



YELLOWHEAD'S CONTRACT ON THE LINE

Highways firm fears job losses

by BERNICE TRICK
Citizen Staff

Owner-employees of Yellowhead Road and Bridge highway maintenance face an uncertain future today as they wait to hear the outcome of a new contract.

"Until this thing is settled we have no security, nor can we plan or even look for other jobs," say shareholders who pooled their resources and skills to establish YRB in 1988 when the B.C. government privatized highway work.

Completing its first contract Oct. 27 may be as far as the company will go if the government awards the next 30-month contract to a competitive bidder, Argo Industries of Kamloops.

Right now the government is negotiating with Argo, which it has ranked first of the two contenders.

If successful, government policy warrants negotiations cease, and that will be it for YRB which will "sell off the equipment and assets, pay the bills and divide up anything left over among the shareholders," said Richard Arnett, road superintendent.

They won't know if there's any profits to divide until the dust has settled, but they do know payments need to be met at banks where they borrowed money and signed notes to become shareholders.

They all believe they've been had by the government.

"Three years ago the govern-

ment encouraged us to become owners of our own company. 'Take a chance, and make something of your lives,' they told us, so we took the chance and borrowed money to become owner-employees," said Bruce Paschal, parts manager.

They did a good job because they cared about the people who had to use the roads, including themselves and their families, and to ensure the company would continue, they say.

And because YRB received high performance reports from the highways ministry every month, and because it was initially told past performance would count most for future contracts, YRB employees

want an equal opportunity to negotiate.

"We deserve a fair shake when we've been repeatedly told we're doing a good job," said Calvin Dyck, shop foreman.

"If price is the name of the game, something has definitely gone wrong in the system. Where does performance come in?"

The word is that Argo's lower bid is the main reason for its ranking despite the fact it has no past experience with this type of service.

Employees are stymied as to how Argo became number one when the government says 60 points (out of 100) are given for past performance.

"How could it have a higher

total than YRB when it has no past performance to rate?" asked payroll clerk Sandi Paulson, who foresees some of the 12 office staff workers losing their jobs.

"This is head office for YRB's three service area contracts — Prince George, Robson Valley and Vanderhoof — but this size staff won't be necessary for just the Prince George area," she said.

Employees want the public to understand that bidding for the new contract was not a sealed tender process with only a price, but a lengthy proposal outlining short-term and long-term plans.

It's like the three little pigs' homes made of straw, sticks, or bricks, said technician Didi Brard.

"We can give you any quality

house you want," Brard said, explaining YRB's proposal for highway service is like the brick house — solid, lasting and of the best quality.

The winning firm is bound by legislation to offer employment to YRB's B.C. Government Employees Union highway workers, but not necessarily the current positions held, nor is there any obligation to hire the 16-member, non-union management team, said shareholder Calvin Dyck.

Nor can they become owner-employees of the new company, because it's a private firm and doesn't offer shares to employees, they say.

Referendum
supports
beer store

The BX Neighborhood Pub has been given the green light by its neighbors to proceed with a cold beer and wine store.

The results of a referendum conducted recently in the area around Fifth Avenue and Carney Street shows 1,102 persons or 65.8 per cent of voters in favor of the store. A total of 573, or 34.2 per cent of voters opposed it.

BX Pub owner, George McDonnell, has been notified of the results by the labor and consumer services ministry, and has been given permission to proceed with the liquor application.

Results of the referendum, conducted by Regional Security Services Ltd., are to be posted on a property sign and in the Prince George Citizen.

Protesters
greet
battleship

VANCOUVER (CP) — Greenpeace protesters in inflatable boats greeted the battleship USS Missouri on Tuesday with shouts and spray paint.

"We're not against Americans, we're not against you personally," John Mate yelled Tuesday night.

"We're against nuclear-capable ships being brought into the Vancouver harbor. We ask you to leave immediately."

The USS Missouri, the ship on which the Japanese surrendered after the Second World War, shelled the Kuwaiti coast during the Persian Gulf War.

Authorities did not say whether the ship, at English Bay in Vancouver as part of a public tour, was carrying nuclear weapons.

The main Greenpeace ship and five inflatables were joined by several one- and two-person boats.

Protesters in inflatables would rush towards the USS Missouri, police would follow, and while they chased the first boatload, another group would try to paint the nuclear symbol on the ship.



Citizen photo by Dave Milne

UNBC route

The first road to higher learning to the University of Northern B.C. begins to take shape under the jurisdiction of the city of Prince George. The gravel road off Highway 16 West from Domano Boulevard will provide access to the site atop Cranbrook Hill during construction of the campus facilities. City crews are also responsible for two other road projects including a road from the intersection of Ospika and Cranbrook Hill boulevards, and the main entrance road leading from the west end of 15th Avenue.

