9-10 EDWARD VII, SESSIONAL PAPER NO. 36A, A 1910. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF LABOUR ON INDUSTRIAL CONDITIONS IN THE COAL FIELDS OF NOVA SCOTIA

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Trieste

REPORT

OF THE

DEPUTY MINISTER OF LABOUR

ON

INDUSTRIAL CONDITIONS

IN THE

COAL FIELDS OF NOVA SCOTIA

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1909

OTTAWA, September 25, 1909.

To the Honourable W. L. MACKENZIE KING, C.M.G.,
Minister of Labour,
Ottawa.

SIR,—I have the honour herewith to report the result of an inquiry into the condition of the coal mining industry of the province of Nova Scotia, with special reference to the differences now existing between the operators of the different collieries and their employees on the one hand, and among the employees themselves on the other.

I left Ottawa for the province of Nova Scotia, as directed, on Monday, August 30, returning on Sunday, September 19, having in the meantime visited every important centre of coal mining in Nova Scotia, and discussed the situation in its general bearings with the managers of all leading collieries, with leading representatives, in most cases, of the workmen affected, and with prominent citizens, not as a rule directly connected with any one of the parties to the present differences, in each of the thirteen cities and towns, including the capital of the province, most closely interested.

The differences to which the inquiry had reference had already culminated in three strikes in different parts of the province, and in friction at other points with appeared to threaten an extension of the area of actual difficulties. I have in the course of my investigation endeavoured to ascertain the underlying causes for this unfortunate condition of affairs.

Number and Output of Nova Scotia Coal Mines.

It may be desirable, before setting forth the details of the report, to indicate briefly the importance to Nova Scotia of the coal mining industry, the number of collieries, the number of employees and amount of output respectively of such collieries, and the close relation of the coal output to the revenue of Nova Scotia consequent on the royalty paid to the government of the province on the coal produced.

The producing coal mines of Nova Scotia, together with the number of workmen employed at each mine, and the output respectively for the year ended September 30, 1908, are stated in the annual report of the Department of Mines of Nova Scotia for the year 1908 to have been as follows:—

Company.	County.	Production.	No. of Employees.
Dominion Coal Co.	Cape Breton	3,816,958	5,486
Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Co.	"	662,350	1,792
Cumberland Railway and Coal Co.	Cumberland	416,132	1,726
Acadia Coal Co.	Pictou	413,782	1,090
Intercolonial Coal Co.	"	315,590	937
Maritime Coal Railway and Power Co., Chignecto	Cumberland	15,839	165
Maritime Coal Railway and Power Co., Joggins	"	51,130½	149
Inverness Railway and Coal Co.	Inverness	283,704⅓	568
Port Hood Coal Co.	"	99,700	216
Other Companies	Various	226,096	804
		6,299,262	12,933

The importance to Nova Scotia of the revenue derived by the provincial government from the coal industry is shown in the fact that whereas the whole revenue for the province for the year ending September 30, 1908, was $1,783,647, the amount received from the coal royalty was $616,933, or considerably over a third.

Coal Trade between Canada and the United States.

There is of course an intimate relation between Canada and the United States with respect to the coal trade. The coal supplies of Canada being found only at points in the extreme east and west, respectively, the United States product finds a safe market in the middle provinces of Canada, while it is able to compete with the Nova Scotia product as the latter reaches the limit of its Canadian market. The Nova Scotia operator finds some compensation in New England for the loss of his domestic market. The following shows where the coal of Nova Scotia was marketed during the year ending September 30, 1908:—

	Tons.
Nova Scotia	1,950,631¾
New Brunswick	510,330½
Quebec	2,047,638½
United States	499,634¼
Elsewhere	477,353¾
Total	5,485,588¾

It will be seen, therefore, that Quebec or the competitive portion of the domestic market consumes about one-third of the Nova Scotia product, while the Nova Scotia coal exported to the United States is less than ten per cent of the product, and for the year named, was less than half a million tons.

The United States product, on the other hand, was marketed in Canada during the year ended June 30, 1909, to the extent of *11,711,961 tons, of which 6,710,933 tons represented bituminous coal and 1,139,233 tons bituminous slack or dust, the remainder being anthracite and coke.

