

**REPORT OF ROYAL COMMISSION APPOINTED TO INVESTIGATE
UNREST IN THE MINING INDUSTRY IN THE COBALT DISTRICT**

THE Minister of Labour received on September 25 the report of a Royal Commission which had been appointed by Order in Council on August 28 to inquire into existing unrest in the mining industry in the Cobalt district and to make investigation "concerning relations between employers and employees in the said industry, with a view to making such recommendations as in their opinion may serve to promote amicable relations between employers and employees and may be calculated to remove or lessen the friction now existing." The report of the Commission was signed by His Honour Emerson Coatsworth, chairman, Junior Judge of the County of York, and Mr. E. T. Corhill, of Copper Cliff, Ont., who had been appointed on behalf of the employing interests. The majority report was accompanied by a minority report from

Mr. Joseph Gibb of Toronto, Ont., who had been appointed on behalf of the employees.

The labour unrest in the Cobalt mining district has apparently existed since the early part of the present year and in the month of June an application was received by the Minister of Labour from the officers of Cobalt Miners' Union of the Western Federation of Miners for the establishment of a Board of Conciliation and Investigation under the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act to deal with a demand on the mine workers' part for increased wage rates and the improvement of their conditions of employment. The application purported to be made on behalf of approximately 2,200 mine workers in the employ of 42 different mining companies. Reference to this application was made in the July and September issues of the *Labour Gazette*. Under the provisions of the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act it was impossible for the Minister to establish a single Board to deal with matters affecting 42 different companies without the consent of the employing as well as of the employed interests concerned. The employers' consent to this course was not given and under these circumstances the Board application was not proceeded with, the Royal Commission of Inquiry being, however, instead instituted under the provisions of the Inquiries Act. The terms of the Order in Council relative to the appointment of this Royal Commission will be found in the September issue of the *Labour Gazette*.

Causes of Unrest

The Royal Commission held in all 15 sittings in the town of Cobalt and one sitting in the town of Halleybury from August 31 onwards. Seventy-nine witnesses were produced and examined on behalf of the employees and eight witnesses on behalf of the mine owners and

that the men's grievances were limited to two, namely: a demand for increased wages and a demand that the employers should recognize and confer with a committee appointed by the men. The claim for increased wages was urged very strongly by the employees' witnesses and just as strongly resisted by the mine managers. An increase of 25 cents per day had been granted by the mining companies on May 1, 1916, to all of their underground workers and also to some of the surface workers, representing in all probably three-fourths of the total employees, numbering in the neighbourhood of 2,800 men. A bonus was also given at this time of another 25 cents per day to all employees when the price of silver should be 70 cents or upwards per ounce. The commissioners in their report have concluded that they are not prepared at the present time to recommend an increase in wage rates but expressed the view that the bonus should be based on silver at 65 cents an ounce instead of 70 cents "as this will more fully meet what the mine managers intended in the way of advantage to the employees."

On the question of recognition of the workmen's committee, the Royal Commission found that the employing interests had disregarded a request which had been made to them for a meeting in the month of May last as they had considered that such a meeting would constitute a recognition of the Western Federation of Miners which they desired to avoid. The commissioners expressed the opinion "that in view of the fact that the committee in question consists entirely of local men, miners and mine workers, it would have been in the interests of all parties concerned to have conferred with the men as to the possibility of making any change in the rate of wages."

Mr. Gibb's Minority Report

Mr. Joseph Gibb, in his minority report, expressed the view that both the employers and the employees should have received an impartial

The following is a list of the names of the witnesses who were produced and examined on behalf of the employees and the mine owners and managers. The commissioners found

cents per day on account of the large increase which has taken place in the cost of living. With respect to the bonus, Mr. Gibbons pointed out that the men only received this bonus for one month when the price of silver fell below 70 cents. Judge Coatsworth and Mr. Corkill had recommended in their majority report that the bonus should be paid when silver is at 65 cents or over. Mr. Gibbons contends, however, in his report that the wage of the employee necessary for his maintenance should not be dependent upon the fluctuating price of any product, especially when that product has no bearing on the cost of living.

