

# The Miners and the Mediator:

## The 1906 Lethbridge Strike and Mackenzie King

William M. Baker

"THE MINERS OF THE Northwest will not have MacKenzie King at any price. . . ." On 8 November 1906, Frank Sherman, president of District 18 of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), sent a telegram containing the above to the Canadian Minister of Labour in response to an offer of his Department for conciliation of labour disputes in the coal mines of the west.<sup>1</sup> Less than a month later Sherman wrote privately to King himself to express admiration and appreciation for the latter's successful mediation efforts in the Lethbridge strike.<sup>2</sup> What had caused such a change in attitude? Four potential answers emerge: 1) King had mesmerized and hoodwinked Sherman; 2) Sherman had been "bought off" or had rolled over and played dead; 3) Sherman was attempting to influence or manipulate King through the use of flattery; and 4) King's services had been of real value to the union and the strikers. The argument which follows, based on a detailed examination of the role King played in the settlement of the Lethbridge strike, is that the last is the most appropriate answer.

Before proceeding to the strike itself it is necessary to point out that when King participated in specific industrial disputes he did not view his role as that of an agent of either capital or labour. Nor was he an "impartial umpire" interested merely in bringing management and workers together to work out a settlement themselves. Rather, he was an active participant, with concepts, positions, and goals which differed from either labour or capital. It was not, however, a case of "whatever Willie wants Willie gets." The process was really that of tri-partite negotiation. As was the case with the other principals involved, King could be pressured and influenced. Thus if, for example, King acted in a manner which won the approval of labour spokesmen, perhaps it was because they had forced him to act that way. King was not the only actor on the stage, even though the significant primary sources available on most disputes which he mediated were generated by King himself. If one is attentive to the sources one can see the perspectives and tactics of both labour and capital emerge. While the discussion which follows could hardly ignore management

<sup>1</sup> Public Archives of Canada (henceforth PAC), MG26, J, William Lyon Mackenzie King Papers, part 1, vol. 5, 5066, Sherman to Rodolphe Lemieux, telegram, 8 November 1906.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, part 1, vol. 6, 5440, Sherman to King, 3 December 1906.

and its involvement with King and union spokesmen, it will concentrate on the relationship between and impact upon the mediator on the one hand and Lethbridge miners and their representatives on the other.<sup>3</sup>

The strike of Lethbridge coal miners had originated in March 1906, in the refusal of management to accept a proposed contract presented by the newly organized local 574 in District 18 of the UMWA.<sup>4</sup> The union demanded equity with other union coal miners in the Crownsnest Pass, including increased wages, reduced hours, a grievance procedure, and union recognition.<sup>5</sup> While events proved that the Alberta Railway and Irrigation Company (AR&I), operator of the coal mine at Lethbridge (popularly called the Galt mine after the founder, Sir Alexander Tilloch Galt, and his son and Company president, Elliott Torrance Galt) was not completely intransigent about bread and butter issues, it was totally adamant in its attitude to dealing with an organized body of men, a position well rooted in the past policy of the Company.<sup>6</sup> Its manage-

<sup>3</sup> On King's relations with labour see Paul Craven's impressive *An Impartial Umpire: Industrial Relations and the Canadian State 1900-1911* (Toronto 1980). Many of the works cited in M. Grant, "William Lyon Mackenzie King: A Bibliography," *Mackenzie King: Widening the Debate*, ed. J. English and J.O. Stubbs (Toronto 1977), 221-53, are also useful on the subject. A few of the relevant recently published items are: J.E. Esbrey, *Knight of the Holy Spirit: A Study of William Lyon Mackenzie King* (Toronto 1980); J.H. Tuck, "Union Authority, Corporate Obstinacy and the Grand Trunk Strike of 1910," *Historical Papers* (1976), 175-92; J. Sangster, "The 1907 Bell Telephone Strike: Organizing Women Workers," *Labour Le Travailleur* (Henceforth *L.L.T.*), 3 (1978), 109-30; R. Whitaker, "The Liberal Corporatist Ideas of Mackenzie King," *L.L.T.*, 2 (1977), 137-69; P. Craven, "King and Context: A Reply to Whitaker," *L.L.T.*, 4 (1979), 165-86.

<sup>4</sup> *Labour Gazette*, 6 (March 1906), 998; S.A.B. Crabb to Editor, 3 August 1906, in *Lethbridge Herald*, 9 August 1906 (same letter appeared in *United Mine Workers' Journal* [Indianapolis], 9 August 1906); and Report of F.A. Acland, 2 and 3 December to *Toronto Globe* and reprinted in *Herald*, 20 December, (hereafter cited as Acland Report). The most useful secondary sources on the strike are: A.A. den Otter, *Civilizing the West: The Galts and the Development of Western Canada* (Edmonton 1982), 282-304; Craven, *Impartial Umpire*, 264-9; S.M. Jamieson, *Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, 1900-66* (Ottawa 1968), 127-8; C.J. McMillan, "Trade Unionism in District 18, 1900-1925: A Case Study," unpublished MBA thesis, University of Alberta, 1969, 49-57; and T.L. McLeod, "The Lethbridge Miners' Strike (1906)," University of Lethbridge, 1975. "Report of Deputy Minister," W.L.M. King to R. Lemieux, 8 December (hereafter cited as King Report), printed in *Labour Gazette*, 7 (December 1906), 649-62, is a useful introduction to the strike and King's involvement in it. Some of the correspondence cited in the footnotes to follow are printed in whole or in part in the King Report.

<sup>5</sup> *Herald*, 1 March; and *Labour Gazette*, 6 (April 1906), 1153-4.

<sup>6</sup> Naismith to D. McNab, *et al.*, 28 July, printed in Crabb to Editor, *Herald*, 9 August 1906; King Papers, part 4, vol. 13, file 80, C9065-118, "Confidential Memorandum Re Lethbridge Strike" (hereafter cited as King Memo.), C9111; Acland Report; Glenbow Alberta Archives, R.B. Deane Papers, "Labour Troubles — A Lock-Out of Miners"; and den Otter, *Civilizing the West*, 280-2.

ment — A.M. Nanton of Winnipeg, the managing director, and P.L. Naismith, general manager, being the two key figures — simply refused to negotiate and proceeded to discharge employees who had joined the union. As a result, more than 500 miners walked out on 8 March without providing the Company with official notice of their intent to strike.

For the next eight months the Company and the union carried on a test of strength. Management re-opened the mine with non-union workers in late May, by October had over 200 men at work<sup>7</sup> and was expecting to obtain an ample supply of labour once work on prairie harvest gangs ceased to be available.<sup>8</sup> Aside from planning to hire and train green hands the Company undoubtedly hoped that it would be able to employ a growing number of experienced miners whether new men or discouraged strikers. Apparently, the Company's managers expected the strike to fizzle and the union to be defeated.

But if the strikers had been unable to bring the AR&I to its knees, neither had they been completely unsuccessful. Very few strikers had gone back to work, many incoming strikebreakers had been discouraged from working the Galt mine, and while many single miners had left the city a solid core of perhaps 300 strikers remained. So the strike had not been broken. Indeed, because many of the non-union miners working were inexperienced, production at the Galt mine probably never exceeded one-fifth of optimal output under normal conditions.<sup>9</sup>

It seems likely that the Company would have prevailed in the long run had the dispute dragged on. That both sides seemed to have realized this may be inferred from the strikers' willingness to agree to, even initiate, various conciliation and arbitration proposals in the spring and summer, and management's absolute refusal to become involved.<sup>10</sup> The strategy of management was upset, however, by a growing public crisis. By September and October coal dealers and residents of the prairies, particularly in Saskatchewan, began to realize that home heating fuel was scarce.<sup>11</sup> By early November the situation was sufficiently ominous for Saskatchewan to send its Commissioner of Agriculture, W.R. Motherwell, to Lethbridge, hoping to bring the disputants

<sup>7</sup> *Labour Gazette*, 7 (November 1906), 557; King Report in *Labour Gazette*, 7 (December 1906), 650; King Memo., C9079; Acland Report; and PAC, RG27, Department of Labour Records, vol. 69, file 222 (7), (2 vols.), "Conciliation. Coal Miners at Lethbridge, Alta. Fuel Shortage 1906" (hereafter cited as Leth. Concil. File), Motherwell Memo. in W. Scott to Lemieux 13 November 1906.

