

CIM FORUM

Utilization Of Human Resources North of Sixty

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FOR MOST of its 71 years in Canada's mining industry, Cominco has been a leader in many fields ... mine development, extraction, processing technology and pollution control are just a few. However, we didn't become a leader by ignoring the needs and aspirations of the many groups affected by our corporate actions. Cominco is very much aware of the issues that face our employees, our shareholders, the various governments and the people who live in the areas where we have operations or plan to develop new facilities.

We are aware of some of the problems of the Northwest Territories — especially at this crucial time in its development. We know it is part of our responsibility to help find answers to these problems. In fact, it is our social obligation to do so.

One of the problems is providing job opportunities for the northern natives ... helping the Indian, Inuit and Metis to become a strong part of Canada by providing meaningful work.

It is a great disappointment to me, as an individual, and as an employer, that we are often faced with confrontation, rather than **cooperation**, when attempting to solve this particular problem.

The old adage, "You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink", holds true in the employment area. We can provide job opportunities, but we can't make the individual work. Work in the mining industry is not particularly attractive to some people. This fact is often ignored by the critics when it comes to native employment. The southern Canadian critics who tend to assume the role of instant experts after a summer "north of sixty" point out with great quickness that companies operating in the north bring in nearly all of their employees from the south and ignore the local residents. Believe me, our company, as well as others I am familiar with, are making sincere efforts to employ local residents. It makes economic sense, but it is not an easy or simple task.

A few self-appointed spokesmen, some local community leaders and even a small number of government representatives have carelessly criticized industry's efforts to employ native people. Like Cominco, a number of other companies, with a very real investment in the north, have been accused of either not hiring or not encouraging a native workforce from the Territories. Indeed, in "Northern Frontier — Northern Homeland", his report on the proposed Mackenzie Valley Pipeline, Mr. Justice Thomas Berger said (and I quote from the report), "not only was there no incentive to employ native people, there was a **disincentive**". He was referring to the employment practices by Cominco's Pine Point Mines in providing work for natives from the community of Fort Resolution. His opinion is one I will

refute completely. It would appear that the more often statements like Mr. Berger's are made, the more believability they seem to acquire. However, statements like that, at least as far as they apply to Cominco, are simply **not** based on actual facts, they are based on opinion.

I would like to put them to rest by telling you the facts about Cominco's performance and continued concern in the area of native employment. I can't say we have met with complete success in our native employment programs, but I can definitely state that Cominco has made some honest efforts. We have had some successes, yes ... but we've had some failures too. An example of a failure is the result of one of our several approaches to the Indian Band Council of Fort Resolution to provide work for able-bodied people. A contract was arranged between the company and the residents of that community that called for the cutting and clearing of 30 miles of line. The line was to be a right of way used by a mineral exploration crew. Cominco purchased the equipment needed for the job for the people who would be working on the contract. After about two weeks of work, 7 miles of line was cleared, and the first pay-day arrived. The Fort Resolution people never returned. Our own crews completed the job and cleaned up the campsite.

To me that's a dismal failure, but we are attempting to turn the situation around and I will cover that later. First, for those of you unfamiliar with the company, I would like to briefly outline what Cominco is and tell you about our pioneer history and extensive investment in the north.

Cominco In the North

Cominco Ltd. is a Canadian company, with 93 per cent of its shares held in Canada. Our principal business is the mining and processing of lead and zinc. After 71 years in the Canadian mining industry, we are a fully integrated company with activities ranging from mineral exploration, mining, smelting, refining and by-product production to international marketing. Cominco employs over 10,500 people, the majority of whom are located here in Canada.

Cominco first came to the Northwest Territories and the area around Great Slave Lake long before the sites of Yellowknife and Pine Point were established. In fact, 45 short years ago, the present site of Yellowknife, on the north shore of Great Slave Lake, was just scrub pine, wind-swept rock and a few tents. Until the early 1960's, Pine Point, on the south shore of the lake, couldn't be found on any map. Both areas were occasionally visited by fur trappers, mineral explorers and other prospectors, but they rarely stayed.

