

NEWSLETTER

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NEWSLETTER

This week we have made an attempt to start a community newsletter, The whole purpose in doing this is to try and keep the community informed of what goes on within the Indian & Metis Association, Conne River Native Enterprises and the Band Council, If anyone has anything of interest that they would like printed just write it up and pass it in to any one of the offices mentioned above.

Housing Repairs

A request for housing repairs for 1976-77 have once again been sent to Central Mortgage & Housing Corporation (CMHC). This week the Indian & Metis Association received a letter from CMHC saying that the request has been received. However CMHC says that due to limitations in the Emergency Repair budget and demands for funds by a number of groups, they have set August 31, 1976 as a deadline for all submissions. They will be holding the Associations request for review at that time.

Even after all the complaints the Association has made to CMHC about leaving it so late before starting the Housing Repair Program it seems that the same thing is about to happen again. The Association have had the request in for over a month now and still CMHC is holding it until the last of August This means that repairs won't be able to start at least until the middle of September again. Every year the late start of the program has been blamed on the Association but as you can see it is a hold-up on the part of the Government.

Five new houses has also been approved under the Federal-Provincial Committee of Labrador Services Division, These will be built this year again by the Conne River Native Enterprises.

Association core funding

Core funding which is the name of the funding that the Indian & Metis Association receives from Ottawa has been approved for another five years. This agreement started in Ottawa in 1970 before the Indian & Metis Association began. This agreement at that time was a five year agreement by the Federal Government to give funds to Provincial native organizations. This agreement was supposed to end March 31, 1976 but this year it got extended for one more year, March 31, 1977. It has since been approved for another five years. The following is a telegram that Marilyn John received from the minister in Ottawa on its approval:

“I am pleased to inform you that the Government has recently approved a new Core Funding Program for Native Associations. The new program will continue to be administered by my department, and has been approved for a five year term, commencing April 1, 1977 subject to certain modifications and conditions. My officials will be consulting with the Executive of each Association in the near future to discuss the modifications and conditions”.

J. Hugh Faulkner, Minister

On Thursday, Marilyn John traveled to Ottawa to meet with officials of the Department of Secretary of State. She will be discussing the program of Core Funding at that time as well as other areas of concern.

Moose Hide Collection

This fall the Indian and Metis Association will 'be trying to carry out a project of collecting all the moose hides it can. The purpose of this hide collection is that the crafts people in Nfld. and all across Canada have a great shortage of hides for handicrafts. In fact our own craft people in Conne River have a very limited supply for their crafts. We will be buying them, collecting them up and either bundling them to send to Nova Scotia for tanning or else tanning them ourselves depending upon if we can get the money to start a tannery. Hunters will be paid so much per hide or quarters of hides. The prices for these have yet to be worked out but it will all depend upon the size of the hide and the quality. For instance if a hide is handed in with a lot of cuts and holes in it the hunter will not get a good a price for it as if it was without cuts and holes.

In a later newsletter we will describe to you where you have to pass your hides in and how much you can get for these hides. There is a great demand for these hides and the Association will greatly appreciate all that can be handed in.

LIP

LIP applications is now available from manpower or the Association. The Association received several from manpower and these are available at the office. The deadline for these applications to be sent in is September 10, 1976.

An application to start up a provincial newspaper has been sent to Secretary of State in Ottawa again. The Association is requesting \$25,000 from the Department of Secretary of State to do this. If this application gets approved then the Indian & Metis Association of Nfld.- Labrador will be hiring an editor to do all the writing and turnout of a newspaper. It will be similar to NANL NEWS that was put out last year by the Association in which Philip Jeddore was the editor. Many thanks to Philip for a good job.

Cultural Education Research Project

The Conne River Band Council is developing a program for research into re-learning some of our MicMac culture which has been lost over the years.

Tentatively we have planned such things as a group exchange between Conne River and Eskasoni, Nova Scotia, a picture dictionary using MicMac, a picture history book of Conne River (anyone with some old pictures they could donate it would be appreciated), etc,

If any of you have some ideas about things that could be done for this kind of project just come into our office and see Marilyn John or Jerry Wetzel, we certainly would like to hear some ideas from you out there,

MicMac Softball Tournament

The first Provincial Indian Softball Tournament will be held in St. George's, Nfld. August 21-23, 1976. Teams from St. George's, Flat ~ Glenwood, Bishops Falls, and Conne River are entered.

The event is being held in St. George's this year as they are the only community with a ball field, hopefully next year the tournament 'can be held here in Conne River.

The Conne River Braves, and the St. George's Red Skins, are considered to be the top teams in the contest. During the tournament an all-star will be picked to play other teams around the Province.

