

CONCRETE?

RAIL TIE DECISION DELAYED

by MALCOLM CURTIS
Staff reporter

"The jury's still out. For reasons shrouded in secrecy, BC Rail has yet to decide whether it will use steel or concrete ties to replace wood on track north of Prince George.

The Crown corporation's board of directors was originally expected to announce the replacement of 185,000 ties last September.

"We're still gathering more information at this point," says Mac Norris, BC Rail chairman.

He said a decision would have to be made before year's end. Next year, continuous welded quarter-mile rail will be laid on 116 km of track north of the city. The heavily-used section links Prince George and the Anzac spur line to Tumbler Ridge.

When asked why the decision on ties has been delayed, Norris replied, "I'm sorry I can't say any more at this point."

Prince George-North MLA Jack Heinrich, a member of the B.C. Rail board, was similarly tight-lipped.

"There's a great deal involved," he said without saying what. "A decision will be made eventually."

There is no regularly scheduled meeting of the B.C. Rail board this month, but Norris said one will likely be set.

The decision to eliminate wood ties has been criticized by a Prince George wood treatment company, run by the Domtar Chemicals group. The company fears it and area sawmills will lose \$3.5 million worth of business because wood replacements won't be used.

Domtar treats ties with creosote preservative. The company says this work accounts for 70 per cent of its business in Prince George, where 34 union workers are employed.

The lumber business accounts for about three-quarters of the freight hauled by BC Rail.

But the Council of Forest Industries, the major lumber lobby in the province, says it has not taken a position on the matter.

"We, as a council, are not involved," said Jim Shaw, COFI vice-president.

The railway has said that ties on sections of track have to be changed to reduce high maintenance costs resulting from heavy coal trains.

While steel ties were initially considered by the Crown corporation, a decision on the ties was delayed while the company received quotes on concrete replacements.

CP Rail recently shelved a plan to use concrete ties on its main line between Golden and Mission. Company spokesman said reduced freight traffic has led to the postponement of a decision to acquire 125,000 ties from Genstar Costain Tie Co. Ltd.

Concrete, which has a longer life than wood ties, is being used by a growing number of railway companies in the U.S.

BC Rail spokesman Jerry Collins said last summer that if steel was used on track north of Prince George it will likely be used on all mainline trackage "over a period of about 10 years."

This was later denied by Norris, who said such fears are unfounded.

The railway has more than 2,000 km of track. While softwood ties are being replaced in heavy load areas, particularly curves, on railways across North America, softwood would still be the mainstay, he indicated.



New banners

Paul Zanette, right, assists city public works employee Hans Jensen in hanging a Zanette-designed banner, now gracing downtown light standards. The banners will hang throughout the winter and will be replaced in April by banners promoting the B.C. Festival of the Arts. Zanette was commissioned by the city to design the winter banner after winning the city's 70th anniversary competition last spring.

Citizen photo by Lisa Murdoch

Indians will argue against injunction

by Canadian Press

KITWANGA — The Gitwankang band said Monday it will ask the B.C. Supreme Court to overturn an injunction ordering it to keep off CN Rail lands in this Indian village in northwestern B.C.

"The goal is to have the injunction set aside entirely," chief Glen Williams in an interview Monday.

The Indians will argue that they did not have an opportunity Saturday to argue against the injunction, granted in Vancouver, and that the judge was "totally unaware" of the situation on the reserve.

Williams said CN Rail had "played dirty games" and that he

did not trust them to not use the injunction indiscriminately.

Williams said about 20 workers at Westar's timber mill in Kitwanga walked off the job Monday because they feared that they could be charged with contempt of court for going to their jobs at the mill, which is located on land leased to Westar by CN Rail.

Mill manager Don Johnson said, he was trying to organize a meeting between CN Rail officials and band councillors to get the mill operating again.

Williams also complained that the injunction made some band members prisoners in their own homes. The moment they leave their front yards they are stepping on CN Rail's industrial park land and could be charged for violating the court order.

"Children could be arrested because they have to cross CN land to get to school," he added.

The band chief said he hoped the application could be heard today or Wednesday in either Prince Rupert or Smithers.

The railway was granted the ex parte injunction after it told Mr. Justice Reginald Gibbs that a group of Indians had driven several vehicles onto the railway's main line here and blocked train traffic.

CN Rail and the band have been negotiating a dispute over ownership of the right-of-way that cuts across the Gitwankang reserve and the 11-hectare industrial park, which straddles part of the line. The band set up a blockade at the industrial park last week.

out the Vancouver area waving placards and handing out pamphlets urging shoppers to avoid Canadian Tire stores.

It was those pamphlets that prompted the court action. No date has been set for the libel trial.

The dispute is also before the B.C. Labor Relations Board where the Retail Clerks Union is seeking to have Pacific Associate Stores Ltd. declared an ally of T.A. Steadman Marketing Consultants Ltd., operator of the Prince George store.

Pacific Associate Stores operates all Canadian Tire stores in the Greater Vancouver area.

A favorable board ruling would allow the union to picket Vancouver-area stores. A decision is expected later this week.

