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The Pulp Mill Comes to the Strait CAPE BRETON ISLAND Leonard O'Neil, Mulgrave: People get the idea that we're asleep here. They come down here and take pictures of the empty buildings. But at one time here in Mulgrave we had 11 stores, 2 doctors, a drug store and a druggist and a dentist. And we had our own hydro plant; we actually sold power to the Nova Scotia Power Company. And we worked here--the people did--to get the pulp mill in the Strait of Canso area. Eva O'Neil: The people here made their living from the C.N.R. When the Canso Causeway opened, that was the end--they were all unemployed. And the government did nothing for the people here. Leonard: They studied the rock in Cape Breton--they knew all about it--but they didn't know anything about what was going to happen to the people. Eva: The men just got a notice they were through. This is a letter a deckhand on the Scotia got--they all got them: In 1952, work began on the construction of the Canso Causeway. When completed, the Causeway would carry the trains as well as automobiles, and put an end to the train ferries that crossed the Strait between Point Tupper and Mulgrave. The train ferries were the economic base of those two communities, and without the ferries they were virtually finished. While the Causeway was being built, first Mulgrave and then the Four-County Development Association worked to bring a pulp mill as an alternative to economic disaster in the Strait area. not all of them--but they had to leave their homes. And they had a case of having to leave their families here, kids going to school, and go up there--because there was no possibility of even selling the house. The place went flat and people couldn't give their homes away. They were tied down--it was a case of going some? where else and renting, being separated from their families. It was a bump. And an awful lot didn't get work. As a result of the commencement of train service across the Causeway, our Strait of Canso Ferry Service will be discontinued 11:59 p.m.. May 14, 1955. I am obliged therefore to notify you that your employment with the Canadian National Railways will terminate at the close of business on the said date. It is regretted that at the said time, there is no other work with the railway which can be offered you. Leonard: And that was all the men received. (I often heard they got work right away.) Some of them got work down in Yarmouth--As mayor, I went to Angus L. Macdonald (premier of Nova Scotia)--went for money to build a new school. Angus L. wanted to give \$15,000 to fix up the old one, because he didn't know what would happen to Mulgrave. So we went to work ourselves. I was out there when the great initial rocks were dumped, the start of the Causeway. A lot of people were saying, when they'd start dropping rock in there and a strong tide come, it would carry it out the Strait somewhere and they'd never finish it. But it kept on going, building across--and we knew it was coming. So we had discussions, 5 or 6 of us in groups, we had discussions every evening. Five or six months, analyze the situation and wondering just what we might do, and we came up with the idea of the possibility of a pulp mill. I don't say the idea was original with me. If you look into the history of things--people that got the 99-year Oxford lease--they had agreed at that time, 1896, to build two pulp mills down here,



one at the Strait and one at Baddeck. It was a 20- year lease with an option to renew it over a period of 99 years. When the first renewal came due, they were able to get the necessity of building one of the pulp mills eliminated. And during the course of renewals, they got all the requirements of a pulp mill eliminated. (31