<sup>8</sup> Leth. Concil. File, memo. signed by F.W.G. (F.W. Giddens was secretary to the Deputy Minister of Labour), 6 October 1906; and AR&I Co. circular, 25 September 1906, signed by Nanton and Naismith, printed in *Herald*, 11 October 1906.

<sup>9</sup> King Report in *Labour Gazette*, 7 (December 1906), 650. Production at the Galt mine dropped from 241,000 tons in 1905 to 100,000 tons in 1906 (PAC, RG87, Mineral Resources Branch Records, vol. 5, no. 36, parts 1 and 2).

<sup>10</sup> Crabb to Editor, in *Herald*, 9 August 1906.

<sup>11</sup> See for example, *Labour Gazette*, 7 (October 1906), 438-9 and (November 1906), 557-9. In spite of the Lethbridge strike and other briefer strikes and lockouts in the Crowsnest Pass it was not a simple matter of less coal being produced. In fact, Alberta

together.<sup>12</sup> With the failure of his efforts, tremendous public pressure built up demanding that the federal government intervene.<sup>13</sup> Ottawa proved willing to act not only in order to preclude the possibility of suffering but also because, as Motherwell pointed out, if prospective settlers "learn that it is impossible to get fuel to meet the strenuous winters of Saskatchewan, immigration will get a black eye."<sup>14</sup>

On 9 November the Minister of Labour, Rodolphe Lemieux, decided to send his Deputy Minister, W.L.M. King, out west as soon as King returned

---

coal production showed a significant increase in 1906 over 1905. (Statistics in Alberta, Department of Public Works, *Annual Report, 1906*, 75; and in J.C. Hopkins, ed. *The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs, 1907* [Toronto 1908], 196, put the increase for Alberta at 71 per cent. *The Canada Year Book, 1911*, 419, and the *Report of the Royal Commission on Coal, 1946*, 68, as cited in McMillan, "District 18," 198, estimate the Alberta increase for 1906 at the more modest figures of 34 per cent and 49 per cent respectively.) Rather, the problem was a complex one involving insufficient production of domestic coal for settlers whose stoves were equipped for Galt coal (see Leth. Concil. File, Scott to Lemieux, 5 November 1906), transportation difficulties (see, for example, Acland Report; and Provincial Archives of Alberta, Alberta Royal Commission on the Coal Mining Industry, 1906, Minutes of Evidence, 193-4), and an enormous increase in the population of Alberta and Saskatchewan. It is impossible to be precise about the size of this increase but some indication is provided in the fact that the number of homestead entries between January and October, 1906, was in the range of 38,000 compared to 29,000 entries for the same period in 1905 (*Annual Report of the Department of the Interior . . . 1905-06, Canada, Sessional Papers, 1906-07*, no. 25, xxiii; and *Report of the Dept. of Interior . . . July 1, 1906, to March 31, 1907, Canada, Sessional Papers, 1907-08*, no. 25, xxviii). The increase in the Alberta population probably contributed to the fuel scarcity in Saskatchewan for the increased size of the home market for Alberta coal undoubtedly absorbed more than its share of the increased coal production simply because of its proximity. The final factor to be kept in mind is that, as a chapter of Wallace Stegner's *Wolf Willow* (New York 1966) testifies, the winter of 1906-07 was very severe.

<sup>12</sup> *Herald*, 1 and 8 November 1906; *Labour Gazette*, 7 (December 1906), 648, and 7 (March 1907), 993; and Leth. Concil. File, Motherwell Memo. in Scott to Lemieux, 13 November 1906. The Leth. Concil. File contains much material related to the scarcity of domestic fuel in Saskatchewan including copies of the responses to Motherwell's circular asking community leaders to inform him about fuel supplies in their localities. These responses were used as the basis of tables published in King Report in *Labour Gazette*, 7 (December 1906), 652-4. A summary of relief efforts for Saskatchewan was published in *Labour Gazette*, 7 (March 1907), 992-6.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, "Coal User" to Editor, n.d., in *Herald*, 1 November 1906; Leth. Concil. File, J. Weir to G.E. McCraney, 27 October 1906, enclosed in McCraney to Lemieux, 29 October 1906, "G.R.B." of the Nor'west Farmer, Ltd., to Lemieux, 29 October 1906, Walter Scott to Lemieux, 5 November 1906, and A. Westman to Minister of Agriculture, 17 November 1906.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in *Herald*, 8 November 1906. Indeed, before the month was out British newspapers were carrying reports about a fuel famine on the prairies (see PAC, RG76, Immigration Branch Records, vol. 416, file 602204, "Fuel Famine in the North West, 1906-08").

from Britain.<sup>15</sup> Intervention was not based on a desire to resolve an industrial dispute *per se*. Rather it stemmed from inconvenience or hardship caused to the public by the dispute. And so the point of government intervention was to improve the productivity of the Galt mine as rapidly as possible. One cannot overstress the fact that the Department of Labour and its Deputy Minister did make the crucial assumption that the most effective means to this end was to get management and strikers to resolve their differences. But it is also very evident that King's purposes differed significantly from those of either the strikers or management. While he would not be uninterested in the terms of an agreement, working out the terms would be the mechanism to achieve a goal, whereas for the strikers and management they were the crucial issue themselves. Thus, while King could pressure management and union by using the public crisis argument and pointing out the deleterious results to either of them if they were unyielding about terms, it was also possible for management and union separately to tell King, in effect, that if he wished to achieve his goal of ending the strike then he had better ensure good terms in the proposed agreement.

Neither capital nor labour was enamoured by the prospect of Ottawa's intervention. Under pressure from the Saskatchewan government Lemieux had offered in October the "friendly offices" of the Department under the Conciliation Act of 1900, a law which allowed for government conciliation of labour difficulties provided that both disputants agreed to this external involvement.<sup>16</sup> Nanton, on behalf of the Company, was blasé but concluded with the statement that they "of course would always be glad of your good offices."<sup>17</sup> The Company was not so independent of the government that it could afford to reject this proposal outright, thereby possibly offending Ottawa, as it had done to initiatives emanating from other sources. A day later, however, Nanton dropped in to the Department office and indicated that unless Mackenzie King, with whom he was acquainted, were available to act as conciliator he thought that the Department should not intervene because anyone else was likely to "aggravate" the situation.<sup>18</sup> King was not available. He was, of course, in Britain. The strikers' response was guarded. They first wanted to know if the Company was amenable to conciliation because "any further overtures on the part of the men would be humiliating in view of the fact that they have previ-

<sup>15</sup> Leth. Concil. File, Lemieux to Scott, 9 November 1906. On King's mission to Britain see R.M. Dawson, *William Lyon Mackenzie King: A Political Biography, 1874-1923* (Toronto 1958), 149-50; and W.L.M. King, *Industry and Humanity: A Study of the Principles Underlying Industrial Reconstruction* (Toronto 1918), 503-5.

<sup>16</sup> Leth. Concil. File, Scott to A.B. Aylesworth, telegram, 2 October 1906; Aylesworth to Lemieux, 3 October 1906; Lemieux to Scott, 4 October 1906; Lemieux to B.G. Hamilton and to Naismith, telegrams, 4 October 1906. For a brief description of the Conciliation Act see H.D. Woods, *Labour Policy in Canada* (2nd ed., Toronto 1973), 50-2. The Act itself is reprinted in *Revised Statutes of Canada, 1906*, II, 1743-51.

