



The Brief

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New Brunswickers stand their ground against shale gas development

By STEPHANIE MERRILL

As the provincial government banks on the shale gas industry to boost the province's economy, New Brunswickers are waking up to the project's dangerous implications. Spurred by screenings of the documentary film, *Gasland*, public information sessions, and the gearing up of exploration programs by industry, communities along the eastern shore are rejecting shale gas as a possibility, and are instead rallying against it.

On Wednesday, April 13th, residents of communities around the Rexton area staged an anti-fracking protest outside of the open house hosted by Southwestern Energy (SWN Resources in Canada). Throughout the event, around 30 protesters waved signs bearing messages such as “No Fracking Way”, and received supportive honks from passing motorists.

The Rexton rally was organized after residents of the area became aware of the seismic testing program proposed by SWN Resources.

Derek Telasco and his wife Terri helped organize the protest, and have been working to raise awareness about shale gas development in their community. They got involved in the issue after an industry representative showed up at their St. Charles farm. “We had seen *Gasland* before, and researched fracking enough to know how dangerous it is to our water,” said Mr. Telasco. “We moved here from Ontario to get away from the pollution. There is no way I am going to let them put our water at risk,” he continued.

Maxime Daigle, originally from Point-Sapin, spent the day talking with people who came to the industry open house, arming them with information and questions he felt they should be asking industry representatives.

Daigle is a former oil and gas driller and speaks passionately about his experiences all across North America. He warns people that “gas drilling cannot be guaranteed to be done safely.” “There are too many opportunities for things to go wrong in the drilling process for us to not be worried about our water,” he says.



"You do not come in peace!" That was the message sent by the youth of Rogersville at a rally outside SWN Resources' open house on their shale gas interests at the Canadian Legion in Rogersville on April 27. Sixty people could be counted at any one time during the six hour protest. Many more came and went during the chilly day and evening. Photo by Kevin Matthews.

Daigle quit the industry after seven years and returned home to New Brunswick to study and work in renewable energy technology. Since finding out that this province is slated for gas exploration on 1.5 million hectares of land, he has been vocal in calling for a complete ban on shale gas development.

The provincial government however, has been staunch in its rejection of any moratorium or ban on shale gas development, with Department of Natural Resources Minister, Bruce Northrup calling it in recent interviews, “the best thing to happen in New Brunswick in a long time.”

The number of New Brunswickers who disagree is growing, and future anti shale gas rallies are planned for SWN Resources' upcoming open houses in Doaktown, Chipman and Stanley. The organizers say they hope to draw in more and more people as they move to the different communities.

For dates and locations of upcoming rallies, visit www.facebook.com/banfrackingnb or www.conservationcouncil.ca.

Postal workers prepare for strike

By MIKE PALECEK

On April 17, 2011, postal workers in Canada made history and voted 94.5% in favour of strike action. Mike Palecek, the Recording Secretary for the CUPW Vancouver Local, writes about why postal workers are preparing to strike below. The original article, published by Fightback, can be read in full at marxist.ca.

Across the country, members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) are preparing to hit the picket line. Strike committees are being assembled; picket signs are being printed; picket captains are being recruited and trained; activists are holding shop-floor meetings; demonstrations are being held. Canada Post has been preparing for this fight for years. They have presented the most regressive package of demands we have seen in a generation and they're counting on Stephen Harper to ram them through.

One of the most important concessions on the table is a plan to take away our paid sick leave, and replace it with a Short Term Disability (STD) plan. Postal workers seem to get every flu bug that comes along. Everyday, we handle thousands of envelopes that have been licked by countless people. Add to that the number of slips, trips, and falls letter carriers face on their routes and you can see how important our sick days are to us.

We currently get 16 paid, bankable sick days per year. Most postal workers do not use all of their sick days, but many do – and they need them. Canada Post wants to replace this with a plan that would reduce our sick leave to seven days per year, paid at only 70% of wages. The new plan would shift a substantial portion of the costs onto the EI fund, thus sticking the rest of Canada's workers with the bill. This plan is not just an attack on the workers at Canada Post, but everyone who pays into the EI system.

The STD plan would be overseen and administered by a private contractor who would have final say over whether or not a claim was approved. Canada Post is demanding that this process be “non-grievable.” This means that postal workers will have absolutely no recourse when their claim is denied. Currently, Manulife is contracted to harass sick and injured workers at Canada Post and there

is every indication that this new portfolio would fall into their lap, too. Anyone who has had to deal with a Manulife agent second-guessing their doctor will know what this means.

Another disgusting demand from Canada Post is the setting up of a two-tiered structure for its workers. Under this plan, all new employees hired by Canada Post would get a lower wage, second-class benefits, and an unsecured pension plan. What's worse is that they would never get the wages and benefits that current CUPW members enjoy. With huge numbers of CUPW members set to retire in the next few years, this move would have an immediate impact.

Two-tiered pay scales are a classic tool of the bosses to impose a long-term decline in working conditions and weaken unions. One only has to look at the grocery store chains in Canada to see where this leads. A couple of decades ago, people working in most grocery stores earned a living wage; they had real benefits, they had pension plans. What has happened? One by one, the grocery chains introduced two-tiered systems into their collective agreements. They dramatically slashed wages to near minimum wage for all new employees. Without strong opposition from the union leadership, workers voted for these changes thinking it wouldn't affect them personally. They were wrong.

The bosses leaned on the senior employees to beat down the junior ones. Then when the staff reached a tipping point and there were more new employees than old ones, they reversed it. They turned their fire on the senior employees and leaned on the junior ones to pass the votes. It is a classic divide and conquer tactic. This is what management at Canada Post is planning.

Canada Post pleads poverty in an attempt to convince its employees and the public that these cuts are necessary. The bosses talk about the sorry state of the world economy and the need for Canada Post to compete in this environment. They must create a crisis to make their changes. The truth is Canada Post has been in the black for 15 years. Canada Post has actually returned over \$1-billion in dividends to its only shareholder, the Canadian government. In fact, in 2009, in the midst of a global economic meltdown, Canada Post made its largest profit in corporate history!

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers has a reputation for being one of the most militant unions in the country. Its string of illegal strikes in the 70s and 80s won major improvements,

not just for its membership, but all Canadian workers. The union has been mobilizing its members ever since it became clear what upper management was planning. We are ready to strike and strike hard.

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