



# Labour's Response to Environmental Issues: A New Brunswick Case Study

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## Abstract

In examining the response of labour to environmental issues, we started with the question of whether there is an inherent conflict between jobs and the environment or whether progress on the two can be compatible. Some see an inherent conflict between them but Richard Kazis and Richard L. Grossman, authors of *Fear at Work: Job Blackmail, Labor and the Environment*, have argued that the two can be compatible. Others such as Peter Victor, the Brundtland Commission, Al Gore and BlueGreen Alliance proponents have taken that position also.

The question is explored in the context of the province of New Brunswick. Where does labour in New Brunswick see itself on the issue? What responses has labour made over the last forty years or so to environmental issues? What factors determine such responses? Has there been co-operation and have there been alliances between labour and the environmental movement? What stands out as most significant in labour's responses? What are some of the stories? What can we learn from them?

We have interviewed labour and environmental leaders in the province and gathered statistics and documents, including those containing resolutions from NB Federation of Labour conventions, in an attempt to get some of the answers to these questions.

The research for this project has received approval of the  
STU Research Ethics Board (certificate # 2011-01)

# Acknowledgements

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**This study is part of the Work in a Warming World Project (W3), a SSHRC-CURA Research Programme**

The author appreciates the financial support received for this project through a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Community-University Research Alliance (SSHRC-CURA) research grant. W3 is a five-year research project to address the challenge of climate change for Canadian employment and work carried out under the direction of Carla Lipsig-Mummé at York University. The author would also like to thank Dr. Andrew Secord of STU for his valuable assistance as research associate on the project, and to acknowledge the research assistance, on the project of which this is a part, of Marie-Christine Allard and Ella Henry.

## Introduction

***'It's either the environment or your jobs- make your choice.' This is the message that is heard from business and government.***

In their 1982 book, *Fear at Work: Job Blackmail, Labor and the Environment*, Richard Kazis and Richard L. Grossman discuss 'environmental job blackmail'. Writing in the time of Reagan's America, they describe what they call this "particularly insidious form of job blackmail" (ix). In it, "many business and government leaders have responded to their new environmental obligations by claiming that these regulations have been killing the economy, making growth next to impossible, throwing people out of work and interfering in the creation of new jobs" (x). Such charges, Kazis and Grossman explain, "have played on fears of unemployment to alienate members of organized labour from their counterparts in the environmental movement". Yet the book refutes the view that environmentalism and unionism do not mix. Rather, the authors argue that, on the one hand, environmental protection is essential to labour- as it is to everyone- and, on the other hand, full employment is essential to environmental protection because "as long as people are afraid of losing their jobs, they will be vulnerable to job blackmail". Thus, they say, "labour and environmental movements will have to make a conscious effort to work together to resist and overcome job blackmail" (xi).

An inspiring story that Kazis and Grossman tell in the book is that of Mike Olszanski, the chair of the Environmental Committee at Steelworkers local 1010 at the Inland Steel mill on Lake Michigan in northwest Indiana (263). In 1974, the company threatened to close down its coke ovens and lay off 2500 workers rather than either clean up or pay the \$5000/day fine that was going to be imposed by the US District Court. Olszanski's local set up an environmental committee, worked with environmental groups, and hired engineers to do an environmental impact study. This allowed Olszanski and his local to stand up to the company and publicly accuse it of "lying to the workers and lying to the community" (265). The company did eventually back down, clean up its coke ovens and no workers lost their jobs. As well, in 1976, Olszanski and his local became involved in an alliance, the Bailly Alliance, which opposed the building of the Bailly nuclear plant. The Alliance was composed of environmental, community and labour groups as well as fish and game clubs. Olszanski even persuaded the Bailly plant construction unions to get involved in the protest by persuading them that, in post Three Mile Island America, the issue of their members' safety as workers would not be addressed in the plant. The Alliance was successful in its goals. In 1981, the Bailly project was abandoned (270).

In 1983, a conference was held at St. Thomas University with *Fear at Work* co-author, Richard Kazis, as the featured speaker. Following Kazis' presentation, there were panels with representatives from the environmental and labour movements in New Brunswick. Job blackmail and the need for 'one voice' from environmentalists and labour, as these issues pertained to the New Brunswick situation, were key topics discussed. Dana Silk, executive director of the Conservation Council of New Brunswick (CCNB), pointed to the myth subscribed to by the Hatfield government of the day that "environmental goals threaten employment opportunities". He argued that belief in the myth was resulting in

the government not supporting fines for industrial pollution (Silk 1983). John MacEwan, representing the New Brunswick Federation of Labour (NBFL), added:

In these hard economic times it is easy for the companies to blackmail us because they usually have the support of the community. If there is strike action there are more people waiting to take the jobs. There has to be dialogue between workers and environmentalists to work out these problems. We all live here so the environment concerns everyone (MacEwan: 1983).

The 1983 conference has been followed by three similar conferences in the province. In 1990, the NBFL organized a conference on workers and the environment where the same themes emerged. In 2000, an 'Emerald Alliance' conference dealt with the same issues as they pertained to Crown lands in the province. In 2011, workers and environmentalists got together once again at the Work in a Warming World Atlantic Forum to explore finding one voice to speak about climate change issues. More than thirty years later, the themes brought up at the 1983 conference are still relevant in the province.

Kazis and Grossman do not see a fundamental conflict between jobs and the environment. However, there are those on the left who see an unsolvable conflict between the environment and growth, and hence jobs. John Bellamy Foster, editor of *Monthly Review*, in his writings on the environment, calls our present economic system "unsustainable capitalism" (2010: 14). He sees a contradiction in that capitalism will collapse without growth but, with growth, capitalism is destroying the planet. Hence what is needed is a social revolution. Anything else is simply a band-aid solution. Peter Victor, an economist from York University, sees the same future for the planet as does Bellamy Foster unless we can move to a "no growth" economy (Victor 2008; Capital Institute 2012). But unlike Bellamy Foster, Victor thinks that there is the potential for such a "no growth" economy. However, maintaining job growth in such an economy would require shorter work hours. In other words, there would need to be a redistribution of work.

Other influential voices would agree with Kazis and Grossman that "environmental quality and jobs are not mutually exclusive" (xi). For example, the Brundtland Commission in its 1987 document, *Our Common Future*, introduced the concept of "sustainable development" which it defined as "the kind of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987: ch. 2). Likewise, Al Gore, while pointing out "the inconvenient truth" of the state of our planet, talks about saving it with the creation of "sustainable capitalism" (Bellamy Foster 2012: 6).

It is those that accept this no conflict position who stress the importance of co-operation and alliances between labour and environmentalists so that the two speak with one voice. In 1999, an historic alliance was formed at the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle between the Turtles (the environmentalists) and the Teamsters (the labour union) (Cabrera 2000). Their alliance in the anti-globalization movement later developed into a

BlueGreen Alliance, first in the United States and later in Canada.<sup>1</sup> A strategy of the BlueGreen Alliance - which has joined up with the Apollo Alliance- in the face of climate change has called for the creation of green jobs in the economy. If jobs are lost with the phase-out of fossil fuels, a corresponding number of jobs in alternative energy can be created and thus the problem of jobs versus the environment is addressed (Apollo Alliance website).

In this paper, these issues are explored in the context of the province of New Brunswick. Where does labour in New Brunswick see itself on them? What responses has labour made over the last forty years or so to environmental issues? What factors determine such responses? Has there been co-operation and have there been alliances between labour and the environmental movement? What stands out as most significant in labour's responses? What are some of the stories? What can we learn from them?

We have interviewed labour and environmental leaders in the province and gathered statistics and documents, including those containing resolutions from Federation of Labour conventions, in an attempt to get some of the answers to these questions.

