

Trouble at Grand Falls.

Editor Evening Telegram

Dear Sir,—This letter is written with the object of putting the public in possession of the salient facts leading to the present trouble at Grand Falls. The town of Grand Falls, economically, is in a rather peculiar position, in that there is little or no competition between the various stores in the town. In the town proper there is one general store purveying Meat, Groceries, Hardware and Dry-goods, one Drug Store, one Candy Store and Bakery, one Shop. Recently there has been started a Co-operative Store, selling groceries and dry goods, but this, as yet, is hampered for lack of working capital. At the Railroad Station settlement, a mile and a half from the town, there are a few small poultry spots, but they do not affect the general situation.

It is obvious that this lack of competition has a material bearing on the selling price of commodities. The general average of retail prices at these stores is much higher than the island in its entirety or for St. John's, the capital city.

This is the first strike that has ever taken place at Grand Falls. All previous differences have been amicably settled in conference with the officials of the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Co., Ltd., who own the town and mills. The employees of the Company fully realize the need for readjustments in wages and salaries in accord with the cost of living, and have only taken the present action after the most serious deliberation.

SHORT TIME.

In the past day workers have worked nine hours per day, six days per week, with double time for repair work on Sundays. Four workers have worked eight hours per day, six days per week. Since Easter the mills have been operating only five days per week, which reduced earnings, of course by one-sixth. Salaried employees were not affected by this, but it forced on the majority of employees the necessity of exercising their right of economy in order to meet current expenses. So keenly was this felt indeed, that on April 24th, the Paper Makers Union appointed a Committee to collect facts and figures as to the cost of living comparatively between Grand Falls and other places.

REDUCED WAGES.

On April 24th, the Company posted a notice as follows:

NOTICE TO ALL EMPLOYEES.
The Anglo-Newfoundland Development Co., Ltd., hereby informs all its employees at Grand Falls that on May 1st, rates of pay will be reduced as follows:

OVERTIME RATES WILL BE:
Week days Straight time
Sundays Time and one half
The company gives notice that in future all coal supplied to employees will be charged out at St. John's retail prices.

For all work other than Mill Work, namely at Farm, Badger, Milltown, Botwood, etc., working hours and rates of pay will be fixed separately and irrespective of Mill Rates. Owing to the deplorable condition of the Paper Trade the Company cannot fix any period of time during which the above rate will remain in force.

ANGLO-NEWFOUNDLAND DEVELOPMENT CO., LTD.
(Sgd.) G. F. Laycock, for general Manager.
April 26th, 1921.

We particularly wish to emphasize the fact that no consultation between employees and management took place before the posting of this announcement; and it was posted only five days before going into effect, thus leaving little time for negotiations. On Friday, April 26th, a Committee from the Local branch of the International Brotherhood of Paper Makers waited on the Management to confer with them on the points raised by the above notice. The representatives of the Company at this interview were Messrs. Harris, Laycock and T. Judge.

THE COMPANY'S CASE.

Mr. Harris reviewed the economic position of the Company. The Company did not make such large profits as the Canadian and American mills during the boom period of last year. Six months ago a decline commenced and now the paper market is in a very bad condition indeed, but he (Mr. Harris) looked for a recovery very soon. Company cannot put a ton of paper F.O.B. Botwood below the current market price in London. Practically all paper mills everywhere are working short time. Owing to general trade depression large advertisers were asking for long period credits, and newspapers live on their advertisers.

Newspaper circulations had not decreased but number of pages, and consequently consumption of paper had been reduced. Company had great difficulty in securing sufficient working capital to carry on. All our costs for material are very high. Company has had bad luck in logging operations during the past three winters. Weather conditions, etc., being very adverse.

During winter of 1918-1919 the Company could not get enough men to carry out adequate logging operations, and as a result had to use the reserve of wood. The quantity of wood cut during the winter 1919-1920 did not nearly come up to expectations, being only about 70,000 cords, although 1,300 men were employed in the lumber woods. This being due to the fact that weather conditions were so bad that it was physically impossible to get out a normal cut. Last winter 1920-1921 the Company had not ten cents in the locker. Consequently, early in February, when logging conditions were excellent, the Company had to close down twenty camps, because, to quote Mr. Harris's own words "We had not enough money to pay the men's wages." Of every dollar paid as wages this year 50 cents is borrowed money.

