

these figures are only careful approximations. These awful disasters were all due to explosion of gas. Besides these, every year there are a number of men killed or injured in various minor accidents, the number of which it is impossible to determine. The Government estimate makes the number at three deaths per year for every 1,000 men.

Laws have been passed at various times to compel the operators to provide safe working conditions. The last in 1911, known as the Amendment to the Coal Mines Regulation Act, is very comprehensive and thorough and meets with general approval.

However, there are a great many features of industrial life for which there is no provision made. Coal companies, because of carelessness or greed, break the law. Individual workmen may also be careless. Favoritism becomes rife. Discrimination or victimizing comes to be practiced. The individual employee may have to endure unspeakable working conditions due to tyrannical bosses with no means of redress. Consequently some form of unionism on the part of the employees becomes an absolute necessity. The employee then secures the co-operation of his fellow-workmen, the right of collective bargaining and protection from unjust and unfair treatment. Unionism enables the workmen largely to solve their own problems, makes for industrial stability and awakens in them a keener interest in the welfare of the industry.

The first union to be established was a local union known as the Mine and Mine Laborers' Protective Association, recognized by the New Vancouver Coal Company's predecessors to the Western Fuel Co., for a period of eighteen years. The results were good. During this interval various attempts were made to organize other mines, but these attempts were always