### **Labour's response: a New Brunswick case study**

In studying labour's response to environmental issues in New Brunswick, we have found that, in general, labour does not see a conflict between jobs and the environment. This is despite the fact that such a conflict is constantly being posed by business and the government in the province. For labour, it is more a question of the level of priority that environmental issues should be given in relation to 'collective bargaining' issues, given their limited resources as a union movement at the provincial level. Certainly, also, structural factors such as the state of the economy and that of particular industries as well as the neoliberal policies of the last several decades have affected labour's response and consequent level of prioritization of environmental issues. Those from the environmental movement, in their attempts to work with labour, see the changes in the structure of the labour movement brought about by structural changes in the New Brunswick economy as having been crucial in determining labour's response to environmental issues. More specifically, there has been a striking shift in the New Brunswick Federation of Labour (NBFL) from the dominance of private sector industrial unions to public sector ones and an ensuing change in the priorities of the Federation leadership.

In looking at labour's response, there has been support for environmental issues as well as co-operation and alliances with the environmental movement. There has also been some conflict. However, what stands out most are some of the heroic efforts to save both the planet and the health and safety of its inhabitants by both those in the labour

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<sup>1</sup> However, recently the BlueGreen Alliance in the States has lost the membership of the Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA) over the Keystone XL pipeline issue (*Talking Union* 2012). <http://talkingunion.wordpress.com>

movement and those in the environmental movement in working with them. We want to tell some of these stories.

### **The New Brunswick context: the economy and neoliberal policy**

New Brunswick is a small province with a 2010 GDP of \$29.5 billion and a population of 750,000 (2011 Census). It is one of the “have-not” provinces based on its GDP per capita which, in 2010, was 82.2% of the Canadian average (StatsCan). The province of New Brunswick is largely rural with the second largest, after PEI, rural/urban population ratio in the country: 48.9: 51.1 compared to 19.8: 80.2 in the country as a whole (StatsCan). Using unemployment rates as an indicator of the state of the economy, New Brunswick’s rate is consistently one of the highest in the country. This is particularly the case in the north of the province. Looking at unemployment rates in New Brunswick since the seventies, we see that unemployment peaked in 1978 (14%), 1983-86 (15%), 1991-92 (13%) while staying at 10% over the 1999-2000, falling to 7.5% in 2007 but then rising to over 10% in the 2008-09 recession. It only went back down to 9.4% after the recession and is over 10% again in 2012 (StatsCan).

The unemployment rate in the north of the province reached 13.8% in 2010 (CBC 2010). This part of the province has been devastated in the last seven years with the shutting down of four pulp and paper mills- one in Bathurst (2005), two in Miramichi (2007) and one in Dalhousie (2008) (APEC 2008: 8). In one town alone, Miramichi, which has a labour force of just 9000, 1240 jobs were lost at the mills (CLC 2009). In terms of the representation of paperworkers in their union (which was CPU, and is now CEP) and in the NBFL, it is estimated that there were some 8000 members at the height of the industry in the 1990’s and now there are only 1000-1500 members left.<sup>2</sup> This has certainly lessened paperworkers’ voice in the labour movement in New Brunswick.

In terms of neoliberal policy, we need to consider it at both the federal and provincial levels since policies at both levels have an impact in the province. At the federal level, the Employment Insurance changes of 1995 and privatization policies have had a major impact. The EI changes particularly affected seasonal workers in the fisheries and the woods. The neoliberal policies of privatization and deregulation begun in the Mulroney era led to the closing of the CN shop which, in the seventies, was providing 5000 jobs in the Moncton area. The decision around the privatization of water by the city of Moncton in the late nineties was also, it could be argued, a product of neoliberal policy.<sup>3</sup>

Neoliberal policy was brought to the province by Frank McKenna who was premier from 1987-97. He imposed a one year wage freeze for public sector workers. He resisted the introduction of anti-scab legislation, protection for public sector casual workers and reform of the Workers Compensation Act. Labour’s struggle culminated in the formation of a NB Coalition which included unions outside of the NBFL and a 2004 campaign for

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<sup>2</sup> From interview with Danny King, April 16, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Suggested by Raymond Leger in interview, Jan. 20, 2012.

“free collective bargaining”. The campaign managed to avert a back to work order for CUPE hospital workers that year (Mann 2009: 151). In 2007, the Self-Sufficiency agenda of the Graham government and the Atlantica proposal to create an Atlantic gateway through the Maritimes to the US were very much in the neoliberal mode. Both spurred some environmental initiatives by labour- the first, a proposal by NBFL for NB Power to take the initiative in wind energy and the second, for labour to join in the struggle against the Atlantica thrust.<sup>4</sup>

Crises in the fishery over the 1980’s and in forestry in the last decade have played a major role in labour’s responses to environmental issues. At first, labour joined with environmentalists to stop the plunder of the resource- the oceans in one case and the forests in the other. However, at a certain point in both cases, there was a break with the environmental movement. In the case of the fishery, the Maritime Fishermen’s Union (MFU) disagreed with the position that the Conservation Council of New Brunswick (CCNB) had taken over the separate but related issue of the Burnt Church indigenous fishery while in the case of the forest, at a certain point, locals from the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union (CEP) took the position of their employers against reducing the allowable cut on Crown lands.<sup>5</sup>

### **The organizational players**

The major organizational players in these New Brunswick stories are the New Brunswick Federation of Labour (NBFL) and the Conservation Council of New Brunswick (CCNB), although two particular unions, the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers (CEP) union and the New Brunswick Union (NBU) will also emerge as key players in our stories.<sup>6</sup>

The Federation was founded in 1913. As “the central voice of labour in New Brunswick”, the NBFL sees itself as a lobbying body representing its members’ interests with the provincial government. As expressed in its constitution, this mandate is “to secure provincial legislation which will safeguard and promote the principle of free collective bargaining, the rights of workers, and the security and welfare of all people”(NBFL website). With an office in Moncton, the NBFL only had one full-time staff person for many years and did not get a full-time president until 2005. In terms of membership, it has increased from 30,000 in 1960 to 46,000 in 2009 and to 47,500 in 2011. Significantly, the breakdown into public and private unions is currently more than four to one respectively.<sup>7</sup> Also of note is the fact that, for some time, there have been no building trades represented in the NBFL. After being expelled from the CLC in 1982, and hence also from the NBFL, very few of these unions ever rejoined the Federation.

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<sup>4</sup> Information from interview with NBFL President, Michel Boudreau, Feb. 9, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Information from interview with CCNB Executive Director, David Coon, Dec. 12, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> The Conservation Council now goes by the name CCNB Action. However, in this paper we will still use CCNB since that was its name in the period about which we are writing.

<sup>7</sup> Based on calculations from membership figures for Jan. 15, 2010. Public sector unions: 36,814 members. Private sector industrial unions: 8554 members.

The Conservation Council of New Brunswick was founded in 1969. The CCNB describes itself as “a citizens' action group that creates awareness of environmental problems and advocates solutions through research, education and interventions” (CCNB website). Just as it is for the NBFL, trying to influence public policy is a focus for the CCNB. Although there are a number of other environmental groups in the province, including the New Brunswick Environmental Network, the CCNB has been the most active in pressuring government and in trying to get labour involved in environmental campaigns. With an office in Fredericton, the CCNB has a full-time executive director and office manager, several program staff and an active contingent of volunteers, including those on the CCNB board.

### **Our interviewees**

We interviewed five leaders from the labour movement in New Brunswick. John Murphy, who started working for the NBFL in 1972, was the first and only salaried staff person at the NBFL for many years. He retired as executive secretary in 2005. At that time, there were only two staff and an office secretary at the NBFL. Sandy Beckingham, from Dalhousie in Northern New Brunswick, was a delegate and later secretary of his District Labour Council from 1976-88, president of his Canadian Paperworkers Union local from 1984, and a Vice-president of the NBFL from 1990-2004. Raymond Leger is a labour historian and has been in the labour movement in New Brunswick since the mid-eighties. This was first as a full-time labour rep for Retail Wholesale Department Store Union in Newcastle and later in a research staff position for CUPE at the regional office in Fredericton. Michel Boudreau, from a CUPE local in Moncton, is in his third term as full-time president of the NBFL, having first been elected to this position in 2005. Since 1998, Tom Mann has been the executive director of New Brunswick Union, the second largest union representing public sector workers in the province. Prior to that, Mann had been the executive director of the NB Nurses Union for sixteen years.