Paper was being imported into England from Finland, Scandinavia and Germany and put on the market at a lower price than English or Newfoundland made. The Company last year bought two years supply of coal at a very high price. This was done in anticipation of a coal famine which did not materialize. Last year the Company lost \$100,000.00 on coal supplied for domestic purposes, \$50,000.00 on the town itself and \$19,000.00 on the Farm (mills, etc.).

The above is a fair summary of the statements made to the interviewing Committee.

THE EMPLOYEES' CASE.

The case for the employees rests on the fact that it is impossible to live on the wages offered by the Company. The Committee did not see at the first conference question any of the statements made on behalf of the Company, indeed, they were not in a position to do so. The Committee rather accepted all statements as true, but pointed out that the wages offered meant semi-starvation for the great majority, and therefore sought for some common ground for discussion. The pay of an ordinary labourer, assuming the five day week to continue, would be at the new rates about \$54 per month. Assuming this man to be married with three children, paying \$9.00 per month rent, which is a fair average, and allowing half a ton of coal per month, we find he had left for food and clothing about 24 cents per head per day for his family. One had only to read these figures to realize at once the impossibility of existing on such a sum as this.

Take again, for example, a paper-maker, one of the highest paid wage-earners, a man who must work at his trade for years before he rises to the position of Machine Tender. He would be paying anything up to \$22.00 per month rent. With a similar family to our last case, the same consumption of coal, and paying \$10.00 per month rent, he would have about 90 cents per head per day for food, clothing and incidentals for his family.

There we have the high and the low line. Other examples follow:—Mechanics under the new rates would average 52 cents per hour, 9 hours per day, five days per week, totalling to \$103.00 per month. Taking a family of five, with rent at \$14 per month and allowing half a ton of coal per month, he would have about 83 cents per head per day for food, clothing, etc. Some Mechanics would, of course, work on repair work on Saturdays, and would be a little better off as a result.

Carpenters would average about 45 cents per hour, 9 hours per day, 22 days per month totalling \$89.00 per month. With a family of five, same rent and coal as above he would have 43 cents per head, per day for his family.

Electricians also have been poorly paid at these mills. Assuming the Company's statements to be correct and knowing the above to be true, we asked for the Company's co-operation in investigating and reducing the cost of living. This they declined to give us. To quote Mr. Harris once again "The spending of your money is entirely your own business, and does not concern us at all."

In reply to a direct question, Mr. Harris said "The Company's terms are rock-bottom whatever happens." On April 30th, a Committee from Local 63 International Brotherhood of Paper Makers, and a Committee from Local 1097 I.B.E.W., interviewed the Management and asked to be allowed to work two weeks at the old rates in order to gain time for further discussion. This was refused, although they were told that they could work two weeks at the new rates without prejudice. The employees were so unwilling to cause trouble that they continued to work at the new rates so as to gain time, and work went on as usual during the week.

On Saturday, May 7th, the Paper Makers met and presented an ultimatum to the Company. This was to the effect that the terms offered were impossible, and they demanded that the old rates of pay be continued, failing which they would withdraw their labor on Monday, May 9th. They offered, however, to work one week longer of the Company desired to get into communication with the London Office. This offer was declined and the Company's terms re-affirmed in writing. The same evening Local 36 I.B.P. S.P.M.W. met and an overwhelming vote in favor of refusing the Company's terms was taken, and the Management so informed. Local 1097 International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers unanimously decided to stand by the other Locals.

The strike, therefore, commenced at 7 a.m. on Monday, May 9th. This trouble cannot fairly be called a dispute. It is rather a protest against impossible terms. We would point out that the representatives of the employees and the representatives of the Company have met on any common ground for discussion. The Company's main point is the impossibility of living on the wages offered. It has never been the custom in this or any other trade to base wage rates on the profits or lack of profits of a Company though this may affect rates to some extent. Wage rates as between the A. N. D. Co., Ltd. and its employees have been based on cost of living.

