

was introduced. The law modified a factor in the industrial situation; to counterbalance this, two other factors have been modified: the resulting equation is the same. To say that when man interferes with natural or customary (it is the same thing) conditions, nature finds a way to equalize things, is not to argue that therefore man may interfere with nature with impunity, although this is a fallacy into which many people fall. Similarly, it is absurd to say that because the industrial equation must have been re-established, as it has been, it was therefore a beneficial act to pass the eight-hour law at the time and in the manner in which it was passed. Nature is impassive to strikes, loss, bankruptcy and suffering. A man may press the lever which maintains a mass of rock in equilibrium; but his crushed body may be underneath the rock. But on this ground it is perhaps arguable whether it would now be advantageous to repeal or modify the law. This would mean another dislocation of industry, because it would be a change which labour would resent as keenly as capital did the previous one. Such changes are for the good of the community, to be deprecated as much as possible. It is evident that whether the eight-hour law should be repealed or not depends on whether the system adopted under it is sufficient to mitigate its effects on capital in any considerable or permanent degree. This can only be fully determined by experience. But the bearing of the Rosslund settlement upon this question makes it doubly interesting, as illustrating the relations between labour and capital in the province in a general way and also in connection with the eight-hour law.

It will be well to separate the salient points, involved in the settlement and deal with them categorically. This method, while it detracts from the style of a leading article, adds to the clearness with which the subject may be comprehended. As the matter is one more to be studied by those vitally interested in the industrial situation in our province, than lightly skimmed over by those who prefer their opinions ready made, this theological method of exposition may be adopted without further apology. The settlement then is interesting on the following grounds:—

1. The method by which employers and men were brought together.

2. The extent to which the miners' union was recognized in the negotiations.

3. The radical change introduced in the method of working the mines.

4. The effect of the negotiations and settlement on the future relations between labour and capital.

1. The companies and the men were brought together by outside mediation, Mr. R. C. Clute, representing the Dominion Government, and Mr. Ralph Smith, the Provincial Government. Both of these gentlemen are notorious for their labour sympathies. It is probable their mediation would otherwise have been unsuccessful. Their functions were limited to getting a plain statement of the case on both sides. If there existed an irreconcilable difference then a fight was inevitable. But it was a pity that a strike should be ordered until the parties knew that their differences could not be adjusted save by the exhaustion of the one or the other. Numerous conferences were held; the matters in dispute were discussed. Finally a statement of their position was obtained from the managers. The mediators gave their opin-

ion upon it and the men balloted as to its acceptance. Nine industrial disputes out of ten, if attacked in the same way would be settled in the same way. The most serious **are so** settled after a strike has been in progress. The particular credit in regard to this one is that it has been settled in accordance with common sense before, not after or during a strike.

The statement of the companies was as follows:

Rosslund, B.C., April 3, 1900.

R. C. Clute, Q.C., Commissioner:

Dear Sir: Referring to the several communications that have passed between Messrs. MacDonald and Kirby and Mr. Devine, as to the conference with yourself and Mr. Smith we have thought it well to make a statement in writing of our understanding of the situation.

1. That the companies are prepared to open up their mines under the contract system to their full capacity, as rapidly as circumstances will permit.

2. The contract system, putting it generally, provides that the contractors are to be paid for all the work they do and the companies pay for all the work done, at a price agreed upon and determined by both parties.

3. The two simplest systems will be adopted, viz., (a) contract by lineal foot of hole drilled and (b) contract by lineal foot of completed working.

4. In stopes, the method of hole measurement has been selected, because of its extreme simplicity—contractors not being obliged to take any chances on the breaking qualities of the ground, or the powder required, the cost of mucking or loss of time from smoke.

5. Blasting will be done, except where otherwise arranged, between the hours of 1 and 7 a.m., so that the probability of loss of time will be reduced to a minimum.

6. As to having all development contracts measured by the lineal foot driven, instead of by the length of holes drilled, it is understood that most of this work will be let by the lineal foot. It would not be satisfactory to contractors or the companies to be confined to this method of measuring the quantity of work done. The method selected for any contract will vary with the mine and the existing conditions, and it is a matter of free arrangement with individual contractors.

7. When, through fault of the companies contractors find themselves obliged to do work not properly included in their contract the time spent in doing such work, in excess of one hour will be paid for at the standard scale of wages. When, by special agreement contractors assume the chances of such occasional extra work, the price agreed upon will be made to cover it.

8. The companies will furnish all explosives to contractors at cost from distributing stations, or they will furnish this material free of charge when agreed upon between them and the contractors in any particular work.

9. The companies will furnish all machine drills, tools and implements necessary for the work free of charge to contractors, and no charge will be made to contractors for drilling machines broken while at work.

10. The companies will arrange as far as practicable to have all holes in stopes blasted between the hours of 1 and 7 a.m., and they will also endeavour