We interviewed three leaders from the environmental movement in New Brunswick. Janice Harvey, David Coon and Tracy Glynn have all worked with the CCNB -Harvey and Coon as executive directors and Glynn as forest campaign co-ordinator. Coon and Glynn are currently at the CCNB. Coon has been there since 1985, Glynn since 2006.

### **A Summary of Labour's Responses**

There are many levels of responses possible by labour. Mostly, the responses would come by way of resolutions put forward at the NBFL annual, and since 2000 bi-annual, conventions. These resolutions come from locals, from Labour Councils and from provincial unions or provincial branches of national unions. These resolutions may, in turn, be inspired by individual members or by resolutions passed at national conventions of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) or a specific union. Resolutions that are carried at the meeting are then taken by the NBFL to government through lobbying, submissions

and/or reports. In addition, committees may be established, education programs offered, convention speakers chosen, and conferences held on an issue.<sup>8</sup>

From examining the NBFL Convention proceedings since the 1970's, we see that pro-environmental resolutions have been passed on nuclear power, workplace safety and pollution issues, the closure of the CN Rail yard in Moncton, the 'Ban the Can' brewery workers campaign, NB forest Crown lands and overcutting issues and, last but not least, climate change. Most of these resolutions were inspired by local issues. There has been some conflict- or 'debate' within the NBFL as they like to see it- over two of these. Starting in 1983, there has been ongoing debate over the issue of nuclear power in New Brunswick and the building of a second nuclear reactor, Point Lepreau II. However the 'no Point Lepreau II' position has prevailed and been carried. In the early eighties, there was also debate over a 'Ban the Can' campaign directed at the brewery industry. When there was hesitation by the Steelworkers union, a compromise 'Ban the Can' position emphasizing the recycling aspect of the issue was taken by the Federation.

As already mentioned, in 1990 the NBFL held their own conference on jobs and the environment where the issues of energy and forestry sectors, worker health and safety issues as well as job blackmail were discussed. After the conference, an *ad hoc* environmental committee was established at the NBFL to be replaced by a standing committee in 1991.

The list of NBFL submissions on environmental issues is a long one, particularly regarding the Crown lands situation. This would include submissions to the Jaakko-Poyry Commission (2002), the Select Committee on Wood Supply (2003) and the Self-Sufficiency Task Force (2007). In 2007, the NBFL also made a joint submission with NB Power, the province's publicly owned power company, on the potential of green jobs in the energy sector.

The NBFL has also been involved in actions on environmental issues, usually in co-operation or as part of an alliance with environmental and other groups. This would include actions over 'No Candu', 'Ban the Can', the CN Rail closure, Crown lands, Moncton water privatization, anti-Atlantica (Atlantic gateway) and 'NB Power is not for sale'. Most of the issues involved in these actions will come up again in the stories to follow.

## **The Stories**

We feel that perhaps the best way to explore the question of labour's response to environmental issues in New Brunswick is to look at some specific stories. These stories focus on the issue, the players and the way that the issue developed over time. We have been able to piece together these stories from our interviews with labour and environmental leaders in the province. There are four stories that we have chosen to tell:

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<sup>8</sup> Information from interview with retired NBFL Executive Secretary, John Murphy, Mar. 2, 2012.

the nuclear story, the NBFL environment committee story, the Crown lands story and the climate change story.

### ***The nuclear story***

The environmental issue that has brought the most conflict in the labour movement in New Brunswick has been the issue of nuclear power with New Brunswick being the only Atlantic province to have nuclear power. The CCNB has been strongly anti-nuclear from the beginning. Janice Harvey, who was the executive director of the CCNB from 1983 to 1988, had also played a leading role in the Maritime Energy Coalition which led the struggle against the building of the Point Lepreau nuclear power plant.

In the seventies, the Conservative government of Richard Hatfield came up with a plan to make New Brunswick an exporter of nuclear power. Originally the government proposed six nuclear plants in the province- three in the north and three in the south. The plan was later reduced to two- one in Anse Bleu in northeast New Brunswick and one in Point Lepreau on the Bay of Fundy, but ended up with just one plant. The plan for the building of Point Lepreau was announced in 1974. By the time Point Lepreau came on stream in 1984, the discussion for the building of a Point Lepreau II had already started. Point Lepreau II was never built although the idea still had not been totally abandoned until the 2008-09 recession. In 2005, amidst great controversy, a decision had been made to refurbish the original Point Lepreau. The refurbishment ran into huge cost overruns and delays but is scheduled to be up and running in September 2012.

A Maritime Coalition of Environmental Protection Associations, later to become the Maritime Energy Coalition, was formed in the seventies to oppose the plan to build Point Lepreau. At this time, labour was not directly involved in the opposition. Rather the Coalition was made up of environmentalists, community activists, fishers, woodlot owners and women's groups (Secord 1992: 180).

However, in 1979, there was an anti-nuclear and pro-labour protest in Saint John in which labour was involved. This was the "No Candu" action in which the Longshoreman's union shut down the Saint John port for one day to protest the shipping of heavy water for a Candu reactor that Canada had recently sold to Argentina. The action, cross-Canadian in nature and originating from Toronto, involved labour, community groups and environmental groups, including both the CCNB and the NBFL (Vair n.d.). However, for labour it was perhaps more about democracy, and the abuse of labour and human rights under the Argentinian military dictatorship, than about the nuclear issue *per se*.

In the latter half of the eighties, there had been an incident of open conflict in Saint John when a group calling itself People against Point Lepreau II was protesting the building of a second nuclear plant. Members of the building trades unions had disrupted the protest. In the words of David Coon, who was there: "They showed up and cut the microphone cord, popped everyone's balloons and scared little kids. It wasn't pretty."

Starting in 1983, resolutions on nuclear power came periodically to the NBFL conventions. In general, an anti-nuclear position was adopted. Such a position was made easier by the withdrawal of the construction trades from the NBFL which occurred in 1982, as mentioned earlier.

In 1983, just as Point Lepreau was coming onboard, a strong resolution opposing nuclear power in New Brunswick was put forward by the Campbellton CUPW local. It called for the NBFL to:

Oppose the use of nuclear energy for any purposes whatsoever, and call for a moratorium on nuclear power development. The federation will initiate and encourage its affiliates to participate in appropriate actions such as rallies, petitions, etc., to mobilize working people against nuclear energy and call on the New Brunswick government to give financial support to the development of alternative power for the future energy needs of all Canada (NBFL *Policy Manual* 1988, Res. 109: 13).

However, over the years and as circumstances changed, resolutions on nuclear power took on various tones, with the pendulum swinging from one position to another. For example, in 1984, the year after the initial resolution, a resolution was passed which stated that since there was already a Point Lepreau plant, it should be operated at full capacity and that power rates to customers should be reduced (NBFL *Policy Manual* 1988, Res. 74: Appendix 20). But then in 1987, another strong anti-nuclear resolution was passed. It opposed the construction of Point Lepreau II (NBFL *Policy Manual* 1988, Res. 95: 13). Then, in 1993, the issue came back with a resolution brought by the Saint John Marine Shipbuilders which acknowledged the stand that the NBFL had taken opposing Point Lepreau but stated that, in the meantime, the Federation should support workers in New Brunswick over those in other provinces. However, although it stimulated considerable debate, in the end, the resolution did not receive concurrence and was referred (NBFL *Proceedings* 1993, Res. 44: 35). In 2001, the Moncton and District Labour Council brought a motion for the permanent closure of Point Lepreau but that was referred and a weaker amended version calling for the NBFL to “fight for a green environment in the field of energy and at Point Lepreau” was passed (NBFL *Proceedings* 2001, Res. 36: 49). The amended resolution, however, included the requirement for a “comprehensive package for all workers in the event of the closure of the Point Lepreau nuclear station.” Most recently, in the fallout from the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan in 2011, another anti-nuclear resolution, brought by the Moncton and District Labour Council was passed. The resolution called for lobbying of the New Brunswick government to “turn the ongoing refurbishment of Point Lepreau into a permanent decommissioning project” and for “investments to be made to compensate and re-train workers who may suffer job loss and to create replacement jobs in energy efficiency, conservation and renewable energy” (NBFL *Proceedings* 2011, Res. 57: 48). In fact, this resolution replaced an even stronger anti-nuclear resolution that had been referred back. The earlier resolution had called for “the NBFL to demand the closure of Point Lepreau and cease the use of nuclear power in the Province of New Brunswick” (NBFL *Proceedings* 2011: 47).

