

following proposals, provided that the company will waive their objection to their employees belonging to the United Mine Workers of America and will agree to open negotiations and endeavour to formulate an agreement similar to prevailing agreements in this coal field.

And provided that upon a failure to agree on any question or questions in dispute, the company will agree to submit the question or questions in dispute to an arbitration board composed of four members, two to be chosen by the Company, and two to be chosen by the men now on strike.

In the event of their failure to agree the arbitration board to have full power to call in an umpire, whose decision shall be final and binding on both parties.

The arbitrators to be chosen shall not be mine operators or miners.

The arbitration board to have full power to render a decision which shall be binding on both parties for a term commencing on the date of resumption of operations and terminating on the 1st of November, 1907.

If the above proposals are accepted by the company, we agree to advise our men to return to work immediately upon the understanding that the men now on strike be given preference in employment before strangers.

The above proposals are offered on behalf of our organization, because we realize that considerable suffering prevails in the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan owing to the shortage of fuel. Being desirous of alleviating the sufferings of innocent people we have agreed to your intervention and propose the foregoing.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the workmen now on strike.

(Signed.)

F. H. SHERMAN,  
JOS. SHARP,  
PETER PATTERSON,  
JOHN R. GALVIN,  
DONALD McNAB,  
S. A. B. CRABB.

Owing to the difficulty the general manager had in communicating by wire with the managing director, I did not receive a reply from the company until the afternoon of Sunday, the 25th. The following in a copy of the communication then received.

LETHBRIDGE, ALTA., November 25, 1906

MR. W. L. MACKENZIE KING,  
Deputy Minister of Labour,  
Lethbridge, Alta.

Dear Sir:—

Answering yours of the 23rd inst., it is needless at this time to go over the history of the Lethbridge coal strike.

The company believed and still believes that it was paying its men fair wages at the time of the strike, and no evidence has as yet been furnished to the contrary.

One principal point at issue was an increase of wages. The mine was shut down for about three months, and as the majority of the men refused to return to work, we started mining coal with new men.

We know that if such of our old experienced men as we could employ were to return to work at once we could increase our output more rapidly than by breaking in new men.

We are the pioneers in the coal mining industry in this country, and operated our mines until a few years ago—covering a period of at least 15 years—without one cent of profit to our proprietors, and it cannot be claimed that we ever tried to take advantage of the public.

We realize the seriousness of the situation, and to aid, in so far as we are able, in relieving the distress that will be occasioned by a shortage of coal this winter, we are

prepared to discuss an increase of wages with any persons you see fit to call in as representing the men.

I have had the greatest difficulty in communicating with the managing director since your arrival here, owing to his having been called to Ottawa on account of illness in his family, and regret the delay in giving you an answer, which is, that, in order to relieve the situation, the company is prepared to increase the wages of the men.

Yours truly,

(Signed) P. L. NAISMITH,  
General Manager.

#### Joint Conference Arranged.

Having received replies from both parties, I acquainted each with the nature of the reply received from the other. It will be observed that in the reply received from the men, a conditional arbitration only was accepted and that the reply from the Company made no reference to arbitration. I learned from the general manager that the company for reasons of its own, was not prepared to consider the proposal of arbitration. On the other hand, the management contended that the question of wages being a main contention, a settlement might be more readily and speedily effected if a joint conference to discuss the matter could be arranged, though I was given to understand that questions other than the wages question would not be considered at such a conference.

At six o'clock on Sunday afternoon, I explained the company's position to the committee representing the men. At nine o'clock on the same evening the committee informed me that, having read the General Manager's letter and taken all things into consideration, they were prepared to meet the General Manager and discuss the situation with him. I then arranged for a conference, which commenced an hour later and lasted until nearly two o'clock on Monday morning.

