

INFORMATION

Ontario New Democrats **NDP** Nouveau Parti Démocratique

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Excerpts from a Speech by Stephen Lewis
May 28 to Dryden NDP Club on Expansion
of Timber Limits to Reed Pulp and Paper
Company

DRYDEN --- the intended expansion of Reed Pulp and Paper Company to license a tract of timber 140-150 miles north of Red Lake will encompass somewhere in the vicinity of 18,000 square miles, or some 16 million acres of land. It is the single biggest tract of land, I believe, that any paper company has ever attempted to negotiate with the Province of Ontario. And what bothers the NDP most is that all of this is talked of largely in terms of rumour and speculation.

Sometime in the middle of 1974 Premier Davis made a very proud announcement in the Legislature about the intended expansion at Ear Falls-Red Lake, the building of a new pulp mill, and the possibility of an increased investment of somewhere between \$190 million and \$400 million dollars. There was also reference made to additional land being required to help provide the timber for the mill. But nowhere was it ever hinted that we'd be talking about something like 18,000 square miles.

Then Reed Paper published its annual report early in 1976, and it says this:

"... the company is continuing its feasibility study of a new forest product complex in the Ear Falls-Red Lake area of Northwestern Ontario, which was announced in 1974. This involves a multi-faceted approach which includes marketing, financing, pre-feasibility engineering and environmental consideration. Such a project would cost an estimated \$400 million dollars and would require Reed to seek a partner for this venture. Much of the feasibility study is being conducted within the company."

"An agreement between the company and the Province is currently being negotiated. The agreement would provide for an area of forest to be held in reserve during the period that environmental, economic and feasibility studies would be carried out."

That's the entire content of the proposed discussion on Reed Paper presented at that meeting. And you have to ask yourself, why do you have to have an agreement with a private multi-national paper company to reserve an area of the Province and then carry out economic, environmental and other feasibility studies? We own the Crown Land. It's owned by the Province of Ontario. Why do you have to enter into some kind of contractual relationship with a private company in order to conduct environmental studies? Or does it mean that once you've entered into the contractual agreement and the feasibility studies follow, you have effectively consummated a fait accompli, and everybody then understands that it's just a matter of time before Reed Paper has access to an enormous swath of timber limits right across the Northwest?

On April the 23rd, having heard of this meeting, I asked a question of Leo Bernier, Minister of Natural Resources, in the House, and our friend and colleague from the Northwest, Jack Stokes, NDP MPP Nipigon, followed up with a supplementary about what was occurring, and in the process of replying Mr. Bernier said:

"The native peoples have been informed as to the direction we're going."

I guess this kind of memo, that I've just read, indicates the extent of information --- that's called 'informing native peoples'.

When we were at the Sandy Lake band today and asked them what they knew about the Reed Paper expansion, all they had heard was from the press releases issued by Treaty 9 and some of the native peoples' periodicals and Indian literature. They knew, I judge, as little about it as any of us, and there's something ironically unhappy about that; because Leo Bernier isn't only the Minister of Natural Resources, he represents that reserve, as an MPP, the area that is now being

I cannot comprehend a government which is a positive legend for its arbitrariness and insensitivity working in this fashion. It is one thing to talk about an expanded pulp mill in Ear Falls-Red Lake, but you don't talk about alienating 18,000-25,000 square miles of Northwestern Ontario in the fashion they're going about. And that leads me to the violations of decent political behaviour that this conveys:

1. Everybody understands that there is going to be a direct and dramatic effect on all of the Indian communities in Grand Council Treaty 9, in that area. Surely they should be involved in the discussions, in advance. The native people, as evidenced through Treaty 9, are terribly concerned about it. The negotiations taking place show a breathtaking contempt for rights to land and land claims which Treaty 9 has lost. They show a certain contempt for traditional hunting and fishing rights, because those can obviously be imperilled. They show a contempt even for the lifestyle --- much as has emerged in the hearings which Justice Tom Berger is holding on the Mackenzie Valley pipeline. What happens when you build sophisticated road networks, useable year 'round through vast areas of the Northwest where there are Indian communities? What happens to the very cultural ethos of those communities? Yet all this has occurred without a serious discussion, despite the recognition of government of the fact that in this day and age, of all days and ages, you shouldn't do things this way.

2. The secret negotiations are going on with a company whose behaviour, if I may put it this way, has been, in corporate terms, often bankrupt of social responsibility and social obligation. This is the same company that has been polluting the English-Wabigoon water systems with mercury for as long as one can possibly recall. Even though there is an equal responsibility on government, it's a company that has never shown a thread of concern or anxiety about what they've done, other than the environmental controls imposed upon them by the government, who were too late,

5. They're doing it without a land use plan for Ontario. No one has any sense of whether or not that tract of land in Northwestern Ontario would fit into overall priorities of development. We do know that there's something called Northwestern Ontario Design For Development and we do know that in the first report which was tabled in September, 1974 there was a map, outlining the future timber-cutting limits for the Northwest from 1974-1991, and this part of the Northwest was never included in those timber limits.

6. We know that what this is all about is the old question of seeing Northern Ontario as the resource hinterland which feeds the rest of the province, and about which we never plan adequately, or care adequately or work adequately. You can darn well lose patience pretty quickly with a government which never learns from its mistakes. The North always has these crazy white-elephants. The Minaki Lodges, six and a half million dollars --- what a testament to a government that is, an exquisite creation which no one inhabits. It reminds me of the white-elephant that was intended for Maple Mountain. You don't deal with Northern Ontario this way --- it's simply the wrong kind of political behaviour, and it has to end.

With whatever conviction and effectiveness we can muster, we're going to try to press the issue of the Reed Paper Company expansion in the Legislature in a way which, even if it doesn't reverse the government's immediate plans --- and I hope it will --- will force them to delay a negotiated agreement until everything is out on the table. That need not prejudice the building of a new mill for which a very small additional area of timber rights is necessary. But it may allow some sanity to creep into the negotiations.

It's on issues like this one that we want to work our way towards the next campaign. What we tried to evolve in 1975 were issues that were real, issues that showed the difference in social philosophy issues that related to the lives people lead. Those are the issues