The nature of our industry requires that the mining operation and most of its support services be located at, or nearby, the mineral deposit. In all cases, it will require some form of new services to be installed or built. These may include railways, roads,

electric power or complete townsites ... in most instances it requires all of those and more. That was the case at both Yellowknife and Pine Point. In rare cases, a townsite may already be established near the potential mine.

Whatever or wherever the situation, we do try to bring local people into the workforce. It's simply more economical for us to hire them if they want to work and are willing to upgrade their skills.

Yellowknife really began to emerge when, after 12 years of exploration, Cominco's **Con Mine** poured its first gold brick in September of 1938. The Con was the first producing gold mine in the Northwest Territories. Giant Yellowknife Mines opened up a gold mine ten years later. Yellowknife became the Territorial Capital in 1967. Today, our Con Operation employs over 250 people and it's still going strong. In fact, we poured gold brick number 5,000 in the fall of last year.

Cominco's investment in its Con Operations at Yellowknife includes not only the original construction of the mine and mill, but also the regular operating costs over its 40-year history. Our current expansion program at the Con, including the new Robertson headframe and mile-deep shaft, has just been completed at a cost of \$20 million.

Cominco's other producing mine in the Northwest Territories is located at Pine Point. Cominco owns 69 per cent of **Pine Point Mines Limited**, one of the largest zinc-lead open-pit mines in the world. The mine and nearby mill employ over 630 people.

Our company has invested over \$90 million in the development of the mine, mill and townsite. The railroad, highway and power plant built by the federal government after receiving certain financial guarantees from Cominco has provided numerous benefits to the towns of Hay River, Fort Smith and Fort Resolution as well as meeting the needs of Pine Point. The railroad through northern Alberta also provided the transportation facilities for the farming, lumbering and oil fields along the route. After 13 years of operation, the new community of Pine Point has a population of about 2000 people, the sixth largest town in the Northwest Territories.

During the summer months, teams of Cominco geologists can be found throughout Canada's north in constant search for new mineral deposits. The money spent by these highly skilled crews for transportation, food and other supplies eventually finds its way into a number of local economies. However, even more important is the direct effect this activity has on local employment ... hiring Indians and Inuit to perform a variety of jobs needed to set up and run a modern mineral exploration camp.

Cominco owns 75 per cent of **Arvik Mines Limited**, a company with a rich zinc/lead deposit on Little Cornwallis Island, high above the Arctic Circle. Discovered by an exploration team in 1971, the Polaris deposit holds a promise of future development. Although a number of issues remain to be settled between the company and the federal government before we can announce development of the mine, a number of studies have been conducted with respect to eventual start-up. To date, we have spent over \$8 million to test the feasibility of the proposed operation. An essential part of this pre-development preparation includes the formulation of employment policies and plans for recruiting and training the 200 employees that will be needed for the mine and concentrator.

The Arvik Proposal

I would like to begin with the Arvik proposal, to outline Cominco's concern and native employment record for you. Then I'll give you the details on what we are doing at both the Con Mine in Yellowknife and at Pine Point.

Realizing that a number of the Arvik employees will come from Inuit communities in the Arctic, Cominco began a study of the potential for Inuit employment as early as 1973. At that time, Cominco's human resources development specialist visited a number of Inuit communities in the eastern Arctic, discussing the potential mine in relation to job opportunities for Eskimo workers. He also visited the Polaris site and held discussions with some 30 workers, including 3 Inuit, employed during construction of the one-mile exploration tunnel. The program continued in 1976 when a series of visits to many of these same communities was conducted by a team organized by Cominco. They visited the communities of Holman Island, Coppermine, Cambridge Bay, Gjoa Haven, Spence Bay, Pelly Bay and Resolute Bay. These visits had two main objectives — to determine what the Inuit people thought of the proposed mine development and how many were interested in working at the Polaris site.

Accompanied by a representative of the Territorial Government and an interpreter, the team first visited each community to meet with the chairman or secretary. After outlining the Arvik project and our desires to communicate further, arrangements were made for a community-style meeting at a later date. These open public community meetings were held on a return trip when the complete Arvik proposal was outlined and the current status of the project was explained to residents at each of the communities. It became obvious to us that most of these people would not hesitate to show us their concern about the proposed development and what would be most acceptable to them in the way of labour and living conditions. This is exactly what we wanted. However, as some of them had never seen a mine and, in some cases, had only a vague idea of its purpose or what the jobs were like, the company proposed that each community select two representatives who could later visit the site.

