

WOODLANDS EMPLOYEES PICKET MILL

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News

by LYNNE BADGER
On Wednesday, July 11, at 6:00 a.m., Kimberly-Clark woodlands workers who are members of the Lumber and Sawmill Workers Union Local 2693 did not report for work in Geraldton, Nakina, Longlac and Terrace Bay. Instead, for the next three and three-quarter hours, they gathered outside at the Masonic Hall on the road to the Kimberly-Clark pulp mill, asking workers at the mill to support them by not going to work. A similar group gathered at the K.C. stud mill in Longlac. The purpose of the demonstration was to force Kimberly-Clark to reconsider its contract with Regis Poulin, a private contractor whose agreement with K.C. they claim, violates their contract with Kimberly-Clark. On January 4th of this year an agreement was made between Kimberly-Clark and Mr. Poulin. Under the agreement, Mr. Poulin would be allowed to cut birch trees on the Kimberly-Clark limits. He intended to sell the wood to the Weyerhaeuser Company in Sault Ste. Marie. The Ministry of Natural Resources issues an Order in Council licence to the contractor to cut the birch trees on the Crown Land known as the Kimberly Clark Limits. The Ministry encourages these third party agreements because the trees which are not used in the pulp process are not wasted by being left to rot or bulldozed to prepare a site for reforestation. The contractor is also instructed to cut any "incidental conifer", that is, other trees that may be damaged in the harvesting of the birch. As far as the Ministry of Natural Resources and Kimberly-Clark are concerned, totally wood utilization instead of waste makes a great deal of sense. For Mr. Poulin and three or four other men, the agreement provides employment, but from the Lumber and Sawmill Workers' Union's point of view, it is a jobber opening the door for other jobbers to come in and take their jobs. They see it as a violation of clauses in their contract with Kimberly-Clark which restrict "baching" (live-in camps). They fear a recurrence of the situation at Boise Cascade in Fort Frances and Kenora where the company decided to employ owner-operators, requiring contract cutters to buy and service their own equipment.

There was also a problem with Mr. Poulin selling the birch to MacMillan Bloedel in Nipigon because it is another bargaining unit of the

Lumber and Sawmill Workers Union.

Initially, union members took the matter in their own hands and told Mr. Poulin to move off the limits. Fearing for his equipment, he did so, then through a lawyer arranged for restraining orders to be issued by the Supreme Court Justice to protect him from the union members. He also began civil proceedings for compensation for lost wages while his machines and crew were idle for two weeks. With the assistance of the O.P.P. talks were held, however the L.S.W.U. were not satisfied as long as Mr. Poulin remained on the limits. On Friday, July 6th, they planned a demonstration but it had to be postponed when foreman declared it a "weather day". (Due to high winds and rain, the men were sent home.)

On Monday, the 9th, Kimberly-Clark met with the president of the L.S.W.U. in Thunder Bay. Still not satisfied, the union members set up an information picket line and asked United Paperworkers International Union and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Union members not to cross the picket line. K-C's Industrial Relations Department officials explained verbally and by means of a bulletin that they would ensure that Mr. Poulin would not sell wood to MacMillan Bloedel and his shipments would be monitored. They also explained that the picket line was illegal and that all employees were free to cross it. Staff members crossed the line amid verbal harassment but union members individually chose not to cross and busloads of workers turned around. Union Stewards Louis Garon from Longlac Camp 55 and Dan Puddester and Lynn Merkley, stewards from Terrace Bay explained their concerns to the "NEWS". Besides violating the contract with Kimberly-Clark, they said that Mr. Poulin had five cutting areas, four of which were actually cutover areas where the birch was left standing. The other was prime timber. They see that as abusing the contract.

Their primary concern however was their jobs. They did not want one contractor to open the way for others and the situation to end up like Fort Frances where there was a prolonged strike "with brothers fighting brothers" and in the end "a lower standard of living" for the cutters. They have "a good place to live and want to keep it that way."

Mr. Al Chisholm, Director of Industrial Relations for Kimberly-Clark approached the group of stewards and informed them that this was an illegal work stoppage and initiated a question and answer discussion by saying that Mr. Poulin was not depriving them of jobs because birch was surplus wood. He also pointed out that when K.C. found out that the contractor was violating the Union contract, by selling wood to another bargaining unit, they stopped him.

Dan Puddester replied that "Birch may be surplus now but what about the future? Poplar was surplus before and now it's our livelihood."

Chisholm replied that poplar was never surplus. As early as 1959, it was run in the mill four times per year and presently the mill has been altered to handle more of it. However, "birch and maple will not be used."

Puddester asked "Why can't we cut the birch?"

Reply: "Kimberly-Clark does not sell wood to others. It is not a market to bother with."

Puddester then suggested that the older cutters could but the birch or that it could be cut during the layoff period. The same reply was given.

Mr. Garon changed the subject and asked if Poulin was "baching" on the job?