Water leak closes schools

More than 600 students attending Blackburn Road elementary and junior secondary schools got an unscheduled holiday today.

The schools were closed to give city works crews time to repair a leak in a water main on Giscome Road between East and West Bittner Roads.

A spokesman for the city said the water was turned off at 9 a.m. today and service should resume between 4 and 5 p.m.

Because water to the area is supplied from a reservoir, some homes in the lower-lying areas will continue to have water after 9 a.m. as the water bleeds from the system, he said.

No estimate of the number of homes affected by the shutdown was available from the city.

SCHOOL CHOIRS PERFORM

School choirs from throughout School District 57 will be featured at the two-day 1985 Christmas Festival of Music which opens today in Vanier Hall.

Today's concert, at 7:30 p.m. will feature choirs from Blackburn, Foothills, Heritage, Highglan, Malaspina, Pineview and Vanway elementary schools.

Choirs from Haldi Road, North Nechako, Salmon Valley, Spruceland and Wildwood elementary schools will be featured during the second concert at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday.

The public is invited to attend both concerts. Admission is by donation.

Council approves art gallery grant

The financially-troubled Prince George Art Gallery will remain open following a decision by city council Monday to give the organization two grants worth \$10,500.

Council gave the gallery a \$5,000 operating grant and a \$5,500 improvement grant for the installation of a fire and security system.

The gallery's situation was bleak earlier this month but improved slightly when it raised about \$4,000 from an art auction.

Even with revenue, gallery officials still projected a year-end deficit of about \$5,000.

Ald. John Backhouse said he was concerned about the money, but said it was "absolute peanuts" considering the city's need for an art gallery.

Mayor Elmer Mercier said the city would look silly in allowing the gallery to close at a time when council is considering the construction of an arts and convention centre which could include a new art gallery.

Ald. Monica Becott supported the operating grant but said Backhouse's comment "blows my mind." She told council that an appropriate committee should investigate the gallery's problems.

Ald. Pat Brady supported the grants and said the gallery provides a service to the city.

But Ald. Art Stauble told gallery president Murray Morrison and David Jones, chairman of the community arts complex advisory board, that he questions the management of the gallery and said someone must have known earlier this year the organization was heading towards financial trouble.

Mayor's plea wins a seat

Mayor Elmer Mercier and Aldermen John Backhouse, Art Stauble and Colin Kinsley will represent the city on the Fraser-Fort George Regional District board.

The three aldermen won in a secret vote of council members Monday, while Mercier finished in a three-way tie with Aldermen Monica Becott and Ed Bodner.

Before a run off vote was held, Mercier said it is essential for the mayor to be on the district board and urged council to re-elect him to the position. Council passed a motion to reappoint Mercier without holding a second ballot.

Mercier will have five votes on the board while the other city aldermen will have four.

Bodner was named to replace Mercier on the board when he is absent while Ald. Richard Godfrey will fill in for Backhouse, Ald. George McKnight for Kinsley and Ald. Pat Brady for Stauble.

IWA holds vote on merger plan

The International Woodworkers of America is holding a ballot on the proposed amalgamation of its western and eastern regional councils in Canada.

The IWA has five regions — two in Canada, and three in the United States. The western Canadian region consists of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and B.C., said Frank Everitt, Local 1-424 president.

The union decided at a regional convention in 1982 to work out details of the merger, he said.

If the proposal passes, one regional Canadian council would be established. This move would reduce duplication at the two present offices and allow the union to work on organizing.

"I think it's a very positive move for our membership," Everitt said. IWA members in Eastern Canada have completed their voting and passed the proposal.

Everitt said members here have until Dec. 19 to vote. Ballots will be taken at work sites and members who have been laid off or missed the ballot can go to the IWA office at 1777 Third Ave.

Results should be known within a few days after the ballot has been completed, Everitt said.

Murder suspect 'unfit for trial'

A 17-year-old Tachie youth charged with the second-degree murder of an elderly Tachie man in November has been found unfit to stand trial.

Cassiar Roberts, 86, was found dead in his store on the reserve. Police said he died from loss of blood after receiving a single knife wound to his chest.

The youth appeared in provincial court here Friday and was sent to the forensic psychiatric institute in the Lower Mainland.

When he is fit to stand trial he will return to face the charge.

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INTERIM ORDER

Pamphlets banned

Citizen news services

An interim injunction was granted in Vancouver Monday against the distribution of a pamphlet by supporters of striking Canadian Tire employees in Prince George.

Mr. Justice Samuel Toy granted the B.C. Supreme Court injunction pending the outcome of a libel action brought by Pacific Associate Stores Ltd. against local 1518 of the Retail Clerks Union.

Members of the local, who are seeking their first contract, have been on strike at the Prince George outlet for more than two years.

The issue is union security. The union insists all store employees be members of the union.

In a show of support for the strikers, union members have been standing on street corners through-

out the Vancouver area waving placards and handing out pamphlets urging shoppers to avoid Canadian Tire stores.

It was those pamphlets that prompted the court action. No date has been set for the libel trial.

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