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Kavanagh

The Vancouver Island strike



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# The Vancouver Island Strike

BY J. KAVANAGH

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ISSUED BY THE

B. C. Miners' Liberation League

VANCOUVER, B. C.

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# The Vancouver Island Strike

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In order that the reader may obtain a clear perspective of the strike on Vancouver Island, and the part played by the government of British Columbia in connection therewith, the following brief outline of the mining districts on Vancouver Island and their political representation is given.

Mines are operated at Nanaimo, South Wellington, Extension, and Cumberland. Nanaimo is represented in the Provincial Legislature by Mr. John Place, Socialist.

Newcastle, which includes Extension and South Wellington, is also represented by a Socialist, Mr. Parker Williams.

Cumberland polled a strong Socialist vote at the last election and indications pointed to the probability of a working-class representative being elected at the next election.

The miners of these districts having elected the only opposition to the present government of B. C., this fact must be taken into consideration when reading over the events which are herein recorded.

## I

**"The State is a class institution functioning in the interest of the ruling class."**

In the twenty-eight years prior to 1912, three hundred and seventy-three men were killed in the mines on Vancouver Island in consequence of explosions of coal gas. Wellington accounted for 83, Nanaimo for 180, Extension 50, and Cumberland 69. The last explosion took place at Extension as late as 1909.

These casualties are apart from the numerous accidents to life and limb, which are almost a daily occurrence in the mines.

It is not due to the negligence of the miners that these gas explosions have taken place, nor would it appear on the surface to be the fault of the government, which has instituted laws designed to prevent such accidents. The Coal Mines Regulation Act of 1911 makes the following provisions:

Sec. 87. Rule 8. If at any time it is found by the person for the time being in charge of the mine or any part thereof that by reason of noxious gases prevailing in such mine or such part thereof, or of any cause whatever, the mine or the said part is dangerous, every workman shall be withdrawn from the mine or such part thereof as is so found dangerous, and a competent person, who shall be appointed for the purpose, shall inspect the mine or such part thereof as is so found dangerous, and if the danger arises from inflammable gas shall inspect the same with a locked safety-lamp, and in every case shall make a true report of the condition of such mine or part thereof, and a workman shall not, except in so far as is necessary for inquiring into the cause of danger or for the removal thereof, or for exploration, be readmitted into the mine, or such part thereof as was so found dangerous, until the same is stated by such report not be dangerous.

Rule 27. The persons employed in a mine may from time to time appoint one or two of their number to inspect the mine at their own cost, and the persons so

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appointed shall be allowed, once or oftener in every shift, day, week, or month, accompanied, if the owner, agent, or manager of the mine thinks fit, by himself or one or more officers of the mine, to go to every part of the mine, and to inspect the shafts, levels, planes, working-places, return airways, ventilating apparatus, old workings, and machinery, and shall be afforded by the owner, agent, and manager, and all persons in the mine, every facility for the purpose of such inspection, and shall make a true report of the result of such inspection; and such report shall be recorded in a book to be kept at the mine for the purpose, and shall be signed by the persons who made the same. And if the report state the existence or apprehended existence of any danger, the person or persons making the inspection shall forthwith cause a true copy of the report to be sent to the inspector of the district; Provided, always, that where the miners in any mine fail to appoint two of their number to inspect the mine, the Chief Inspector shall select from the men, in alphabetical order where possible, two competent miners, who shall comply with the provisions of this section, and the said owner, agent, or manager may withhold from the wages of the underground employees a sufficient sum pro rata to remunerate the persons making such examination.

For not making a true report, the following penalty is incurred:

105. Where a person who is an owner, agent, or manager of or a person employed in or about a mine is guilty of any offense against this Act which in the opinion of the Court that tries the case is one which was reasonably calculated to endanger the safety of the persons employed in or about the mine, or to cause serious personal injury to any of such persons, or to cause a dangerous accident, and was committed wilfully by the personal act, personal default, or personal negligence of the person accused, such person shall be liable, if the Court is of opinion that a pecuniary penalty will not meet the circumstances of the case, to imprisonment with or without hard labour for a period not exceeding three months.

Taken in conjunction with Rule 8, it would appear that the miners were amply protected, but it was found that if a gas committee discovered gas in dangerous quantities and made a true report of the same, much difficulty arose in finding a "place" in which they could work, and ultimately they would have to leave the camp.

This condition of affairs, together with other grievances under which they were suffering, forced them to a realization of the fact that if they wished to offer any resistance to the pressure brought to bear upon them, they must do so collectively, and to that end they invited the U. M. W. of A. to organize among them.

This offer was not at first accepted, the Union demanding that some desire for organization be shown before it came into the field.

Satisfactory conditions being shown, local unions were finally organized at Cumberland, Nanaimo, Extension and South Wellington.

On June 15th, 1912, Isaac Portrey and Oscar Mottishaw, the gas committee appointed by the men as laid down in the Act, reported having found gas in several places in the No. 2 mine at Extension. This report was forwarded to the Inspector of Mines, who verified the same in July, 1912.

Shortly after this report was issued Mottishaw's "place" ran out, and it was discovered that no other "place" could be found for him. He left Extension and later arrived at Cumberland, where he obtained work with a contractor at one of the mines. After he had been there a short time the contractor was notified by the manager that Mottishaw must be discharged. The contractor objected, but was told that Mottishaw had to go, excuse or no excuse.