Thus although there has been debate on nuclear issues and several weaker resolutions introduced in particular circumstances, on balance, the anti-nuclear position has prevailed at the NBFL. As John Murphy, the retired executive secretary commented, the position of the original 1983 resolution which opposed nuclear energy in New Brunswick “remains on the books”. It should be noted, however, that in coalitions outside of the NBFL where there is wider participation of labour including that of the construction trades, the issue of nuclear power is very deliberately kept off the table. A case in point was the 2009 ‘NB Power is not for sale’ coalition in which both the NBFL and CCNB played leading roles.

### ***The NBFL environmental committee story***

There seems to have been a heyday for environmental issues in the NBFL from the mid-1980’s to the mid-1990’s. Both Harvey and Coon of the CCNB remarked that it was the leadership of the NBFL at that time that made all of the difference on environmental issues. They particularly mentioned working with Tim McCarthy, president of the NBFL from 1982 to 1991 and John Murphy, the executive secretary of the Federation over the same years. They also remembered the contribution of certain other individuals during this period: Maurice Clavette from the Canadian Paperworkers Union (CPU) in Edmundston, Sandy Beckingham from the CPU in Dalhousie and Dermot Kingston, a member of PSAC who worked at Forestry Canada in Fredericton. Each of these also sat on the CCNB Board for a time. The story of Sandy Beckingham whose involvement in his local, his District Council, the Federation and the CCNB is an example of the kind of environmental activism within the NB labour movement that was occurring during this period. We will conclude this section of the paper with his story.

In 1990, the “Conference on the Environment” was put on by the NBFL and held in Fredericton. The conference dealt with environmental problems in the areas of forestry, energy, solid waste and the use of chemicals and pesticides. The issue of job blackmail was also discussed. The conference featured a panel which included David Coon and Maurice Clavette among others. Attended by 60 NBFL members, the conference by all accounts had been a great success.<sup>9</sup>

Following the conference, the NBFL formed an *ad hoc* committee on the environment with Maurice Clavette as chair and Dermot Kingston as secretary. The committee came up with a policy statement based on discussions at the conference to take to the NBFL Convention to be held later that year. The Statement, carried by the Convention, has many notable aspects. It names the environment as a critical issue for the nineties. Taking the framework of sustainable prosperity, it calls for treating New Brunswick “as if we plan to stay” and rejects “jobs at any price economic thinking”. Further, it states that “job blackmail will no longer be tolerated”. It identifies the four common areas of concern discussed at the 1990 conference: energy, forestry, solid waste and the use of chemicals and pesticides. In the area of energy, any future nuclear power development is opposed.

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<sup>9</sup> This conference was mentioned to us by Sandy Beckingham, John Murphy, Janice Harvey and David Coon.

Finally, the policy calls for “working with NBFL affiliates and strengthening ties with the environmental movement” (NBFL *Proceedings* 1990, Res. 16-18: 52-56).

At that same convention, four resolutions were brought forward by CPU locals and the Edmundston and District Labour Council concerning the banning of asbestos and chemicals, especially carcinogenic chemicals, in the mills and chlorophenols in forestry (NBFL *Proceedings* 1990: 29-30).

The *ad hoc* committee recommended that the NBFL create a standing committee on the environment. With the establishment, in 1991, of such a standing committee, chaired by Tim McCarthy, the following mission statement was adopted:

To preserve all aspects of working life and to promote to our affiliates the knowledge and understanding of environmental concerns (NBFL *Proceedings* 1992: 37).

Of particular interest is a clause in the Policy Statement that suggests “whistle blowing” as a direction that the NBFL and its affiliates might be taking:

For the future, the committee wishes to proceed in a manner which will be established by our affiliates and the direction of the committee will be towards “whistle blowing” legislation and the protection of our members (NBFL *Proceedings* 1992: 38).

At first, the committee was active and met regularly but after a few years, it seems to have gone into decline. In 1995, with Tim McCarthy still as the chair, the committee reported back to the Convention. However, the next year, a resolution was passed about the inaction of the committee (*Proceedings* 1996, Res. 26: 21) and a 1997 report from the committee stated that the committee itself could not agree on positions. In a section of that report with the title, “Our reaction to the position of others”, the following somewhat contradictory points are included:

- Our interests are more in common with environmentalists than corporations.
  - Environmental groups need to become more sensitive to the jobs issue and stop attacking our workplaces.
  - We relied on our governments and our companies to protect our jobs. They did not.
- (NBFL *Proceedings* 1997: 43).

The committee did a study on forestry in 1997 but then went “into the dark” for a while.<sup>10</sup> Eventually, the committee was merged with the health and safety committee. Such a move could not help but diminish the role of environmental issues in the NBFL.

Sandy Beckingham’s story as an environmental activist gives greater depth to our understanding of the period of the heyday of environmental issues in the NBFL.

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<sup>10</sup> Description from interview with John Murphy, Mar. 2, 2012.

Beckingham worked in the Canadian International Paper (CIP) paper mill in Dalhousie from 1976 to 2004. A member of the Canadian Paperworkers Union (CPU) later to become Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union (CEP), he was the president of his local from 1979-88, president of the Campbellton-Dalhousie and District Labour Council from 1984-2004 and a Vice-president at the NBFL from 1990-2004. He was on the board of the CCNB for a year or so in the late 1980's.

In that same period- the late 1980's- Sandy was a representative on the Premier's Round Table on the Environment and the Economy. The NBFL did a lot of this type of work during this period but Beckingham found it frustrating. He said that he "never felt like I was doing anything" because the labour representatives were "losing every battle". It is noted in the 1992 NBFL Convention *Proceedings* that Tim McCarthy had refused to sign the report of the Premier's Round Table "because of fundamental differences over its conclusions relating to the province's future energy options" (38).

Beckingham described his environmental concerns as involving health and safety issues in his mill and in his community.<sup>11</sup> He regarded these also as environmental issues. It is interesting to note that two of the other leaders on environmental issues in the Federation also worked in paper mills- Clavette in the Fraser mill in Edmundston and McCarthy in the UPM-Kymmene (formerly Repap) mill in Miramichi. Beckingham, and the others as well, played a whistle blower role in their mills. It perhaps explains the reference to whistle blower protection in the 1992 Convention resolution mentioned earlier. Issues that Beckingham fought for included: getting rid of toxins in the mill, methods of waste disposal from the mill and the pollution of the bay beside the mill. In the community, he had been concerned with a proposal for docking nuclear subs in his port, the province's budworm spray program and the forestry practices of the big corporations.

Beckingham brought resolutions from his Labour Council to the conventions, sat on the executive council of the Federation and attended conferences like one in Montreal where he publicly disputed the facts presented by a New Brunswick 'expert' on the forests.<sup>12</sup> As well, he participated in the 1990 NBFL conference on the environment in Fredericton and sat on the CCNB board for a time in the 1980's although he said that he found that, after a point, the commuting was too much for someone who did shift work.

