Photos by Paul Sequeira

Left: Speaking before a meeting of tribes a spiritual leader emphasizes the oneness of all people with each other and the land. *Right: The two medals received by Chief Magesi in 1853 are held by Charles Ackley, a member of the tribal council and son of the late Chief Willard Ackley. These medals establish the government's recognition of the Mole Lake or Sokaogon Chippewa as a separate and distinct tribal unit.* *See Chippewa story below.*

ENVIRONMENT

Dairy state threatened by metal mining

Many former mining areas are still suffering damage from the 1900-1920 mining boom.

By Al Gedicks
Pacific News Service

CRANDON, WISC.—The small farm towns and lake-studded forests and fields of the Upper Great Lakes, dotted by ghost towns of bygone boom times, have been reawakened by signs that the area may boom once again as one of America's richest natural resource regions.

The excitement has been sparked by extensive mineral explorations now being conducted by more than 40 major corporations, including Exxon, Kennecott and International Nickel. They are fiercely competing for millions of dollars worth of mineral rights to land believed to contain some of the world's richest deposits of copper, nickel, lead, chromite, zinc, vanadium and uranium.

But while mineral company executives, local bankers and labor officials hail the developments as a return to the good old days, local farmers and dairymen, Indians, sportsmen and others are predicting a new boom-and-bust Appalachia—poisoned, barren and poor.

They fear the short-term gains of massive ore-mining here will mean the end for the area's extensive and long-term agriculture, dairy farming, forestry, fishing and tourism.

Exxon discovery.

Exxon's recent discovery of a "significant" copper-zinc deposit near Crandon, Wisc., is believed by some to be the largest in the world. Jack B. Jacks, a regional geologist with the U.S. Forest Service, speculates the lode may exceed 125 million tons.

Exxon official Paul Jason disputes that figure, but says the company now estimates that there are some 75 million tons of high-sulfide zinc, copper, silver, gold and lead—and exploratory drilling is still in progress, going deeper every day.

But despite the euphoria at Exxon and other companies—and among state and local officials eyeing tax dollars—opposition to the development is mounting.

"If the mining companies go ahead it's going to ruin this part of the country for dairy farmers," says Louis Havluj Jr., a longtime dairy farmer in Rusk County, Wisc., site of a proposed Kennecott open-pit copper mine.

"They've been surveying and getting land all around this and surrounding counties. They're going to gobble up land all over northern Wisconsin and ruin farming completely."

"All you have after the mines close down," says Havluj, "is piles of rubble and junk. Acid wastes will drain into the rivers, subsoils and wells. Once that happens, we're through. Not even rabbits will want to live here."

Havluj was one of many small farmers who spoke out against the mining operations last November and persuaded the county supervisors to deny a zoning change that would have allowed Kennecott to proceed.

Boom once before.

Some longtime residents remember the last mining boom in northern Wisconsin and Michigan's Upper Peninsula. It peaked around 1920, when there were more than 150 mines working three ranges.

When the mining companies found it more profitable to switch operations to South America around 1950, massive unemployment and a proliferation of ghost towns followed. Unemployment still runs two to three times the national average in the area, and some 30 percent of all families earn less than $3,000 a year.

Many former mining communities are still suffering environmental damage from the mining techniques of the period. Iron River, Mich., for instance, is faced with cleaning up the acid wastes from a local mine, which are polluting the city's water supply and eating away its sewer system.

Modern, state-of-the-art exploration techniques have brought the companies back to the area to locate the minerals long believed to underlie the area.

The real potential of mineral extraction in the area remains one of the industry's best-kept secrets. When Kennecott discovered a huge copper desposit in Rusk County nine years ago, industry sources claimed it was an isolated deposit.

But since then at least four other corporations have laid plans for mining operations in Wisconsin alone. And John Rigg of the Interior department's Metal Mining Division has predicted that northern Wisconsin and northeastern Minnesota may become the largest copper-nickel producing region in North America.

Land or ore.

At the same time, the small citizens' action group that banded together to delay the Kennecott mine in Rusk County last year is spreading to other communities.

Says organizer Roscoe Churchill, a 60-year-old school principal and small farmer, "If this mad destruction of agricultural lands does not end soon, in a short time there will not be enough land to produce food for the people."

The takeover of farmland also threatens the loss of agricultural jobs, which some critics believe will not be equalled by new mining jobs. Mining jobs, in addition, will last for only about 30 years—compared to displaced farming and tourism employment, which lasts for many generations.

Exxon is also facing opposition from the Mole Lake Chippewa tribe, whose reservation is just a mile from the company's huge copper-zinc discovery.

The tribe contends, among other things, that the mine will contaminate nearby Rice Lake and destroy their annual wild rice harvest, a major source of their income and food. ■

Al Gedicks is a Wisconsin journalist and film producer who has written extensively on mining in the Great Lakes area.