Realizing the insecurity of their position should they allow such a case of flagrant discrimination to occur without some protest on their part, a committee was appointed by the miners to interview the manager in connection therewith, but he refused to meet them. Another committee was sent with a like result. The miners then decided to declare a general holiday at all the mines in Cumberland on Monday, Sept. 16th, 1912, in order that this question might be discussed.

At the meeting, on the 16th, a committee was chosen, consisting of union and non-union miners, to again visit the managers. This committee met the same fate as the previous ones.

On the miners returning to work on the morning of the 17th, they discovered notices at the mine entrances notifying them to take out their tools, the only condition under which they would be permitted to work being: That each man desiring to work could do so, provided that he signed an individual contract agreeing to work under the old conditions for a period of two years. Thus commenced the strike on Vancouver Island—by a lock-out at the hands of the mine owners.

## II

### **"The State performs its function."**

The Orientals employed in the mines had quit work in company with the rest of the miners. The miners were idle, no one working save a few firebosses who were engaged in keeping the mine in repair. The miners were taking advantage of the enforced holiday pending some settlement being effected.

On Sept. 21st District President R. Foster interviewed the Minister of Mines, Premier McBride, relative to the discriminating against Mottishaw for making a true report, as called for by the Coal Mines Regulation Act. He was informed that the matter would be considered. The Premier later communicated with Mr. Foster to the effect that he could see no grounds for interfering in so far as the Coal Mines Act was concerned, and would not take it up under the Public Enquiries Act.

About Sept. 24th some ten or twelve special provincial police arrived in Cumberland. Previous to their arrival the white miners had had free access to the Oriental quarter, but this was stopped when the police arrived. It may be a coincidence, though undoubtedly a strange one, that a few days after the police had surrounded the Chinese quarters, the Chinese evinced a desire to return to work, although previous to that time they had no intention of so doing.

It is alleged, and on good grounds, that the police, together with Mr. Coulson, manager of the company, went to each of the Chinamen and threatened them with deportation unless they returned to work.

On Sept. 30th a communication was sent to the Minister of Labor at Ottawa asking for advice and containing the following sentence: "If there is any remedy we would like to know."

A formal reply promising a further reply was received, but no further reply materialized. Further attempts to meet the mine owners in conference were unsuccessful.

Although Cumberland was, if possible, more peaceful than ever, approximately 100 foot and twenty mounted special policemen were sent into the town. In the meantime the miners working at the Extension mines, Ladysmith, operated by the same company as at Cumberland, The Canadian Collieries ("Dunsmuir"), Ltd., had taken one day's holiday to discuss the situation as it applied to them, and on their return to work were met by the same notice which had been posted at Cumberland. By the beginning of October all miners employed by the Canadian Collieries, Ltd., had been locked out.

The company made one or two attempts to import strike-breakers but with little success.

During this time the press had carried on its usual campaign of vilification. A sheet published at Cumberland, entitled *The Islander*, became hysterical in its abuse of the miners. Reports were circulated

that an attempt had been made to blow up a railway bridge, but had failed owing to the dynamite being frozen. The discoverer of the alleged attempted outrage stated that 100 yards of fuse was attached to the dynamite. As fuse is only made in 50-foot lengths, and as fuse only burns at the rate of one foot per minute, the story was discredited save by the above mentioned press.

In January, 1913, the Executive Board of the British Columbia Federation of Labor interviewed the Premier and his cabinet, and again urged him to intervene in order that a conference between the mine owners and the miners' representatives might be accomplished.

To this a formal reply was received. Later on President Sivertz of the B. C. Federation again wrote to the Premier, asking him, as Minister of Mines, to intervene in this dispute. This request was politely evaded.

A resolution was introduced during the 1912-13 session of the Provincial Legislature by Mr. Parker Williams, asking that a committee of enquiry, one member of which was to be Mr. John Place, be appointed to enquire into the cause of the lock-out. This resolution was defeated by an overwhelming majority.

The Canadian Collieries, Ltd., had by this time a considerable number of Asiatics working as strike-breakers at Cumberland. Attempts had been made to import white miners, but with very little success. It had been decided at an executive session of the miners to declare a general strike of all miners on Vancouver Island in an endeavor to influence the government to intervene and bring about an investigation into the circumstances responsible for the lock-out. No date had been fixed for the declaration of a general strike, however, the intention being to carry out this program only when all other means of effecting a conference had failed.

May 1st being the day celebrated by the miners as Labor Day, it was finally decided to issue the strike call on the evening of April 30.

This was done and the pamphlets, proclaiming a general strike of miners on the Island, were distributed among the men as they came from work.

Much stress has been laid on the statement that no ballot was taken of the men working in the mines, as to whether or not they were in favor of striking.

This has been made the basis of some of the most extravagant statements appearing in the press of British Columbia.

For every effect there is a cause, therefore we will seek the cause as to why no previous ballot was taken.

The Union in Nanaimo was comparatively small, the reason for this being an almost perfect spy system operated by the officials of the Western Fuel Co. So perfect was the system of espionage that to mention organization was tantamount to requesting dismissal. This being the condition, some common interest was necessary in order to overcome the feeling of distrust engendered amongst the miners by the system operating among them. The strike call furnished that common bond.