Answer: "Our people (Kimberly Clark employees) are not "baching."

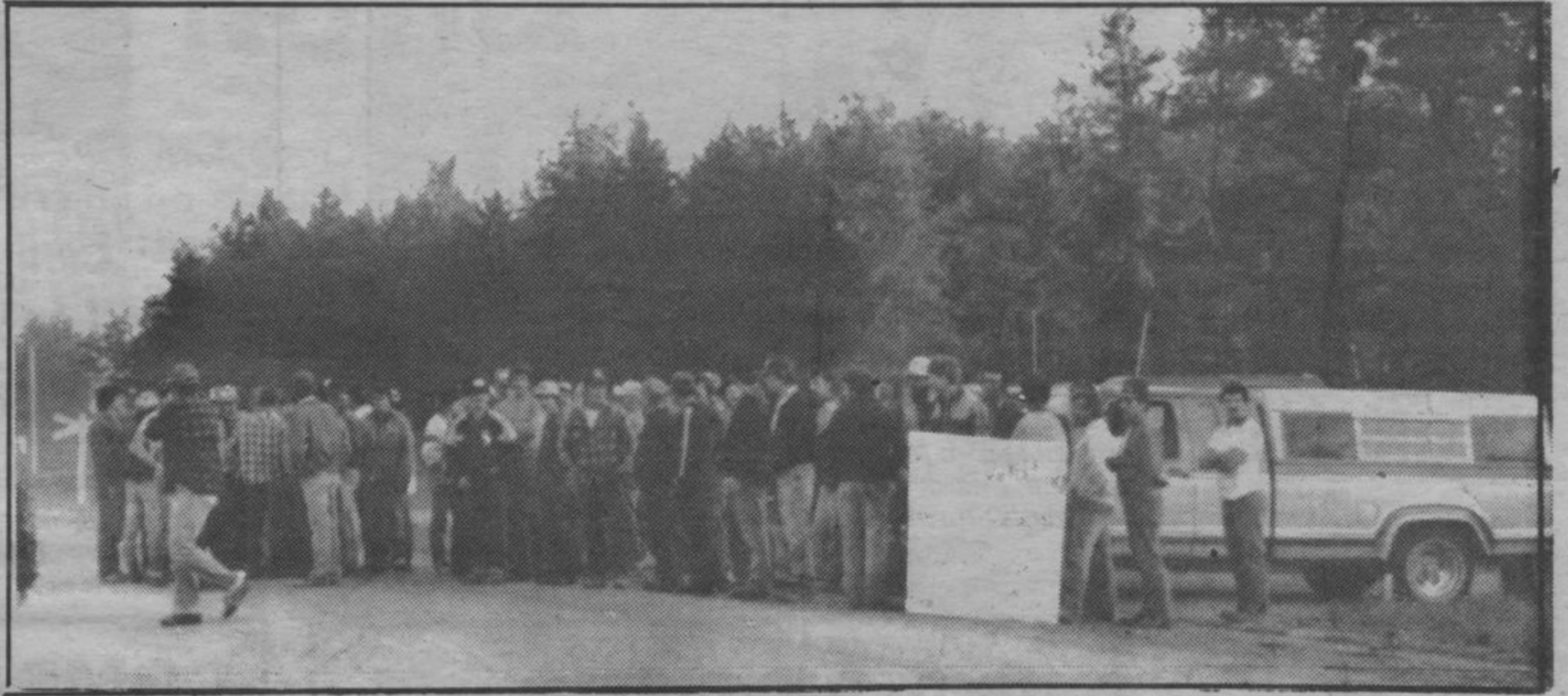
Question: "Why do "Packsackers" (contractors) not have to wear the same safety equipment as we do?"

Answer: K.C. enforces safety regulations for the good of their employees. The contractor is under government regulations.

Mr. Chisholm suggested that they approach the company about all of these concerns.

At 9:45 a.m. the picket line was withdrawn. The company and union had agreed to discuss the matter at a negotiating table and the present contractor will be allowed to complete his contract of 2,000 cords of wood provided he does so with his present staff. Operations at the mill were not disrupted as the night shift stayed on until the line was withdrawn.

All seemed well until Mrs. Poulin stated on Thunder Bay television that her husband would not be told where to sell his wood. Kimberly Clark has guaranteed the L.S.W.U. that Mr. Poulin will not sell wood to another bargaining unit.



Woodlands workers block one lane on the Kimberly Clark Mill Road.



Chic Thompson, Gerry Withers and Al Chisholm, K.C. Industrial Relations Department and Preston McKeever, (in truck) Camp 59 Foreman look on as staff member in a van crosses the line.



Mill Workers (left) and Woodlands workers (right) cheer as a pulp truck turns around without crossing picket line.



Lumber and Sawmill Workers Union members from Longlac and Terrace Bay wait to talk to mill workers as they arrive.