Argentina honours NB Longshoremen for 1979 act of solidarity

Argentina’s Ambassador to Canada, Arturo Guillermo Bothamley, presented the Orden de Mayo to Pat Riley, business agent for the Saint John local of the ILA, for the union’s 1979 protest that prevented the shipment of heavy water to Argentina’s military dictatorship. By ROBERT GUTIERREZ-HERRMANN

Hundreds gathered at Lily Lake Pavilion in Saint John on Saturday, March 13th to honour the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) Local 273 for what has been called “the single most dramatic example of Canadian trade union solidarity with workers in the Third World.”

Argentina’s ambassador to Canada, Arturo Guillermo Bothamley, presented the Orden de Mayo to Pat Riley, business agent for the Saint John local of the ILA, for the union’s 1979 protest that prevented the shipment of heavy water to Argentina’s military dictatorship — an action that resulted in the release of 11 political prisoners. The Orden de Mayo is the highest award given by the Argentine government to citizens of another country for courage, honour and solidarity.

On the morning of July 3rd, 1979, port workers refused to load a tanker at the west side of the Saint John Harbour on the day they were supposed to ship a load of heavy water to Argentina, which was necessary to operate the CANDU nuclear reactor it had bought from Canada in 1973.

The protesters, stating “NO CANDU FOR ARGENTINA!” and “NOT CANDU!” were asking someone to come to the Cabinet and the protesters were released. The protest was organized by the NO CANDU committee in the name of nuclear power in Argentina.

The military junta’s most appealing practices were the most painful. They were the worst of the worst. They were known to disappear people who were tortured, murdered and disappeared. Meanwhile, the government of Canada was supporting, up to the point of the 1978 nuclear power plant, by the Argentine government’s refusal to sign the 1979 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

As a result of the protest, 11 of the 17 political prisoners were released within days. Union leader Albert Hynes, who was released a day later, expressed his gratitude to a group of Canadian workers. “Unity is the unity of all peoples, and it must be of the highest, for the sake of all those who are threatened by the enemies of freedom and democracy.”

After accepting the Orden de Mayo from the Ambassador, Riley said: “The Argentine government is a country that is open to new ideas and to new ways of doing things. They can be an example to other people elsewhere — especially in this busy world.”

It was the story of the 1979 No CANDU for Argentina protest that started a new era of activism in the country. It was a time when the Argentine government was seeking the recognition of its 31 years of work and was looking to the future.

The Cranberry cooperative goes big in Rogersville

By TRACY GUILLEN

Rogersville, a predominantly francophone village in southeastern New Brunswick, with a population of 1,500 and greater regional population of 3,500, is set to become North America’s largest cranberry growing farm.

Premier Shawn Graham was on hand to break the ground for the Cranberry Farming Cooperative, which will invest $8 million to expand its operations by 2,000 acres, with the first 1,000 acres to be planted in 2010, 2011 and 2012. The project is expected to create 60 jobs and to bring an annual average of $1.5 million in wages to the area.

The company plans to transition 775 ha of land into profitable cranberry beds which is expected to employ 100 people. Ocean Spray has invested $8 million in new equipment in the first phase of the project, and plans to invest $100 million over five years. More than 100,000 berries are expected to be harvested by 2012.

The company has already bought 300 acres of land and another 200 acres of land will be planted in the spring of 2011. The first year of cranberries is expected to be harvested in 2012.

The Cranberry Cooperative has been formed to capitalize on the growing demand for cranberries. The cooperative has been formed to capitalize on the growing demand for cranberries. The cooperative has been formed to capitalize on the growing demand for cranberries.

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A picture cannot show how big this site is. It’s unbelievable. It’s like another planet. The landscape will never be the same out there,” says Roger Babin. Photography by Roger Babin.