

These are only Fernie prices and at Morrissey and Michel they are even lower. We regret that we have not been able to get the due bills from these places in time for the *Press* as it would have shown just how much lower they are than here. However, we are safe in saying that they are below a fair living wage, and that they should be raised to Fernie rates is only just. In the interview with the *Press* representative Mr. Tonkin states that the timber trouble was settled as soon as landings were made and that the men are having no trouble about lack of timber. We say the timber trouble was not settled and the men did have trouble for lack of timber right up to the time they came out. Those four men spoken of last week were dismissed for trying to get some redress to the timber trouble and for coming out of the mines for want of it. Indeed several other men on different occasions were told by the overman, that if they went out for the want of timber they would be dismissed. Further, Mr. Tonkin states that he was always willing to meet the committee of the local union. Well, the local committee did meet him often, and stated their grievances but could get no redress. So at last to stop further encroachments they had to place the whole of their troubles before the District Board. The trouble with the buttying system is that under that system the company do not pay enough to give the miner a good wage and allow him to pay a helper as he should be paid. It forces the helper to work for a lower wage than the general rate of the country. In all the West the Government price for outside labour is \$2.50 and in quartz mines the muckers get \$3 per day, yet these men are expected to work in the hazardous calling of coal mining for \$2.50 when they are working for a miner, and \$2.25 when they are working as helpers for the company at Michel. These are the complete facts of the case as taken by the *Press* Committee after going through all the due bills that could be got, and we think it answers the question "Are the men of the Crow's Nest Valley well paid?"

REASONS OF THE STRIKE.

The men and boys working in and around the mines and coke ovens of the Crow's Nest Pass Coal Company at Morrissey, Michel and Fernie came out on strike on the morning of February 11th. In Fernie the men and boys have been working under protest since August 4, 1902. The public at large are more or less acquainted with their grievances. Just one month and four days after the big explosion of May 22, 1902, in which 130 men and boys were killed because coal is mined for profit instead of being mined for use, Mr. John H. Tonkin, who by the way, came direct from Pennsylvania after the explosion to fill the position of manager of the Crow's Nest Pass Coal Company, without consulting his employees, imposed upon them an extra half hour underground, or in other words, made it nine hours from bank to bank instead of eight hours, as it had been previous to his coming here, and as it is in every other coal mine in British Columbia. The men were forced to strike or submit to the imposition.

After a six weeks' strike, and on August 4, the Gladstone Miners' Union, No. 76, of the W. F. M., entered into an agreement with Mr. Tonkin on behalf of the Crow's Nest Pass Coal Company and clause 5 of that agreement in part reads as follows: "If at the expiration of two months from date of this agreement the union shall signify in writing to the company after a vote by ballot among the employees employed by the company underground, that they are dissatisfied with the extra time underground, the company hereby agree that this agreement shall be at an end; and thereafter a day's work shall consist of one eight (8) hour shift."

The day they signed this agreement Mr. Tonkin told the committee that he intended in the near future to draw up a scale of prices which he wanted the committee to sign on behalf of the union. He assured the committee that he would not cut prices, or in other words, that the prices would remain as they were when he came. The day following the signing of this agreement he submitted his scale of prices to the union, and to the surprise of all concerned there was a general cut of from five to twenty per cent. Of course the union refused to sign it. But what could they do? They had pledged their word and honour to try the new system for two months. They went to work under protest of prices. At the expiration of two months the union took the vote by ballot, which resulted as follows: Thirty-three for the new system—who, by the way, were largely petty bosses of the company—and 129 votes to return to the old system. The union notified Mr. Tonkin in writing that they wished to return to the old system. He wholly ignored their notice.

Section 6 of the agreement reads in part as follows: "There shall be no discrimination by the company against any of the miners or working men employed by the company previous to the inauguration of the strike." This the company almost wholly ignored and many a good man left the camp rather than allow the union to get into trouble fighting his case.

At Morrissey they have been working under a protested wage scale since the middle of last October, 40 cents per ton for digging coal, and the company's stores to deal in. If I am correctly informed this is the lowest price ever paid for digging coal on this continent. At Michel where everything is owned by the company except the C. P. R. tracks, the union men in order to hold their meetings have to walk about three miles into the woods to an old logging camp with neither doors or windows. The company have positively refused to rent them a place to hold their meetings. The company stores are at the mines in all the three camps and none others are allowed.

Men and boys are killed or crippled almost daily in these mines. It would take a whole column to enumerate all the grievances in the three camps; I merely mention a few. So it will be seen that the employees of the Crow's Nest Pass Coal Company have not been waiting for an opportunity to strike, but all these months they have been working under protest with the hope that they could adjust their grievances without a strike, and knowing that to win a strike all three camps must strike together, in that way shutting off all the