Text of Majority Report

The text of the report of Judge Coatsworth and Mr. E. T. Corkill in this matter is as follows:

To the Hon. T. W. Crothers, K.C., M.P.,
Minister of Labour,
Ottawa.

Report of Royal Commission consisting of Emerson Coatsworth, Junior Judge of the County Court of the County of York, in the Province of Ontario; Edward Thomas Corkill, of Copper Cliff, in the said province, Esquire, Safety Officer of the Canadian Copper Company, and Joseph Gibbons, Esquire, of the said City of Toronto, Business Agent for the Amalgamated Street and Electric Railway Employees of America, appointed to investigate the unrest in the mining industry at Cobalt, in the Province of Ontario, and the nature and causes thereof, the appointment of the said commissioners being dated the twenty-eighth day of August, A.D. 1916.

Meetings.

Your commissioners immediately upon their appointment arranged to meet in the Town Hall at Cobalt, Ontario, at 2 o'clock p.m. on the thirty-first day of August, 1916, and held 15 sittings

in the Town of Cobalt, and one sitting in the Town of Haileybury. Generally speaking, the meetings were held at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., but on one occasion, in order to accommodate some of the witnesses, an evening sitting was held. At the first meeting held as above stated on the thirty-first day of August, Messrs. Davidson, Joyce and Gorman appeared as representatives for the employees of the mines. No person appearing on behalf of the employers, to represent them, your commissioners ordered that a notice be sent to each of the mine managers, between 35 and 40 in number, notifying them of the dates and hours of meetings, and inviting them to attend and hear the case presented on behalf of the men and to give such evidence as they thought fit in reply, and a further notice to all persons concerned was inserted by advertisement in the "Cobalt Daily Nugget" on the second, fifth, sixth and seventh days of September, notifying any person interested to attend the meetings and give evidence, or take such other part as they might see fit. No person, however, appeared for or on behalf of the employers or Mine Owners' Association until the seventh September, when Mr. Bateman, the general manager of the La Rose Mine, appeared and gave his evidence, and on the following day, by appointment, a number of the mine managers came forward and testified for your commissioners, giving their statements as to the right of the employees to have their demands recognized.

Grievances and Evidence.

There were in all 79 witnesses produced and examined on behalf of the employees and eight witnesses produced and examined on behalf of the mine owners and managers in reply.

With regard to the grievances of the men, they were limited to two; one, a demand for increased wages; two, a demand that the employers recognize and confer with a committee appointed by the men.

Your commissioners are very pleased to be able to report that so far as all other conditions of working in the mine are concerned the miners were united in expressing their satisfaction, and except for the two matters above specified, no complaints whatever were made, though one or two matters of small importance were brought forward by individuals, not affecting the miners generally.

As to the two matters brought forward on behalf of the miners, it is desirable to deal with them separately, giving the report of the investigation together with the evidence taken before the commissioners, and their opinion thereon.

Claim for Increased Wages.

The matter of increased wages was urged very strongly by all the witnesses brought before your commissioners on behalf of the employees, and just as strongly resisted by the mine managers. The agitation for increased wages began in the early part of the present year, 1916, and was based, as the employees claim, on the increased cost of living. The agitation began probably in March or April, 1916. The Local Union, called the Cobalt Miners' Union, No. 146, took the matter up and held several meetings. On the first day of May, 1916, the managers anticipated any action by granting an increase of 25 cents a day to all underground workers, and also some of the surface workers, representing in all probably three-quarters of the total employees, who would number in the neighbourhood of 2,800 men, and also giving a bonus of another 25 cents a day to all the employees when the price of silver should be 70 cents or upwards per ounce. The complaint of the men with regard to this was that the direct increase of 25 cents a day should be extended to the whole of the employees, because the lower paid men were the most needy, and it was they who did not receive the increase, and