Consumer confidence climbs

OTTAWA (CP) — Consumer confidence is high and company executives see fatter profits ahead but there's pessimism about the unemployment picture, the Conference Board of Canada said Wednesday.

With interest rates falling and inflation easing up, there was a substantial jump in consumer confidence in a June telephone survey of 1,000 Canadians.

The conference board said its index of consumer confidence was at the highest level since the first

three months of 1990, before the recession began.

The board said strong consumer confidence is a good indication Canadians plan to spend more money.

"The present survey results signal further expenditure strength, a promising sign that the consumer believes the recession is over."

The conference board also said its index of business confidence jumped in the April-June period following an increase in the first three months of the year.

"For the second consecutive survey, we are seeing business express confidence in their financial situation and in the economy as a whole," said Brian Hollohan, the board's associate director of forecasting and analysis.

The survey found 57.4 per cent of executives thought the economy would improve during the following six months.

That's the second highest level in the history of the conference board's survey and up from 47 per cent in the January-March period.

It's also a remarkable rebound from the depths of business pessimism during this recession.

In the September 1990 survey, 1.5 per cent of executives saw better economic times ahead.

Still, Canadians were not optimistic about finding new jobs.

"The only reservation expressed by consumers centred on employment expectations," Hollohan said.

The survey found only 14.4 per cent of those surveyed expected more jobs six months from now.

Air India
debris
recovered

OTTAWA (CP) — Debris from the Air India flight downed six years ago by what may have been a terrorist bomb has been recovered from the floor of the North Atlantic Ocean, an RCMP official said today.

An RCMP investigating unit is on board the Abeillie Supporter off the west coast of Ireland, using a deep-sea submersible to search for wreckage of the jumbo jet that crashed in 1985, killing 329 passengers and crew.

Jean Lhopitallier, vice-president of Vancouver-based Canoean Deep Water Services, said from the company's search base in Cork, Ireland, that the ship will return tonight or tomorrow to its home base in France.

Foster mom
receives
1-year term

A former foster mother found guilty of two counts of assault causing bodily harm to foster children in her care will serve one year in jail after being sentenced in Supreme Court today.

The woman, 60, was also found guilty of three counts of assault at the conclusion of her trial May 15. She received an additional three-month sentence on these counts — to be served concurrently — from Supreme Court Justice Richard Low. She was found not guilty on four counts of assault causing bodily harm.

"The whole of the evidence persuades me there is another and darker side to the accused," said Low, noting the 38 defence witnesses who testified as to the woman's character had not heard the evidence presented at the trial.

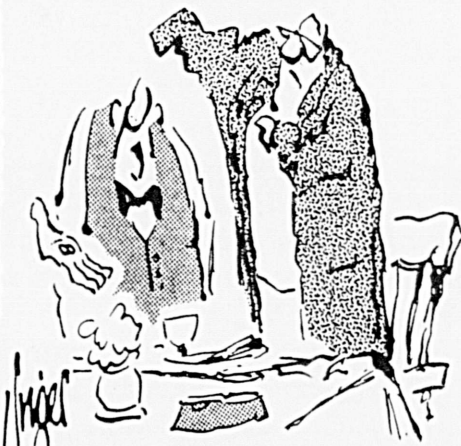
The charges brought against her by nine former foster children related to multiple incidents of assault from 1969 to 1978 in two Lower Mainland communities and one in the Robson Valley, 200 kilometres east of Prince George.

She was found guilty of charges brought by five of the complainants. In compliance with a court order, the woman can't be named.

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FORMER GOVERNOR GENERAL

Roland Michener mourned



Roland Michener

OTTAWA (CP) — Roland Michener, the former governor general who presided over the euphoria of Canada's Centennial, died Tuesday at the age of 91.

His daughter Joan Rohr said today he died in his Toronto home about 8:30 p.m.

Few details were immediately available about his death.

"It was a little sooner than expected but not unexpected," Rohr added.

Another daughter, Diana Schatz, said there will be no formal state funeral. A private serv-

ice for family and friends will be held at St. Anne's Anglican church in Toronto, followed by an Ottawa memorial service. No date has been set.

Schatz said Michener's ashes will be interred next to those of his wife in St. Bartholomew's church, near Rideau Hall, the residence of the Governor General.

"It's hard but he had a wonderful life," said Rohr.

The avuncular Michener was appointed Governor General in April 1967, following the death of Georges Vanier.

Michener was a Rhodes Scholar who became a lawyer and then entered politics. He was a member of the Ontario legislature between 1945 and 1948 and was a cabinet minister for two years. Between 1953 and 1962, he was an MP.

He was Speaker of the Commons under the Conservative government of John Diefenbaker 1957-62. Following the government's defeat, Michener was named high commissioner to India.