In terms of his involvement with environmentalists and the CCNB in particular, Beckingham said that he wanted "to show them that the [labour] movement had a place and that they had a credible voice to the issue". Further, he didn't want environmentalists to feel that "they were singing in the wind by themselves"- that "environmentalists were not the enemy". He said that he liked David Coon, Janice Harvey and David Thompson of the CCNB- that David Coon had even "come up home" to visit him and they had been able to visit some of the sites that Beckingham was concerned about.

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with Sandy Beckingham, Mar. 5, 2012.

<sup>12</sup> This story is also recounted in Jamie Swift, *Stories from CEP's First Ten Years: Walking the Union Walk* (2).

### *The Crown lands story*

The Crown lands story contains all of the elements of labour's response to environmental issues in New Brunswick. There is Danny King, an environmental fighter from labour following in the tradition of Tim McCarthy, Sandy Beckingham and Maurice Clavette - all four from northern New Brunswick paper mills that have since shut down. There is the CCNB which has focused on Crown lands policy, or 'public lands policy' as they prefer to call it, over the last thirty odd years. There is an historic alliance, the Emerald Alliance between environmentalists, labour and others over the future of the Crown lands. But there is also the 'your jobs or the environment' messaging from the companies and conflicts and cross-overs in support by labour from environmentalists' to employers' positions.

Crown lands have been a contentious issue in New Brunswick since the passing of the 1982 Crown Lands and Forest Act. The Act had been in response to a forecast that had been made of the loss of all wood source in the province within twenty years. Ten twenty-five year licenses to those with wood processing facilities were given out by the province. In return, the companies were supposed to take care of the proper management of the lands (CCNB website).

Problems with the system that have emerged include clearcutting and the replanting of hardwood and mixed wood forests with softwood plantations. Although the primary source of wood supply was supposed to be from private sources- at that time some 40,000 private woodlot owners in the province, this directive was abolished by Frank McKenna in 1992.<sup>13</sup> At the present time, more and more of the wood is being taken from Crown lands while private timber is being underutilized (Llewellyn 2011).

Through all of this, starting in the 1990's, the corporations and their association, the New Brunswick Forest Products Association (NBPFA), have been claiming that the industry does not have enough wood for their mills and thus are pressuring the government for an increase in the allowable cut. This is the exact opposite of what the CCNB has been recommending based on Department of Natural Resources estimates. This difference of opinion came to a head in 2001 when a leaked letter from the companies to the government outlining what we may call the former's 'demands' around Crown lands was released by the CCNB. Shortly after, the NBPFA and the government commissioned Jaakko-Poyry, a Finnish consulting company, to look into the question. When the Jaakko-Poyry Report was tabled a year later, the recommendations closely mirrored the 'demands' that had been made by the companies in the leaked letter. In response to the outrage of many groups in the province, including the Emerald Alliance, the government set up a Select Committee on the Wood Supply which, in 2003, held public hearings around the province. When the Select Committee's Report was tabled in 2004, it did not support the Jaakko-Poyry Report's recommendations, calling the document "*not* a go

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<sup>13</sup> This was brought to our attention by Danny King in his remarks to the *Work in a Warming World Atlantic Forum*, Sept. 29, 2011. It is also discussed in a commentary by Jean Guy Comeau, "Questioning the Jaakko Poyry Report: What New Brunswickers should ask the government- before the debate begins" (2003).

forward document for the province” (26, italics mine). Still that was not the end of the story. A new government, Graham’s Liberal government, was elected. Following a recommendation from the Select Committee on Wood Supply, the Erdle Task Force was appointed to look into how much clearcutting should be reduced. But the new government also appointed a “Self-Sufficiency Task Force” whose recommendations on forestry echoed those of the Jaakko-Poyry Report. In 2009, a new government was elected, the Alward Conservatives, who commissioned their own Crown lands task force. Meanwhile the companies and the NBFPA stepped up pressure on the Alward government to increase wood supply and establish a defined “timber objective” for investment purposes in the industry (Morris 2012).

The conservation of the Acadian forest has always been an issue for the CCNB. With the push for a greater timber allocation by the forest companies and the NBPFA, the issue really heated up. In 1999, the CCNB helped to create the Emerald Alliance, an alliance of labour, environmentalists, woodcutters, and woodlot owners to come up with one voice to push for a policy that would conserve the forest for future New Brunswickers. The Alliance held a conference in the spring of 2000 publishing a newspaper from its proceedings. One of the outcomes of the conference was the call for a royal commission on wood supply and forest management. This did come about in the form of the Legislative Assembly’s Select Committee on Wood Supply.

However, according to Coon, it was immediately after the Emerald Alliance meeting that the CCNB’s relationship with labour “fell off the rails”. At a joint news conference held by CCNB and CEP, the regional CEP officer publicly asserted a position hostile to the consensus that the Emerald group had developed, much to the surprise of all members of the group. In fact, the CEP officer’s words pretty much reversed all of the support the Council had been receiving from labour for its conservation goals.

What had transpired at the news conference soured the relationship enough that the CCNB saw no potential for moving further with labour on that issue at that particular time. According to Coon, it was clear that the regional CEP leadership was unprepared to carry the Alliance’s collective work forward. After that, the Council had to continue its attempts to save the forests without labour’s support. In conjunction with the NB Environmental Network, it launched a new Public Lands in Public Hands campaign around the Select Committee Hearings on Wood Supply and has made submissions to all subsequent hearings and task forces around the issue (CCNB website).

In the same period, the CCNB collaborated with labour in a separate but related struggle against the industrialization of wood cutting which was throwing wood cutters out of work and replacing them by mechanical harvesters. In February 2001, information had leaked that UPM-Kymmene was switching to totally mechanized harvesting operations (Comeau 2003). Meetings protesting the situation were held in many communities with over 700 at one in Allardville attended by the Minister of Natural Resources, Jeannot Volpé (Benoit 2001). Coon was invited to the region to participate at a media event on the issue by Denis Landry, a defeated Liberal MLA for the northern peninsula at the time, but formerly the president of his CEP local and a member of the NBFL executive as well

as president of the Acadian Peninsula Labour Council. Landry was later to become a member of the Select Committee on Wood Supply.

In 2000, Danny King, representing the NBFL, got involved in the creation of the Emerald Alliance. King and those at the UPM-Kymmene mill and in the Miramichi region where he worked had been hearing the cries from employers of a wood shortage for mills and the concerns of woodlot owners about a lack of market for their wood. King was a full participant in the formation of the Emerald Alliance and the conference that was held.<sup>14</sup> This is how King described the meeting:

So, on a nice Saturday in the spring of 2000, we all got together at the Fredericton Inn- there was well over a hundred of us- and we actually had a civil conversation about what was developing in the Crown lands of New Brunswick. We also knew that the corporations were going out and they were in back rooms with the government and they were making plans to take over the Crown lands even more. So we came to a conclusion at the end of the day that we were going to work together, that we were going to call for a Royal Commission on the Crown lands, and that we were going to basically come out with the same voice at the Royal Commission (King 2011).

King had kept working on the Crown lands issue even after the press conference debacle in 2000. In May 2003, King's local brought two resolutions on Crown lands to the NBFL Convention: one to hold a NBFL workshop on Crown lands and the other "to develop a position on the Jaakko Poyry Report containing the best plans for working people as opposed to corporations" (*Proceedings* 2003, Res. 61 & 62: 70-71).

Later that year, King was a co-presenter on behalf of the NBFL to the Select Committee on Wood Supply. The presentation was based on the NBFL forest report released earlier titled "The Future of Forests and the Forest Industry in New Brunswick". Both the oral and written presentations before the Select Committee by the NBFL took a strong stand on the conservation of forests in New Brunswick.

The oral presentation begins:

First, the industry submitted a wish list for the future of the industry. We became very concerned about the Jaakko-Poyry report and that it was saying was basically the same things as their wish list- doubling the annual allowable cut, increasing planting and they would pay, on the condition that the wood belonged to them, to guarantee a wood supply or compensate them financially (Public hearings 2003).

