

Mining Throughout British Columbia

Strike at Trail Smelter — Statement of Management and Men. — Notes on Meeting of Western Branch of Canadian Mining Institute.

Truly the mining industry of British Columbia is experiencing troublous times. At the opening of the year the outlook for an unexampled production was bright. During the early summer a strike in the Crowsnest not only stopped the mining of coal and making of coke in that district but caused the shut-down of the Trail Smelter, the B. C. Copper Smelter and seriously impeded the operation of the Granby Smelter at Grand Forks. The strike was finally settled and all went well. Now the Trail Smelter, the chief customs smelter in the Province is shut down again on account of a disagreement between the men and the management over an eight hour day. Practically all the business interests of the Interior are struggling to effect a settlement looking to the early opening of the smelter but to date without avail. The situation is serious.

That there exists only some slight knowledge of the question we present the statement of the management and men for which we are indebted to the Trail News.

Editor Trail News:

Dear Sir: I notice some inaccuracies in the report of the strike contained in your issue of the 15th inst.

The fact is that I did not invite the men to any meeting, but having been told that a meeting was being held, I said I would like to address the men, which I did, in the hope that they might return to work in accordance with their agreement before the furnaces were down. It is true that the men refused to adopt the suggestions I offered.

I have heard that some of the union officials are saying that they have permitted certain men to remain in the plant so as to keep it in such condition that when a settlement was reached the men would be able to go back to work in a body. The position is entirely different. A number of our shift bosses are on duty in the plant. When I found that they were being molested by some of the union pickets — one of them an Austrian — I told the official that this action was wrong and should cease, and that these men should not be made more uncomfortable than necessary. To this the Union Committee agreed.

The plant is being shut down completely, and now, even if the men were willing to come back to work tomorrow, it would be some weeks before it could be run to its full capacity.

I think that every one should know the exact state of affairs and realize the seriousness of the situation.

Yours truly

S. G. BLAYLOCK,

Assistant General Manager.

A statement from the Trail Trades and Labor Council press committee has been issued to the public, in which is found the men's side of the causes that led up to the walk-out last week Thursday at the Consolidated smelting and refining works. Following is the statement:

Trail, B. C., November 20th, 1917.

To the Organized Labor Movement and the General Public:

We, the strike committee of Trail, wish to present our views on the situation in general now existing at the Smelter City. The most notable feature of any controversy is to define it clearly and impartially as far as the facts leading up to the trouble is concerned. It is not the intention of the men on strike to present anything else but the real facts. The difference with the men and the Smelting Co. is one over the 8-hour day, a question that has been pending for many months, between the men and the company.

On every occasion that the demand for 8-hour day for all smelter workers, including the mechanics, was presented

to the management, there was nothing but a strict refusal. Now, this question of 8 hours, has been recognized to such an extent today that it exists in a great many industries, even in the Dominion of Canada, and on the coast it is generally conceded to all the mechanics operating in the industries that are producing the essentials for the prosecution of the war.

In face of the fact that the 8 hours at Trail was only affecting about 450 men, chiefly mechanics, with the exception of a few general laborers and the further facts that all the men responded to the strike who were not affected thereby, amplifying that a smelter should under all circumstances be covered by the 8-hour day for all, the shut-down of the smelter will seriously effect the mining industry of this province, and mines that are shipping ore from the United States will also be affected as well. This because the strike is on over the reasonable demand for the 8-hour day. There are a good many instances where this concession has been granted by employers of labor, and remarkable changes have taken place as a result of the granting of this measure.

What real objection the management of the smelter have to conceding our demand, has been confused by statements that the Mill & Smeltermen's Union have an agreement with the company until the end of the war. This question of the "so-called agreement" has been considered by them on many occasions, but, there was never the intention on behalf of the men, that such a thing as an agreement was even entertained, between the men and the Consolidated Company. In the event of an agreement between the company and the men working at the smelter had taken place, the breaking or violating of the agreement would have been readily acknowledged by the Mill & Smeltermen's Union to say when they are entertaining an agreement.

This is the chief bone of contention that is up now before the two parties, and the stand of the company is that they want the men to go back to work as they have violated an agreement. There is not any doubt in the men's minds that the relations between themselves and the company could be ended any time that the men decided to do so. We are not seeking an opportunity to misrepresent the side of our grievance, only stating what the condition was before the strike took place. The representatives of the Mill & Smeltermen's Union have several times told the management of the smelter that they (Smeltermen's Union) would take up the question of signing an agreement with the Consolidated Mining & Smelting Company. This the company would not consider up to the time of the shut-down, pointing out that the sincerity to their argument was lacking as to an agreement.

The strike is being conducted under the Trades and Labor Council of Trail, for it embraces all the Unions that are working at the smelter. All the other arrangements as to wages and hours have been taken up through the Mill & Smeltermen's Union, yet for this measure it brings in the various unions existing at Trail, which are trying to establish this condition.

This is but a brief statement of the relation between the men and the management over the trouble, yet the points set out are the facts of the situation as to the "so-called agreement" which is the argument of the company. If that is the only argument that can be advanced at this time, it is a very weak one, and it could not be adopted by the most impartial observer with respect to the matter under dispute. The committee are all of the opinion that the labor movement and the general public will view the situation as it deserves. Furthermore, everyone can accept these statements for what they are worth. Had the Mill and Smeltermen's Union an agreement with the Consolidated Mining &