<sup>17</sup> Leth. Concil. File, Nanton to Lemieux, telegram, 5 October 1906.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, memo, signed by F.W.G., 6 October 1906.

ously offered conciliation, arbitration, etc.; and have met with flat refusal at all points."<sup>19</sup> Quite clearly, though, local 574 did not refuse government intervention; its representatives simply wanted to confirm that the Company was agreeable to it before committing themselves. As the Company backed away from conciliation, the first attempt of the Department of Labour to intervene in the dispute failed. A second offer by the Department was met with Sherman's harshly worded telegram quoted above. Union officials were suspicious of King because of his involvement in previous mining disputes such as one in Nanaimo in 1905.<sup>20</sup> Yet Sherman's incautious assertion not only was in sharp contrast to the tenor of the earlier response of local 574 to the Department of Labour but also was disproved by events.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, under the terms of the 1900 Conciliation Act, the Department could only appoint King as conciliator pending the acceptance of his "good offices" by both sides; failing that his instructions were to make an investigation "and report fully upon the matter for such further action on the part of the Government as the circumstances appeared to warrant."<sup>22</sup>

King wasted no time in acquainting himself with the problem upon his return from Britain.<sup>23</sup> Saskatchewan's Premier Scott, who was in Ottawa at the time, constantly reminded the Department of Labour of the urgency of the situation and told King "that if necessary he would have to send in men protected by Police to work the mines at Lethbridge rather than let the people freeze to death in their homes." King knew immediately that such a comment would be extremely useful to him in attempting to mediate the strike and requested Scott to write a letter specifying his intention.<sup>24</sup> Scott agreed. His letter was severely threatening to the strikers, not to the AR&I, because sending in strikebreakers was intended "to enable *the Company* to put the Mine into

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, S.A.B. Crabb to Lemieux, 11 October 1906. See also *ibid.*, Lemieux to Crabb, 17 October 1906.

<sup>20</sup> On the Nanaimo dispute see Craven, *Impartial Umpire*, 253-64; Jamieson, *Times of Trouble*, 122-3; and *Report of the Department of Labour for Year Ended June 30, 1906, Canada, Sessional Paper, 1906-07*, no. 36, 33-42.

<sup>21</sup> Since Sherman himself ignored the earlier position of the strikers it is hardly surprising that the Department of Labour's assessment of the 11 October response of Lethbridge strikers was rather misleading. On 9 November, Lemieux claimed that the strikers had "indicated an unwillingness to accept the Department's intervention." (See Leth. Concil. File, Lemieux to Scott, 9 November 1906). Such an assertion was really a misrepresentation of the strikers' position.

<sup>22</sup> *Labour Gazette*, 7 (December 1906), 649.

<sup>23</sup> He even had Giddens, his secretary, meet him half way between Montreal and Ottawa on 13 November so that he could look over the Department's correspondence concerning the strike (King Memo., C9065).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, C9065-7. See also Leth. Concil. File, Scott to Lemieux, 13 November 1906 (with Motherwell's Memorandum on his mission to Lethbridge enclosed), and Motherwell to Aylesworth, Minister of Labour [sic], 13 November; and *Labour Gazette*, 7 (December 1906), 648-9.

full operation. . . ."<sup>25</sup> Scott's letter gave King a club with which he could beat the union into submission.

Prior to leaving Ottawa King drafted two letters offering the Department's services one final time.<sup>26</sup> The letters provide an indication of King's orientation to the disputing parties at the outset of his mediation effort. The message to Nanton ignored the managing director's earlier about-face on Departmental intervention, merely stating that the Company "has already expressed its willingness to accept the good offices of the Department. . . ."<sup>27</sup> In contrast, the letter to Sherman "was conciliatory in tone," King claimed, "but of such a nature as to decidedly weaken the case of the Union before the Public, if they did not help along a settlement."<sup>28</sup> In so doing King's draft boldly stated that local 574 had shown an unwillingness to have the Department intervene. No explanation of the perfectly reasonable reticence of the strikers to accept the offer of conciliation was provided.<sup>29</sup> In the attempt to have both parties accept the Deputy Minister as mediator it was a case of a carrot for management and a stick for the union.

King's first stop on his trip to Lethbridge was at Minneapolis where he consulted John Mitchell, the president of the UMWA, who was attending a meeting of the American Federation of Labor.<sup>30</sup> King's visit was intended to smooth relations with the union. He considered that whatever the faults of the UMWA it was infinitely preferable to more radical miners' unions such as the

<sup>25</sup> My italics. Leth. Concil. File, Scott to King, 16 November 1906. Scott's position was really quite astounding when one considers that he was threatening to send strike-breakers into a neighbouring province and was expecting to receive the protection of the federal police force. The *Labour Gazette's* report [7 (March 1907), 993] on the relief of the Saskatchewan fuel shortage indicates that after the failure of Motherwell's mission to Lethbridge the province realized that it "had no right to interfere except by way of conciliatory measures," and therefore appealed to the federal Department of Labour. By late November Scott was demanding that the Ottawa government take control of the Galt mine unless the dispute were settled immediately (PAC, MG26, G, Sir Wilfrid Laurier Papers, vol. 435, 116142-3, Scott to Laurier, telegram, 28 November 1906). One must conclude that Scott's threat of mid-November was largely bluff.

<sup>26</sup> Though signed by Lemieux the letters were written by King (see *ibid.*, C9068).

<sup>27</sup> Leth. Concil. File, Lemieux to Nanton, 16 November 1906.

<sup>28</sup> King Memo., C9068.

<sup>29</sup> Leth. Concil. File, Lemieux to Sherman, 16 November 1906. A good statement of local 574's position concerning Departmental intervention in October is located in Leth. Concil. File, Crabb to King, 19 November 1906.

<sup>30</sup> On Mitchell see E. Gluck, *John Mitchell* (New York 1927); M. Coleman, *Men and Coal* (New York 1969), 67-74 and 76-80; and J.O. Morris, "The Acquisitive Spirit of John Mitchell, UMW President (1899-1908)," *Labor History*, 20 (1979), 5-43. See also Mitchell's lengthy and interesting book, *Organized Labor: Its Problems, Purposes and Ideals and The Present and Future of American Wage Earners* (Philadelphia 1903). The John Mitchell Papers are housed in the Catholic University of America Library in Washington and have been microfilmed by the Microfilming Corporation of America. The Guide to the microfilm edition contains a useful biographical sketch.

Western Federation of Miners.<sup>31</sup> In any case his supposedly unofficial and secretive talks with Mitchell were quite fruitful.<sup>32</sup> He first attempted, with apparent success, to assuage the concerns and overcome the suspicions of the UMWA leadership which stemmed from King's involvement in the Nanaimo lockout of 1905.<sup>33</sup> Secondly, he read Scott's letter and pointed out, as he had always intended, the probable consequences for the UMWA if the Saskatchewan government felt compelled to send in strikebreakers: not only would the union be defeated in Lethbridge but also the resultant public hostility might kill the entire organization in Canada. King then asked Mitchell if he insisted on a closed shop in the Lethbridge mine. Mitchell said he did not unless the Company "refused the men the right to have an organization," in which case "he would feel it necessary to look after every single man. . . ." Moreover, Mitchell mentioned to King that a few years earlier:

. . . President Roosevelt had threatened . . . to send in men to work the coal mines in Pennsylvania, at a rate of wages which would be regarded as fair. Mitchell thought that perhaps I could insist on the same conditions prevailing in case of it being necessary for the Saskatchewan Government to send in men.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, Mitchell informed King that, presumably to facilitate discussions in Lethbridge, he would send along Joseph Sharp, a member of the International Board of the UMWA and already acquainted with the Lethbridge situation.<sup>35</sup>

Thus began the negotiation process between King and the union in regard to the Lethbridge strike. On first glance it may appear that Mitchell had given up the game without a fight and with nothing to show for it. Under heavy pressure

<sup>31</sup> Craven, *Impartial Umpire*, 252-3.

<sup>32</sup> King informed Mitchell that he had come "on my own responsibility without authority or instructions from the Government" (King Memo., C9070). This was quite misleading for King had discussed with Lemieux his proposal to see Mitchell and the Minister had given King a free hand to do what he thought best (*ibid.*, C9066). Mitchell *et al.* agreed to keep quiet about King's visit (*ibid.*, C9073).

