

Loggers seek meeting with Maine landowners

Protesters vow to give U.S. officials more time

By **Beurmond Banville**
Of the NEWS Staff

ALLAGASH — Actions by U.S. Secretary of Labor Alexis Herman will determine if and when northern Maine loggers will return to blockade roads leading into the Maine woods from the province of Quebec, a loggers' spokesman said Tuesday.

Two weeks ago, a dozen loggers stepped away from their weeklong blockades along the Maine-Quebec border to give state and federal officials time to review the woodsmen's allegations. While they were expected to return to the border this week, the loggers have decided to give officials more time.

"Frustrations are growing," said spokesman Hilton Hafford of Allagash on Tuesday. "I don't know when it will happen. It's becoming harder and harder. We are not being heard."

Loggers could very well be assisted in their future actions.

Hafford hinted that other groups across the state have offered help.

"It will not be only 12 angry loggers the next time," Hafford said Tuesday.

While some action could still come this week, Hafford predicted that there would be no action until next week.

The woodsmen believe that bonded Canadian loggers are taking jobs away from American workers, and that the presence of Canadians in the Maine woods suppresses wages for all Americans. The Maine woodsmen also are concerned about the amount of Maine lumber being exported for processing in Canadian mills along the Maine-Quebec border.

A preliminary report by the U.S. Department of Labor regarding its investigation into alien worker certification in Maine has found no disparities with federal law.

The Maine Department of Labor has administered the alien

See Loggers, A6, Col. 1

Loggers seek talks with landowners on North Woods issues

Loggers, from A1
certification program in "an exemplary way," according to a report summary of the investigation.

Hafford said his group was evaluating the information it had received thus far before making a decision on its next actions.

The group has requested a meeting with landowners to discuss loggers' problems. According to Hafford, his group wants to discuss its grievances with those people who can actually do something about the problems.

The spokesman wasn't too positive about landowners agreeing to meet with loggers.

"It's up to Alexis Herman," Hafford said. "She will decide whether we need to return to the border to continue our blockade."

The federal investigation proposed 10 recommendations to improve the lot of American workers in the northern Maine woods.

Included in the summary of the investigation report are recommendations for the creation of grants to help train Americans to be certified logging professionals; public service announcements to

Baldacci, others offer proposals to ease conflict

advertise jobs; job announcements to be posted at public buildings; followup of referrals; job fairs at several St. John Valley sites instead of just Presque Isle and Skowhegan; meetings to identify employer needs for workers; making sure Americans get jobs first; identifying available American workers; conducting audits of employers' payrolls to verify that the prevailing wage is being paid in American money; and contin-

ed compliance checks of the bonded labor program.

None of the recommendations met the loggers' demand that Canadian workers be removed from the Maine woods.

On Monday, U.S. Rep. John Baldacci proposed to Herman and Gov. Angus King a federal-state-industry program to help train Americans who want to work in the Maine woods. He called for the creation of a vocational woodworker training initiative operated with a mixture of state and federal funds.

"Such a program could provide vocational and safety instruction to unemployed and underemployed individuals in the lumber industry, giving them reduced or no-cost assistance through grants," Baldacci wrote in a letter to both officials.

"They're still missing the point," Hafford said. "Training is not the point. The work force companies want in the Maine woods is

too big. There are too many cutters in the woods for the long-term sustainability of the forests."

Loggers claim the Maine forest is being cut at a rate 30 to 35 percent higher than the forest can regrow itself.

"If we don't get Canadian labor out of the woods, we won't have any wood to cut in the years to come," Hafford said.

State Rep. Duane Belanger, R-Wallagrass, was trying Tuesday to set up a meeting between the Allagash area loggers and representatives of the northern Maine woods landowners. Included on his list are the Seven Islands Land Co., International Paper Co., Fraser Papers Inc., Prentiss and Carlisle Management Co. Inc., and Irving Ltd. woodlands.

"I am just starting," Belanger said Tuesday afternoon. "The loggers would like a meeting for Saturday. I have no feedback now because I am just starting."

The meeting with landowners is separate from a Department of Labor proposal for a series of meetings to identify ways those involved in the northern Maine woods can work together. The group would include loggers, landowners, contractors, state and federal DOL personnel and representatives of the Canadian consulate.

Our 4th Store

ALL BRAND VACUUMS

50 New Vacuums

Genuine KIRBY Bags \$5 ⁰⁰ pkg./3	Genuine KIRBY Shampoo \$24 ⁹⁹ gal.
<small>with this ad. Exp. 12/31/90</small>	<small>with this ad. Exp. 12/31/90</small>

ELECTROLUX Bags

392 So. Main St., Brewer (N. of Brewer)
989-1881 or 1-800-368-3681