A mass meeting was held in the Princess Theatre on the night of May 1st, wherein the situation was outlined to them. The feeling in favor of the strike was overwhelming and the strike of all miners on Vancouver Island had commenced.

### III NANAIMO

On becoming aware of the situation Mr. Stockett, manager of the Western Fuel Co., announced that the mines would be closed May 2nd and 3rd in order to allow their employees to ballot on this question of striking. It was thought that if a sufficient number evinced a desire to return to work the strike would be broken.

A committee of employees, composed of topmen, clerks, etc., who were not in favor of striking, held a meeting in the Princess Theatre on the night of May 2nd. About 900 miners were present. On the question being put to the meeting only 85 stood up in favor of returning to work. The chairman of the meeting immediately declared an adjournment and stated that a regular ballot would be taken at the courthouse on the following day.

Note: The company's committee was allowed to use the courthouse in order to take a ballot. In view of the action taken by the authorities later in the year, when another ballot was being taken, it is well to remember this point.

On May 3rd about 478 men out of 2,000, that being about the number employed at Nanaimo, South Wellington, and Jingle Pot, voted on the question, 33 voting against going back to work.

The majority of those voting were company officials, clerks, carpenters, and men working around the top of the mines. A very small percentage were miners.

Within a week after the strike had been called, 95 per cent of the men who were not in the union on May 1st had joined. The Pacific Coast Coal Co.'s mines at South Wellington were left almost without a man, and the shut down in the Nanaimo district was complete. The firebosses were permitted to remain at work in order to keep the mines in repair.

The local literary mouthpiece for the Companies became almost hysterical in its denunciation of the U. M. W. of A. and its officials.

At Ladysmith, near which the Extension mines are located and at which some strike-breakers were working, various attempts were made to provoke the strikers into committing a breach of the peace, in order that the special police might have an opportunity of earning their pay.

On May 1st, as the strikers were holding a demonstration in a field near the main road, the company officials brought the strike-breakers into town from Extension, direct from the mine as they left work, and paraded them through the streets of Ladysmith.

So disgusted was the chief of the provincial police at Ladysmith at this attempt to provoke the strikers that he resigned his position, although he was within two years of qualifying for a pension.

At Cumberland the special police were ably fulfilling the purpose for which they had been sent there. It was no longer safe for a woman to be out after dark without an escort, subjected as they were to the insults of these guardians of the law.

So bad did it become that on May 14, 1913, President Foster communicated with Premier McBride protesting against the conduct of the special police in Cumberland.

The Premier replied to the effect that he had every confidence in the Superintendent of Police and declined to interfere.

Early in July Mr. Crothers, Minister of Labor, stated his inten-

tion of coming to the coast in order to look over the situation on Vancouver Island. Hopes were entertained that as he was a Dominion official the same influences would not prevail upon him as appeared to be the case in so far as the provincial ministers were concerned.

He was met at Vancouver by Mr. Farrington, the U. M. W. of A. executive officer in charge of the strike, and the situation outlined as fully as was possible in the limited time at their disposal, Mr. Crothers leaving for Victoria by the 10 a. m. boat, enroute to visit the Premier. During his tour of the mining camps the most notable feature was the scarcity of time at his disposal when being interviewed by the strikers, and an apparent conviction that all men were liars, particularly if they happened to be miners on strike. He frequently stated that he could not believe what he heard. At South Wellington, after the strikers had waited all day in order to interview him, he was unable to accommodate them, although he had been able to spend two hours in the offices of the Coal Company. At Nanaimo he chided the miners for coming on strike, saying that in his opinion they had done wrong by acting so precipitately in the matter of calling the strike. The balance of his address was devoted to eulogizing the Conservative member for Nanaimo. Throughout his tour on the Island the strikers received about 20 per cent of the time devoted to the enquiry, the balance being utilized in interviewing strikebreakers and mine officials. Enquiries as to complaints were put to the men who had accepted the operators' terms and gone back to work, rather than to the men who were on strike as a result of their grievances being ignored. On one occasion, on being told that the men then at work were not qualified miners, he expressed his disbelief of the statement, whereupon President Foster requested that an impartial board of examiners be appointed, of which the Minister of Labor act as a member, stating further that if 50 per cent of those working in the mines at that time were able to answer the questions as prescribed by law, then he would advise the miners to call off the strike. This request was ignored.

Mr. Samuel Price, a special commissioner appointed as an investigator, and who accompanied Mr. Crothers, has since published his report, which same appears to have been gleaned from interviews with mine managers, strikebreakers, etc.

#### IV

The strike dragged on, the Companies endeavoring to get strikebreakers. In this they were ably assisted by the special police, those stationed at South Wellington even acting as employment agents. Two women were fined for calling "Scab" at a strikebreaker, although he, escorted as he was by special policemen, was permitted to use the most obscene language towards them.

On July 16 the Cumberland strikers received word that a man named Cave, a big husky fellow who was acting as a scab herder for the company, had declared his intention of coming into Cumberland and cleaning out the strikers.

On the evening of Saturday, July 19, Cave, accompanied by about fifteen others, came down the street leading from the company's property. They marched down one side of the street, the strikers being on the other side, Cave calling upon the strikers to come over and fight. No notice was taken of this. On reaching the bottom of the street one



of Cave's gang struck one of the strikers. A fight ensued and both were arrested.