<sup>33</sup> According to King, Thomas Burke, one of Mitchell's lieutenants, thought that the Department had refused to intervene at Nanaimo when the men asked for it but had become involved when the Company wanted the Department to save it from defeat. King explained the terms of the Conciliation Act to him but the UMWA belief is interesting and may explain Sherman's telegram of 9 November. Sherman may have thought that the offer of Departmental intervention was a repeat of what was believed to have been the situation in regard to Nanaimo a year earlier. On King's relations with Mitchell in the aftermath of the Nanaimo lockout see King Papers, part 1, vol. 4, 4067-79, King to Mitchell, 6 and 13 November, 1905, Mitchell to King, 9 and 16 November, 1905; and part 13, G1926, diary entry, 6 November, 1905.

<sup>34</sup> On the 1902 Pennsylvania strike see R.J. Cornell, *The Anthracite Coal Strike of 1902* (Washington 1957).

<sup>35</sup> King Memo., C9070-3. Mitchell had been authorized by the UMWA executive in August to use his judgment about sending a representative to Lethbridge (Mitchell Papers, Minutes of the [Inter]national Executive Board, 2 August 1906, on reel 41 of the microfilm edition of the Mitchell Papers). As a result, Sharp visited Lethbridge in September (*Herald*, 6 September 1906). For Mitchell's views on the closed shop issue see Mitchell, *Organized Labor*, 272-85.



from King, Mitchell had waived the closed shop and had even acquiesced in the possibility of Saskatchewan sending in strikebreakers. Certainly Mitchell had to recognize the weight of the club King carried; it was a formidable weapon. As leader of a union which had only recently made organizational gains in Canada, he had to be careful not to jeopardize the overall effort and future of the union for the sake of a single battle in the ongoing industrial struggle. Even so, was it a clearcut case of caving in? In the first place, one must note that it was King who was forced to come to Mitchell rather than vice versa. Secondly, in not insisting on the closed shop, Mitchell was not violating UMWA practice. The UMWA naturally preferred the closed shop and was becoming more militant about the matter, but in numerous instances had settled for less. Nowhere in District 18 was there a closed shop union mine, nor had this been directly demanded by local 574. What Mitchell did demand was the right of miners to belong to the union, a not insignificant term given the practice of AR&I management to fire union men and its desire to exclude the union. Thirdly, Mitchell's suggestion in the event of Saskatchewan sending in men was rather subtle. A "fair" rate of wages being insisted upon might increase management's incentive to negotiate with the strikers, for if capital had to raise wages in any case, perhaps it would be better to deal with its old workers, a known factor, rather than bringing in strangers whose mining ability would be unknown. Fourthly, Mitchell took the precaution of sending Sharp to Lethbridge. Undoubtedly he was expected to get as much as he could for the strikers, to protect union interests, and to be in a position to provide an account of proceedings. Finally, Mitchell had shown a willingness to cooperate with King, or at least give him another chance. Such a posture may have been designed to "win over" the mediator but in any case probably reduced King's antagonism to the UMWA.

King's second stop, *en route* to Lethbridge, was in Winnipeg to see Nanton. King began the discussion, which he wished "to be regarded as largely private and personal," by explaining to Nanton that he had been to see Mitchell "in view of the strong prejudice" the union had against him, as exemplified by Sherman's anti-King telegram, and in light of his expectation that the ultimate disposal of the dispute would depend on Mitchell and the International Board. Having implied to Nanton that he was closer to the Company than to the UMWA by divulging this information,<sup>36</sup> King proceeded to talk about his plan for settling the strike: "... I believed a settlement making conditions in Lethbridge mines the same as in other coal mines throughout the district; regard being had to differences in the nature of the mine and cost of living, etc., would be fair."

<sup>36</sup> Before leaving Ottawa King had attempted to inform Nanton of his intended visit to Mitchell by wiring that he would be stopping in Minneapolis for a few hours (Leth. Concil. File, King to Nanton, telegram, 19 November 1906). "I thought he would read between the lines," King noted, "and know that I had gone to see Mitchell and I thought it was advisable to let him into this fact confidentially. . . ." (King Memo., C9060). confidentially. . . ." (King Memo., C9060).

With this position Nanton could hardly disagree. But King's attitude on union organization — namely that men had a right to belong to an organization if they wished but that they had no right to force a company to employ only union men — was unpalatable to Nanton, although King felt that Nanton recognized "the unfairness" of his opposition to union organization of any sort. Nor could Nanton have been pleased with King's views on Scott's threat of the 15th to send in strikebreakers. King felt that such action would be "quite proper" for the Government of Saskatchewan if the strikers took some "unreasonable attitude" which prevented a settlement. But if conditions at Lethbridge were "less favourable" to the men than at competing pits, then bringing strikebreakers in with government protection under those circumstances would place other companies at a "relative disadvantage." King's position had obviously been influenced by Mitchell's suggestion, but it is a measure of his skill as a negotiator that in front of Nanton King stressed equity among employers rather than substandard conditions of employees. For his part Nanton "was very strong in not being willing to concede any points" and insisted on there being plenty of men who would mine except that they were being intimidated. King dismissed the probability of intimidation: "I told him I thought there was a good deal of humbug about the intimidation business, that to a degree it was talked about with a view of prejudicing the minds of the Public against the men."<sup>37</sup> Thus, from the perspective of the strikers, King had done four things in his discussion with Nanton which would have met with their approval: rejection of the intimidation claim; insistence on the right of union membership; rejection of the importation of strikebreakers unless the strikers were unreasonable; and insistence on conditions comparable to other miners in the region.

At Winnipeg King was joined by Frederick A. Acland, the western editorial representative for the *Toronto Globe* resident in Winnipeg, whom King had chosen as an assistant or witness.<sup>38</sup> At Moose Jaw King was also joined, as pre-arranged, by Joseph Sharp of the UMWA.<sup>39</sup> Sharp admitted to King over dinner that the UMWA would not press too vigorously the proposition of a daily minimum rate of three dollars for underground workers, whether company men (e.g. timbermen, track layers, drivers, pumpmen) paid by the hour or contract miners paid by the ton but unable to earn three dollars per shift because of

<sup>37</sup> King Memo., C9074-6.

<sup>38</sup> See *ibid.*, C9068, 69, 70, 74 and 76. On 1 March 1907, Acland became secretary at the Department of Labour (*Report of the Department of Labour . . . July 1, 1906, to March 31, 1907, . . .* 10). Acland had been in Lethbridge during the summer and had reported, briefly but in tones unsympathetic to the strikers, about the strike situation. (See Report of F.A. Acland to the *Toronto Globe*, reprinted in *Herald*, 16 August 1906.)

<sup>39</sup> King had also asked Scott to meet with him in Regina but neither the Saskatchewan premier nor any of his ministers were in the city (Leth. Concil. file, King to Scott, telegrams, 20 and 21 November 1906; and F.G. Robertson to King, telegram, 21 November 1906).

abnormal conditions in their working places. Nor would he insist on the controversial demand that coal obtained by contract miners be weighed before being screened.<sup>40</sup> Sharp evidently received nothing in return for these concessions and it is difficult to comprehend why he made them. Perhaps King simply failed to mention any *quid pro quo* gained by Sharp (although it's difficult to imagine what this might have been); perhaps Sharp was simply incautiously confiding in King; perhaps Sharp was building up a debt which he hoped to collect later; perhaps he was attempting to develop good will. In any case, King told him that a closed shop would be impossible and that even getting the Company to sign an agreement with the UMWA would be very difficult.<sup>41</sup>

King arrived in Lethbridge on the morning of Thursday, 22 November. Although his mediation actually began several days earlier, his activities as conciliator officially commenced that day when Donald McNab and Samuel Crabb, president and secretary-treasurer of local 574, agreed to allow him to act. There is no doubt that the Deputy Minister was a skilled mediator. Through various techniques — a capacity to use sympathy, flattery, and encouragement on some occasions, insults, coldness, and virtual bludgeoning on others; a nice combination of patience and impatience; a sense of when to divulge or withhold information; an idea of when to refuse to accept no for an answer; and skill with language, particularly when new clauses or different phrasing had to be written — King demonstrated considerable ability to push and pull the disputing parties into line. During the first few days in Lethbridge he shunted back and forth between the two parties, taking their pulse and measure.

