieved through a program of transitional demands for the labour movement designed to appeal to the immediate consciousness of the workers and at the same time bring about a raising of that consciousness.

To complement the demands of the committee, a program is proposed that would allow the workers of the community to be involved in a direct way. Everyone should continue to work—a moratorium on layoffs—keep the plants open—shorten the work week to provide full employment—30 hours work for 40 hours pay. When the company shuts down or claims it can no longer afford to operate without assistance—open the books. If the books prove the bankruptcy of the operation, its continued operation should be assured with the government underwriting the operation—nationalization. Compensation would be rejected as it serves only to appropriate even more profits for the corporations than they have already taken. Further, for those companies that remain solvent, workers should have control over layoffs and plant shutdowns, control over company organization to prevent the super-exploitation of resources, which is against their long-term interests, and finally, control over the investment of public funds to assure that they go towards the planned development of productive capacity and are not used to bolster the profiteering of private capital.

As students, we are directly affected by the dangers, both immediate and future, in these company shutdowns and must support New Brunswick Labour in their protest. The turnout of a large number of UNB students can have a profound effect on the labour movement and the people of Bathurst both in terms of moral support and in strengthening the ties between students and the external environment.