

NEWS

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PCP Contamination of Miramichi

By RAIJA VAN INGEN

Residents on the Miramichi face a serious water-pollution crisis and are deeply concerned that their drinking water is unsafe.

Last week, the Miramichi Environmental Society (MES) confirmed that high levels of pentachlorophenol (PCP), a wood preservative known to cause cancer and birth defects, were found in samples of effluent taken about two kilometers from the Domtar plant in Newcastle. Domtar is a wood preserving facility which had been operating over sixty years until it closed in 1986.

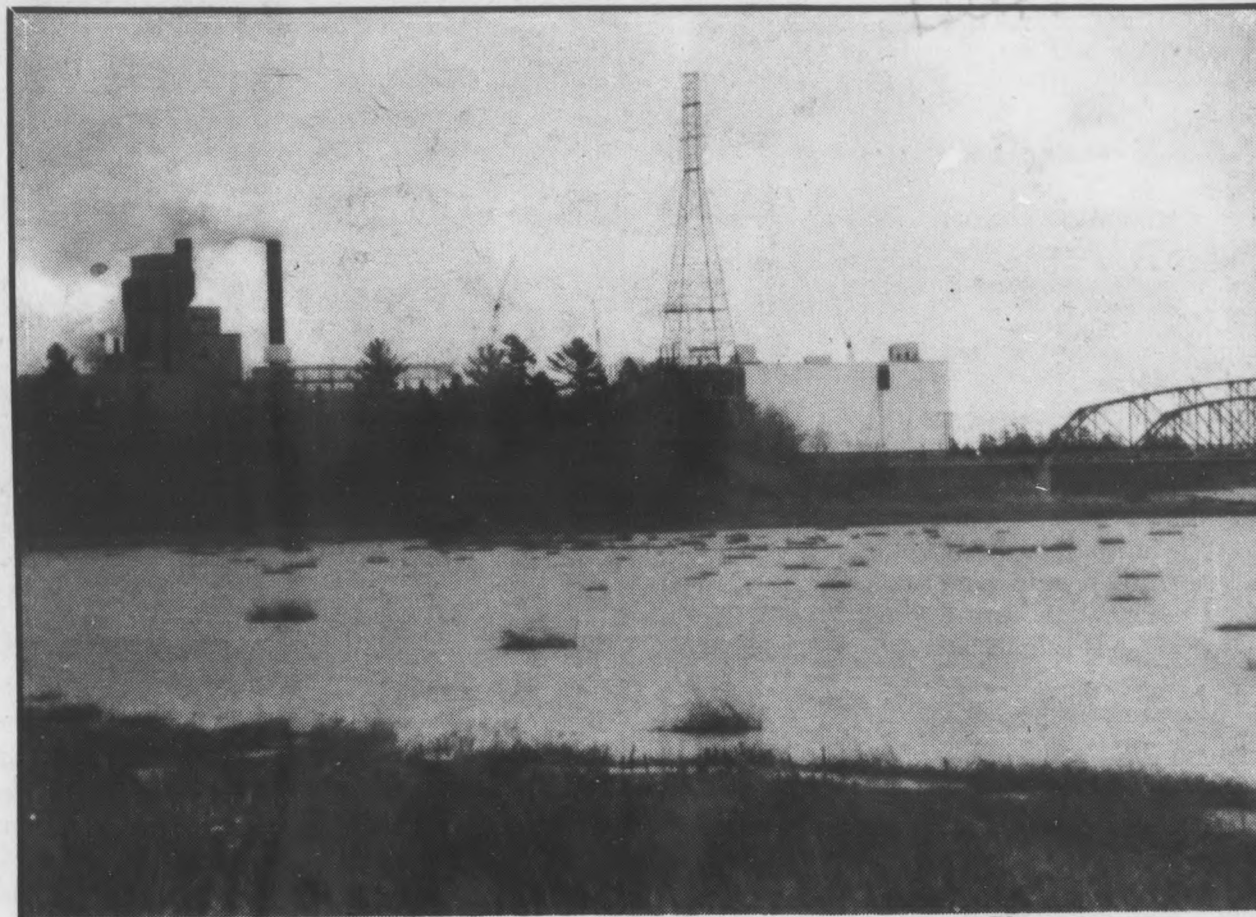
The chemical analysis received from Ocean Chem Lab in Dartmouth, NS, shows PCP levels between 57-69 ppb (parts per billion) at five different sampling locations and 71 ppb at the last site, Chemical Brook. These data greatly exceed the standard EPA (United States Environmental Protection Agency) recommends for the protection of freshwater aquatic life. According to EPA, "PCP levels should not exceed 3.2 ppb."