Cave, with the remainder of his gang, then marched back up the street, repeating his previous performance. As he was calling out his challenges a young striker name Reynolds, a man weighing fully fifty pounds less than Cave, crossed over the street and met Cave and said to him "Have you got a gun on you." Cave replied that he did not need a gun to clean out such ———. With that Reynolds swung his right on to Cave's jaw, bringing him to his knees. The police immediately rushed over and arrested them, releasing Cave, however, a few minutes later.

The discovery of this latter episode irritated the strikers beyond endurance and they proceeded to drive the strikebreakers back on to the company's property.

At the point where the government road leaves the townsite and runs between the property of the company is situated the house of Mr. Clinton, the cashier for the company, and also United States Consul. At this point were drawn up the special police, mounted and foot, to prevent the strikers going any further.

While the argument was proceeding between the police and strikers, Mr. Clinton came out of his house, rushed down to the fence gate and exhorted the police to "Shoot them, ride them down, drive them into the sea, etc."

After a short time the strikers returned home.

Some two weeks later several of the strikers were arrested, among them being Joe Naylor, President of the Union, and charged with being members of an unlawful assembly on the night of July 19. Neither Cave, or any of his companions, who were the instigators of the trouble, have been arrested.

Those arrested were refused bail.

Up to this time no trouble had occurred in any of the other towns, though the miners at Extension and South Wellington were somewhat irritated by the importation of strikebreakers by the operators. At South Wellington the special police were especially officious on behalf of the company. One of them, named Killam, threatening, on one occasion, to drill a striker full of holes for speaking to him on the question of strikebreakers.

Nanaimo had been very quiet, no special provincial police being there, although the city police force of two, had been reinforced by the addition of a few more.

The companies were, by this time, undergoing a financial strain owing to the source of their profits having been cut off, and it was apparent that the miners were prepared to remain on strike until their demands had been granted.

While there was no definite proof that the executive of the B. C. Provincial legislature was conniving with the coal operators for the purpose of fomenting trouble in the mining camps, at the same time a careful review of later events leads one to that conclusion.

The strikebreakers at Extension and South Wellington had become possessed of firearms. How they became possessed of them, and for what reason, is a question that only the company officials can answer. They were becoming correspondingly aggressive.

On the evening of Aug. 9th, as two of the strikers, residing at Ladysmith, were proceeding home, they were set upon by four Italian, who were acting as strikebreakers at Extension. During the struggle one of the strikers was stabbed. After the strikebreakers had gone the miners returned to town, where the injured man had his wound dressed. They then sought out the chief of police, and after considerable difficulty, prevailed upon him to accompany them to the Temperance Hotel (the headquarters for the strikebreakers), where the man who had used the knife was arrested. The police, however, refused to arrest the other three men who were implicated in the assault.

This refusal to extend the protection of the law to their members irritated the strikers.

On Sunday, Aug. 10th, the chief of police was again requested to perform the duties of his office, but he refused, saying in effect "You people had better go back to work, you are beaten anyway."

On Monday, Aug. 11th, a meeting of the strikers was held in the Union Hall, and the following resolution passed: "That if the police do not extend to our members the protection of the law, we will be compelled to take measures to protect ourselves."

Within half an hour after this resolution had been adopted and communicated to the chief of police he signified his willingness to arrest the other men concerned in the assault, which was done.

A little prior to midnight on Aug. 11th, five strikebreakers were brought into Ladysmith by boat. These men were under the influence of liquor, and had been warned, by the person conducting them, not to speak to anyone once they landed, as the town was full of police and they would be arrested. The strikers were out picketing as usual. The five men landed and were marched up to the Temperance Hotel, paying no attention to the questions put to them by the strikers, between whom they were passing.

As all previous arrivals had spoken on being questioned, the miners thought that the silence of these five was due to sullenness, the real cause being totally different, and this, in conjunction with the happenings of the two days preceding, irritated them almost to the breaking point. They followed the strikebreakers to the hotel and congregated around on two sides of the building. The police were patrolling between the strikers and the hotel.

The hotel is situated on a corner, having a frontage of about 40 feet, the rear of the building being L-shaped, the projection being on the far side of the building, as viewed from the street. A six-foot fence, adjoining the building on both sides, completes the location. The street was lighted by a 60-candle power lamp, situated on the street corner, distant about 60 feet.

When the miners massed on the two sides of the hotel the inhabitants thereof crowded to the windows, and an interchange of compliments, more forcible than polite, occurred.

Some boys who were in the crowd commenced to throw stones. Shortly after this a man was observed to open one of the windows in the hotel projection and throw out what appeared to be a lighted match. This was immediately followed by an explosion which demolished part of the fence adjacent to the building, a distance of about 40 feet from the street. Shortly after this the crowd dispersed.

During the time the crowd was about the Temperance Hotel a man named Alex McKinnon, who was acting as a strikebreaker, was coming down the street towards the hotel, but on seeing the crowd he immediately turned and hurried home. About 2 a. m., as a small group of strikers were approaching the group of cottages wherein McKinnon's house was situated, another explosion occurred, blowing off the arm of McKinnon, who had the explosive in his hand, preparing to throw it into the street.

A brief description of McKinnon will be useful to the reader. When the lockout took place he stayed with the men who refused to accept the operators' terms. He was in receipt of \$11 per week strike pay for a considerable period. He then purchased a new house costing \$4,000, and demanded that the Union grant him a further \$25 per month to keep up the payments on the same, failing which he threatened to return to work. He was informed that he could "Go to hell if he chose." He then commenced strikebreaking.

