

mined that they would not in any way recognize the United Mine Workers of America or their officials.

Mr. MACDONALD: That was a point at issue?

Mr. CROTHERS: That was a point at issue.

Mr. MICHAEL CLARK: How long was the minister on the island?

Mr. CROTHERS: I do not remember. I think I was there about ten days. I visited all the different mines and interviewed the owners and many of the miners. At Cumberland, I had before me twenty-seven men who were out on strike, and heard what they had to say. Then I had before me exactly forty of those who had taken their places, and heard what they had to say. I heard what the Board of Trade of the town of Cumberland, the mayor and certain of the councillors, had to say about the matter.

I was satisfied that the two parties felt so strongly on the question at issue that there was no probability whatever of bringing them together. The mine workers thought that the whole thing would be settled in a couple of weeks if I would just leave them alone; that the mine owners would have to take them back in order to get any coal out of the mines. On the other hand, the mine owners said: We will not recognize this union, if the mines are closed for forty years. I never saw two parties so determined.

Mr. Samuel Price inquired into conditions in Vancouver Island; saw the owners and miners and the Government at Victoria; interviewed some officials of the miners in Vancouver and made a report.

Hon. gentlemen will understand that, as time goes on in such matters, and things do not turn out as the people expect, when the mine owners do not get sick of the strike and take the men back as quickly as the men thought they would, and the men do not go back as soon as the mine owners thought they would, it usually happens that after a lapse of time, there is a better opportunity of making another effort to see if the dispute cannot be settled.

Mr. MACDONALD: In the meantime how many men had been brought in for the purpose of working the mines?

Mr. CROTHERS: I do not think I have any direct information as to that. About a hundred were brought over from England, but only about fifty ever reached the mines.

Mr. MACDONALD: They joined the union?

Mr. CROTHERS: They joined the union, but I do not know the number that was brought in.

Mr. Acland, the deputy minister, has for many years had a great deal of experience in these matters, and I may say that he has been very successful in adjusting them. We thought it would be well to make one more effort to see if anything could be done. Mr. Acland went to Vancouver Island about the first of November and spent the largest part of a month in interviewing the various parties.

He returned—feeling as I did in July when I returned, that it was utterly impossible to bring these people together. Now, that is the last effort that we made—in November last. Things went from bad to worse, and hon. members are all aware of the troubles that arose. A large number of men were arrested, under the authority, as I understand it, of the provincial government. Many of them have already been tried. The process of trying them is going on now in New Westminster, the venue having been changed from Victoria. It is a very bad state of things that exists in Vancouver Island. It is really the only serious labour trouble we have had in the last two years. As every one at all familiar with these matters knows, the most difficult problem between miners and mine-owners is that of the recognition of the union. If it was a matter of wages, you could compromise—

Mr. CARROLL: May I ask if there is only one labour union operating among the miners there?

Mr. CROTHERS: Yes, the United Mine Workers of America.

Mr. MACDONALD: Was the objection to the recognition of this union or unions generally?

Mr. CROTHERS: This particular union.

Mr. MACDONALD: They would have recognized some other union?

Mr. CROTHERS: They said so. But the men said they would not.

Mr. MACDONALD: The employers said they had no objection to unions generally?

Mr. CROTHERS: Yes, but the men said that they would not recognize any union. That was their idea, but they had no direct evidence as to that. The mine-owners said they were willing at any time to confer with the men actually working for them,