

as it is, cannot but lose heavily by such a strike—probably \$2,000 or \$3,000 per day, to say nothing of the large number of men it gives employment to in the ore and coke carrying traffic. All of these immense interests are dependent upon the whims of a few shareholders or a few employees in the Crow's Nest. This is certainly not as it should be.

The cause of the coal miners' strike was a regulation put in force by Mr. J. H. Tonkin, the new General Manager of the Crow's Nest Pass Coal Co., requiring the men to remain underground eight and a half hours, instead of eight hours as formerly. Against this order the miners protested, claiming that "eight hours per day from pit's mouth to pit's mouth was a just and satisfactory day's work under ground," and had so been found by the company. Replying to this protest: Mr. Tonkin said that all the company wanted was eight hours work for eight hours pay, and he subsequently gave out for publication a statement of the company's position. In this he disavowed any intention of antagonizing the men, and denied that the new regulation is the entering wedge of a ten-hours system. He stated the position of miners in relation to the company to be as follows:

This single shift plan would be a great benefit to every miner in Coal Creek mines; he would get more coal, his room would be kept in far better and safer condition, and he would not be haunted by the fear that if he left a little coal at night the man who cross-shifted him would reap the benefit of some of his labour. The miner, as everyone is aware, is a contractor, inasmuch as he works on a basis of coal tonnage, yardage, etc., and is therefore largely his own boss. His earnings are entirely dependent upon the amount of labour he daily devotes to his work. He regulates his hours of work largely by the conditions of his room, and may labour six, seven or eight hours daily, and no objections are raised to his so doing, the only requirement being that he does not fall too much behind the turn of the miners in his division or district of the work—on the other hand no limit is placed on the amount of work he may do if he pleases, the company taking from him all the coal he may load.

Mr. Tonkin pointed out also that it is absolutely necessary in order to secure the best results "for the men, the community and the company," that there should be continuous work, both above and below ground, but as eight hours is too long a period for men to labour without rest, the company proposes that all work by day men shall cease for half an hour during the middle shift. He says the system which he has inaugurated is precisely the same as that demanded by the strikers in the Pennsylvania anthracite mines. The miners simply reply that they have been accustomed to have "eight hours from bank to bank" and are not willing to put in eight hours at the "coal face." They claim that under the new regulation some of the men would be nine hours from bank to bank. The case between the company and the miners seems in brief to be that the company proposes to suspend work for half an hour to give its day men a little time for rest and food. The day men will work eight full hours. It therefore requires that the miners shall put in eight full hours at the "coal face." The miners want their eight hours to begin when they enter the pit and to leave the coal face in time to get

out of the pit at the expiration of eight hours. Under the statement of the case, as made by the miners themselves, it is clear that under the arrangement in force before the new regulation the men were at the coal face from seven to seven and a half hours, while the day men dependent upon them for a supply of coal worked eight hours.

It is not intended in this article to inquire into the merits of the question between the management and the miners, further than has been done above, nor to express any opinion except to say that the position of the management seems a reasonable one. Indeed, the miners do not dispute his reasoning, but content themselves with saying that the new regulation is "an encroachment upon the rights of labouring men." They call upon the representative of South Kootenay to secure the passage of a law making eight hours from bank to bank a working day in coal mines. Thus we find the coal miners of Fernie "appealing unto Caesar," and as they have done so it is proper to inquire how the legislature should deal with the whole subject matter, including strikes and the remedy for them.

At a mass meeting of miners held at Michel on July 2nd a proposal to inaugurate a strike in sympathy with the Fernie miners was voted down by a ballot of 56 to 12; nevertheless the secretary of the union posted up a notice declaring that the men should not work. Of itself this is not a very serious matter, but it illustrates a principle. The miners have seen fit to subject themselves to an arbitrary authority, which would not be tolerated for one moment in the government of the country. A short time ago the president of the Chicago Teamsters' Union—we are not sure that the name is absolutely correct—stated that he could at any moment order twenty thousand men to quit work, and this led one of the newspapers of that city to remark that this was a greater power than was possessed by the President of the United States or even by Congress. So we see at Michel an absolutely irresponsible individual ordering a strike. Whether few or many of the miners obeyed the order is neither here nor there. The assumption by any one of the right to exercise such a power is dangerous to the community. It is said that the Fernie strike was ordered by the Western Federation of Miners, an organization formed in the United States and controlled there. Thus British Columbia industries are at the mercy of an organization, the managers of which have no interest in this Province, and may be hostile to its progress, who are not amenable to the laws of this country and whose opinions have been formed from conditions, which happily do not exist in this Dominion. The men constituting the Western Federation of Miners in the United States have lost confidence in the institutions of their country, and have set up an *imperium in imperio*. It is intol-