In their written presentation, the NBFL states:

As we have already stated in the past, we are not in favour of "jobs at any price," at the cost of destroying our forests, at the costs of profits only, at the cost of

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<sup>14</sup> This is from Danny King's account of the Emerald Alliance at the *Work in a Warming World Atlantic Forum*, Sept. 29, 2011.

destroying wildlife, at the cost of excessive mechanization, at the cost of having no forest to leave to our children...(Presentation 2003: 3).

And throws in their lot with environmentalists:

...we have forged privileged links with community organizations that deal with the environment, wildlife, native rights...only to realise that all of us, in our diversity, wished for a more harmonious development of our forests, not only in the short term, but also in the long term. These organizations have become our principal “social” partners in this fight for healthier forests that can generate wealth to be shared by all New Brunswick communities. At times our interests differ from those of ecological groups, but more often than not, our interests converge (Presentation 2003: 3).

The submission goes on to reject environmental job blackmail by the employers:

Sometimes workers are uneasily caught between the demands of environmentalists and those of the forestry industry. But, with the CEP, **we have always rejected the employers’ false conflict between jobs and the environment.** As New Brunswick citizens, we consider ourselves co-trustees of Crown Lands together with the government of New Brunswick, and we fully intend to carry out our responsibilities (Presentation 2003: 3).

According to King, the Emerald Alliance had run its course by 2005.<sup>15</sup> In 2007, the UPM mill where he worked closed and he lost his job. This meant that he ceased to be a member of CEP although he is still attends NBFL conventions. In a conversation we had with him in 2012, King explained the apparent discrepancy between the position that he had been taking on Crown lands policy and the position that the regional CEP had been taking as “politics”. He said that union leaders have to follow the wishes of their members, which had been to support the industry position, even if the union leaders themselves disagreed with it. Otherwise those union leaders would not have been re-elected to their positions.<sup>16</sup>

In 2007, the Crown land wood allocation question came up again when it was time for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to set the next five-year allocation. JD Irving, one of the few big forest companies left in the province, along with the others, began a campaign to persuade the Graham Liberal government of the day to maintain or increase the allocation. According to a CBC news story looking back on this campaign:

...JD Irving and the other forest companies had workers send thousands of postcards to Shawn Graham’s Liberal government. Those letters also used the names of ordinary people to urge the provincial government to follow the industry’s corporate objectives. Jeannot Volpé, a former natural resources

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<sup>15</sup> Information from Danny King’s account of the Emerald Alliance at the *Work in a Warming World Atlantic Forum*, Sept. 29, 2011.

<sup>16</sup> Telephone conversation with Danny King, April 16, 2012.

minister and Progressive Conservative MLA, criticized the postcard campaign: “All the Irving employees were asked to send a letter of support. The letter was already done. All they had to do was put their name on it and where they were working, and say, ‘We support what the Irving group wants’” (*CBC News*: 22/06/11).

The outcome, considered an industry victory, was that the government allowed increased cutting in conservation areas to make up for a reduced quota.

Shortly after, when UPM-Kymmene announced an August mill closure, workers feared that the company would continue to ship raw logs out of the province from its Crown lands. Weyerhaeuser, another Miramichi mill which was closing that June, had been granted an exemption to the Crown Lands and Forest Act to do just that. In May, four CEP locals, two of which were UPM locals, brought an emergency resolution to the NBFL convention. The resolution called for the NBFL to demand “that our provincial government require that any company using our provincial natural resources as raw material for production and profit in this province to either continue operations and employment in the province or relinquish all right of access to those natural resources” (*Proceedings* 2007, Emer. Res. 4: 44). The workers were actively supported in this struggle by the CCNB, with Tracy Glynn working on the file.

The issue was brought to the attention of the media and two rallies were held. The first, in June in Moncton was outside of the Canadian Premiers’ meetings with the key slogan on this issue being “No to Exporting Wood. No to Exporting Jobs”. The second, a 24-hour rally organized by the NBFL in August in Moncton, was outside the Council of the Federation (a coalition of premiers of all provinces and territories) meeting. “The Exportation of Forestry and Manufacturing Jobs” was one of the three issues- which also included the Atlantic Gateway- highlighted at the rally.

In 2011, in anticipation of the government’s announcement of the 2012-17 wood allocation, the conflict heated up again. The companies, led by J.D. Irving Ltd., started up a campaign to keep wood allocations at 2007 levels. For the first time at a NBFL convention, a resolution was passed which threatened the forests’ sustainability. An emergency resolution was brought, coincidentally by the J.D. Irving Pulp and Paper local in Saint John, that “the NBFL lobby the government to keep the wood allocation at 2007 levels so no more jobs are lost” (*Proceedings* 2011, Emer. Res. 1: 36) J.D. Irving Ltd. set up a website where workers only had “to click” to sign a petition or write a letter supporting the companies’ position (*CBC News*: 22/06/11). Meetings were held with politicians, communities and union locals. On June 1, a luncheon was held for MLAs where petitions containing 3000 signatures were presented.<sup>17</sup> The petitions were later to

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<sup>17</sup> The CEP website description of the campaign and the luncheon (06/20/2011) describes the 3000 signatures as “workers’ signatures”. However, they would not all be workers’ signatures. Communities were also included in the campaign- e.g. besides the full page ad in the Irving papers signed by union locals, there was one signed by mayors of eighteen communities as well as the director of francophone municipalities and the president of the Union of Municipalities of NB (*Daily Gleaner* 25/06/10). When the matter had come up earlier in relation to the 2007 postcard campaign, it was revealed, based on a Right to

be tabled at the legislature by a Saint John MLA. CEP NB locals were participants in the organization of the event (CEP website 06/20/2011).

On June 1 also, the CCNB put out its own news release titled, “Crown lands overcut-wood quotas must be reduced”. In the statement, backed up with a table giving data from DNR’s Timber Utilization Survey, David Coon had said:

The amount of wood cut from Crown lands in 2006-2007 was double what was cut in 1966-1967. We have seen the amount of wood cut from Crown lands on a five-year average increase by roughly 80% over the past forty years from 2.7 million cubic metres per year in the late 1960’s to almost 5 million cubic in the past decade. The bottom line is we have overcut the public forest so wood quotas have got to be reduced in 2012. The good news is private woodlot owners across this province have plenty of wood to sell that can make up the difference and create work at the same time (CCNB website: 20/06/11).

On June 20, CEP Atlantic released a statement titled, “Wrong Facts Threaten New Brunswick Forest Workers: The Conservation Council of New Brunswick Needs to Clean Up its Act” (CEP website: 20/06/11). In the statement, the Council, and David Coon in particular, was accused of being reckless and irresponsible and “not caring about people” by giving incorrect annual average Crown harvest numbers. On the very same day, June 20, a press release was issued by J.D. Irving Ltd. containing the CEP statement. In the next few days, the charge was repeated all over the media (CBC Information Morning; *Daily Gleaner* 22/06/11). In the end, it turned out to have been a transposing error on the CCNB website and it was all cleared up, particularly between CEP Atlantic and the CCNB. CEP pulled the offending statement about the CCNB from their website. According to David Coon, “They [CEP regional office] agreed it was out of line to be dissing us when we don’t go around dissing them.” Later in the same month, full-page ads came out in newspapers owned by the Irving group of companies with union locals calling on the government “not to reduce the Crown wood supply” (*Daily Gleaner*: 18/05/12). Claiming that their concern is about “protecting jobs AND the environment”, the ad calls on MLAs “to save forestry jobs in New Brunswick”. It is signed by seventeen CEP locals and one IBEW local. Of note is the fact that fourteen of the eighteen were J.D. Irving Ltd. locals, including the IBEW one.

