

JOHN HART DAM CAMPBELL RIVER

THE VALUE OF A GOOD AGREEMENT



Operating engineer Brad Cleverley

BRIAN Cochrane, business manager for the Operating Engineers Local 115, said the John Hart Dam project is very significant to the local union and the other affiliates of the BC Building Trades.

All the major dams in B.C. have been built under the Allied Hydro Agreement. The agreement covered projects such as the Keenleyside, Brilliant, and Waneta dams that have recently undergone upgrades. But that work is now complete. The John Hart Dam was not named in the original agreement. And neither was Site C of course.

The project labour agreement, covering the work on the John Hart Dam, mirrors the terms and conditions of the original Allied Hydro Agreement. The only difference is that it includes the current market rates for heavy construction.

"The project was bid on a P3 basis and the consortium came to us even though they had no obligation," said Cochrane. "They wanted to make sure they had access to a stable and highly skilled workforce during peak demand."

He added, "and the trades all stepped up to the plate to get an agreement. We pulled it together."

During Tradetalk's visit to the site, several tradespeople also stressed the

importance of doing this work well so that future dam work is also done union.

Several building trades' affiliates are on site and there is a good mix of young members and experienced journeymen.

Curtis Harold, Local 115 business rep, said, "Everybody's working under the same conditions and there's great camaraderie with all the trades. There's equality for all.

"There are a lot of benefits for employers too," he added, "because they get a competent and well-trained workforce. The quality of work is definitely there."

Trevor Dawley, an operating engineer since 1975, pointed to the meticulous and well-ordered work being done by Brian Chaisson and Laurence Hill, members of the Electrical Workers Local 230. Chaisson and Hill were installing a 480-volt panel and moving over from the temporary power source.

"That's the trades," Dawley said. "It's clean. I like the work they do."

Then he added, "99% [of people in the trades] take great pride in what they do. I hope it results in work on Site C."

Hill said he hoped the general contractors also recognized the quality of

their work and that it would lead to contracts for future projects.

The current agreement confirms the contractors' and unions' interest in completing the work on the John Hart Dam "expeditiously, efficiently, and economically" while recognizing their roles in environmental stewardship.

It spells out management's rights and security for union workers, with details in relation to local hiring; hiring by name; equity employment for First Nations people, women in non-traditional job classifications, visible minorities, and people with disabilities; return to work for people on workers' compensation; protection for shop stewards; overtime; and working in inclement weather and when the risk of forest fires is high.

Unionized contractors are benefitting from the agreement too. Upland Excavating, with a 40-year relationship with Local 115, is based in Campbell River. Terry Stuart, manager of contracting activities, said, "We are local. We have the local knowledge, the expertise and the people and equipment to do it.

"We have a good relationship with the OEs, Teamsters, and Labourers," he added. "We have to be really competi-

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Brian Chaisson, a member of the Electrical Workers Local 230, is replacing the temporary wiring with a more permanent system for the site.

Laurence Hill, a member of IBEW Local 230, installing a 480-volt panel in the mechanics' sheds.

Mark Peters, a member of the Electrical Workers Local 230, prepares the electrical cable to be run on site.



tive and they have been really helpful to us. They give us stability. We call them and they send people to us." Marcello Calabrese, general manager of RKM Crane Services, was on site because his company is bidding on some of the upcoming work. RKM, a signatory contractor with Local 115, is confident that the operating engineers working for his company are well qualified to handle the work. "I know we're on the list," he said. "We run the bigger stuff and we did the last retrofit on the surge towers."

Because of ever-increasing environmental standards and pressures to get the work done as efficiently as possible, companies are constantly upgrading their equipment. "In the last two years, we've invested \$10 million in new crane equipment," Calabrese said, "and the guys are loving it."

The BC Building Trades, represented by Tom Sigurdson and Wayne Peppard, are diligently arranging meetings with BC Hydro and lobbying the provincial

government to try to secure a PLA for the proposed Site C Dam.

"It just got the green light and will proceed until it's challenged in the courts," said Cochrane.

As you'd expect, there's concerted opposition from the Independent Contractors' and Businesses' Association and the Road Builders' Association who want the work to go non-union.

"But it's a big risk to the government," said Cochrane, "because we could be into a peak workforce demand and 2,300 tradespeople will be needed at peak [for Site C], including 800 OEs, so we will be drawing from throughout B.C."

Cochrane said Premier Christy Clark has talked about wanting to create a legacy similar to that of WAC Bennett. So the BC Building Trades waste no opportunity reminding her that Bennett understood the value of bringing in unionized tradespeople for all the major dam projects built during his

time in office.

"Bringing in temporary foreign workers, for example, is not a great legacy," added Cochrane, "and we will make damn sure everyone knows that."

"Site C will be the largest construction project on a dollar basis and we will make sure that the government sees the value in terms of training, pensions, and benefits to the province. The Allied Hydro Agreement mitigates the risk on the labour supply piece and for making sure the project comes in on budget."

Meanwhile, there's a potential for 20 years of work for the tradespeople in the Campbell River area. The reservoir needs upgrading and the gates on the Ladore Dam have to be replaced. There are three earth and concrete dams on the Campbell River "so there is lots of work," said Harold. "Each job starts literally after the last one, so hopefully they will be covered by similar agreements."