On December 22, 2018, protesters against the sale of armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia picketed the King Street entrance to the Port of Saint John.

Sharon Murphy-Mayne of the group PEACE-NB, which helped organize the picket, called the sale of armaments to Saudi Arabia “immoral” and said: “We’d like to send a message to the Canadian government that this is unacceptable.”

The protesters noted Saudi Arabia has caused massive civilian casualties and human rights abuses during the three and a half year military intervention in Yemen.

Canada has sold nearly $4 billion worth of armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia over the last three decades, and is currently in a 14 year, $14.8 billion contract to supply 742 light armoured vehicles to that country.

Protestor Wayne Dryer, who is associated with the Council of Canadians in Saint John, said he learned about the scope of the abuses in Yemen a few months ago and feels that if he did not speak up, he would be “complicit in all of the actions of the abuses in Yemen a few months ago and feels that if he did not speak up, he would be “complicit in all of the actions that take place using the vehicles that pass through our port.”

Groups such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International say the Saudi-led coalition intervention in Yemen has violated international law by bombing civilians, hospitals, and a half year military intervention in Yemen.

By NORM KNIGHT

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Shipments of armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia picketed in Saint John

By NORM KNIGHT

On December 22, 2018, protesters against the sale of armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia picketed the King Street entrance to the Port of Saint John.

The Bahri Yanbu remained offshore all day on Dec. 22 due to "bad weather," according to Saint John port officials. The Bahri Yanbu docked at the Saint John port the next morning, on Dec. 23 at 1:34am. The ship, loaded with the armoured vehicles, was seen leaving the port that afternoon.

By NORM KNIGHT

Saint John longshoremen receive historic recognition

By DAVID FRANK

They call it the movement of goods, as if the goods moved on and off ships of their own accord. But from the days of square timber and lumber deals to the cargoes and resources of today, none of this activity has been possible without the longshore workers. By muscle and machine, they have done the loading and unloading at the blunt interface between the port of Saint John and the rest of the world.

In return, they have asked for their fair share of benefits in their conditions of work and some measure of respect. The longshoremen of Saint John hold a special place in Canadian history because they were among this country’s first workers to take common action to achieve those goals.

They did this by founding the Labourers’ Benevolent Association. It was a cautious name, calculated to allay fears in a time when the legal status of trade unions was uncertain. But, as historians have long recognized, it was one of the earliest labour unions in British North America. Possibly, it was one of the oldest continuously existing dockers’ unions in the world.

At a ceremony held November 16, 2018 at the Frank and Ella Hatheway Labour Exhibit Centre in Saint John, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada unveiled a plaque recognizing the founding of the Labourers’ Benevolent Association as an event of national historical significance. These designations are not handed out casually. A nomination was put forward by Local 273, International Longshoremen’s Association, in 2009, and it has taken until now to go through all the stages of consideration, approval, and implementation.

In the earliest days, the longshore workers belonged to the precarious employment and gig economy of their time, hired in season and by the day, working in all weather, under conditions threatening to life, limb and health, for meagre pay and zero security, twelve. They worked 14 or 15 hours a day, all the while competing against each other in a race to the bottom for worse conditions.

The arrival of the union in 1849 was announced with the raising of the Labourers’ Bell on Market Slip, a bell that governed the working day, ringing in the day of work and bringing it to a close at the end of 10 hours. At a later date, the plaque will be permanently installed at the Frank and Ella Hatheway Labour Exhibit Centre, on Ella Vair’s recommendation that all members of the public and for walking tours of the city.

This normalization of the working day, first to 10 hours, later to nine and eight, began to bring some order to the chaos of exploitation on the docks. It helped make work available for more workers, made conditions safer, and gave workers more time for family and community. The bell rings out, in their words, a “message of hope for the workers.”

The plaque was unveiled on November 16 at the Frank and Ella Hatheway Labour Exhibit Centre in Saint John. Left to right: Saint John Mayor Don Darling, Saint John-Rothesay Member of Parliament Wayne Long, Local 273 Secretary Treasurer Pat Riley, labour historian David Frank, and Bernard Theriault, New Brunswick representative on the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. Photo credit: Kurt Peacock/Parks Canada.

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At a call to action by anglophones on language rights in New Brunswick

By GERRY MCALISTER and SUSAN O’DONNELL

Moving NB to a Green Economy is the theme of a competition for music videos made using cellphones. The five top videos will each receive $1,000. The competition is a joint effort by the NB Media Co-op, the NB Film Co-op, the NB RAVEN project and JEDI. For the competition registration form, email: ravenvideocast@gmail.com. Competition deadline is March 15.

Blessing of the fleet in Caraquet. Photo by Brian Atkinson from the Images of New Brunswick databank.

In 2019 New Brunswick celebrates 50 years as Canada’s only officially bilingual province. The equality of both linguistic groups is protected in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Constitution of Canada states that English and French are the official languages of the federal government and that equal rights and privileges as to their use in all institutions of the legislature and the government of New Brunswick.

New Brunswickers recently voted the People’s Alliance (PANB) into our legislature, a party that campaigned on abolishing the office of the Official Languages Commissioner and reducing the second language requirements for some public service jobs. In concert with the Progressive Conservative government, they are already attempting to make these changes.

The only way to reduce the right to services in both official languages in New Brunswick is to change the Constitution. This requires the approval of the legislative assembly in New Brunswick and of the Senate and House of Commons in Ottawa. Any political party serious about trying to change the Constitution would be making convincing arguments, in both English and French, to win over the hearts and minds of Canadians. Instead, PANB’s messaging has mustered a narrow audience of anglophones in New Brunswick.

