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Strike and Stoppage of Work at Inverness Mines Creates Serious Situation

Broken Time Since The Middle of January Leaves Many in a Difficult Position to Face a Period of Idleness

History of Events Culminating in Present Situation

The threatened rupture in the apparent cordial relations existing between the Inverness Railway and Coal Co., and their Employees, since October 1924, when the mines resumed work after a shut down of five months, until a few weeks ago culminated on Wednesday, the 16th instant in the section of the employees belonging to the U. M. W. voting to come out on strike.

Although the most peaceful period enjoyed by Inverness for a number of years, in labor matters, was experienced in the two years after the resumption of work in October, 1924, the seed of dissension was sown and had taken root before the mines closed down at all in 1924. Up to this time, and for some months after, all the employees were members of the U. M. W. of A. and that organization had what is known as the "closed shop" clause, that is, one would have to become a member or at least, signify his intention of becoming one, and sign an order authorizing the Company to deduct from his wages any sums levied by the union for dues, initiation fees, assessments etc. before he was given work. In this way every employee contributed to the Union funds, whether he took any further interest in its affairs or not.

In that year a serious disagreement arose within the ranks of the organization over the administration of the funds, when it was discovered that the local Union was in arrears to International headquarters for eight months per Capita tax, that had been paid by the members, through the check off on the pay-roll, as above outlined, and five months in arrears to district headquarters, also paid by the members. These arrears amounted to \$3400.00 or \$3500.00 approximately.

During the summer and fall of 1924, strenuous demands, by many of the members, for an accounting failed to produce any authentic statement of the affairs of the Union. The situation was made more difficult by the general unemployment and the non holding of regular meetings of the members, many of whom were temporarily absent from town during the shut down.

When work was resumed about the end of October, 1924, a contract was entered into between the Officers of the local Union and the Company involving a considerable reduction in the rates paid to coal cutters and other contract men.

The District officials, under the leadership of J. W. McLeod, District President, refused to approve this contract, made by the local Union, on the ground that it involved a rate of wages below that being paid at other mines in the district. However, the contract, which was to expire on the 31st of May following, was allowed to stand, without the sanction of the district officials, and operations got away to a good start about November 1st.

Shortly after this the position of the local Union in the organization, by reason of the non-payment to the International and district of the per Capita tax again, became a question of contention at the local Union meetings and renewed efforts were made by many of the members to find out how matters stood in this regard, but beyond the knowledge that the local was in bad standing, financially, with both headquarters, International and District, no further information could be obtained. Matters continued in this unsatisfactory state until about the end of December when at a regular meeting of the Local Union a resolution was passed directing that a referendum vote of the members be taken to ascertain whether they wished to remain in the U. M. W. or go over to the One Big Union, which at this

time had organized branches at Stellarton, Westville, Thorburn, New Aberdeen and other mining centres. In accordance with this resolution the referendum was held and the result of the voting, which was by ballot, resulted in a majority of 97 being in favor of establishing a branch of the O. B. U.

On one pretext or another, the minority did not abide by the will of the majority in this respect, however, the result being that the employees found themselves in rival camps, with respect to labor organizations.

A Unit of the One Big Union was organized at the beginning of January 1925 and continued to function, while those of the employees who decided to remain at the old stand under theegis of that organization. The new contract did not specifically contain the closed shop clause, but the U. M. W. members continued to have their union dues checked off by the Company, while those who left the union were exempted from the operations of the check-off, on requesting the Company, in writing, to that effect, without prejudice to their position as employees.

At this time a committee from the O. B. U. approached the management requesting the check-off for their organization, but the management took the ground that inasmuch as that a contract had been entered into between the local Union of the U. M. W. and the Company, which did not expire until the 31st of May following, and until that time it was not considered advisable to grant the check off to any but that organization during the life of the contract. The O. B. U. continued to function without the check off until that date, when the U. M. W. declined to re-enter into a renewal of the contract and the check off was granted to both unions on precisely the same terms.

From this time onward there was peace, outwardly at least, and work at the mines went on without a single interruption from a labor dispute of any kind until last week. Both unions were functioning with varying strength as there was a considerable shifting of members from one to the other. On the surface the relations between both unions appeared cordial enough but it did not require a seer to see that a fire was smoldering which was liable to break out at any minute, with possible disastrous results.

Early in January of the present year, a committee from the U. M. W., headed by International Board Member, William Hayes, of Springhill, waited on the present general manager, S. G. Davis, and demanded that the company discontinue the privileges of the check off to the O. B. U. or in the alternative the Employees who were members of the U. M. W. would be called out on strike. Mr. Davis acceded to their demand and notified a committee from the O. B. U. accordingly. This, however, did not have the effect of either creating an open rupture at the time or extinguishing the O. B. U. entirely as had been anticipated.