The Canadian duty on bituminous coal is 63 cents per ton, and on bituminous dust or slack and on charcoal 14 cents per ton. There is no duty imposed by Canada on anthracite or coke.

The Unted States duty on coal for many years prior to 1894 was 75 cents a ton, under which the export from Nova Scotia, after fluctuating violently between 254,750 tons in 1873, and one-half, one-third, and one-fourth that figure in the few succeeding years, was almost wiped out in 1892 and 1893 when the amount sent to the United States was respectively 13,833 tons and 16,099 tons. In 1894, the duty was made 40 cents, and so remained for three years, during which there was a marked increase in export. In 1897 the United States tariff imposed a duty of 67 cents on coal, and this remained unchanged until a few weeks ago, when a reduction was made to 45 cents. The figures of the coal export from Nova Scotia to the United States under the 67-cent tariff were as follows:—

* See Canadian Mining Journal, August 1, 1909.

	Tons.
1897	106,279
1898	98,027
1899	153,188
1900	624,273
1901	590,086
1902	751,382
1903	968,832
1904	713,170
1905	652,538
1906	769,775
1907	616,312
1908	499,634

It will be observed that the export reached its highest point in the year 1903, the increase of that year being obviously due to the strike prevailing in the United States collieries during the late months of 1902 and the early portion of 1903. Similarly, the marked falling off during last year is no doubt to be attributed to the decreased demand due to the business depression then existing in the United States, and which caused a falling off also in United States coal production to the extent of 70,000,000 tons. In spite of this decreased production the United States operators produced more than the demand, and a slump in prices followed, which was felt in Canada to some extent, and is no doubt responsible for the decline in production during the first half of the present year as compared with the corresponding period of last year in the output of the six largest mines of Nova Scotia, as shown in the following statement:—

January 1 to June 30, 1908	2,481,594 tons
" " 1909	1,994,673 "
Decrease, 1909	486,821 "

——	1908.	1909.	1909, Decrease.
	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.
Dominion Coal Co.	1,570,258	1,209,991	360,267
Inverness Ry. and Coal Co.	128,291	97,487	30,804
Cumberland Ry. and Coal Co.	198,279	178,316	19,963
N. S. Steel and Coal Co	287,595	274,556	13,039
Acadian Coal Co.	162,618	124,199	38,419
Intercolonial Coal Co.	134,523	110,124	24,399
Totals	2,481,594	1,994,673	486,921

Decrease, 1909, under 1908 = 19·66 per cent of production.

Finally, so far as this aspect of the case is concerned, the following statement giving the total coal production of Canada by provinces, from 1904 to 1908, will show the relative importance of the coal mining industry in the different producing districts of the Dominion:—

COAL PRODUCTION in Alberta, British Columbia and Nova Scotia for the five years 1904-8.

Year.	Alberta, short tons 2,000 lbs.	British Columbia, short tons 2,000 lbs.	Nova Scotia, short tons 2,000 lbs.	Total tons of 2,000 lbs.	Percentage of Increase Canadian Coal Production.
1904	728,931	1,862,625	5,596,241	8,187,797	
1905	811,228	1,945,452	5,646,583	8,403,263	2·63 p.c. inc. over 1904
1906	1,385,000	1,955,000	5,840,000	9,180,000	9·24 p.c. " 1905
1907	1,834,745	2,365,000	6,354,000	10,553,745	14·96 p.c. " 1906
1908	1,845,000	2,362,000	6,540,000	10,747,000	1·83 p.c. " 1907
Totals	6,604,904	10,490,077	29,976,824	47,071,805	

Alberta increase 1908 over 1904 ..... 1,116,069 tons or 153 p.c. increase.
British Columbia increase 1908 over 1904 ..... 499,375 tons or 26·8 p.c. "
Nova Scotia increase 1908 over 1904 ..... 943,759 tons or 16·8 p.c. "

Labour Situation in Nova Scotia Coal Mines.