Ambulance NB has repeatedly stated that the ambulance service in Saint John is “not bilingual.” A number of critical services are bilingual, including some emergency communications.

However, the challenge to language rights goes beyond only PANB voters. Before the election, a CBC video reported that 70% of New Brunswickers found that 78% of PANB voters strongly agreed, as did a minority of Liberal, Green and NDP voters.

Since the implementation of the Official Languages Act, people lacking adequate second language skills have difficulty securing public service jobs requiring those skills. While the vast majority of anglophones are bilingual, only eight in ten in rural New Brunswick have two languages. Atlantic Canada is bilingual only in six anglophones.

For bilingual anglophones and francophones, communities, institutions and the government in New Brunswick are willing to pay for language training. The tactics of the “old” Confederation of Regions party – which will have to be persuaded to change their minds, move past styness, embarrassment, resentment, sense of entitlement or physical discomfort and focus on what they can actually change for them and for the future. In Canada, New Brunswick can become the future of the bilingual country.

Our MLAs must show leadership, first by putting to rest the notion that making “the government” bilingual is somehow an imposition on the other linguistic group. This is a story that has been well rehearsed and played. It is a media narrative that the government in New Brunswick has a duty to make a clear and firm commitment to bilingualism, and to all its citizens, to help New Brunswickers understand our rights and responsibilities under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. And, most importantly, to stress the richness of life and culture that living in a bilingual province brings.

The government must engage the federal government in a mission to improve second language skills in New Brunswick, with a focus on rural areas. We need to recognize that we must have a national will and vision, and that we need to create a big social and cultural project with anglophones and francophones working together in our collective interest.

Let’s move language training out of urban institutions and into rural communities, supporting local language training projects by government, community groups and local entrepreneurs. Building on our shared love of nature, we could support language training skills training and cultural exchange opportunities designed to support rural development projects for rural community development such as small farmers, organic food producers, community forestry, and climate change adaptation activities along our waterways and coastlines.

A call to action by anglophones on language rights in New Brunswick

By GERRY MCALISTER and SUSAN O’DONNELL

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Donate today and help us grow.

Municipal unions and governments have three official languages. Switzerland and the Netherlands each have four official languages. Good practices for learning and teaching second language skills in schools of all regions could be examined by other jurisdictions and could be applied in New Brunswick.

Finally, in this new year, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Official Languages Act. Let us act in concert to defend bilingualism for the second language skills citizens. We call on all anglophones to speak up to defend bilingualism for all citizens, including Francophone citizens.

It should be unacceptable to anyone who respects the rule of law that the rights of Acadians and francophones of New Brunswick are under threat from our own government.

Gerry McAlister is a NB Media Co-op member and supporter; he delivers The Brief in Fredericton. Susan O’Donnell is a NB Media Co-op reporter and volunteer. Gerry McAlister is a NB Media Co-op member and supporter; he delivers The Brief in Fredericton.

Community Calendar
To list your community event, email: movements@nbbrief.ca. For an updated listing of events, check: nbmediacoop.org.

Tertulia this winter at Midi’s Pizzas (732 Charlotte St.) in Fredericton will feature talks on the lives and works of philosophers, poets, painters, poets, historians, a playwright and a mathematician on scheduled Wednesdays at 7:00pm. For the schedule, Facebook: Tertulia or contact: fredericton.tertulia@gmail.com.

Cinema Politica believes in the power of art not only to inspire, excite and entertain, but to improve social change. Cinema Politica is the largest volunteer-run, community and campus-based documentary- and short film exhibition in the world. A film screening will be screened on Fridays during the fall and winter at 7:00 pm at Conserver House, 180 St. John St. Check out film schedules and venues, or start your own chapter at: cinemapolitica.org.

We are “the culmination of an historical movement” towards greater democracy that has made them a “fundamental aspect of Canadian society”. To understand these kinds of rights, all citizens need to know this kind of history.

There is no better example than the story of the longshore workers of Saint John and their union that is now one of the oldest continuously existing labour organizations in the country. By joining together in a shared cause, ordinary workers, with relatively few skills and little economic support, were able to organize themselves in the face of communal hostility and community conflict that often required force and violence. This is a story that serves to be known by all Canadians.


calling all singers-songwriters and video-makers for the environment

With more than 1500 members in the 1960s, the Labours’ Benevolent Association was one of the largest unions in the region and important to the history of Confederation. In an age when governments took little interest in such things, they negotiated wage agreements and provided benefits to thousands of injured workers and their families from the hundreds of men killed on the docks.

And they built solidarities with other workers. They struggled to overcome ethnic and religious divisions, and in the face of a centralizing economy, they joined the independent Longshore Union to resist such attempts. Frank Hatheway could not win until the union took up the cause with a determination that could not be ignored. They went on to push for miners’ allowances, minimum wage laws, and other reforms that benefited all workers in the province.

The longshore workers also knew how to respect picket lines, and two notable examples can be mentioned here. In 1949 they stood with the Canadian Seamen’s Union when Canadian sailors were on strike in ports around the world. In 1979, they supported protests against the repression of civil rights in Argentina and the export of heavy water supplies to the military dictatorship there.

It is not possible to know if the Supreme Court of Canada was thinking of the Saint John longshoremen when they ruled in 2007 that union rights and collective bargaining are protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As the court decision put it, the rights of labour are “the culmination of an historical movement” towards greater democracy that has made them a “fundamental aspect of Canadian society”. To understand these kinds of rights, all citizens need to know this kind of history.

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