The next episode of the drama, upon which the curtain rose, was the issuing of a circular letter by the company, following a conference with U. M. W. officials at Halifax, requesting a ten per cent cut in the wages of employees, which since the new wage scale negotiated by the U. M. W. on behalf of the employees of Besco became effective, ran about five per cent higher than the rates paid by the big corporation. The letter pointed out that it was impossible for the Company to continue operations with the rates then in effect and that the only alternative to an acceptance of the proposed rates was a cessation of operations. At a meeting of

the U. M. W. Local, at which 150 members voted, by ballot, it was decided not to accept the proposed reduction. Negotiations then commenced between the U. M. W. officials and the Company having for their object the drafting of a new wage scale and working agreement, and after considerable effort, a scale, working out to a reduction of a fraction under 4 1-2 per cent was agreed upon. A copy of the revised schedule was taken to Glace Bay by the Sub-District Board member, J. D. Stubbart, where conditions were appended, among them the closed shop clause, in other words that all employees would have to become members of the U. M. W. and be under the conditions obtaining before 1924, or be denied the right to work.

In the meantime, the O. B. U. members and other employees, not belonging to either union, who up until this juncture were not consulted in the making of the new rates, joined in making an application to the Minister of Labour for a Conciliation Board to investigate the whole matter. The ground taken by them was that if the proposed reduction was necessary, as represented by the Company, a Board would recommend it after a thorough investigation and they proposed to agree to such recommendations as the Board would make. Another object which they had in making the application was that they felt that no Board would recommend forcing them into an organization to which they did not wish to belong, in the light of their past experience.

When the new wage schedule, with appended conditions, was submitted to the Company they refused to agree to the closed shop clause as it would mean compulsion applied to approximately half of their employees, with regard to their union membership and the Company did not wish to assume the role of dictator in this regard, which would be the actual result if the clause were agreed to.

Numerous meetings took place between the management and the U. M. W. Officials without their being able to arrive at any compromise in the matter and on the 14th inst. negotiations were broken off. On the following day the management posted up the amended wage schedule, minus the closed shop clause, to become effective on March 19th.

On March 16th, as already stated, a strike vote was taken by the U. M. W. Local, a majority favoring it. On the 18th a wire was received by the President of the O. B. U. and Chairman of the Committee applying for the Conciliation Board, from the Minister of Labour, stating that he had requested the Company not to put the new schedule of wages in effect on the 19th. The U. M. W. took another strike vote on the 18th resulting in 136 voting for and 4 against. The O. B. U. and other employees held a meeting the same night and voted to remain at work, pending the outcome of the application for a Board. There was no work in the mine the following day, Saturday, and all was quiet.

The first indication of trouble manifested itself on Sunday night, when the men going to work on the eleven o'clock shift were met by picketers from the U. M. W. ranks who tried to persuade them from going down. On Monday morning the picketers were out in full force and occupied all the roads leading to the mine. In many cases they succeeded in dissuading the men from rejoining for duty. This state of affairs continued until Wednesday, greater force being applied by the picketers each succeeding day until this particular morning when many were forcibly returned home.

On learning the conditions here, the Company decided to discontinue operations entirely save the most necessary work required to keep the mine pumped and in other respects preventing the workings from falling into disuse.

In the meantime Messrs. E. McG. Quick and J. D. O'Neil, Special Investigator and Legal Adviser, respectively, of the Federal Labor Department, arrived from Ottawa and held conferences with all parties to the trouble, first with the employees and O. B. U. Committee and later with the U. M. W. Committee. In the afternoon on Wednesday another conference took place at which representatives of the O. B. U. and U. M. W. together with the representatives of the Labor Department met and decided to go back to the status obtaining at the beginning of the trouble and to proceed to Halifax the following day with the purpose of getting the Company to consent to re-open the mines.

Accordingly the delegation proceeded to Halifax, the following day. The O. B. U. and other employees were represented by M. J. McLean and Alex L. McIsaac. The U. M. W. was not represented by any of their local men, their representation being entrusted to District President, J. W. McLeod and Vice President P. G. Muise.

On Friday a conference was held at Halifax with representatives of the Company but it resulted in a deadlock. Several proposals were advanced by the Company and the representatives of the Labour Department, but President McLeod would not concede the demand for the complete closed shop. To this the Company would not consent for reasons already stated and the attempt to effect a settlement ended in failure.

At this writing the situation is that over five hundred men are walking the streets with more than half of them ready and willing to go to work, while the balance stand ready to prevent them from doing so.

The present situation is a serious one for many in town. Since January 14th the mines have not worked a full week, about four days being the average, and in consequence there is little reserve to go and come on and many will find their position a very difficult one indeed.

AYRSHIRE MEN MEET IN TRURO.