On the morning of the 12th the miners paraded through the Chinese district, and the other parts of the town, and meeting some strikebreakers going to work, endeavored to dissuade them from so doing.

In the meantime clouds were gathering on the industrial horizon in the Nanaimo district.

For some days prior to Aug. 11th officials of the Western Fuel Co. had been visiting those of the strikers whom they imagined were wavering, with a view to getting them to return to work. They were spreading the news that over 200 men had decided to do so.

Picketing at this time being considered legal, the miners turned out in large numbers on the morning of Aug. 11th in order to, if possible, dissuade anyone from commencing work and thus trying to break the strike. Some eleven men turned out to go to work, escorted by the mine officials. They could not be induced to refrain from so doing.

The strikers, together with a considerable number of sympathisers including many women, again assembled, at the close of the shift, to meet them coming from work. The evident disapproval of their actions, as evidenced by the remarks of the crowd, influenced the majority and they declared their intention of ceasing work.

Four of one family who refused to have anything to do with the strikers were taken to their home in an automobile filled with police.

A crowd assembled around the house to persuade them, if possible, to cease work.

The father of the family came to a window armed with a shot gun and threatened to fire into the crowd. A few stones were thrown as a result of this threat. One of the younger members of the family then came and took the gun away. Some window panes were broken. On the family promising to cease work the crowd dispersed.

The strikers again turned out in force on the morning of Aug. 12th. Only a few firebosses turned out to go to work, they having been, until then, permitted to do so, in order to keep the mine in repair. The action of the company in endeavoring to break the strike induced the miners to request the firebosses to cease work. This they refused to do.

At the close of the shift, a meeting was held in front of the company's offices, Mr. Shepherd, M. P., being present.

Mr. Shepherd addressed the meeting, and shortly afterwards Mr. Stockett, manager of the Western Fuel Co., came out of the office and did likewise.

He stated there was a danger of the mine being destroyed by fire unless he could get men to deal with it.

He was told, in reply, that he could have 50 men the next day, provided he agreed to recognize the Union.

He stated that he would be willing to meet a committee composed of men who had been employed by him on April 30th. This was agreed to and at the next meeting of the Union a committee was appointed, including Mr. Farrington, the U. M. W. of A. official in charge of the strike. On the committee visiting the company's offices, Mr. Stockett objected to meeting a committee of which Farrington was a member.

Event after event followed in rapid succession. At South Wellington, a mining camp about five miles from Nanaimo, the company had housed ten strikebreakers in a place known as the "Bull pen." These had annoyed the miners on more than one occasion. On the evening of the 12th, spurred on by reason of the occurrences in Nanaimo, some of the miners approached the "Bull pen" with a view to persuading these men to quit. One of the strikebreakers attempted to introduce an axe into the argument, and in consequence, thereof, received a beating.

On Wednesday, the 13th, news came that twenty-three special policemen were coming to Nanaimo from Vancouver. This irritated the miners who were unaware of any reason why the government should take such action. When the policemen landed they were escorted back to the boat. One policeman named Taylor drew his gun. This created considerable irritation and a young miner named Griffiths stepped in front of him and dared him to shoot. Some of the cooler heads among the miners, realizing the danger the policeman had incurred by his action, attempted to get him to go back on the boat. He, in his fright, resisted their well-meant efforts to remove him and in the struggle received a pair of black eyes.

The miners then sent a message to Attorney-General Bowser stating that if the police were withdrawn they would undertake to preserve peace. This was answered by the following statement issued to the daily press:

Victoria, Aug. 15.—"When day breaks there will be nearly a thousand men in the strike zone wearing the uniform of His Majesty \* \* \* This is my answer to the proposition of the strikers that they will preserve the peace if they are left unmolested by the special police."

In the meantime the strikebreakers at Extension had been becoming particularly offensive to the strikers residing at the mining camp. The women and children were especially visited with many indignities.

The company had erected a searchlight which played on the houses wherein the strikers resided. The miners received the impression that some attempt was to be made to drive them out of the camp. They therefore approached the "Bull pen" where many of the strikebreakers were lodged, in order to discover their intentions. It was necessary to proceed carefully, as many of the strikebreakers were possessed of firearms. As the miners drew near the "pen" they met many of the strikebreakers wives and children, who were fleeing from the camp, evidently knowing that trouble was brewing. The miners

escorted all they could find into the city. As they drew near the mine the strikers were met by a fusilade of bullets. This drove them to shelter. Shortly afterwards a man named Baxter was shot by someone concealed in the mouth of the mine. The miners of Nanaimo, hearing that some men had been killed by strikebreakers at Extension, immediately formed up to proceed to the scene of trouble.

Flames commenced issuing from the "Bull pen" and some of the shacks and it is a well-known fact that the buildings were on fire before any of the strikers reached the "Bull pen." The strikebreakers kept up a desultory rifle fire from the mine entrance and about midnight, on the 13th, the crowd dispersed.

On the morning of the 14th a detachment of militia from Vancouver, numbering 300, landed at Departure Bay, a trifle north of Nanaimo. They moved into the city and encamped near the post-office. Later in the day a detachment went out to Extension, and with the assistance of the strikers got the strikebreakers out of the mine and rescued the remainder of the women and children.