New Projects for Conne River

The Conne River Band Council has submitted several proposals to the Federal-provincial Indian and Eskimo Affairs Committee this summer. Some have already been funded, these are:

A summer crafts project for young women.

A park development project employing teenage boys.

A grant to the Conne River Native Women's Handicraft Association to develop a craft course on leather work and basket making to be started this fall,

A preliminary grant toward the development of a motel.

There are several other proposals on the drawing boards. One for Cultural Education Research into the MicMac culture, and one for the construction of a handicraft building for the handicraft Association.

The Conne River Timber Dispute

The following information is true and correct and is not an attempt to twist any of the facts as they have occurred.

In 1972 the Indian people of Conne River organized themselves into a Council and became incorporated as a Local Improvement District. In 1972 the Council developed an economic development plan for the community. The main element in this plan was a sawmill.

In 1972, before Ralland Forest Products ever existed, the Council wrote to their MHA, Mr. Roy Cheeseman, then Minister of Fisheries, outlined their plans to him and asked him to make representation on their behalf, In this plan the Council asked for the timber rights within their municipal boundaries. Mr. Cheeseman met with the appropriate ministers involved, and the Council received a reply from the Minister of Forestry advising them that an official of his department would be meeting with them about it. No one ever came,

The Council wrote again in 1973 and 1974 to the Dept. of Forestry and received no reply.

In 1974 the Provincial Indian Organization in co-operation with the Conne River Indian Band Council submitted a proposal to the Federal Dept. of Manpower for funding to develop a sawmill operation. Before submitting this proposal, representatives from the Provincial Indian Association met with Mr. Al Brennan, then Director of Forest Management (he now is Assistant Deputy Minister), Mr. Brennan was asked for timber commitments for the planned project. Timber within the municipal boundaries of Conne River was requested. Mr. Brennan advised the representative from the Provincial Indian Association that this would be no problem. He did say that it would take some time to get the timber rights in the municipal boundaries transferred to the Conne River Council, In the meantime, since the Dept. of Manpower wanted a commitment, he wrote a general letter stating that the Province would ensure a 20 year supply of timber based on ½ million board feet a year. These negotiations took place in January and February 1974.

In June 1974, the Conne River saw milling was approved and the project began. Prior to that, in March of 1974, a meeting with Mr. Brennan was held again and he advised that the mill's capacity per year would be one million fbm rather than ½ million fbm. He said that this could be accommodated, When asked what progress had been made about turning over cutting rights for wood within the municipal boundaries of Conne River to the(Conne River Council, he was non-committal.

In the fall of 1974, we learned the wood within our municipal boundaries had been given to Ralland Forest Products who were building a large mill in Bay d' Espoir. We immediately protested this and met with Mr. Dick Carroll, Regional Director of Forestry. Mr. Carroll advised us that he would communicate our protest to the St. John's office and assured us that he felt something could be done to renegotiate timber allotments, The truth of the matter was that in 1974-75, Practically everything in Bay d' Espoir had been given to Ralland Forest Products and at that time the Dept. of Forestry had not even designated an area for us to cut in. All they issued to us that year was a "Special Permit" to cut.

Confrontation 1975

Several meetings were held with local and regional forestry officials during 1975, all to no avail. Finally, in 1975, the Regional Director of Forestry wrote to us and told us that no re-allocation of the timber within our municipal boundaries would be done.

After three years of letters, requests, and meetings, the local timber which was to ensure a long term supply for our mill was given away. The people of Conne River then decided that if the Government wanted a fight they were ready.

In the fall of 1975, local woods roads within the municipal boundaries of Conne River were blocked off and the people of Conne River served notice on the Government that they had been unfairly treated and that they would not stand for it.

The roads that were blocked were within the municipal boundaries of Conne River and under the jurisdiction of the Conne River Council (local government act). These were just woods roads approximately 9 -10 feet wide, When the Government found that they could not legally stop the people of Conne River from blocking the roads, they changed the status of these roads from local roads to secondary highways. By doing this, they changed the jurisdiction from the Conne River Council to the Dept. of Highways. This would then allow the Government to get a court injunction against the people of Conne River, prohibiting them from blocking the roads.

Before anyone was arrested, the Hon. J. Rousseau, Minister of Forestry, attended a public meeting in Conne River to discuss the situation. At that meeting it was made abundantly clear to him that everyone in the entire village who could walk, was prepared to block the roads and go to jail if necessary, unless the wood within their boundaries was turned over to the Conne River Council so that the jobs the saw milling project created would be secured.

The confrontation came to an end then when Mr. Rousseau announced that the Dept. of Forestry would allocate more timber to Ralland Forest Products in another vicinity in exchange for them turning over the timber within the municipal boundaries of Conne River to the people of Conne River.