Our third visit in this series then was to fly these representatives north to Little Cornwallis Island after an in-depth day-long tour of the Nanisivik mine and mill, at that time just beginning operation on Strathcona Sound. We also made sure that each had the opportunity to visit with some of the approximately 60 Inuit people already working at Nanisivik. A group discussion followed which gave us a definite insight into the many different concerns of the Inuit community representatives.

After holding their own private meeting to discuss Arvik, the representatives were returned to their individual communities, where they were encouraged to continue this kind of discussion with their neighbours. Approximately two weeks later, Cominco people were invited to visit each community again, and this time we gained an excellent indication and a detailed appreciation for most — if not all — of their concerns. I think we can now say we know the priority the people of these Inuit communities place on the effect the development will have on such things as housing, language, hunting, the environment and general living conditions.

These concerns will definitely have an effect on Arvik's employment policies. For instance, the importance placed on hunting as part of their lives will be considered as systems are developed on punctuality, absenteeism, shift systems and other areas of employment. We consider this experience to be one of our successes in the field of native employment programs — simply because we now have an even greater understanding of the needs and aspirations of the people who may become employed at Arvik once we are able to proceed with its development.

Cominco's efforts in employing native workers are not restricted to potential mines such as the proposed Arvik development. We have also extended similar programs to include both Pine Point and the Con Mine. Since Cominco established a Group Office at Yellowknife, our efforts in this type of program have intensified.

In fact, the appointment of Group vice-presidents to key regional posts at Vancouver, Trail, Calgary and Yellowknife in 1975 was done specifically to provide that kind of planning. Cominco has now established responsible senior management on a regional basis. This management is more responsive to each area's social and environmental needs and has more understanding of local economic and political trends.

Employment Liaison Committee

As a result of this policy, Cominco initiated the formation of an Employment Liaison Committee. This committee consists of representatives of the Territorial Government Training and Employment Branch, Canada Manpower, senior personnel from both of our northern operations as well as the senior representative for personnel and administration from my office. They meet regularly to promote and encourage the employment of northerners — particularly natives. Early in the program, this committee was mainly concerned with improving communications among Cominco, various government departments and a variety of communities spread throughout the Territories. From time to time the committee has discussed a variety of problems, such as housing for native workers, alcohol and family counselling. As the committee continued its work, it gave impetus to other programs, such as the one I mentioned earlier regarding eventual Inuit employment at Arvik Mines. With this committee's assistance, Cominco representatives have visited communities on both the south and north shores of Great Slave Lake. Here they have talked with people from Fort Smith, Fort Simpson, Fort Providence, Snowdrift and Rae Edzo.

Each visit was well publicized in advance through radio, local newspapers and posters. Our representative would show a few slides of either Pine Point or Con Mine and give a brief explanation of the mining industry. This was followed by a general question-and-answer period, at which time application forms were given to those expressing interest.

By the way, we have re-drafted our employment application form to make it easier to read and fill out. To assist those Indians or Inuit who wish to complete it, we make an interpreter available at the mine or in the field, as required.

Our efforts to relate employment possibilities at Pine Point and Con have met with some genuine

enthusiasm from a few of the community spokesmen; others seemed far less positive. In fact, on one occasion, the Cominco representative had made previous arrangements for the community meeting through the local Band Council chief. When he arrived he was told by the community's Roman Catholic priest that no one was interested in working at the Pine Point Mine, as all the people were taken care of locally and consequently there was no need to hold a public meeting. However, that's the exception, not the rule.

During the same time that Cominco representatives were visiting the different villages around Great Slave Lake, arrangements were made for the leaders of each Indian Band Council to visit Cominco operations. We understood they were totally unfamiliar with the mining industry and we knew that some were fearful about working underground. To alleviate these feelings, we brought a number of representatives from each community into Yellowknife, where they spent a day touring the entire operation. After going underground in the mine and seeing the Con Operation "close up", we flew them across the lake to Pine Point, where they had a chance to see our surface operation. At each location, our key people made themselves completely available to answer questions about any phase of the operation. This program required a number of charter flights and a stay of one or two nights at either Pine Point or Yellowknife.