also so far as the bonus was concerned, that the price of silver, on which it was based, was so high, that they have only since received the bonus for one or two months, and consequently, it has proved of trifling advantage to them. Very much evidence was brought forward by and on behalf of the men to prove the increased cost of living, particularly within the last two or three years, some complaining that the increase was as high as 30 per cent or 40 per cent and others running from 20 per cent to 30 per cent. The employers in their answer to this part of the claim of the employees admitted the increase in the cost of living, but claimed that from figures gathered by them from the reports of the Labour Department the increased cost of living for the last two or three years was only about 10 per cent, and this was adequately met by the increase made in wages and the bonus above mentioned. It will, therefore, be seen that the fact of the increased cost of living was not in dispute between the employers and the employees, but only the percentage of increase, and your commissioners are bound to say that the evidence adduced on both sides was very strong on behalf of the employees to show the increase up to 30 per cent, and of the employers keeping it down to about 10 per cent, and it is somewhat difficult in view of the conflicting evidence, to determine exactly what the percentage of the increased cost of living may be. The mine managers also claimed that the conditions under which they are operating and the prospects for the future are such as did not justify them in granting any further increase in wages.

Your commissioners, upon reviewing the whole of the evidence and the statements made to them, and weighing the same carefully, and having in mind all the conditions bearing upon the claim for increased wages, have concluded that they are not prepared at the present time to recommend an increase in the rate of wages, but they confirm what the mine managers have already done,

including the bonus to the employee, but in their opinion the bonus should be based on silver at 65 cents an ounce instead of silver at 70 cents an ounce, as this will more fully meet what the mine managers intended in the way of advantage to the employees.

Recognition of Committee

The other grievance laid before your commissioners was that the mine managers refused to pay any attention to or hold a conference with the committee appointed for the purpose of interviewing them in regard to the matter of wages. The recent history of this matter is as follows: In the month of April the Local Union of Miners, which then consisted of between 400 and 500 miners and has gone up since the agitation to about 1,500 members, held several meetings to consider the question of the rate of wages and to take some steps to have them increased, and after holding two or three meetings on or about the fourteenth May, they called an open meeting in the Grand Theatre for all mine employees for the purpose of discussing the matter, and at this meeting there were present between 700 and 800 miners and other employees of the mines, and the matter of the demand for increased wages was fully and freely discussed, and a committee appointed to meet with and interview the mine managers, or the Mine Managers' Association, with a view to bringing about some satisfactory arrangement with regard to wages, and at this meeting the following were appointed as the committee: Joseph Gorman, Secretary of Local Union, chairman; Wesley Morrison, carpenter; Patrick Redmond, Assistant Secretary Local Union; J. M. Gillis, pipe-fitter; Lyman McFadden, blacksmith's helper, and James Wilson, mill-worker. A few days after the appointment of this committee, the following notification was sent to Mr. Robert Livermore, the President of the Mine Managers' Association, and also to each

Cobalt Miners' Union, No. 146,
of the
Western Federation of Miners.

Cobalt, May 22, 1916.

Mr. Robert Livermore,
Manager, Kerr Lake Mining Company,
Cobalt.

Dear Sir,—

On behalf of the members of Cobalt Miners' Union, No. 146, W.F.M., we are writing you to request a conference at the earliest convenience between the Mine Managers' Association and a committee of the Miners' Union, to discuss and if possible to arrange an increase of wages for underground and surface men in this camp. We are writing you as President and Mr. Thompson as Secretary of the Mine Managers' Association. Hoping for an early reply, we are,

Yours truly,

(Sgd.) JOSEPH GORMAN,
Cobalt Miners' Union, No. 146, W.F.M.