So far as Paper makers are concerned, the Company has paid the rates prevailing in Canada and the U.S. Now living costs are always higher in Newfoundland than in Canada or U.S. and may be anything up to about 20% higher, if follows, therefore, that Papermakers in Newfoundland are always underpaid to this extent.

A composite Committee from the three Locals has been formed to take charge of and conduct the strike. We agreed to leave in sufficient men to carry on certain essential services, such as water supply, lighting, sanitation, coal and milk delivery. The fire brigade, of course, remains on duty. The mills have been picketed since Monday morning, but so far their position has been a success. One or two men, strangers in town, turned out to work on Monday morning, but when the picket explained the situation to them they went away and since that time no one has attempted to go into the mill.

On Tuesday night hundreds of men left town by special train for their homes. The train could not accommodate all who wished to get away. Local 93, on Monday, May 9th, suffered a loss by the death of a true and loyal member, Bro. J. Paddock, who died of heart failure. He leaves a widow, two sons and a daughter, to all of whom the Employees Committee offers its deepest sympathy. The funeral was on Wednesday, and was attended by three hundred union men, headed by the Salvation Army Band, followed by their deceased comrade to the grave.

So far there has been no disturbance of any kind in the town. The men are standing solidly together in their fight for justice and a living wage.

EMPLOYEES' COMMITTEE.

Mrs. F. J. King will sing "Angus Macdonald" at Scotch Concert, Methodist College Hall, Wednesday, May 18th.—may 11, 71

So far there has been no disturbance of any kind in the town. The men are standing solidly together in their fight for justice and a living wage.

An Arbitration Committee was appointed at a meeting of the Unemployed Committee last night, for the purpose of interviewing the Prime Minister with respect to the appointment of the new general foreman

who is closely associated with party politics, and of making representations concerning various other matters in connection with employment and the work now in progress.

Don't forget the Card Party and Dance to be held at the T. A. Armoury, May 18th, at 8.30 p.m. may 17, 21

By Bud Fisher.

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BOYS' TWEED SUIT BARGAIN

Boys' Tweed Kensington Suits, well made, good material; to fit from 2 to 6 years. Prices range from \$3.50 to \$4.00.

Sale Price \$2.95 to \$3.55

NORFOLK SUIT BARGAIN

BOYS' TWEED NORFOLK SUITS—Flush collars, two box pleats, back and front; all round belt; Pants straight leg; to fit ages from 5 to 18 years, at the following prices from \$6.75 to \$25.00.

Sale Price \$4.50 to \$16.70.

RUGBY SUIT BARGAIN

BOYS' TWEED 3-PIECE RUGBY SUITS—In plain and pinch-back; Pants, short straight leg; made of good strong material and trimmings; to fit 9 to 17 years. Prices range from \$10.00 to \$37.50.

Sale Price \$6.70 to \$25.00

SUFFOLK SUIT BARGAIN

BOYS' TWEED SUFFOLK SUITS—Two piece, Chesterfield collar, sham vest, box pleats back and front and all round belt; Pants, short straight leg; to fit ages 5 to 18 years. Prices range from \$9.60 to \$31.50.

Sale Price \$6.40 to \$21.00.

CLYDE SUIT BARGAIN

BOYS' TWEED CLYDE SUITS—Two garment, light fancy collar, Buster Brown Coat, all round belt; Pants, short straight leg; to fit ages 2½ to 9 years. Prices range from \$7.30 to \$21.75.

Sale Price \$4.90 to \$14.50.

BOYS' VELVET CLYDE SUITS—Plain White and Fancy Collar, long Buster Coat, all round belt; in colors of Saxe, Brown and Navy; to fit ages 3 to 8 years. Regular prices \$13.00 to \$17.20. Sale Price \$8.70 to \$11.50

BOYS' SERGE SUIT BARGAIN

These Suits are made in Buster Brown style, with self collar and pleated coat; to fit 1 to 8 years. Reg. price \$4.20 to \$4.60.

Sale Price \$3.60 to \$4.00

BOYS' COLLAR BARGAIN—We are clearing a lot of our White Linen Eton, Sailor and ordinary Double Collars at Sale Price 10c.

Boys' Collar with Front Attached