Native Training Programs

The Liaison Committee, chaired by a member of my staff, has also been instrumental in establishing special training programs for natives at both the Pine Point and Con operations. These training programs have proved to be fairly successful, particularly when combined with the earlier familiarization programs. Last March we brought in three Band Council representatives from Snowdrift, two from Rae and two from the nearby village of Detah to visit both operations. They spent two days at Yellowknife and two at Pine Point. In the following months, our personnel officer at the Con flew into Fort Rae. After detailing the type of work available and the training that would be given, he brought back 11 completed application forms. We hired 6 of those we considered to be the most promising applicants and immediately started them on an underground training program. This program is about two months long ... slightly longer than normal, as we have designed it specifically for those completely unfamiliar with the mining industry. Five of the six left within a month after completing the training program.

We started 6 more natives from Rae-Edzo and Snowdrift on a second training program. This one was not successful in that all 6 quit before completing the course. In the past year and a half we have hired 28 natives; 4 of these 28 are still with us.

Now that kind of turn-over rate may sound quite excessive to you, and it is somewhat higher than the normal turn-over rate among the semi-skilled or unskilled employee group.

Compared to similar operations in the south, this apparent high turn-over rate is something all companies in the north must live with ... particularly in the last few years. So far this year, we have managed to bring that rate down to around the 50 per cent mark among our hourly paid employees.

Trainees on the Con program receive the same

benefits as our other employees. Their pay rates, vacations, travel allowances and other fringe benefits are identical. For example, we realized some time ago that the Con bunkhouse and cookhouse arrangements were sub-standard, but other accommodation was just not available. When the Northern United Place was built in downtown Yellowknife, Cominco guaranteed to rent a number of apartments in the complex. The company now makes these spaces available to all employees at a much reduced rate. This has not only made living conditions much more pleasant, but also has helped us to attract a better calibre of employee.

Accommodations

Although we have provided some excellent housing at Pine Point since it began operating in 1963, we realize we must increase the accommodation there for married workers and their families. We have such a plan under study. Our single objective in expanding facilities at Pine Point is to establish a more stable workforce for northerners. That was the reason for building additional homes over the past 14 years, and it will be the same objective in building even more.

To overcome the immediate problem of housing, our operations manager at Pine Point Mines approached the Band Council at Fort Resolution with what we thought was an excellent — although temporary — solution. Essentially an Indian population of about 500, of which 150 are employable in the mining industry, Fort Resolution is about 40 miles east of the mine and is Pine Point's nearest neighbour.

The operations manager proposed that a bus service between Fort Resolution and the mine be arranged to transport workers to and from work each day. We even offered to supply the bus, provided the Band Council paid a token purchase price of one dollar. Our operations manager then proposed that a community labour pool be established to utilize the service to and from the mine. We would take any six workers from the pool that reported for work each day — similar to the arrangements made to operate the community's only other source of employment — the Fort Resolution sawmill.

After the bus sat in the mine's parking lot for a few months waiting for the offer to be taken, the Band Council finally turned it down saying too much travel time would be involved.

There are 20 homes at Pine Point reserved by a local housing authority to provide family accommodation for natives and other northerners who take part in the mine's training program. After completing their training, they are moved, where possible, to make room for new trainees and their families. Although this has been reasonably successful, a shortage of alternate accommodation has made it impossible to move all of these people from the trainee units. As I mentioned earlier, we are working on that situation.

Despite problems like these, we do have a number of people from Fort Resolution working at the mine and living at Pine Point.

Native Workers at Pine Point

Since we began operations, and until the end of 1976 (a 13-year period), Pine Point Mines has recorded 125 hirings of 92 different Fort Resolution residents. Some of them we have hired as many as four and five times. In 1976, we hired 30 natives from that

community alone. At year-end, nine remained on the payroll. In 1977, we hired 15 natives from Fort Resolution (including 2 ladies as mill helpers). Of these, 7 are still with us. Compare that with our overall figures on native employment at Pine Point. During the past three years (to the end of 1976), we hired a total of 102 natives — 78 from the north and 24 from the south. Currently, 27 northern Indians and 25 southern Indians still remain with us, a total of 52. That is about 8 per cent of Pine Point's total work force of 630. We should not lose sight of the fact that over 30 per cent of our work force are people making their home North of Sixty for over five years.