It was understood when the present inquiry was instituted that the existing difficulties in the labour situation in the coal mines of the province arose mainly from the struggle between two rival labour organizations over the enrolment of the employees and the question of recognition by the employing companies. The organizations are, respectively, the Provincial Workman's Association of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, a body incorporated under the laws of the province of Nova Scotia, and the United Mine Workers of America, an unincorporated body having its membership chiefly in the United States where also are situate its headquarters.

The Provincial Workmen's Association of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick was organized in the year 1878, and from that date until the beginning of the present dissension was practically the only trade union known among the miners of the province. The organization, which was incorporated under the laws of Nova Scotia in 1881, is controlled by a Grand Council, and its chief office is the Grand Secretaryship, a salaried position, which has been for the last eleven years occupied by Mr. John Moffatt, Dominion, C.B. The majority of the miners have, as a rule, belonged to the Provincial Workman's Association, but its membership has fluctuated as the demand for organization appeared to be pressing or otherwise. It has been the practice in most cases for the operating companies to give formal recognition to the different unions of the Provincial Workman's Association, that is to say, to accept a committee representing the union as entitled to speak on behalf of the employees, and frequently, to make agreements with such bodies. In addition, several of the employing companies have made it a practice to collect the dues of the Provincial Workmen's Association; that is to say, on the written request, as a rule, of a particular employee the company will deduct from the wages of the employee the dues payable to the order; and as a matter of convenience in such cases, the custom has grown up whereby the company has made such collection from a list furnished by the Grand Secretary, the necessary changes being made regularly. The method of collecting dues is usually termed the 'check-off,' and, apart from what is known as the 'closed shop,' is perhaps the largest measure of recognition that is sought by unions or conceded by employers.

The effect of the system is of course to make the employer a party to building up the union, the regular deduction of dues in the way described tending to prevent delinquencies and generally to keep the organization compact. The point is one which has figured somewhat prominently in the present difficulties. Coal mining companies were specially empowered under the Nova Scotia law to make these collections, though not all companies have assumed the responsibility. There are, of course, other dues similarly collected, for hospital, doctor, &c., and in some cases, where the men ask, for church. The collection of union dues is understood to be a practice confined to the coal mining industry.

The United Mine Workers of America is an unincorporated body, comprising in its ranks the majority, probably, of the workers in the bituminous and anthracite mines of the United States. By many of the bituminous operators, the organization has received a recognition similar to that granted the Provincial Workmen's association by the Canadian operators; in the case of the anthracite operators, however, such recognition has been definitely refused. The body claims a membership fluctuating from three to four hundred thousand, not falling below the former figure. The order is governed by an executive board, termed 'international,' whose business is conducted from Indianapolis, Ind. The various local unions are grouped into districts which are given numbers and each district is entitled to a representative on the executive. The coal miners of eastern British Columbia and Alberta, for instance, have been during the last few years organized as local unions of the United Mine Workers of America and constitute District No. 18 of the order, with district president and secretary on salary, and a representative on the executive. The president of the organization for many years was Mr. John Mitchell, who became widely known during the great coal miners' strike in the United States in 1902, and on that and other occasions took high rank as a labour leader. Mr. Mitchell was a year ago succeeded in the presidency by Mr. Thomas L. Lewis, of Bridgeport, Ohio, a native of Wales. Mr. E. S. McCullough, of Bay City, Michigan, is vice-president of the order.

United Mine Workers of America Organizers in Canada.

Within the last year or two, the United Mine Workers of America began to organize local unions in Nova Scotia, the membership of which would necessarily be taken largely from the Provincial Workmen's Association, and it was from this movement that developed the friction now existing among those concerned in the industry. The following statement as to the local unions claimed by the rival organizations at the date of my inquiry will show the measure of success attained by the newcomer and the power of resistance exerted by that already in the field.

Provincial Workmen's Association Locals.

LODGE.	SECRETARY.	ADDRESS.
Ladysmith	Jos. Cubby	Westville, Pictou Co.
Buller	Isaac Fukes	Stellarton, Pictou Co.
Hastings	Wm. King	Port Hastings, Inverness Co.
Seaside	Jas. McLellan	Port Hood, Inverness Co.
Star	W. S. Walker	Inverness, Inverness Co.
Drummond	Arthur Davis	Sydney Mines, C.B.