

Logging industry

After reading the recent article about the sad state of Maine's logging industry I wasn't sure if I felt vindication or more anger. As a member of the Department of Labor's Logging Subcommittee, I wonder if the people mentioned are the same ones who were saying we were "crazy" and "didn't want to work" when we were at the border last year? Now that these contractors are complaining about the low prices and Canadian labor, is it all right to say the same about them? I would rather not, but it is their own fault. I hate to generalize about all contractors, because I have worked for some fair ones, but for years when the landowners wanted to cut prices, they passed it on to the workers. Now the prices are down to where no one can do it and they wonder what happened.

I commend those who had the intestinal fortitude to say no to Irving and I sympathize with those who didn't. I understand the type of financial slavery they can use. It is telling when Phil Sullivan, who has been head of Irving for more than 20 years, can come into one of these DOL meetings and say his company doesn't pay enough money. He has seen these disputes come and go and knows there is nothing we can do without sticking together. He doesn't have to fear saying this when it is clear the state is in the landowners' pockets. The recent DOL study should be evi-

dence of that. Apparently we are better off with low-paying, secure jobs than with no jobs at all. Statements like that make me angry and it should make everyone else upset. It comes down to them saying, "If you want to work here for nothing, then you can work here forever."

We all know what is going on and still people won't say anything, which is what keeps this problem from getting fixed. Some don't agree with our methods, but at least we tried. I don't have much financially and I probably never will. The thing I do have is the peace of mind that comes from telling these people they can't put a monetary value on my life or my kids' lives and when I see some of you I also get to say, "We told you so."

Troy Jackson
American Workers First
Allagash