Here are a few examples. Ernest Hall of the Elkhorn Reserve in Manitoba began working for us in 1971 as a Cat operator and was promoted to pit boss in September 1971. There is Ramsay Lizotte from Fort Vermillion, Alberta, also a pit boss, who started with us as a shovel operator in 1968.

Another of our staff is Edward Mandeville, a shift boss in the Pine Point concentrator. He came from Yellowknife in 1969 to start as a flotation operator in that mill. We have Irene Beaulieu of Fort Resolution, who started as a requisition clerk in the Pine Point warehouse in 1974. She was promoted last year to accounting clerk, finance, where she is employed as paymistress. Part of her responsibility is the \$300,000 payroll given out to our hourly-paid employees every two weeks.

About one year ago, Pine Point Mines hired Isadore Tourangeau, a native Chipewyan, as liaison officer. He is responsible for the development of training and employment programs for Indians and other natives in the north. He deals with Canada Manpower and various Indian and Metis groups to develop programs which are meaningful to the native workers. Recently, Mr. Tourangeau has been promoted to personnel officer in charge of hiring employees at Pine Point.

In addition to the work done by our Personnel group, we have asked the Territorial Government's Employment and Training Branch to provide some assistance. Their counsellors have given us extensive help in dealing with the more personal problems of the native people employed at both operations.

J. J. Morin, a Treaty Indian from Saskatchewan who works in our heavy equipment shop at Pine Point, was recently elected mayor of the town of Pine Point — a positive indication that the native has the opportunity to rise in the political as well as the industrial field.

With the help of Canada Manpower, Pine Point Mines has developed and will continue to develop training programs for native people. For instance, a mill helper series providing jobs for four natives proved successful. We have plans to include a series for equipment operators and another for mechanic's helpers.

Exploration Work

Cominco exploration crews also have a direct effect on native employment in the Territories. During the summer exploration season, these crews can be found in a number of areas scattered throughout the north — searching for further mineral discoveries or determining the extent of a known deposit. Although they work essentially out of Vancouver and Toronto, these crews hire local field assistants from Yellowknife and many other communities in the Territories. Just one example is the Cominco

exploration crew of about 12 people that worked in the Baker Lake area last summer, trenching, drilling, blasting and mapping. Of the 12 members, 3 were Inuit. Two of those were from Cambridge Bay and had returned for their second season with Cominco; the third, from Bay Chimo, was on his first trip. The three worked for a period of nearly three months and showed themselves to be quite willing to work, cooperative and eager to learn. A fourth Inuit was hired on to this same crew for a period of about two weeks and, like the others, he assisted our geologists in performing many of their tasks.

So there you have a few examples of Cominco's past and present activity in the field of Inuit, Metis and Indian employment. We have had some successes and some failures in those attempts.

Conclusion

Where do we go from here? As I said earlier, to find a complete solution the problem must be identified. The problem of providing employment opportunities for the native has many outside influences ... welfare payments, excessive drinking, transportation, housing and in some cases the unwillingness to depart from a comfortable life style and to "take on a job". These influences can make the problem as complex as the solution. However, we must not prevent these

complexities from trying to improve our performance.

In closing, I have some personal observations that I have gathered over the past twelve years of association with northern operations.

We should avoid becoming trapped in the numbers game of judging success by the percentage of the work force that is native. We must realize that there is a certain percentage of people, whether native or whites, who do not wish to go into the mining industry. Rather we should provide job opportunities and programs to upgrade skills for those natives who wish to enter the wage-based economy and strive to bring these people along to accepting more responsibilities.

I have concerns that there are very few, and in some cases no one, of native origin being trained as professionals in the fields of engineering, geology, metallurgy or accounting. Surely this is an area where the native could establish himself in a positive way. It would be great if northern natives with the developed skills could be the senior management people in our northern operations.

Our company has a sizeable investment and tremendous interest in the future of Canada's north. It is to our best advantage not only to develop the natural resources, but to do so using the human resources in the same area.