Generally speaking, there was no answer made by any of the 35 or 40 mine managers, but two replies were received stating that the managers declined to have anything whatever to do with the Union. The matter remained in this position until your commissioners were appointed. When the employers came before your commissioners and were asked why they objected to a conference with the above committee, they stated their reason to be that they regarded this committee as a committee of the Western Federation of Miners, and that they objected to having anything to do with that Federation. They stated distinctly and positively that they had no objection whatever to meeting with their own men, and that in their judgment it was a perfectly proper thing for the miners and mine workers to organize, and their sole objection to meeting was as above stated, that they considered such a meeting would be a recognition

of the Western Federation of Miners, and this they desired to avoid. It should be pointed out that there was at this juncture evidently some misunderstanding because the committee above mentioned consisted of local miners and mine workers, and was apparently just such a committee as the mine managers were prepared to meet, and there was evidently misunderstanding of the nature and scope of this committee.

Your commissioners are, therefore, of the opinion that in view of the fact that the committee in question consists entirely of local men, miners and mine-workers, it would have been in the interest of all parties concerned to have conferred with the men as to the possibility of making any change in the rate of wages.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

(Sgd.) E. COATSWORTH,
Chairman.

(Sgd.) E. T. CORKHILL.

Toronto, September 12, 1916.

Text of Minority Report

The text of the minority report of Mr. Joseph Gibbons in this matter is as follows:

To the Hon. Thomas W. Crothers,
Minister of Labour,
Ottawa, Ont.

I herewith submit to you my report as a member of the Royal Commission appointed to investigate the grievances of the mines in Cobalt district. I differ materially with my colleagues as you will perceive, and submit a minority report.

I am in accord with the report made

by the majority of the commissioners, His Honour Judge Coatsworth and E. T. C. Corkhill, Esq., as far as page 8, and ending with the words: "their opinion thereon." I am not in accord with their findings as expressed under the caption, claims for increased wages. I submit in place thereof the following:

The employees, both underground and surface, should have received an increase of 50 cents per day, owing to the large increase that has taken place in the cost of living since their present rate of wages established, and the fact that the large increase in the price of silver would have enabled the mine owners to have paid the increase and still have a larger profit than at former prices.

The employees claim that the cost of living has increased 30 to 40 per cent since their present standard of wages was fixed, and in support of their claim presented a cost of living for family of five, and also brought forward a number of the leading merchants of Cobalt, who submitted invoices in some cases as far back as 1908 (the time that the present rate of wages was established). A few comparisons might be interesting to the public: Beef, 1914, \$11 per hundred, now \$17 per hundred; pork, 1914, \$12 per hundred, now \$18. Canned and cured meats increased in proportion. Cheese, 1914, 14½ cents per pound, now 21 cents; butter, 28 cents, now 38 cents; lard, 13 cents, now 18 cents; sugar, 1914, \$4.50 per hundred, now \$7.85; flour, 1913, \$2.82, now \$4.20; beans, \$1.95 per bushel, now \$5.00; potatoes, \$1.00; now \$2.25. Invoices were also submitted showing that furniture, carpets, oil-cloths, etc., had increased 25 per cent; boots and shoes, 25 per cent, and woollens 40 per cent.

The mine managers admitted an increase, but contended the increase was only 10 per cent, citing figures from the *Labour Gazette* as their authority, and claimed that the 25 cents per day granted covered this increase.

I desire to point out here that the 25 cents per day increase was not given to the surface men, who are the low paid men, and consequently the most in need of the increase, as it takes as much to maintain the family of the man who works overground as it does to maintain the family of the man who works underground, and overground men are just as necessary for the carrying on of the work as the underground men.

The fact that the mine owners paid a

bonus of 25 cents per day to all men in addition to the 25 cents per day, making an increase of 50 cents for underground employees, demonstrates the fact that the 50 cents per day increase was a just request. The bonus was paid when silver was 70 cents per ounce or over. The men only received the bonus for one month when silver went below the 70 cent mark. The majority report recommends that the bonus be paid when silver is 65 cents or over. I contend that the wages of the employee necessary for his maintenance should not be dependent upon the fluctuating price of any product, especially when that product has no bearing on the cost of living.

(Sgd.) JOSEPH GIBBONS.