Exxon invades Chippewa territory

By Paul Sequeira

Less than a mile from the site of an Exxon discovery of what may be one of the world's largest zinc and copper sulphide deposits lies the Sokaogon Chippewa reservation. Its 1,900 acres include a portion of Swamp Creek and all of Rice Lake, both of which abound in wild rice, a basic economic and dietary ingredient in Sokaogon Chippewa life even today. Swamp Creek, which feeds Rice Lake, runs just north of the main lode of ore claimed by Exxon.

The Indians, however, also have claims for the land that Exxon wants to mine. The Sokaogon Chippewa, also known as the Mole Lake, Post Lake or Lost Band Chippewa, were excluded from the Treaty of 1854 by which the tribes of the Great Lakes region ceded their ancestral lands to the federal government for reservations. At that time they were lumped together with the Lac de Flambeau Chippewa.

But tribal leaders claim that shortly after those treaties were signed a government agent was sent out to survey a reservation site for the Post Lake Chippewa. The reservation included the piece of swampy, wooded area one mile northeast (and uphill) from the present reservation that Exxon wants to mine. This would have given the Indians control over the immediate water source for Rice Lake.

Through an unfortunate set of circumstances, written copies of this treaty have disappeared—the Indian copy was lost on a hunting trip shortly after the signing and the government agent's copy was lost when the agent was reportedly killed enroute to Washington. The tribe's contention that it existed, however, is supported by documented testimony around the turn of the century. The tribe also has custody of two medals, dated 1853, given to the tribe in recognition of the treaty.

Apart from the land claim, the tribe opposes Exxon's mining plans for fear of the effects on local water and life-support systems.

An application to mine hasn't been filed by Exxon yet, nor has a required environmental impact report been demanded by the state. But Exxon is already driving prospecting shafts over 2,000 feet down, probing the dimensions of the ore. The Indians worry that sulphide compounds brought up by the shaft, when exposed to sunlight and water, will yield sulphuric acid that could seep into local water systems.

Exxon argues this can be prevented and is using a sealing compound on the outer casing of each of the dozens of probes it has planned to prevent the seepage of water and minerals from lower levels into strata nearer the surface. Nonetheless, a great deal of effluent, mostly water, has already been brought to the top in the prospecting operation and is stored in surface ponds to allow possible contaminants to settle out before it is to be pumped back underground. ■

Paul Sequeira is a Chicago-based writer and photographer.

FARMING

Tobacco subsidies under fire

By Michael Kirkhorn
Pacific News Service

LEXINGTON, KY.—A heated controversy over continued federal price supports for the tobacco industry has heightened into a war of powerful and persuasive lobbyists on both sides—including two Cabinet departments pitted against each other.

As of Aug. 31 this year, government loans for tobacco supports equalled $664 million—nearly $200 million more than the previous year.

Opponents of these price supports are insisting that the government justify the morality of programs contributing to the prosperity of a "death-dealing" industry that sold Americans 626.7 billion cigarettes last year. Tobacco's defenders, on the other hand, are rolling out the formidable economic arguments that have beaten back other challenges to the 44-year-old tobacco support system.

Joseph A. Califano Jr., Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW), said recently that the government should not employ price supports to "make it less expensive for people to buy something that's going to give them emphysema, lung cancer or heart disease."

The Department of Agriculture, however, disagrees, and President Carter has been noncommittal. But HEW apparently is studying ways to launch Califano's promised "strong anti-smoking campaign."

The campaign will have to be persuasive to undercut support for an industry that protects itself with facts like these:

- Last year federal, state and local governments collected more than $6 billion in revenues from tobacco purchases; more than 98 percent of that amount came from taxes on the sale of cigarettes.
- Tobacco provided $2.3 billion in farm income last year; North Carolina alone earned $999 million from tobacco in 1976, Kentucky $482 million; as many as 650,000 farmers (nobody is certain of the exact number) depend on tobacco, the "debt paying crop," as a source of cash, for many their only source.
- No other crop yields nearly as much money as tobacco.

A Kentucky farmer with a one-acre patch of well-kept burley can earn as much as $3,000 at harvest time for his small crop. There is little doubt that without a crop of equal profitability, many farmers—especially those working small farms in the South and Southeast—would have to go out of business if federal price supports were eliminated and tobacco income dropped drastically.

> There is little doubt that without a crop of equal profitability, many small farmers, particularly in the South and Southeast, would have to go out of business if federal supports were removed.

Drain on the treasury.

But now the opponents of price supports have an economic weapon of their own—the growing drain on the federal treasury from the accumulation of tobacco surpluses in already bulging Department of Agriculture-financed storehouses.

Last year the Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation bought, in accord with price support policy, the 6.7 percent of the tobacco crop that did not sell at support levels. This tobacco, much of it dirty or of inferior grade, was added to an already heavy surplus.

As a result, a recent editorial in *Tobacco Reporter* said tobacco was an "industry under siege," in danger of losing government subsidies because of the accumulation of costly surpluses that might never be sold to manufacturers.

Since 1933—the year tobacco was designated a basic commodity—federal supports have been used to increase tobacco farmers' income and even to cut market fluctuations by controlling the amount of tobacco grown and marketed. Farmers are allowed to grow only a certain amount of tobacco; in return they are assured high prices—$117.30 for a hundred pounds of burley this year, $2.19 more than in 1976.