In the fall, Irving started closing down sawmills. Four in all were closed down.<sup>18</sup> In September, when the Clair mill was indefinitely shut down, even David Alward, the Premier, questioned the company’s explanation for it and is quoted as saying that “the closure won’t affect government’s position on the harvesting of wood on Crown land” (*CBC News*: 13/09/11). The day before the announcement of the indefinite shutdown of the Deersdale mill in October, a mill worker, seemingly persuaded by the company

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Information request, that virtually all of the postcards and form letters (3089 in all) had been signed by Irving employees or by employees of various companies with a direct business relationship with an Irving company (Terry Seguin of CBC, Information Morning: email correspondence 24/05/12).

<sup>18</sup> The four were Clair, Deersdale, Kedgwick and Doaktown- the latter two were announced in late October, two weeks after the Deersdale announcement (CBC: 25/10/11).

position, told CBC: “We need more affordable wood. More Crown allotment is what it boils down to” (Poitras: 13/10/11). At the announcement, Irving spokeswoman Mary Keith cited “a lack of wood on Crown lands to keep it running” as the reason (*Daily Gleaner*: 14/10/11). But according to Dave Palmer, the general manager of the York-Sunbury-Charlotte Forest Products Marketing Board, the mill closure was being used “to apply pressure on the Progressive Conservative government to give it [the company] greater access to Crown land (Poitras: 14/10/11).

On March 30, 2012, after a long wait, the Minister of Natural Resources finally announced the government’s new forestry plan containing the 2012-2017 wood allocations. The plan maintains the cutting of softwood but reduces the harvest of hardwoods by 21% (Chilibeck 2012). The plan satisfies neither the companies nor the environmentalists. The spokesperson for J.D. Irving Ltd. was upset that the government did not set a timber objective warning that the plan “will hurt rural employment and communities that depend on forestry” (Chilibeck 2012). Coon, in a CCNB press release, notes that “the new management plan reduces the area of conservation forest from 30.5% to 28% of the overall forest meaning that 100,000 hectares of wildlife habitat (deer wintering areas) will be opened to clearcutting”. However, Coon does concede that “this government’s forestry plan is far better than the strategy the former government intended to implement this year” (CCNB website: 30/03/12). There has been no response to the plan from labour to date.

### ***The climate change story***

Of the four stories presented here, climate change has created the least conflict for labour. Rather, it is an issue that struggles to get labour’s attention, at least in the New Brunswick context. Perhaps the reason for both of the above reactions by labour is that, at the moment at least, climate change is not seen as an immediate threat to jobs. For the CCNB, in contrast, climate change is seen as a crucially important issue- one that needs to be addressed at all levels, including the local one.

At the NBFL, there have been a few resolutions over the years on climate change. The issue made its first appearance at a 1980 NBFL convention in a resolution calling for tax deductions for energy conservation conversions for dwellings (NBFL *Policy Manual*: 13). The next climate change resolution did not make an appearance until the 1990 convention, the year that the *ad hoc* Committee on the Environment was set up. The 1990 resolution was brought by a local of the PSAC, the union of Dermot Kingston, a forester sitting on the CCNB board at the time. The resolution called for the NBFL to endorse the CCNB’s carbon emission targets and Five Point Plan for Government Action on Global Warming (NBFL *Proceedings* 1990: 57-58). In 1999, there were three resolutions- one from CUPE and the other two from the Saint John and District Labour Council- on green job creation. The resolutions ask the CLC to take the lead on this based on the model in the Alternative Federal Budget. The third motion also calls for “green job creation strategy” to be the theme of the 2000 NBFL convention (NBFL *Proceedings* 1999: 33-34). This did happen. At the 2000 convention, the theme was “Green Jobs for a Green Economy” and David Coon was a lead speaker.

Meanwhile, the CCNB was taking a leading role on climate change action in the region. New Brunswick is a member of the Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers (NEG-ECP) which represents eleven jurisdictions in all. The CCNB sits as an observer at the NEG-ECP meetings. With some effective lobbying, the CCNB had persuaded several senior members of the recently elected Bernard Lord government to get the new premier to introduce a motion at the 2000 meeting in Halifax for the NEG-ECP “to adopt climate change as a focus of their work”. The motion passed, a steering committee was appointed, and in the 2001 meeting in Connecticut, a regional climate change action plan was adopted. The plan set greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for 2010, 2020 and the long-term. The NEG-ECP agreed to reduce emissions to 1990 levels by 2010, to 10 percent below that for 2020, and to a reduction of between 75% and 85% in the long-term (later set as 2050). The environmental organizations from the region, who were participating in the NEG-ECP meetings as observers, agreed to collaborate on annual report cards to track progress in their respective jurisdictions.

As a result of its NEG-ECP commitments, New Brunswick implemented its own Climate Change Action Plan, created Efficiency New Brunswick, a crown agency offering energy efficiency programs to homeowners, businesses and large industries, and imposed a regulatory requirement for NB Power, New Brunswick’s public energy utility, to increase the percentage of its sales from new low impact renewable sources.

The 2010 NEG-ECP targets have been achieved in most jurisdictions, including in New Brunswick. However, there is no new NEG-ECP action plan to achieve the 2020 targets. The reason given is that each jurisdiction has its own plans and priorities. In addition, the NEG-ECP moved to a slightly different focus, in 2008, with a Transportation and Air Quality Action Plan. However, at the 2010 meetings in Massachusetts, climate change came back to the agenda with an introductory theme of “Green Jobs and the Green Economy”. The issue did not come up at the 2011 meetings in Halifax but there is hope that it will at the 2012 meetings to be held in Vermont since Vermont is a state where ambitious efforts are underway to drive down greenhouse gas emissions and grow a green economy.<sup>19</sup>

Unfortunately, labour has not been involved in any of the NEG-ECP initiatives on climate change. Environmental organizations are playing a crucial backroom role as observers and monitors but labour has been given no place in the process. This has been largely true at provincial government level discussions on climate change as well. Climate change does not seem to be considered a labour issue.<sup>20</sup>

In 2006, several actions on climate change were taken by NBFL president, Michel Boudreau. Using a NB government grant, the NBFL initiated a car-pooling project for workers. Also, Boudreau made a presentation jointly with NB Power to the government’s

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<sup>19</sup> This account of the New Brunswick’s involvement in the NEG-ECP is based on David Coon’s remarks at the Work in a Warming World Atlantic Forum, Sept. 30, 2011 and his summary of those remarks in the conference publication, *Work in a Warming World Atlantic Forum: Saving the Planet and Creating Jobs* (2011: 33-34).

<sup>20</sup> Tom Mann concurred with this view.

Self-sufficiency Task Force in which the green job creation potential of the development of wind power by the public utility was promoted. However, the initiative did not go anywhere. After some time it became apparent that if wind power was to be developed in the province, it was to be done by bringing in investment from outside. Under this scenario, new jobs would not be created in the public sector and hence the Federation lost interest in pursuing the matter further.<sup>21</sup>

In 2008, a new labour initiative on climate change was undertaken by Tom Mann, Executive Director of the New Brunswick Union (NBU). Mann had been spearheading this climate change initiative in his union and beyond since he attended an Al Gore “An Inconvenient Truth” workshop in April 2008 and a follow-up one in May 2009. After Mann came back from the workshops, he and other Al Gore trainees gave some ten presentations around the province- to his and other unions, at universities etc. With Peter Corbyn, one of the other Al Gore trainees, two handbooks, *Cool Comforts* and *Cool Comforts II*, were produced and widely distributed (2008 & 2009). In *Cool Comforts*, climate issues are explained and changes are suggested that workers can make in their homes and workplaces. It also gives collective bargaining language that unions can seek in their collective agreements. *Cool Comforts II* shows union members how, through ethical investing in their pension plans, they can affect investment decisions in creating a new green economy. Further, Mann and the NBU undertook some collective bargaining initiatives on climate change and were able to make some headway with two of NBU’s private employers in getting better language in their collective agreements.