The test results show high

levels of PCPs consistently at the six sampling locations, an overall area that MES says, "has been documented as a dumping ground before 1972 of toxic sludge from Domtar." This evidence suggests that Domtar is the source of widespread PCP contamination in the Miramichi River.

Last May, the Department of Health closed the Millan Ave. Well in Newcastle. Tests confirmed that polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) were found in the well which provides 40% of the town's water supply. The Domtar plant sits directly above the Newcastle aquifer. Circumstantial evidence suggest that the creosote, tar and other deleterious agents found in a chemical lagoon on the Domtar property have seeped down into the ground where, further below the Newcastle aquifer lies.

MES predicated that the contamination groundwater would reach the Newcastle aquifer and circulated a petition to local residents in February 1988. The petition was sent to Environment Minister, Vaughan Blaney, and outlined five requests. MES asked for Domtar's permit to be withdrawn, a five-



The Miramichi River near Newcastle.

Photo by Andre Hall

year clean up schedule to begin, assessment of the limits of groundwater contamination,

MES continues to document monitoring of the property, and the initiation of a public health inquiry. Only the first request has been achieved to date.

sources of environmental abuse in the area. The Society of Concerned Citizens would hope that the authorities and

industry want a cleaner environment, and would act to control any source of pollution in the past, present and future.

Students active in Federal Election

By ALLAN CARTER

According to a small survey of UNB students, it seems the majority do care about the Federal election. 35% of the students questioned said they didn't care about the election, but at the same time the majority of this percentage are still going to vote. Common answers for the reason why they are not concerned about the Federal election are: "No interest in politics", "Makes no difference what party governs" and "None of the parties have any definite solutions on the main issues at hand".

Of the 65% of students that said they do care about the election, most said that their major concern is Free Trade. Followed by answers, such as: "It's my country, I should care.", "It's our future", and

"Leadership is important".

In terms of student involvement in the actual campaign, the local Youth wings of the national parties have been active in varying degrees.

According to Fred Blaire, executive Director of the Progressive Conservatives of New Brunswick, the party could not function without the Progressive Conservative Youth Federation. To his knowledge, they are the second largest youth party in the world and are very active in New Brunswick. They "provide spark and life in the campaign". In their own campaign the youth get the candidates involved in things that have been overlooked by adults. Blair personally feels "young people should take an interest" in politics.

Peter O'Neill, President of the New Brunswick Liberal Association and a law student at UNB says that student participation "hasn't been as great as in the Provincial election." But he believes that "the voter turnout (for students) will be high". He feels a larger interest in the election is being taken by students since the debate. The debate was "something for people to focus on" states O'Neill.

The New Democratic Party here in Fredericton claims that more students have taken an interest in their campaign than in the past. Student supporters of the NDP took on the task of setting up information desk on campus recently. Because of the student response it is likely another one will be set up in the near future.

He helped me

Dr. Bernard Vigod, professor of History at UNB, died last Saturday as a result of a motor vehicle accident. He was 42 years of age and had been teaching at UNB since 1971. The following is a commentary by a former student of his:

Dr. Bernie Vigod was a man of action, a man who stood up for what he believed was right.

More often than not in the last few days since his death I have had heard students say "he helped me", and I find this remark to be a lasting tribute to him. For not only is it an indication of his sense of humanity, but it is a lasting comment on his devotion to the students whom he taught and "helped" over his years at UNB.

I remember only last week at a meeting, Bernie Vigod stood his ground over something a lot of us would wince at..., but everybody in the room knew what he said was right.

It took guts to stand up like he did, and I admired him for it. He was willing to be criticized, accused and harassed...the Malcom Ross case stands as a good example of the public and

private criticism Bernie Vigod withstood.

About five years ago Bernie Vigod gave me some sound advice--unsolicited may I add--that I can honestly say changed my direction in this University. He told me quite frankly that if I didn't "get it together" very soon I would be out of the History Department. Well, I was pretty devastated. It hurt to hear those words especially from him. But, I pulled up my socks, hit the books, and proved to him that I could do the work. We never mentioned that advice again until last week when, after the meeting I spoke about it, he said to me with a chuckle "Good thing I gave you a scare five years ago, isn't it?"

Yes, it was a good thing you did, after all, Dr. Vigod. It's only too bad I didn't get to thank you before.