If it weren't for the connection between smoking and a variety of illnesses, the federal price support system for tobacco could be considered to have been remarkably successful.

Kentucky farmers, for example, raised 434.4 million pounds of burley in 1975, only 10 million more pounds than in 1946. Yet the 1975 crop was sold for $463.8 million, while the 1946 crop was sold for only $169.4 million.

Neither side knows exactly what consequences might follow the abolishing of tobacco price supports.

Action on Smoking and Health (ASH), an organization in Washington, D.C., which has been objecting to tobacco supports for ten years, argues that once controls were eliminated, the government could offer loans and other inducements to persuade farmers to raise "more acceptable crops," weakening the power of the "tobacco barons and their pawns in Congress."

Production will continue regardless.

William Kloepfer, of the Tobacco Institute, which represents manufacturers in Washington, argues that those who object to smoking should be in favor of price supports.

"Voluntary participation [by farmers in the price support program] reduces tobacco production," Kloepfer says. "A surfeit of tobacco would reduce prices and make tobacco more available. A lot more tobacco would be on the market if everybody could grow it in their backyards."

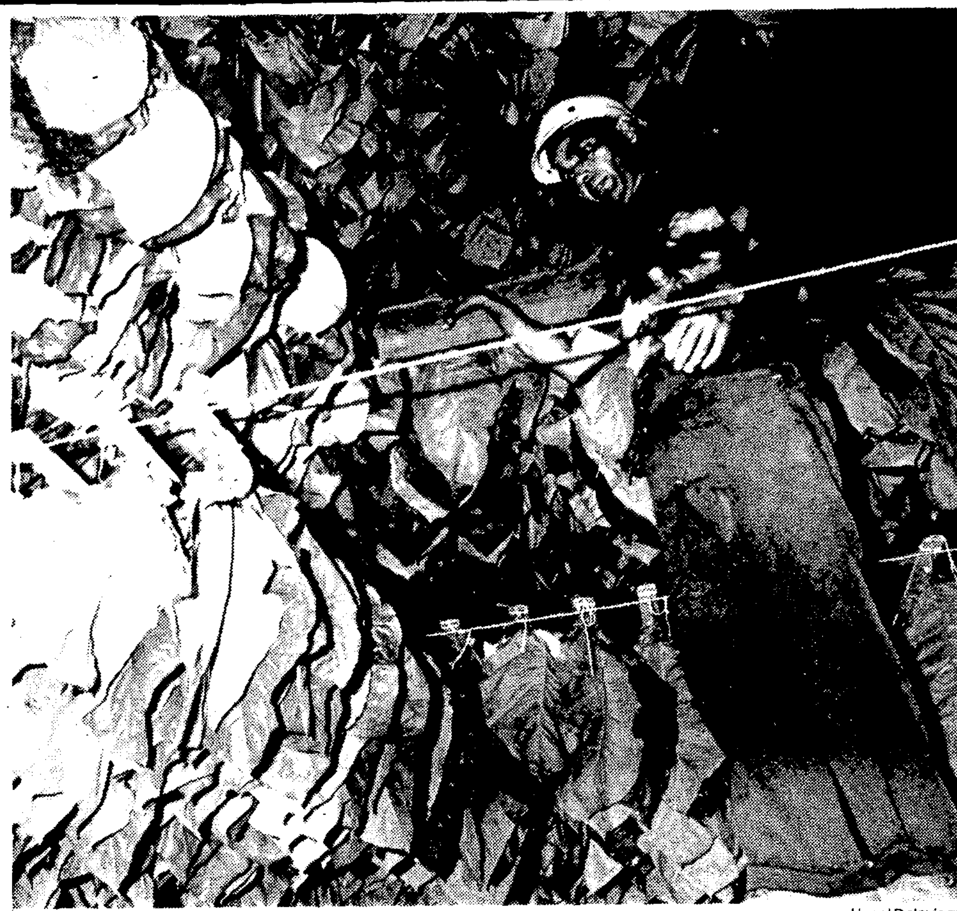
Most experts agree that if price supports were eliminated, tobacco prices would drop and small farmers might grow more tobacco to maintain their income from the crop. But then, as one congressional expert speculates, large growers might begin planting great tracts further west, and as they mechanized tobacco farming to cut labor costs, the smaller farmers back east would lose out.

In any case, abolishing federal price supports would not abolish tobacco: it would still be grown.

The anti-smoking forces believe decisive action is necessary. So far, government attempts to reduce smoking have had mixed results. While many adult males have stopped smoking cigarettes, the industry has attracted new smokers—including young women who now are smoking at a much higher rate.

Cigarette production reached 555.1 billion in 1971 and 610 billion in 1974. Per capita cigarette consumption for all American adults was 4,110 in 1976, lower than the record of 4,345 in 1963, but higher than the average of 3,985 in 1970. ■

Michael Kirkhorn, former reporter for the ***Chicago Tribune*** *and* ***Milwaukee Journal****, now teaches journalism at the University of Kentucky.*



Lionel Delevingne

Hanging tobacco to cure.