King's discussions with the Company took place primarily with Naismith, the general manager, and with William D. Hardie, the mine superintendent. Nanton, the ultimate determinant of Company policy, had been forced to change his plans to come to Lethbridge and had gone instead to the bedside of his dying mother in Ottawa.<sup>42</sup> In their initial dealings with King, Naismith and Hardie conceded that the Company would allow employees to belong to the union, that it had no objection to a check-weighman because this was already a provision of the new Alberta Coal Mines' Act, and that the strikers remained the main source of efficient miners available.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, Naismith refused to consider the check-off system for union dues and at best was hesitant about signing an agreement with the union. A tour of the premises of the mine

<sup>40</sup> King should have known that the UMWA would give way on the minimum wage for Motherwell had already discovered and reported this (Leth. Concil. File, Motherwell Memo. in Scott to Lemieux, 13 November 1906). On the differences between company men and contract miners see D.J. Bercuson, ed. *Alberta's Coal Industry, 1919* (Calgary 1978), ix. A brief but excellent description of work in the Galt mine is provided in den Oter, *Civilizing the West*, 266-70.

<sup>41</sup> King Memo., C9077.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, C9082; Leth. Concil. File, King to Nanton and Nanton to King, telegrams, 21 November; and King Report in *Labour Gazette*, 7 (December 1906), 651.

<sup>43</sup> *Statutes of Alberta*, 6 Ed. VII, 1906, c. 25, sec. 33.

convinced King that "there did not appear to be any ground" to substantiate the Company's persistent claim of intimidation by strikers. While King's conclusion was essentially correct, it was based more on assumption than upon adequate investigation and conveniently ignored various violent incidents earlier in the strike. In any case, steps towards a settlement were being made, the Company's changed position on union membership being the most important. King suspected that this shift was result of his Winnipeg conversation with Nanton, but in any case he was determined to emphasize it "in talks with the men as a great point which had been gained in their favor."<sup>44</sup>

This was true but did not prevent the union representatives from pressing for more. Sharp demanded something just shy of the closed shop — namely, "that the Company should first of all agree to allow the men to belong to the Union; that they would then try to get as many of the non-union men as possible into the Union and failing in this they should be at liberty to strike or to refuse to work with the non-union men." This was sophisticated bargaining. It was as far as Sharp could go without violating Mitchell's commitment to King that the UMWA would not insist upon the closed shop. But King would not accept the position, even terming it a closed shop. He told the union negotiators that failure to come to a settlement under the emergency situation existing in Saskatchewan because the strikers would not work with non-union men would result in great public hostility to the UMWA and perhaps in legislation against it. He also told Sharp in front of the others that Mitchell himself had not insisted on all the men being union members. King thought he had forced Sharp to back down but it does not appear that Sharp had ever demanded that all men belong to the union. In any case Sharp retreated part way. He agreed that his members could work with non-union men currently employed in the mine but demanded protection for union members "against discrimination in favor of the scabs." Clearly union spokesmen were fighting for the security of union members and were pressuring, or negotiating with, the mediator to obtain the best possible deal.<sup>45</sup>

In his discussions with the other principals, King had stressed the gravity of the situation. On Friday, 23 November, receipt of two strongly worded letters from Saskatchewan officials<sup>46</sup> gave King the impetus or excuse to suggest an immediate resumption of work by the strikers with mediation to follow and ultimate arbitration of unresolved problems.<sup>47</sup> The *modus operandi* proposed

<sup>44</sup> King Memo., C9078-80. The Lethbridge C.O. of the Mounted Police had been instructed to give King access to Police records and to provide information and assistance if requested. King does not seem to have taken much advantage of the opportunity. See *ibid.*, C9068; and PAC, RG18, Royal Canadian Mounted Police Records, A1, vol. 316, file 238-06. "Lethbridge — coal miners strike at — 1906." F. White to A.B. Perry, 17 November 1906, and Perry to White, 26 November 1906.

<sup>45</sup> King Memo., C9080-1.

<sup>46</sup> Leth. Concil. File, Motherwell to Aylesworth, 15 November 1906; and A.P. Ketchen to King, 19 November 1906.

<sup>47</sup> King Memo., C9082-3; Leth. Concil. File, King to the representatives of the late

by King recommended that the Company employ as many of the strikers as it could, that the men work under the old terms, but that new terms, particularly the financial ones, to be negotiated or awarded by arbitration, be applied retroactive to the time the miner began work again. The former recommendation implied that not all employees who had gone on strike back in March would be rehired. There simply were not enough positions since the over 200 new men hired by the Company were to retain their jobs. Although this was not likely to create a problem because many of the miners who had struck in March had left Lethbridge, the principle of retaining scabs before the others was an important one. King's proposal also provided little protection for the strikers against prejudice by management, once the union miners were back on the job.

In presenting his proposal to the union representatives, which now included Frank "not-King-at-any-price" Sherman, John R. Galvin, respectively president and vice-president of District 18, and Peter Patterson, chief UMWA organizer in the district and International Board member, King argued that moderation would be the union's best policy. He urged them to be very careful in their response to his letter and "assured them that any insistence upon a closed shop would give the Company a weapon to be used against them, which would justify the Government in sending in men to assist the Company as the Public would never stand for a refusal of allowing the Company to employ non-union men." But Sharp did not tuck his tail between his legs. He proclaimed "that they would not submit to arbitration the right of the men to belong to a Union or to refuse to work with non-union men." King retorted that the union had agreed to arbitrate everything, referring to an offer of local 574 to the Company back in July.<sup>48</sup> Sharp responded that the union was no longer bound by a four-month old proposal that the Company had rejected. This exchange forced King to become more accommodating. He suggested that the spokesmen for the strikers might refuse to arbitrate the right of the men to belong to the union and might insist on a clause preventing discrimination by the Company against union men. This was an interesting proposal since, as King pointed out, "if the Company did discriminate in favor of the non-union men that this would be a breach of the agreement . . . [and therefore] would be justification for the men refusing to work with the non-union men." The ultimate response of the strikers' committee made three demands: 1) that the Company agree to negotiate, to try to draw up a settlement "similar to prevailing agreements in this coal field," and to submit issues that could not be resolved in negotiations to an arbitration board; 2) that strikers "be given

---

employees of the Alberta Railway and Irrigation Company at present on strike, and to the representatives of the Alberta Railway and Irrigation Company, 23 November 1906. The *Herald* had made such a suggestion the day before (see *Herald*, 22 November 1906), but King often adopted this tactic when mediating disputes.

<sup>48</sup> McNab *et al.* to Nanton and Naismith, 21 July 1906, printed in Crabb to Editor, 3 August 1906, in *Herald*, 9 August 1906.

preference in employment before strangers"; and 3) that the employers "waive their objection to their employees belonging to the United Mine Workers of America."<sup>49</sup> Probably because the committee wished to avoid any mention of non-union miners, the reply did not include Sharp's demand for protection against discrimination. King was pleased with the response and praised the men for avoiding confrontation on the issue of the closed shop. He was sure that they wanted the closed shop "but they are unwilling to take the closed shop attitude publicly."<sup>50</sup>

Although different in kind, Naismith's response to King's proposal for an interim arrangement also was promising. Naismith was disposed to seek a settlement. Since the public crisis made it a practical impossibility for the Company to continue its former course of refusing negotiation or arbitration, it seemed preferable to Naismith to work out an understanding before the men returned to work, or at least "that it should be known what points were to be arbitrated," rather than adopting the *modus operandi*. Naismith became convinced of this when King informed the general manager that the union would probably be willing to yield on the method of weighing coal, on the minimum wage for miners taken to do company work, and on the check-off system, all of which union representatives had conceded in previous discussions with King.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, the following day King examined a variety of suggested and actual agreements which the union had turned over to him and, armed with this information, he informed Naismith "that probably all the points to which he had taken exception . . . would be eliminated either in whole or in part." Naismith remained concerned about possible intimidation of his new workers by union miners, but once again King downplayed the issue. He also pointed out that the Company would have to allow the UMWA to represent the strikers in negotiations. This may have been logical and necessary, it may have been assumed by union leaders, it may even have been a commitment made by King to the union, but it had not been recorded as a specific item of agreement between King and the union.