For the last seven months, December 1975 July 1976, representatives from Ralland Forest Products, Conne River, and the Dept. of Forestry have met several times to review drafts of legal agreements the Dept. of Forestry had drafted up to settle the transfer of timber. Everything seem alright.

During these months the Dept. of Forestry undertook a forest survey in the small block of land that, in late 1975, had been set aside for the Conne River saw milling operation, On repeated occasions in April and May Conne River representatives asked the Minister for copies of the survey which was supposed to be done in March. Also, in April, Mr. Rousseau was asked in the house by Hon, Roger Simmons for a copy of the report. On all occasions Mr. Rousseau stated that the report was not completed. However, we found out in July that it had been ready since March. The Government had been withholding it. Months dragged on with no progress.

Finally in July, after repeated requests, Mr. Rousseau agreed to schedule a meeting in Gander. On July 26th, representatives from Conne River met with Mr. Rousseau and other forestry officials in Gander.

A Set Up

From the moment the meeting convened the representatives from Conne River, Mr. Bill Joe and Mr. Jerry Wetzel could see something was amiss; there were no representatives from Rallands Forest Products. Mr. Rousseau then informed the Conne River representatives that the agreement that had been agreed on in principle last fall was now off, that the Government was not going to transfer the timber within the town boundaries of Conne River to their community's saw milling co-op. The reason for this was that the Government had not succeeded in gaining timber from Bowaters to give to Rallands, This took the Conne River people by' surprise as they had seen Ralland's cutting crews cutting wood in Bowaters areas for the past t'.~ weeks.

When questioned about this, Mr. Rousseau explained that the Government had set up meetings directly between Rallands and Bowaters, a neat side-step if ever there was one. This move made it possible for Mr. Rousseau to say that the Government had not been able to fulfill their commitments to Rallands Forest Products, and therefore had to return the timber within the Conne River municipal boundaries to Rallands.

Behind the Scenes: The Real Situation

After many months of intensive research, after interviewing many officials in the Dept. of Forestry, the real picture has become clear. There is not sufficient timber in the Baie d'Espoir area for both sawmills. This has been confirmed not only by Government action against the Conne River people, but by the Manager and part owner of Ralland Forest Products. Mr. Ernie Strickland, during discussions with Conne River representatives, has openly confirmed that the amount of sawlogs that have been set aside in restricted areas for his mill are not there. In one area where there was supposedly 9 million fbm of sawlogs, he has only been able to harvest 200,000 fbm. In another area where there is supposed to be 10 million fbm of sawlogs he has half the area cut and has only been able to harvest 550,000 fbm. Ralland Forest Products holds over 50 million fbm of exclusive softwood timber concession in Baie d'Espoir. In two years they have cut over half of their areas, but have only been able to harvest slightly over two million fbm of softwood logs. Where did the other 23 million fbm go? It is obvious to both Mr. Strickland and the Conne River people that the Government estimates are way off and that the future is very dim for both mills.

Mr. Strickland has released the whole story of the development of Rallands Forest Products to representatives from Conne River during a recent meeting.

Another Grandiose Dream Down the Drain

Mr. Strickland, Manager and co-owner of Rallands, said that he first approached the Provincial Government in 1973, long after the Council in Conne River had applied for cutting rights within their boundaries, concerning the possible development of a sawmill in Baie d'Espoir. He requested some information on sawlog volumes in Baie d'Espoir. If there was enough timber in the area, he proposed to establish a medium sized mill with an annual output of two million fbm, much the same as the Conne River mill.

However, the Dept. of Forestry, and the Forestry Task Force, rejected his proposal on the grounds that it was too small. Instead they wanted to see a large mill, capable of an annual output of five million fbm of lumber per year go up. We have been told that this was when Mr. E. Ralph entered the scene as the Government's "specialist" on forestry. He joined with Mr. Strickland and together they established Rallands Forest Products. With the backing of the Dept. of Forestry, and the Forestry Task Force, the Government gave them large sums of money to begin to set up the mill.

It was then that the question of how much timber was there in Baie D'Espoir was asked. We are not sure, but we understand from a very reliable source in the Dept. of Forestry that Mr. Ralph

drew up the maps and indicated how much wood was in each area. This was accepted by the Dept. of Forestry and it was based on these figures that the funds for Rallands was advanced. Not a bad way to negotiate; it's just like getting a blank cheque and filling it in yourself!

So a whole grandiose scheme, a large saw milling operation was financed before any real study of the timber stands in the area were ever done, and they have not yet been done.

