

Nanaimo looking to handle containerized forest products

By MARK WILSON

VANCOUVER — The Nanaimo Port Authority is talking with a U.S. company about the barge movement of boxed cargoes of forest products from the east coast of Vancouver Island to Vancouver, for transfer there to containerships.

“We are hoping something will happen, though it won’t be before the spring,” said **Bill Mills**, president and chief executive officer of the Nanaimo Port Authority. “We are doing everything we can to shave costs and make such an operation economically viable.”

An agreement would allow the port to utilize a container crane that it acquired from the Port of Vancouver two years ago.

The container crane, Vancouver’s first when it was commissioned at Centennial Pier in 1972, was sold to Nanaimo for \$1, but Mr. Mills estimates that subsequent investment exceeds \$1 million.

“It cost \$260,000 to transport it from Vancouver. It is rail-mounted and the installation of rails at Duke Point cost \$750,000,” he said.

The crane was originally self-

powered with a diesel-generator supplying current to electric motors. It has been converted to use mains power.

Mr. Mills said the port came close to finding customers for crane service on two occasions but failed to clinch deals. “One problem is volume. You have to have a steady flow of containers to justify someone coming in. This time around we think we may do it.”

The intent since acquiring the crane has been to have it service a barge haul of containers to Vancouver. The containers would be loaded at Vancouver Island mills and trucked to Nanaimo.

“We haven’t yet used the crane in its intended role but we do have long-shoremen run it once a month to stay in practice,” Mr. Mills said.