The annual meeting of the Nova Scotia Ayrshire Breeders' Association took place here the 24th at the Stanley House. Members were present in large numbers from all over the Province and fine enthusiasm and fellowship prevailed. The objects of the Association are to cultivate the qualities of the Ayrshire breed, to increase numbers in Nova Scotia and to make the breed better known to the farmers of Nova Scotia.

Measures were adopted tending to the promotion of Ayrshire interests. A general field day will be held on June 22 next at Mount Cameron, Antigonish County, the property of St. Francis Xavier College, where there is a large herd of Ayrshire cows. A resolution was passed commending the work of making Nova Scotia a restricted area.

The resolution states that the Nova Scotia Ayrshire Breeders' Association considers that the matter of eradicating bovine tuberculosis from the cat in Nova Scotia is a most important step in connection with the live stock industry of the Province.

The following officers were elected for the succeeding year: President—R. A. Douglas, M. P. P. Alma; Vice-President—Samuel C. Crockett, Middle Musquodoboit; Secretary—Treasurer—Rev. Hugh MacPherson, Antigonish. Directors—T. J. Hawkins Shubenacadie; W. A. Macdonald, Pictou, A. J. Rankine, Judique; J. R. Macdonald, Shubenacadie; M. Gillis Boisdale, C. B.; Father Robitaille, Mount Cameron, Antigonish; John Retson, Truro; Edward Black, Amherst; E. Cutten Peers, Pugwash.

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British and United States Warships Open Fire On Hill in Nanking In Reply to Attack by Cantonese Batteries

ONE BRITISHER KILLED—OTHERS WOUNDED—WARSHIPS READY FOR ACTION—LOOK GRAVE

(Canadian Press Despatch)

Shanghai, March 24—British and United States warships replied this afternoon to the shelling by the southerners of foreigners concentrated in Nanking. One Britisher was killed and the British consul and another Britisher wounded.

The foreigners were concentrated for evacuation on a hill in the northern part of the city, where the Standard Oil Company plant is located. The shelling by the southern irregulars began shortly before four o'clock. A few minutes later the United States destroyers, Noa and Preston, and the British cruiser, Emerald, shelled the area surrounding the hill with the object of opening the way for the immediate evacuation of the foreigners.

Combined British and United States forces were landed. There were no casualties among the 155 American men, women and children, who were at the concentration point.

A wireless despatch from Nanking blames the attack on the hill on "undisciplined Cantonese troops."

A report reached the warships early this afternoon that looting had begun in the city and that foreigners were being killed. This report was not verified. Later it was reported that the British Consul had been looted and the consul wounded. The United States consul, John Davis and his staff, accompanied by a Marine guard which had previously been landed from the Noa, left the consulate and took refuge on Soocny Hill, where the foreigners were assembled.

When the warships learned that the hill was being attacked, they opened fire with their main batteries on the area surrounding the hill for the purpose of cleaning out the attackers. United States destroyers are standing by at Shanghai awaiting possible hurry-calls to Nanking.

The destroyers Killebrew, John D. Ford and Peary, have been ordered immediately from Manila to Shanghai. The British steamer Poyang arrived today in Shanghai with the first refugees leaving Nanking since the official evacuation began.

COLCHESTER COUNTY PRODUCE CES 35,000,000 FEET OF LUMBER AND FROM 20,000,000 TO 25,000,000 LATHS

A careful survey of lumbering operations in Colchester County during the past winter, shows that the cut will be about the same as last year. Upwards of 35,000,000 ft. of lumber, and from 20,000,000 to 25,000,000 laths, is the production of our forest lands during the present season.

The beginning of operations was met with most discouraging conditions. Little snow and extreme mild weather during December and January presented a blue outlook. In some places owing to heavy freshets, men and horses were forced from the woods and operations brought to a standstill. Happily, however, February came in with ideal weather for lumbering and every man and horse available were rushed to the woods to overcome the tremendous handicap of the earlier months.

There is but little pulpwood cut in Colchester at present. Only a few small operations are carried on, but it is expected that the pulpwood yield in the near future, from lands in Colchester will be great. The Penobscot Pulp Co., that is now about to step in connection with the live stock industry of the Province. The following officers were elected for the succeeding year: President—R. A. Douglas, M. P. P. Alma; Vice-President—Samuel C. Crockett, Middle Musquodoboit; Secretary—Treasurer—Rev. Hugh MacPherson, Antigonish. Directors—T. J. Hawkins Shubenacadie; W. A. Macdonald, Pictou, A. J. Rankine, Judique; J. R. Macdonald, Shubenacadie; M. Gillis Boisdale, C. B.; Father Robitaille, Mount Cameron, Antigonish; John Retson, Truro; Edward Black, Amherst; E. Cutten Peers, Pugwash.

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