Most likely it was primarily a reflection of King's view of the most efficient way to conduct negotiations with the striking workers. He did acknowledge that he could summon a gathering and attempt to deal with the strikers directly, but perhaps remembering that such a proceeding had been part of the fiasco in Nanaimo which had so alienated the UMWA, he asserted to Naismith the foolishness of this approach by pointedly repeating the general manager's claim that "most of the good miners who did not wish to strike had left the camp altogether and that the men who were here were in the hands of the few." In any case, after a delay caused by the necessity of Naismith consulting with Nanton, the Company gave its formal response to King's proposed *modus*

<sup>49</sup> Leth. Concil. File, Sherman *et al.* to King, 23 November 1906.

<sup>50</sup> King Memo., C9082-3 and C9086.

<sup>51</sup> The reasons for management's concerns about the method of weighing coal are presented in Alberta Coal Commission, 1907, Evidence, 43 and 83-5.

*operandi* at 3 p.m. on Sunday, 25 November. Before turning the letter over, however, Naismith read it to King and on the latter's advice deleted two passages which, at the least, would have been irritants to the union.<sup>52</sup> What was left in the letter, aside from justification of the Company's actions, was an offer to discuss a wage increase "with any persons you see fit to call in as representing the men."<sup>53</sup> Naismith made it clear that he was prepared to discuss only a very limited range of issues. In view of the subjects raised by the strike and by King's letter, Naismith's written answer was very incomplete. King learned, for example, that the Company refused to accept the crucial stage of arbitration in King's proposed *modus operandi*.<sup>54</sup> As well, Naismith rejected the idea of a signed contract with the union and insisted on the right of employees not to belong to the union. On the other hand, King discovered that Naismith was prepared to allow the men to belong to the UMWA (or any other organization); to give preference to the strikers over new applicants for jobs; to guarantee no discrimination of any kind; and, of course, to accept a checkweighman. King thought that if the wage increase were large enough to bring Lethbridge to the standard of the district, a settlement could be arranged, for even though wages had not been the focus of attention for a long time, they were a crucial issue. King commented to Naismith that he considered the Company's position "fair speaking off hand" and that "in view of the way in which the strike had been brought on . . . I did not think that the men could press any further recognition of their organization."<sup>55</sup>

King's use of the two responses to his letter of 23 November was most interesting. Both answers had outlined certain propositions and demands. But King operated on the basis of Naismith's position, not on the union's or a combination of both. Once Naismith had responded, the union's letter was apparently forgotten, there being no indication that King even informed Naismith of the complete answer of the strikers, let alone attempted to press the Company on arbitration. Moreover, King had shown no reticence to whittle down the strikers' demands to essential items. Nevertheless, most of the concerns the union had expressed in its response to King's letter had been met, and with the prospect of not only finally negotiating with the Company but also

<sup>52</sup> According to King's account, one passage complained that the strike had been brought on "by persons not residing within one hundred miles of Fernie [sic — means Lethbridge]." The other was a final sentence proclaiming that the Company would make no further concessions than those mentioned in the letter and that "its policy in regard to the Union would remain unchanged." Although these passages were erased, "it was understood that if negotiations fell through he might later put the Company on record on these points in some way."

<sup>53</sup> Leth. Concil. File, Naismith to King, 25 November 1906.

<sup>54</sup> King Report in *Labour Gazette*, 7 (December 1906), 656.

<sup>55</sup> King Memo., C9083-7 and 90-2. For King's thinking about the illegitimacy of the declaration of the strike, particularly about giving due notice, see *ibid.*, C9077, 91 and 109. The Company had not been concerned about receiving notice in March and had

being promised a wage increase, the strikers' committee was anxious to proceed. Consequently, King arranged a conference which began at 9:45 on the same evening.

The first item raised at the negotiating session was the subject of the union.<sup>56</sup> Naismith was expecting this; he pulled out of his desk a statement which was to be included in the agreement:

There shall be no discrimination against any employee by reason of his being or not being a member of any organization, but all employees of the Company, whether members of any organization or not, shall be upon an equality in the Company's employment. . . . Any employee of the Company interfering with or discriminating against any other employee by reason of such other employee being or not being members of any organization, shall be liable to dismissal.

As King put it, "this clause was like a red rag to a bull." The strikers' representatives were obviously suspicious about Naismith's preparedness and were sure that the clause had an ulterior purpose. As if this were not bad enough, Naismith "then undertook to close the discussion on the point by saying that he understood that it was to be confined to the subject of his letter." Once again the men reacted strongly, Sherman and Patterson both asserting that everything should be open for discussion. King stated that he had already informed the committee of the restricted nature of the session. King and the union representatives, however, had missed the point.

Naismith himself had raised the issue by producing the clause in the first place. Thus the threat of Naismith to end discussion of the matter was absurd. Equally, King's acquiescence in Naismith's effort to institute closure was ill-considered and unfair to the union. Perhaps Naismith felt he had established his authority sufficiently, however, for he "allowed" discussion to proceed. In his explanation of the clause Naismith attempted to pacify the men. In particular he stated "that any argument or attempt to convince a man that it was in his interest to join the United Mine Workers was not discrimination. . . ." King thought that the men were opposed because they would agree to nothing "which provided any security to non-union men." On these grounds King went on record as viewing Naismith's clause as "perfectly reasonable." King evidently had no sympathy with the union's unspoken concern that every one of Naismith's comments about the clause could be reversed and used to the detri-

---

known full well that a strike was imminent (see Mounted Police Records, A1, vol. 316, file 238-06, J.O. Wilson to Perry, 1 March 1906). By the autumn, however, the Company was complaining about not having received warning (see AR&I Co. circular, 25 September 1906, signed by Nanton and Naismith, printed in *Herald*, 11 October 1906; and King Memo., C9078). Neither International nor District 18 constitutions required that strike notice be given (see *Constitution of National Union United Mine Workers of America, Revision 1901* in Mitchell Papers, reel 42; and *Constitution . . . District No. 18, UMW of A . . . 1905* located in Provincial Archives of British Columbia).  
<sup>56</sup> Unless otherwise noted, quotations and factual information about the conference come from King Memo., C9092-8 and C9114-8.



ment of the union. The previous statement about "persuasion," for example, could be turned around to provide sanction for the Company to convince a miner to abandon the union.

King may not have realized an important fact — that is, that the positions of management and strikers were determined by a recent Fernie strike. As Naismith later informed King, the management view of the Fernie strike was that there had been a verbal agreement against discrimination between union and non-union miners, but "the men had subsequently repudiated such an understanding when it suited them and that this was responsible for the recent strike." On the other hand, union representatives complained that the management at Fernie had been encouraging miners to drop their union membership during the course of a contract.<sup>57</sup> Consequently, while the UMWA refused to accept the clause, Naismith refused to omit it. As a result, the non-discrimination clause became a major stumbling block to settlement of the Lethbridge dispute. Union negotiators were not about to accept the clause easily or merely because the mediation considered it "reasonable."