One striker who guided the militia into the mine in search of an elderly strikebreaker was afterwards arrested for so doing. The only person injured was the man who was shot from the mine entrance.

During this time the press of the lower mainland outdid itself in virulence and misrepresentation. Bridges were reported burned, property destroyed, railway engines dismantled, in fact everything was printed that would tend to make the miners appear fiends of the worst type.

The police and militia were being drafted into every mining camp on the Island.

A false rumor that trouble had broken out in Cumberland caused the despatch of troops to that district, notwithstanding the fact that the town was already burdened with a host of special police. Vancouver Island was invested as though it was in a state of siege. Troops were everywhere, in the postoffice, telephone offices, in fact one would imagine that the safety of the Empire depended on the vigilance of the militia.

On Sunday, Aug. 17th, as J. J. Taylor, Vice President of Dist. 28, U. M. W. of A., was on his way to Victoria to speak at a meeting called by the executive of the B. C. Federation of Labor in protest against the action of the Provincial authorities, he received a telegram, purporting to come from the officers of the Federation, but which had been sent out by the police, asking him to get off at Duncan, B. C. He did so and was at once placed under arrest by detectives who had been awaiting his arrival.

Monday, Aug. 18th, notice was issued that a meeting would be held in the Athletic Club, Nanaimo, for the purpose of considering a proposed agreement between the Vancouver and Nanaimo Coal Co. and the Union.

The ground floor of the Athletic Club is some fifteen to twenty feet below the level of the street on which the club faces. The rear entrance consists of a large double door. The front doors are situated on each side of the main entrance, it being necessary to descend a flight of steps in order to enter. The main body of the hall is not large, the spectators sitting in seats arranged in tiers on three sides of the room, the top tier being almost level with the front entrance.

The meeting convened at 7:30 p. m., some 1,200 men being pres-

ent. Shortly afterwards the hall was surrounded by troops under the command of Col. Hall. The troops were formed up in a hollow square facing the entrances to the hall. At the double doors at the rear of the hall was placed a machine gun. About 9 p. m. the Colonel sent in for the chairman of the meeting. On going outside the chairman was shown the means of destruction surrounding them, and told that the miners must commence leaving in two minutes, also that any man showing undue haste would be shot or bayoneted. The miners prepared to close their business and accede to this demand. The Colonel then said they could have one hour in which to finish their business. Later he desired to address the meeting, and on this being granted, said they could go ahead and finish their business, but that he was tired and was going to bed. Strong suspicion is entertained that the gallant gentleman had been gazing on the wine that was red.

While the meeting was in progress Alex Watchman, an executive officer of the B. C. F. of L., who was in Nanaimo in connection with the arrest of J. J. Taylor, went up to the Athletic Club in order to find some official of the miners. Upon nearing the club, he was met by the point of a bayonet in the hands of a 72nd Highlander, who told him to "Get to hell outa this; you would look pretty as a corpse." While he was reasoning with the soldier, a sergeant came up. He backed up the statement, adding: "There's likely to be some dancing around here and we will supply the music."

When the meeting had closed, the miners having voted to accept an agreement with the Van. & Nan. Coal Co., they were marched out in groups of ten, single file, in charge of special police, a guard of soldiers, with bayonets fixed, on either side, and marched to the courthouse. There each man was searched, his name taken, and if he was desired, placed in detention. The remainder were then marched out on to the ground at the front of the courthouse and kept there under guard. Forty-three were detained, the remainder being kept under guard until 2 a. m. before being allowed to disperse.

Nanaimo and the surrounding districts experienced an epidemic of military imbecility that is scarcely equalled in history. The floor of the Athletic Club was torn up in an effort to discover armories of rifles. Hardware stores were raided and their stock of sporting ammunition confiscated. Every store that was so raided was said to be for the purpose of frustrating the strikers. At Ladysmith a hardware store situated beneath the Union hall was raided and, to quote the daily press, a large secret store of ammunition was discovered. If to store ammunition behind a glass case in the centre of the store is to secrete the same, then of course it was a "secret store."

At Ladysmith the miners were not holding a huge meeting, therefore no spectacular arrest could be made. However, commencing about 1:30 a. m., Aug. 19th, the special police and militia went around to the houses of some of the strikers, woke them up and told them they were wanted at the police office. Here they were arrested. Among them was Sam Guthrie, President of the Union, and one of the greatest factors in the keeping of peace in Ladysmith.

The Daily Province of Vancouver, in reporting this occurrence, naively remarks. "At first it was planned to have the round-up occur simultaneously with that in Nanaimo, but this plan was abandoned for the method followed."

Amongst those arrested at Nanaimo was Mr. John Place, M. P. P.,

who was charged with being in possession of the gun taken from the policeman, Taylor.

The manner in which the accused miners were brought to and from the courthouse is aptly illustrated by the following excerpt from the News-Advertiser:

They were brought up in a body, under the escort of fifty special police, and a guard of soldiers with fixed bayonets.