#### Result of Conference.

As a result of this conference, which was conducted in a friendly manner throughout, what appeared to be a basis of settlement was reached. The company made certain important concessions, the representatives of the men withdrew altogether certain of their

demands. One or two points alone were left over for further consideration. I was requested to draft a memorandum of the points upon which the parties appeared to be agreed, and it was arranged that a further conference would take place at a later hour on Monday morning.

During the conference on Sunday night, one point on which no agreement appeared possible was the acceptance by the men of a clause which the company insisted should be a part of any agreement arrived at, as a security against discrimination between union and non-union men on the part either of the company or any of its employees. I was informed by the men on Monday morning that if this clause were insisted upon in the form in which it had been drafted by the company, negotiations might as well cease. However, from talks which I had with members of the committee, I felt there was reason for believing that the difficulty in regard to this clause being satisfactorily overcome, a settlement might be possible on the basis of what had been mutually agreed upon at the conference. I therefore devoted my energies on Monday to endeavouring on the one hand to get the company to modify the stand which it had taken in reference to this clause, and on the other, to persuade the men to overcome their objection to it. Each of the parties had conceded the principle involved in the clause at the conference and the representatives of the men had said that they were prepared to accept all that it implied on a verbal understanding, but objected to having it included in any terms of settlement in the form in which it had been drafted. Being cognizant of these facts, I drafted a clause which to my mind guaranteed all the rights and privileges secured to all parties under the company's clause, but which I believed was worded in a manner to which exception could not with reason be taken. I then endeavoured to have each of the parties compromise on this point by an acceptance of the clause I had drafted.

By Monday night the committee representing the men, realising the responsibility which they were assuming in hold-

ing out against a settlement except upon the terms which they themselves were prepared to accept, decided to refer the stand which they had taken in regard to the settlement to Mr. John Mitchell, president of the United Mine Workers, and to abide by his ruling in the matter. Two of the committee were accordingly delegated to go to Indianapolis to see Mr. Mitchell, and they arranged to leave Lethbridge on the following night. This was the situation on Monday night, the 26th.

#### A Crisis Reached.

On Tuesday morning the following open letter, addressed to the Prime Minister of Canada, came to my notice in the press:—

LOCAL IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT OF RAMSAY,  
BLADWORTH, SASK., Nov. 19, 1906.

Dear Sir Wilfrid:—

The hamlet of Bladworth is the supplying point for settlers in approximately twelve townships surrounding.

These townships have approximately 50 settlers each settled therein. The country is open rolling prairie, devoid of trees. The settlers depend for fuel on wood and coal obtained at the nearest railway station, Bladworth. The local dealers secure their wood from the Prince Albert country, and their coal from the Galt Mines, Lethbridge. No coal has been obtained from this latter source since April last. One car was obtained from Banff in September last, since which no coal has been received here. Ten cars are under orders from Lethbridge, and none delivered. One car is ordered from Estevan and promised by the mine operator for December 17 next.

Wood has been ordered from the Cowan Company, Prince Albert, and their answer is:—  
"We have neither slabs, edgings nor cuttings, and though we have inquired we are unable to purchase any cordwood—there is none in the city."

Settlers have been burning lumber at \$30.00 a thousand, willow bramble, twisted hay and grain. These sources are well-nigh exhausted.

Dr. J. Fyfe reports from observation that no fuel is in the settlers' hands, and that suffering and perhaps death will ensue therefrom. All public schools are closed for want of fuel. The Saskatchewan Hotel, a thirty-roomed house, has but one fire.

A blizzard had been blowing on November 15, 16 and 17, with zero weather. I leave you, sir, to imagine what the condition of your fellow-subjects is in the electoral district of Batoche—a name not unknown in history. This condition is not local, but general.

We are informed that those persons operating the mines of the people are disputing over their rights—regardless of the right of the people to live.

I would respectfully ask that you, sir, put an end to a dispute that is intolerable, and the maintenance of which endangers the life and happiness (inalienable rights of all free people) of all settlers.

I ask you, sir, on behalf of a suffering people, that by the powers vested in you the right of eminent domain be exercised.