Recognizing the futility of further discussion of this matter, King suggested they proceed to other subjects. However, the men immediately raised another problem related to the role of the union. They wondered whether management would be willing to meet a committee "for the settlement of grievances." Naismith's response was affirmative except that the members of the committee would have to be mine employees, i.e. no *outside* union representatives. Sherman and his colleagues were concerned, however, not only to provide the union with a means of representing their members, but also to have some control over them since a strike resulting from an unresolved grievance would have to be carried on by the UMWA. Thus, allowing an external union officer to argue the case and to represent the organization at large, promised to have some advantages even for the Company for, as the negotiating committee intimated, "there might be many cases where the United Mine Workers would decide against their own men." This was an effective argument, especially for King's ears. A mechanism which had the apparent object of reducing industrial strife and the likelihood of work stoppages was bound to appeal to the mediator. King drafted a clause which, in time of crisis, provided for management meeting with another, though unspecified, representative of the men. On this issue the mediator moved to meet the union representatives at least part way. The union negotiators appeared satisfied with the proposal but Naismith merely took the matter under consideration.

Surprisingly enough the conference between Naismith and the representatives of the strikers became fairly open-ended and quite amiable, once discus-

<sup>57</sup> On the Fernie strike see McMillan "District 18," 57-9; *Labour Gazette*, 7 (October-December 1906) 438-9, 558-9 and 684-6; *UMW Journal*, 11, 25 October, 1, 15 November 1906; *Herald*, 27 September, 4, 18, 25 October, 1, 15, 22, 29 November 1906; and PAC, RG27, Department of Labour Records, vol. 69, file 222 (6), "Conciliation. Coal Miners at Fernie, B.C. and Frank, Alta. 1906."

sion bypassed the problem of what the role of the union was to be.<sup>58</sup> Headway was made on the issue of the shorter work day, Naismith demonstrating flexibility and agreeing that if the men worked ten-hour days until April, he would institute an eight-hour day during the slack time from April to November.<sup>59</sup> King also hinted that the Alberta government might legislate the eight-hour day as had the British Columbia legislature.<sup>60</sup> The matter of the check-weighman and the subject of Company deductions from wages were quickly settled. Moreover, the wage increase offered by Naismith was substantial. Although day or company men were reimbursed on a different basis than contract miners, the offer amounted to a 10 per cent increase across the board. To this the committee could offer only mild opposition and even then to only a few specific categories, particularly the drivers.

It was obvious that the conference had failed to resolve the difficult problem of what the role of the union was to be. Nevertheless, the meeting had gone so well after this issue was left aside that, by the time it ended slightly after 1:30 a.m. feelings were rather cordial. The negotiators clearly had made headway towards a settlement and had operated on sufficiently good terms that Naismith gave away cigars at the end of the conference. It is doubtful, however, that either capital or labour was as confident about the possibility of a speedy settlement as was the mediator. For in spite of his earlier recognition that agreement on Naismith's clause on non-discrimination was impossible, King believed at the end of the conference that a "fair and satisfactory" basis of settlement had been reached.

King wired Lemieux in the morning that he was confident the strike would end that evening.<sup>61</sup> Similar sentiments were expressed in his wire to Scott, with whom the Deputy Minister had been communicating throughout his stay in Lethbridge.<sup>62</sup> King's optimism was jolted when the union negotiators arrived at his room at 10:45 a.m. as planned; the men were not prepared to proceed. They raised the issues of the eight-hour day, of wages, especially those of drivers, and of union officers appearing before management in grievance cases. The

<sup>58</sup> Although the subjects to be discussed at the conference were supposed to be severely restricted, by the end of the meeting matters were so open that King was inviting the men to bring forward any issues they wished to raise.

<sup>59</sup> An eight-hour *underground* law would have placed the AR&I Co. at a competitive disadvantage because being an older colliery its long tunnels required a miner to walk for some time before he reached the coal face (see Alberta Coal Commission, 1907, Evidence, 40 and 72-5). On the other hand, miners claimed that eight hours under the earth's surface away from daylight was long enough. Moreover, getting from the surface to the work site and back was often just as demanding and tiring as actual mining at the face.

<sup>60</sup> King had written to the Alberta government about this matter (King Memo., C9104-5).

<sup>61</sup> Leth. Concil. File, King to Lemieux, 26 November 1906.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, King to Scott, telegram, 26 November 1906. See also *ibid.*, King to Scott, telegrams, 22, 23 and 24 November 1906.

key problem, however, was Naismith's discrimination clause. This the men absolutely refused to accept, insisting instead "that the Company should simply put in that it waived any objection to their belonging to the United Mine Workers." Despite the fact that all these matters had been brought forward in the negotiating session, King told Sherman and the rest that he "could hardly believe that they were sincere in urging these matters. . . ." King's suspicion of the motives of the union representatives, never far from his mind, and his anger at them for thwarting his plans and therefore embarrassing him in the face of the telegrams he had sent to Scott and Lemieux, were surfacing. Clearly King had underestimated the tenacity of the union representatives. The evening session had been a skirmish for them, important but not conclusive, certainly not the final battle. They were determined to continue the fight, to wring as much out of the situation as possible. Perhaps they believed that since King was so close to achieving his goal that he was vulnerable to pressure. If so, they underestimated King's toughness as much as King had miscalculated theirs.

In any case King was forced to act. He went to see Naismith but was confronted with an equally hard-line stance that the non-discrimination clause must be inserted. King countered that no settlement could be reached if the statement as presently worded was insisted upon, that the clause was "cumbersome and involved," that there was no point in rubbing salt into a wound. Naismith replied that "that was precisely their purpose, viz., that they want to rub it in. . . ." King ignored Naismith and proceeded to re-work the clauses to read as follows: "The Company does not object to its employees being or not being members of any organization but all employees of the Company whether members of an organization or not shall be upon an equality in the Company's employment."

From the strikers' perspective this was some improvement. It removed all mention of discrimination and dismissal. Naismith tentatively agreed to the new clause subject to Nanton's approval and provided that the men accepted everything else. He refused to budge on the eight-hour day or on wages, even for drivers. As far as grievance procedures were concerned, management's objection to any sort of outside union involvement was evident in Naismith's proposal. Rather than agreeing to meet with a third representative of the miners in a crisis situation, Naismith had come up with an alternative — impartial, binding arbitration as the culmination of the grievance procedure. The union was thus seemingly bypassed but its negotiators could hardly refuse to sanction such an apparently equitable solution to recurrent grievances in coal mines. They must have chuckled that the Company which had consistently refused to arbitrate anything was now making such a proposal. Thus one more of the demands of the strikers was accommodated, at least in part.<sup>63</sup>

King went back to the strikers' committee. Discussion focussed on the discrimination clause. King did not inform the men of the quite specific wording he had already developed for the amended clause but merely "gave them an

<sup>63</sup> King Memo., C9098-100.

idea of the clause which I was endeavouring to form. . . ." According to King, the union negotiators remained unhappy with the statement because they wanted no mention of non-union employees. When King asked if they would accept a statement on discrimination taken from a Coleman agreement signed by UMWA representatives and discovered that the answer was negative "unless the Company would give them exactly the same agreement in every particular," his patience reached its limit:

I then saw quite clearly that they were not aiming at a settlement at all but holding out pure and simply with a view of securing a clause so I told them that they put me in the *painful position of being compelled to make a report precisely as to why the strike was not settled* and that I did not see how it would be possible for me to have it appear that they had not been unreasonable in their demands, in view of the Company's concession and that I feared they were doing permanent injury to . . . unionism in general and in particular to their own organization.

While King's suggestion that the union was not "aiming at a settlement" was absurd, he was correct in thinking that they were holding out for better terms. But King was not to be pushed any further and had fought back. The committee responded with an offer to arbitrate the whole dispute. King parried this thrust by asking if this included arbitrating the right of the men to belong to the union, knowing full-well from previous discussions and from their letter of 23 November that the union negotiators exempted the right of union membership from arbitration. The committee then asked him for a memorandum stating the Company's offer to take before a meeting of the strikers. King refused. He was probably correct in suspecting that they would take the offer and have the men turn it down in order to strengthen their hand.

I determined that they should not have this opportunity and told them that our understanding from the outset had been that they were acting as representatives of the men, that . . . it appeared to me that the agreement was one which the men would be willing to accept . . . [and] that what they said would go. . . .