In 2009, Mann became a Vice-president of the NBFL and as such a member of the Executive Council representing his union which had just joined the NBFL in 2008. He became the “lead person” on the environment in the Federation although there was no longer any environment committee as such. Earlier, he had invited Peter Corbyn and Carl Duivenvoorden, another Al Gore trainee, to speak at a NBFL summit. Mann had been disappointed with the membership’s response to the issue. Only about one-third of the attendees stayed to hear the climate change speakers.<sup>22</sup>

In 2011, Mann and the NBU brought the following resolution to the NBFL convention:

### **Slower Economic Growth – Climate Change**

- **Whereas** a “healthy” capitalist economy expands at 3 per cent per annum, where capitalists make a reasonable profit.
- **Whereas** it is forecasted that the world’s economy will slow down to a rate of 2 percent growth over the next 60 years, however, the world economy will still be 40 times bigger than it is today posing enormous challenges on the earth’s ability to provide the resources; to sustain such growth and absorb the waste products;

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<sup>21</sup> This information is from the interview with Michel Boudreau, Feb. 9, 2011.

<sup>22</sup> The information on Tom Mann’s climate change initiative is taken largely from our two interviews with him, Oct. 7, 2010 and June 24, 2011.

- **Whereas** the evidence shows that ignoring climate change will eventually damage economic growth.
- **Whereas** responding adequately to the threat of climate change will entail a fundamental restructuring of the economy and economic restructuring without the voice of workers through their unions will lead to ruthless job losses, heightened exploitation and the interests of capital prevailing.
- **Be it resolved** that the NB Federation of Labour and its affiliates embrace the role as not just protecting workers during the undeniable economic restructuring but in shaping the very nature of the restructuring.

That the basis of our efforts to restructure the economy be focused on decoupling economic growth from growth in carbon pollution. Economic reform and technological innovation are the keys.

That the NB Federation of Labour commit to educating its members on strategies not limited to the following:

- Resistance to types of productivity improvements that merely seek to reduce labour inputs.
- Advocating for increased contribution in the overall production purpose, rather than raw materials.
- Greater workplace democracy and worker control.
- Advocating for the revival of industry policy.
- Arguing for the validity of social movement unionism (*Proceedings* 2011, Res. 52: 52-53).

The resolution had already been approved by the NBFL executive and was passed unanimously without any discussion by members at the convention. Raymond Leger's reaction, on being shown the resolution in our interview with him, was to question whether the vote signified that NBFL members had truly embraced the climate change issue or if members had not fully understood and/or considered the rather long, complex resolution, perhaps regarding it as a motherhood issue of not much practical concern.<sup>23</sup>

The Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and national unions have been active on climate change issues since the Kyoto agreement. Some of that action has spread to New Brunswick when materials from national campaigns on climate change have been distributed to New Brunswick members. For example, very good material from CUPE's national office was distributed at their 2010 regional convention. In addition, individual members have participated in international actions on climate change. Marc Desgranges, a CUPW (Canadian Union of Postal Workers) member from northern New Brunswick, was a CUPW representative at the 2009 UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen and brought back the message about climate change to northern New Brunswick in school visits etc.<sup>24</sup> In 2011, Ruth Breen, a member of CUPW in Fredericton, was a representative at the UN Climate Change Conference in Durban, South Africa. Like Marc

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with Raymond Leger, retired researcher with the CUPE regional office, Jan.13 & 20, 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Marc Desgranges presented on this at the Work in a Warming World Atlantic Forum, Sept. 29, 2012.

Desgranges, she has come back with enthusiasm “to work on climate justice issues within her union and her workplace” (Glynn 2012: 1).

A recent effort to advance the climate change agenda in New Brunswick was our Work in a Warming World Atlantic Forum: Saving the Planet and Creating Jobs, held in Fredericton in September 29-30, 2011, a regional initiative of the Work in a Warming World CURA project based at York University.<sup>25</sup> The Forum was sponsored by the Work in a Warming World project, St. Thomas University, the NB Union and the Conservation Council of New Brunswick and organized locally by a team representing each of the latter three bodies. One hundred and twenty attended the Forum with representatives from Atlantic Canada, New England and the rest of Canada. National unions and governments sent speakers and most of the local unions were represented as well as the NBFL and the CLC Atlantic offices. There was a good response from both labour and environmental groups and there were no conflicts between them. The idea of bluegreen alliances was promoted with a speaker from the BlueGreen Alliance in the United States, another from BlueGreen Canada and Danny King in his role as a labour representative to the Emerald Alliance in New Brunswick. On the second day of the Forum, participants who were interested in exploring the possibility of forming a bluegreen alliance in New Brunswick met over lunch. The discussion was enthusiastic, action seemed promising, and plans for a follow-up meeting were made. To date, that follow-up meeting hasn't taken place but we still hope that it will.

### **What do these stories mean?**

We started with the questions of whether or not there was an unresolvable conflict between labour and environmentalists over the issue of saving the planet and whether or not the two movements could speak with one voice on the issue. Looking at the concrete situation in one small part of the world, the province of New Brunswick, as a case study, we can see that there are no easy answers to these questions. It is a complex matter, not a straightforward one. However, it has become clear to us that it is naïve to think that labour and environmentalists can come together over all issues all of the time. Rather it is going to be the case that the two movements will only be able to speak with one voice at certain times over certain issues.

For labour, it is their present and future jobs which are of paramount importance. This is especially the case for frontline workers. We could see in the Crown lands story in New Brunswick that the future of the forests and forest management policy was of great concern to labour as reflected, for example, in the NBFL presentation before the Select Committee on Wood Supply. However, when it came to the devastation of northern New Brunswick with the shutting down of four paper mills, and the question became one of what was perceived as the “survival” of the industry, the union threw its support behind

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<sup>25</sup> See the St. Thomas University website ([www.stu.ca](http://www.stu.ca)) under “publications” for a summary of the Forum, the *Work in a Warming World Atlantic Forum* publication and a number of the presentations that were given.

employers rather than environmentalists despite warnings from the Department of Natural Resources and the CCNB that the wood allocation needed to be reduced.

Even with Sandy Beckingham and the NBFL environment committee, the environmental issue of concern was the health and safety of the workers in his mill and his community. When it came to the issue of climate change, for example, he was not as interested. He considered it an abstract issue which was not of much immediate concern to labour.

The NBFL has been generally supportive on environmental issues but these issues have not been given the same priority as direct labour issues such as collective bargaining rights. As well, because the NBFL has always been very under-staffed, not all environmental issues could be followed up on. Even with the environmental issues that were brought to the conventions, only those with membership support were carried. It was important in the case of nuclear power, for example, that there were no building trades unions in the NBFL. Otherwise anti-nuclear resolutions would have faced more opposition. In the case of Crown lands, putting the resource first was possible until the current devastation of the industry. It was at this point, with the majority of paper workers who were left having thrown in their lot with the employer, that the recent resolution about not reducing wood allocations was carried. Most of all, however, it would seem to have been the change in the structure of the membership of the Federation with the dramatic decline in industrial sector unions which had represented the resource sectors as compared to public sector unions that has led to the deprioritizing of environmental issues in relation to other social issues. The exception here is the NBU which has taken up the climate change issue.

Overall, however, on the issue of climate change, it has been difficult to get the attention of the labour movement in New Brunswick. Climate change is just not seen as directly labour related at the local level.

Despite all of this, some particular individuals emerge in the New Brunswick stories that we have told. These activists have fought, and are fighting for, a united voice by labour and environmentalists to save the planet. This would include those northern labour unionists: Sandy Beckingham, Maurice Clavette, Tim McCarthy and Danny King. It would also include Tom Mann and his recent one-man campaign on climate change. The CCNB itself has recognized these contributions by labour in giving an environmental award to the NBFL in 1991 and another to the NBU in 2009.

But perhaps even more than to those on the labour side, credit should go to environmentalists Janice Harvey, David Coon and Tracy Glynn who have been trying to include workers in campaigns to save the planet. David Coon deserves special note. Over the last twenty-seven years, Coon, despite rebuffs and setbacks in the struggle from time to time, has always taken the course of patching things up and soldiering on.

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