

workers at the mines, whether members of either union or of no union whatsoever having a chance to vote regarding which union they would prefer. If a majority of the miners say they prefer the United Mine Workers then, by the bill, the Dominion Coal company would be compelled to "check off" United Mine Workers' dues.

The above is a fair statement of facts which could be made more interesting reading if the opinions of the rival factions could be given regarding each other. Such opinions, however, are too lengthy and border too closely on the libellous for statement herewith.

It was with a state of affairs existing as above that the discussion came up on Saturday.

Mr. Tory wanted a fuller explanation regarding the proposed "check off."

Mr. McInnes explained how, under the law, the Dominion Coal company were allowed to "check off" the dues of the P. W. A., and explained that at Stellarton, where some 3,000 men are employed, there was no union "check off," neither was there any at Springhill, where some 1,500 men are employed. He thought it would be drastic legislation to tell any corporation that they must retain certain sums from men's wages to pay to a society to which they were opposed.

Hon. Mr. Armstrong said his most serious objection to the proposed plebiscite bill, was the fact that such a plebiscite would constitute a direct charge on the revenue of the province, and he did not think any private member had a right to introduce such a bill.

That statement brought Mr. Cameron to his feet to tell the commissioner of public works and mines that it was strange he should only be making such a statement after having been familiar with the bill in all its stages.

Premier Murray very emphatically stated his opposition to the bill. He said the first duty of the house was to decide upon the soundness of the principle of the legislation. It was his personal judgment that the bill was calculated to perpetuate and continue with renewed bitterness the troubles now existing. These differences would have to be settled by other means than legislation. The ascertaining of the fact that the P. W. A. or the United Mine Workers was preferred would not bring the men any closer together. He was prepared to admit that probably the result of the plebiscite would show that the U. M. W. had a majority, but the P. W. A. could not be destroyed in that way as long as that organization remained within the law. Never, in the history of labor organization, as far as he could discover, had corporations been forced to hold back part of workmen's wages as dues to a labor organization, and he thought it unwise for the legislature to embark on such legislation; the principle, to him, seemed unsound.

After some further discussion, in which Mr. Douglas expressed the opinion that there was something mysterious about the manner in which the committee on law amendments had been dealing with the bill, there was an agreement that it would not be put to vote until a later sitting of the committee of the whole house.

In a discussion of the bill to empower the government to appoint a commission to investigate conditions at the collieries, Hon. E. H. Armstrong said that the duties of the commission which was to be appointed included an investigation into prices.

Mr. Kinley: Should not Nova Scotia industries and Nova Scotia customers be given the preference?

Mr. Armstrong: What does the honorable member think himself?

Mr. Kinley: I think they should. I think that some effort should be made to see that Nova Scotia industries are provided with coal. It is a vital matter. We should have the preference over all other customers.

He asked if anything was being done to protect the supply to our own province.

Mr. Armstrong said that present conditions were unique and exceptional. He believed the coal operators had been straining every nerve to make the best possible distribution. The coal companies had put forth every effort to keep our industries going and Nova Scotia industries, compared with those of other provinces had little to complain of.

Mr. McInnes said that coal was being sold in Boston at a lower price than in Nova Scotia and explained how it happened. Immediately after the outbreak of war business was paralyzed and in order to keep up production the company entered into contracts with three Boston firms to supply large quantities of coal at a price that was much lower than now could be obtained. Owing to the shortage of ships it was difficult to make deliveries and the company on several occasions had been threatened with action for non-fulfilment of contracts.

Mr. Douglas called attention to one pleasing feature of the mines' report where it was shown that during the past year the output per man was in excess of any year in the history of mining in Nova Scotia. This reflected great credit on the miners considering the war time conditions and the absence of so many young and active men at the front.

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At a subsequent debate on the bill further explanation was given. This time the Chronicle's report is utilized:

In the Committee of the Whole there was some discussion of the Bill providing for a plebiscite among the coal miners of the Province as to their preference for the Provincial Workmen's Association or the United Mine Workers of America. Premier Murray discussed the clause providing for the declaration of a holiday on June 30th at all the mines in order to take the plebiscite. He said that he thought this a rather serious proposal, meaning the loss of thousands of tons of coal. He said that Provincial and Dominion elections were held without the holding of a holiday, and he failed to understand why a holiday was necessary in this case. The total daily output of our coal mines was about 20,000 tons and this would be a big loss at this time. Furthermore, he thought that this proposal meant an injustice to the miners, thousands of whom would not want to lose a day's work. Mr. Butts, Hon. E. H. Armstrong, and Mr. Douglas contributed to the discussion, Mr. Douglas suggesting that the vote among the miners be taken in the evening, as in the case of