Martial law had not been proclaimed, yet Russia was never more militarized than was Vancouver Island. Soldiers armed with rifles and bayonets searched the trains, looked under all the seats, (presumably for machine guns) and subjected all passengers to an inquisition as to their business, etc. All persons travelling to Nanaimo by boat, had to pass an examination at the hand of special police, reinforced by a file of soldiers. It was impossible to send telephone or telegraph messages out of the city without the military knowing the text of such messages. The following excerpt explains the origin of some of the stories which afterwards appeared in the press:

#### **Special to the News-Advertiser.**

Nanaimo, Aug. 20.—Indications point to the possibility of the extension of the power of the military authorities here over the telegraph and telephone lines leading out of Nanaimo and the strike-affected district.

Already the telephone headquarters here are under guard, and all messages, especially long distance ones, are overheard by a military representative.

The telegraph lines to a certain extent are supervised, military men being stationed at the railway station here to overlook all messages received or sent.

Now, so the rumor emanating from the military headquarters indicates, the next step will be the exercising of some measure of control over the messages sent out by the newspaper representatives.

Some members of the newspaper fraternity have had the suggestion made to them that they should first submit their press copy to headquarters, where it could be looked over before being sent.

In all, 179 miners were arrested and thrown into prison where they were held, bail being refused.

## **VI**

At the preliminary hearing in Nanaimo the visitors to the court were treated to the edifying spectacle of Magistrate Simpson retiring to the judges room in company with Prosecuting Attorney Shoebottom, any time he happened to be in doubt as to what course to pursue.

In the meantime the executive officers of the B. C. Federation of Labor, resident in Vancouver, made arrangements to hold a monster protest meeting in the Arena Rink on Thursday, Aug. 21. Owing to some misunderstanding the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council did not co-operate with those holding the meeting and as a result the meeting was not as successful as it might have been.

George Pettigrew, Executive Board member of the U.M.W. of A., was one of the speakers, and also Mr. Hodgkinson, a merchant from Nanaimo.

Mr. Hodgkinson was arrested on his return to Nanaimo because of his utterances at this meeting.

George Pettigrew was on his way to Sointula to pay the men who had quit work at the P. C. Coal Co.'s mine at Squash.

The Federation of Labor followed up the mass meeting by a ref-

erendum for a general strike of 48 hours. This was defeated in the Trades and Labor Council meeting, Mr. Frank Farrington denouncing the referendum and the protest meeting which had preceded it. He stated "that only fools who could not keep their mouths shut were in jail."

This was apparently taken by the police as an indication that the Union would not support the imprisoned men, and as George Pettigrew arrived in Nanaimo from Sointula on the Sunday night following the Trades and Labor Council meeting, he was at once arrested, although they had made no attempt to do so during the two weeks previous to Mr. Farrington's statement.

The U. M. W. of A. engaged the firm of Bird, Darling & Leighton, together with J. W. DeB. Farris of Killam & Farris, to defend the miners. Some of the people of Nanaimo knowing that these counsel were very busy, raised a "Miners' Defense Fund," to which Mrs. Fiddicks of South Wellington contributed \$2,000, for the purpose of hiring additional counsel. Mr. I. Rubinowitz of Vancouver was engaged.

The Vancouver-Nanaimo Coal Co., operating the Jingle Pot mine, having made an agreement with the Union, resumed operations. Towards the end of September, acting on the advice of their counsel, Messrs. Farris, Bird & Leighton, some of the miners elected to take speedy trial. The trial was to take place during October. Contrary to expectations, however, Judge Howay of New Westminster was brought over to try the cases.

Among those electing for speedy trial were Guthrie and J. J. Taylor. Just a day or so preceding the trial the counsel for the miners visited them and attempted to get them to plead "guilty." Guthrie opposed this, knowing that no mercy could be expected if they did so. It was intimated, however, that an arrangement had been made with the crown prosecutor whereby the offence would be dealt with as a technical one, and they would probably be at liberty in a short time. Guthrie finally agreed to plead as the remainder had decided to do.

Thirty-nine men were tried. The sentences ranged from two years down to nine months, the sentences below two years carrying additional penalties. Guthrie and Taylor were among those receiving two years.

Previous to delivering the sentences Judge Howay vilified the prisoners because they did not cringe before him. On his return to New Westminster he issued a statement to the press justifying himself, and which was calculated to influence the jury before whom the remainder of the prisoners would be tried, the venue having been changed to that place.

The first case tried at the assizes was that of Richard Goodwin, charged with assaulting a policeman at Cumberland on the night of July 19th. He was found guilty and sentenced to nine months' imprisonment.

While the jury was being picked for the next case, a reporter from the *World* said he had heard one of the jurors in the Goodwin trial express his intention of sending him to jail, even before the evidence for the defence had been submitted.

The jury was dismissed and the cases referred to a special assize. An organization was formed in Vancouver, known as the B. C.



Miners' Liberation League, and composed of the following organizations: B. C. Federation of Labor, Vancouver Trades and Labor Council, I. W. W., S. D. P. of Canada, S. P. of C., U. M. W. of A., and citizens of Vancouver, the object being to obtain the release of those who had already been sentenced and to prevent, if possible, the imposition of excessive sentences upon those yet to be tried.

A mass meeting was held in the Dominion Hall, Vancouver, on Nov. 10th, at which resolutions were passed demanding the release of the imprisoned miners. Similar meetings were held at Victoria, Edmonton and other places throughout the Dominion.

Following the meeting at the Dominion Hall, bail was allowed to the majority of the miners awaiting trial, though previous to this no bail would be granted.

Five men were still refused bail, amongst them being Joe Angelo, Italian organizer for the U. M. W. of A.

