

# Loggers meet with federal, state officials

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FORT KENT — American loggers were told in no uncertain terms Wednesday that the use of Canadian bonded labor in the Maine woods won't be stopped in the foreseeable future because there are not enough Americans to fill logging jobs.

That message came from James Farmer of the Boston regional office of the federal Department of Labor. Farmer and other officials with the federal and state labor departments were in Fort Kent to meet with loggers about a nearly 2-week-old investigation of lumbering practices in the Maine woods.

"We are not going to stop Canadians," Farmer said. "Get off that side of the coin. The industry needs to make changes.

"If there were enough American loggers to fill the jobs requested by lumber contractors, Canadian bonds may not be approved," said Farmer.

Farmer's message did not sit well with the loggers, most of whom were men who had participated two weeks ago in blockades along the Maine-Quebec border.

While they would not discuss their plans, the men hinted that more civil disobedience actions would be coming in the next week or two. The loggers stated during the meeting that they thought the American government was protecting Canadian woodsmen at the expense of the American workers.

State labor officials were at the session to interview loggers about their complaints and to sign up loggers seeking work in the Maine woods.

Ray Lopez of the Department of Labor told loggers that the state department, which certifies requests for Canadian bonded labor, has been doing its job and the investigation found nothing

## Use of bonded Canadians will not be stopped

wrong.

"I'm not impressed," said Hilton Hafford of Allagash, a leader of the 12 to 15 disgruntled American loggers at the session. "All they want to do is snowball this investigation like they have done in the past."

"You are going to protect Canadians," said Stacey Kelly of Fort Kent, another spokesman.

The government contingent was an hour late for the scheduled meeting at the University of Maine at Fort Kent. The officials said their plane didn't take off in time.

"We are here to find out why the system is not working and what can be done to correct it," Farmer said during the meeting.

He explained that as a representative of Labor Secretary Alexis Herman, his work "is to defend working people."

"You gained the attention of the secretary of labor," said Farmer. "She wants this issue resolved."

Even as they were promised answers to their problems, loggers were adamant about showing their resolve.

"We want bonds stopped," Hafford said. "They should not be putting Americans out of work. If  
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# Officials: Canadian labor will continue

## Loggers hint at plans for more disobedience

*Loggers, from B1*

we have to go to the border again, someone will have to be accountable. Just stop the bonds while the investigation is going on."

Logger Joe Jackson of St. Francis and his son, Troy Jackson, were there. Joe Jackson told of his log truck being parked in his driveway since February, because he has been without work. He also said he and his son had to sell their \$300,000 delimiting machine because they could find no work for it. Their monthly payments on the equipment amounted to \$6,700.

"Come with me, and I will show you machinery owned by Canadians, and it's in the woods working," said Troy Jackson.

Lopez explained that the loggers' complaints were not reasons to deny bonds to the Canadians. He said only 32 American loggers applied this year for 690 posted jobs in the woods.

"There seems to be a shortage of U.S. workers for the jobs in the woods," said Lopez.

"Of course," Kelly responded. "This is an old problem that's never been solved."

"The town of Allagash used to have over 700 people," he said. "Today, there is less than 300 people in town. The others left because there were no jobs for Americans in the Maine woods."

"But today, you have 12 guys that won't go away," Kelly told Farmer.

Lopez also told the loggers it was important for them to file complaints when they believe they have been wronged by contractors.

They were told by Alan C. Hinsey, director of Maine's Bureau of Labor Standards, that Americans are guaranteed a job wherever a bonded Canadian employee is working.

"You can demand his job," said Hinsey.

In the end, Farmer proposed the initiation of a committee comprising contractors, Department of Labor officials, union members and loggers to work out problems in the Maine woods.

"You need a committee to look at this and come out with some answers," said Farmer.

The proposal got a lukewarm reception, at best, from the loggers.

"The secretary of labor will find a way to resolve this situation in your favor," said Farmer. "It won't happen today or tomorrow."