

minister should have done something in that matter. Of course he will say that he has written to give instructions to the fair wage officer, Mr. McNiven. I strongly believe that if Mr. McNiven had been left alone he surely would have done better than he has done. I know him well enough and I know enough of his knowledge of labour troubles to be convinced that, left to himself, he would be able to do some good. There must have been correspondence also between that fair wage officer and the department, although it is omitted from the return.

I wish to read to the House a letter, signed by Mr. Foster, sent to the Minister of Labour on the 30th day of September, which explains this case. That letter is as follows:

Nanaimo, September 30, 1912.

Hon. T. W. Crothers,  
Minister of Labour.

Dear Sir,

A short time ago, if you remember, in the Wilson hotel, you made the remark that if you could do anything in your power for the benefit of the workers that you would only be too pleased to do so, now I will endeavour to give you a full explanation of the trouble which we are engaged in at the present time. Our men have been openly discriminated against and the companies refuse to give any reasons whatever, they refused to meet our committees and we claim the right to question at any time why our men are discharged, the companies refuse to concede that right to us, and what do we find, they put us up against a lockout, Our men are compelled to act on those gas committees and we can find no other reasons why they are discriminated against. Of course the companies are able to prove that they are not discriminating against our men on account of their actions on gas committees, but they do not submit any reasons why they have discharged them, and that is what we want to know, if there is any way to compel them to let us know why they are allowed to discharge our men unquestioned that is the only question at issue. And if there is any remedy we would like to know.

Trusting you will give this question your immediate attention and that we will receive an early reply, I am,

Fraternally yours,

(Signed) Robert Foster,  
President District 28, U.M.W. of A.  
P.O. Box 798, Nanaimo, B.C.

The answer of the minister was simply that he would consider the matter and reply later on. Up to the present time I do not know that any answer has been given.

It is not my intention to go over all these letters, because they are long, and probably when the minister is replying to me he will read some of them, including the letters that do not appear in this re-

[Mr. Verville.]

port. Up to the 30th of September, it seems that everything was done by telegram. That was probably the better form of communication, but from that day there is written correspondence. Of course, the explanations were long, and for that reason the minister commenced writing letters to the operators as well as to the men. But we find that at a certain moment a gap occurs in this report. There are two places in the report at which the department almost begs the company, that is Mackenzie and Mann, to have their side of the question exposed, as the session was to open very soon and probably those questions would be brought up before the House. That is about what the letter states, yet up to the present nothing appears in this report as to their side of the question. We now have before the House only one side of the question. Why is it? I know that you, Mr. Speaker, do not believe that the Mackenzie and Mann Company were so strong that they could prevent their side of the case being included. I do not believe it. I claim that last year, when Mackenzie and Mann were before this Parliament asking for a donation of \$16,000,000, that was the time for the Labour Department and for the Government to force them to meet those men and come to some agreement. I claim that whenever any company comes before this Government asking for so many million dollars and the Government and this Parliament do not know what they are going to do with that money, that is highway robbery. In such a case, when an agreement of that kind is to be made, a government is all powerful over a company of this kind. Reading this correspondence, we find that up to the 25th day of October correspondence of all kinds was received, and then we jump away down to the 19th of November. The case of the men was absolutely explained.

As I stated, I do not want to weary the House by reading all the correspondence. Probably it might have been better to do so, but I shall give a chance to the minister to read some of it, because he will pick out from the report the communications which best suit him. I am not attacking any one; I am simply stating that the men's case has been explained, and I have said here before that any man who understands the situation of labour in any part of this country, if he knows how to go about it, can probably do some good in bringing about a settlement of such a dispute,