On Friday, Nov. 14th, Chris Pattinson, organizer for the U. M. W. of A., who had been sentenced to three months' imprisonment by Magistrate Simpson at Nanaimo, on a charge of vagrancy, it having been stated that he said "boo" to a special policeman, but had appealed against the same, came up for re-trial before Judge Barker at Nanaimo. The case was dismissed.

George Pettigrew had been held without bail for two months, during which period his wife had given birth to a child. On being tried he was sentenced to the time he had already spent in prison, and was therefore released.

The first cases at the assizes were those arising out of the alleged riots at Cumberland. The jury found them "not guilty."

The next case was that of Cowler et al, charged with assaulting the police, riotous assembly, etc., at Nanaimo on Aug. 12. The jury found them "not guilty."

The next trial was that of Isaac Portrey and others, charged with rioting at Ladysmith. During this trial the fact that thirty-nine men had pleaded guilty and been sentenced, for the same offence, was used against them. Judge Morrison, in summing up, denounced the Union, declared that the witnesses for the defense were perjurers, and, in effect, instructed the jury to find them guilty. Eleven out of fourteen were convicted. Sentence has not yet been passed upon them.

On Monday, Dec. 15th, commenced the trial of ten miners, including the president of the Local Union, on a charge of rioting, and destruction of property at South Wellington. This case is, at this date, Dec. 15th, in the hands of the jury.

Before summing up the principal events noted herein, I may say they are the result of personal enquiry and observation, both in the strike zone and elsewhere.

One item which I have forgotten to record before is in reference to the strikebreakers arrested for stabbing a miner in Ladysmith on Aug. 9. At the preliminary hearing of these men the man who had been stabbed was also arrested, the court holding that he must have commenced the assault. At the trial, which took place in Nanaimo, the learned judge dismissed the case.

In Cumberland, at the present time, the special police act as bank messengers for the Canadian Collieries (Duasmuir), Ltd., going down to the bank on paydays and drawing out the money, which they afterwards convey to the company's office.

## SUMMARY :

Sept., 1912—A miner named Mottishaw is discriminated against by the Canadian Collieries (Dunsmuir), Ltd., for carrying out the law as laid down in the Coal Mines Regulation Act.

Sept. 17, 1912—The miners at Cumberland are "locked out" by the company for taking a holiday in which to consider this matter.

Sept. 19, 1912—The same action is followed at the mines at Extension, owned by the same company.

Sept. 24, 1912—Special police are sent into the camps to force the Asiatics to resume work on the Company's terms.

Oct., 1912—More police are sent in, mainly to annoy and harass the strikers. Sept., 1912—Premier McBride, Minister of Mines, refuses to interfere, although the company is ignoring the Coal Mines Regulation Act.

Sept. 30, 1912—A communication to the Minister of Labor at Ottawa, asking "if there is any remedy," is practically ignored.

1913—A resolution introduced into the Provincial Legislature, asking that an enquiry be held in connection with the trouble is defeated.

May, 1913—Complaints from Cumberland, re actions of special police, are ignored.

May 3, 1913—Western Fuel Co. allowed to use courthouse, Nanaimo, for purpose of taking ballot on question of returning to work.

On Aug. 18th, while the Union is holding a meeting in order to ballot on a similar question, they are surrounded by troops, marched out of the hall in groups of ten, and subjected to considerable indignities.

On July 19th, sixteen strikebreakers went into Cumberland with the intention of causing trouble, none of them were arrested for so doing.

A number of strikers, however, were arrested as a result of this visit.

On Aug. 9th a striker, living in Ladysmith, was stabbed by one among a party of four strikebreakers, while proceeding home in company with a fellow miner, the police refusing to arrest the assailants until compelled to do so.

On the same date, in Nanaimo, officials of the Western Fuel Co. were going around endeavoring to secure strikebreakers.

At this time the militia in Vancouver and Victoria had received orders to hold themselves in readiness for service.

On the miners of Nanaimo notifying Attorney-General Bowser of their ability to preserve peace if he withdrew the special police, he replied by ordering out the militia.

The only persons arrested have been strikers and those who sympathised with them, although in almost every instance the trouble has been commenced either by strikebreakers or special police.

No strikebreakers have been seriously injured by any of the strikers, yet a striker, a mere boy, is charged with attempted murder. On the contrary no attempt has been made to arrest any of the strikebreakers for shooting Baxter.

The venue for the trials was changed to New Westminster and the jury chosen from among the ranchers of that district, men whose minds were first biased by the lying reports in the newspapers of Vancouver and the lower mainland, and secondly by the interview given to the press by Judge Howay.

This pamphlet has not been written as an apology for anything the strikers may have done. Even had they been guilty of all the crimes charged to them by a prostituted press still no apology would be offered.

The blame for all that has occurred on Vancouver Island rests upon the representatives of the master class, who are in power at Victoria and Ottawa, and in the last analysis, upon those members of the working class who gave them that power.

If this but enlightens the reader, ever so slightly, as to the real function of governments, and interests him to the extent of desiring to learn more about his position in human society, it will have served the purpose for which it was written.

The emancipation of the wage-slaves will not fall, like manna, from heaven. Nor yet will they be led into freedom, as into the promised land, by inspired leaders of mankind.

The workers will only be freed by those whose interest it is to do so—the workers themselves.