When Conne River confronted the Government last year, the whole question of whether there really was as much timber in the area as the Government said there was almost came to the surface. At that time we had not realized that we had struck a sensitive nerve, and did not understand why all the higher officials in the Dept. of Forestry were trying so hard to cover up something by saying that they had never heard of the Conne River sawmill before. They blamed us for everything from mismanagement to irrationality. All this was said just to confuse the issue which we now know is poor judgement on the part of those higher officials in the Dept. of Forestry. They had been conned into accepting far higher estimates of timber than there actually is in Baie d' Espoir and they have been trying desperately to keep this from public attention. They are an example of inefficient bureaucracy at its worst.

If Mr. Rousseau had any sense of justice or decency, he would have uncovered this situation before now and removed those who are responsible.

The Future

Mr. Rousseau S Dept. has produced a report that indicates that we have 13 million fbm of sawlogs within the small area that has been given to us to cut in. Our area is much smaller than any of Ralland's areas, none of which is estimated at more than ten million fbm. So the Government is now telling us that in our small area we have more timber than twice the size which Rallands holds.

We can show that the survey the Government has produced does not take into consideration the naturally agreed upon minimum size of a commercial sawlog. We can show that over 70% of the wood they say is available is not economically suitable sawlog material.

Government Threats

In an attempt to keep the people of Conne River quiet and force them to accept the cruel decision that Mr. Rousseau had made, Mr. Rousseau advised the Chief of the Conne River Band that if the people of Conne River continued to oppose the Government's decisions about the allocation of timber, they would cut off all financial assistance to the Conne River mill. The following is a quote from Mr. Rousseau's letter: "The sawmill at Conne River is receiving significant financial assistance from Government. Such assistance is conditional upon the venture operating in accordance with Provincial rules and regulations or is to be discontinued forthwith." The Conne River Native Enterprises holds valid cutting permits and has paid royalties on wood we have cut, so we have lived up to the Provincial rules and regulations. What we feel Mr. Rousseau is saying is that if we don't shut up, they will attempt to cut off the funds from the Federal Government that we are receiving to set up our saw milling operation. This kind of threat is far

below the dignity of a cabinet minister and can only be attributed to how worried he or the Government must be over the, not too far in the future, collapse of Rallands Forest Products, another grandiose Government scheme that was concocted in St. John's, is impractical for the local area, and is doomed to failure, but not before the forest in Baie d' Espoir is leveled to the ground.

The whole fiasco only goes to show that:

1. local Government has no real power and can be politicized out of the way by Government whenever the cabinet decides,
2. this Government does not give a damn about Native People.
3. this Government does not give a damn about rural community development, or local people's right to exploit their own local natural resources to make a living.

We are only sorry to say that what was one of the most significant Indian Economic Development projects in Canada will, within three years, be going down the drain due to lack of timber and that one million dollars of Federal monies will have been wasted. We are also sorry to say that it appears that in five years or less Ralland Forest Products will also be out of business, resulting in a loss of millions of dollars to the Province and to the Federal Government.

Most of all we feel sorry for the people of Baie d' Espoir who will be out of work for generations, for the only resource in the area is the timber, and after that is leveled to the ground, it will be fifty years before it is commercially valuable again. If the Government had listened to Mr. Strickland's first proposal for a smaller mill; both his mill and the Conne River mill could possibly have continued for many years at a slower pace that the forests could take. What we are witnessing now is the "fast ripping off of the buck" kind of development that this Province is so well noted for. It goes like this:

1. to begin with the Government gets conned by private business, they finance a business venture that is impractical without any development studies,
2. by the time Government finds out its mistake they are too involved to pull out, so they end up giving more concessions to the private business project to keep it from going under and to keep their own mistakes from public notice,
3. eventually the private business either rips off all the exploitable natural resources and takes its profits and leaves, or the Government changes and the private business project is gradually allowed to die with some kind of pay-off for the private business to keep them quiet

The people that bear the burden is the tax payer and the people in the local area who are left jobless.

We, in Conne River, have only one of two choices to make; let the Government destroy us, or fight, and at least have the pleasure of going down swinging

Conne River Band Council

The Management Committee of Conne River Native Enterprises Ltd.

TO THE PEOPLE OF MILLTOWN & HEAD-OF-THE-BAY

We are writing to you about the timber controversy surrounding us, the Government & Rolland Forest Products.

We bear no ill-will or grudges against you or Rallands. We recognize your right to earn a living for yourselves and your family. All we are asking is that you recognize that we have that same right.

All we are fighting for is the timber within our town boundaries, our only resource which we can and will use. Do you think that it is right for Government to take this away from us.

If oil was discovered tomorrow in Milltown, and you had your own oil company, do you think it would be right for Government to let us come over because we had a bigger oil company to pump your oil and not employ any of your people and get rich off your oil.

To us the timber within our boundaries is the same thing. We ask that you recognize our right to use what few natural resources we have in our town boundaries so that we can earn a living.

Local Improvement District Conne River