King ended the conversation by stating that he was going to start writing his report.<sup>64</sup>

The committee was being backed into a corner. King's threat to write a public report specifying that the union was the guilty party in failing to resolve the dispute was something that UMWA officials could not take lightly. It might well have meant the sending in of strikebreakers and the destruction of the union in Lethbridge and beyond. Nevertheless, the committee was not entirely powerless. To achieve his primary goal of getting the mine into operation as expeditiously as possible, King was dependent upon the committee. He was in a position to pressure UMWA officials but not to alienate them or sever contact with them.

Thus, in spite of a grandiloquent statement in his Confidential Memorandum that he would "make a report which would show up the whole matter even

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, C9100-2.

if it cost me the opposition of the labour unions for the rest of my life," King used the threat of a report as a tactic. He did not begin the report; rather, he and Acland drew up clauses on the grievance procedure which incorporated the idea of binding arbitration. They then returned to Naismith's office both to discuss the proposed clauses and to tell him about the "almost hopeless position in which things were." King does not appear to have used this state of affairs as an opportunity to pressure the Company as he did with the union but, given his stated beliefs on the matter of the closed shop and the role he had taken in formulating the revised non-discrimination clause, it is difficult to believe that he could have "put the muscle" on the Company without loss of credibility. Naismith's only proposal was an artless offer to give to drivers an extra 1.5 cents per hour provided that the strikers accepted his original non-discrimination clause. King informed Naismith that this proposition was out of the question. But King also told him, probably because he wanted to keep the Company committed to making an agreement, that he intended to have the strikers draw up a statement on their position and then "as a last resort to go and take up the matter with Mitchell."<sup>65</sup>

Not long after King had finished his dinner Sharp and Sherman, who had left a strikers' meeting, came to his room.<sup>66</sup> For a time the three men engaged in fruitless sparring. Sherman and Sharp obviously wanted to know if any further headway had been made with the Company, but King claimed to be offended that "they were trying to use me as a means of getting at the Company's position and frankly told them so." King complained that the union representatives "never stayed in the same place, that they shifted about from one place to the other." Sharp and Sherman angrily rejected his assertion. Well, King said, if so "they could out and say exactly what they were prepared to consider on any terms that were concrete." He made one last attempt to get them to agree to the draft settlement, but to no avail. He then played what he called his last card, the idea of submitting the matter to the UMWA president — namely, "would they be prepared to approve as a fair basis of settlement and recognition [*sic* — means "recommendation"] to their men the basis of agreement which was embodied in what I had read over to them, in the event of my being able to get the Company to agree to it and the whole approved by John Mitchell." Sharp and Sherman readily accepted this suggestion. The plan decided on was for King, Sherman, and Sharp to go to UMWA headquarters in Indianapolis. Telegrams would be sent to the Lethbridge strikers informing them of Mitchell's decision. Presuming Mitchell's response was positive, the strikers would return to work immediately.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, C9102-3.

<sup>66</sup> Unless otherwise noted, quotations and information about this session come from *ibid.*, C9103-6.

Why had Sharp and Sherman agreed to the appeal to Mitchell? The answer is not entirely clear.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps King was correct in suspecting that they simply did not wish to shoulder the responsibility. After all, the issues of open shops and non-discrimination clauses were serious problems of policy for the union at the time, as witnessed by the lengthy debate of these matters at the UMWA convention seven weeks later.<sup>68</sup> More particularly, friction between Sherman and UMWA headquarters had arisen on this very subject during the recent Fernie walkout.<sup>69</sup> Thus Sherman and Sharp might well have believed the matter crucial enough to require the approval of the UMWA president. Another factor is that there was a lack of unanimity amongst the strikers' representatives about what they should recommend to the men. According to a Company spy who had attended the strikers' meeting, Sharp and Sherman had been the two members of the negotiating team that had urged the strikers to hold out for better terms, especially in regard to the clause on discrimination.<sup>70</sup> Appealing to Mitchell might have been considered a reasonable means of settling that disagreement. As well, as Sharp stated to King, obtaining Mitchell's seal of approval on the agreement would ensure that the UMWA would feel obligated to protect union members in the Lethbridge mines. An appeal to the UMWA President would also take the negotiation process as far as it could go and might result in some further gains for the union. Finally, while the appeal could and did have negative consequences in Canada such as renewed efforts to prevent "foreign" union leaders from having influence over Canadian workers, it also gave status to the UMWA.<sup>71</sup> The union may not have been able to win formal recognition from the AR&I, but informally the appeal to Mitchell provided enormous recognition of the power of the Mine Workers. From the perspective of Sherman and Sharp, therefore, King's proposal did offer certain advantages.

<sup>67</sup> Correspondence related to District 18 in the UMWA headquarter files might shed more light on this matter. Unfortunately, the UMWA files are not currently available to researchers.

<sup>68</sup> See *Proceedings of the Eighteenth Annual Convention of the United Mine Workers of America . . . Jan. 15-22, '07, Inclusive* (Indianapolis 1907) in Mitchell Papers, reel 41.

<sup>69</sup> In spite of Sherman's stance Thomas Burke, Mitchell's own delegate, had felt obliged to send the Fernie miners back to work. Interestingly enough, Sharp had agreed with Sherman's interpretation of the Fernie situation (see Sharp to Editor, 9 November in *UMW Journal*, 15 November 1906).

<sup>70</sup> King Memo., C9108. King suspected that Galvin was the individual "in the employ of the Company" but his rationale is totally unconvincing.

<sup>71</sup> As an example of hostility towards American union involvement in Canada, Lord Grey, the Governor General, thought that "Yankee capitalists" bribed the heads of the miners' union to bring about strikes in the Canadian west to the ruin of Canadian interests in competition with the Americans (PAC, MG27 [II B I], Lord Minto Papers, vol. 27, 85-7, Grey to Minto, 24 November 1906). See also Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review, 1906*, 302-3; *Toronto News*, n.d., in *Herald*, 6 December 1906; and Acland Report. During the 1907 session of the federal parliament a bill was introduced in the Senate forbidding aliens from directing the activities of Canadian unions (see *Canada, Senate, Debates, 1906-7*, 213-28).

Equally appealing to the union representatives was King's report of progress towards the eight-hour day.<sup>72</sup> After swearing Sharp and Sherman to secrecy King informed them that the Attorney General of Alberta, C.W. Cross, had responded favourably to his suggestion of an eight-hour mine law and that the premier was consulting his colleagues about the matter.<sup>73</sup> King could not refrain from spelling out to the Union representatives what this meant:

If they were to settle this strike and agitate for the eight-hour day they would probably get it through the legislature, and probably turn the whole struggle here to their advantage. On the other hand were the strike not . . . settled it would be hard to say if the whole public sense would not be outraged and the legislature[s] of Alberta, Saskatchewan and the Dominion would be against the union, which would help to set back unionism and in particular the work of their own organization.

It was a nice example of combining the carrot and stick approaches. Nevertheless, one should not lose sight of the fact that union pressure in the strike emergency had been the impetus for King to act and for the Alberta government to respond, with favour if not with guarantees, on the important issue of the eight-hour day.

Just before the men left the Deputy Minister's room at 11 p.m., King asked Sherman if he thought Mitchell would approve. Sherman replied that Mitchell probably would agree, given the situation. King had difficulty understanding the stance of the union representatives but whatever else cropped up he was determined to "get hold" of Mitchell with the proposed settlement. King felt that he had the union by the throat. "I have the men now in the position that it can be positively shown that unless this strike is settled it is because one man in the United States has it in his power to allow people to freeze to death through a large part of the Dominion." Unless Mitchell wished to kill his union in Canada he would be forced to accept King's proposition. King's view was valid but not the only perspective. Union officials may well have believed that King's hand was not on their throat but in their hands. They were forcing King to take his case to the union president over a thousand miles off. King even felt compelled to consult with his Minister about going to Indianapolis "in case the government should later find fault with me for going to the States to negotiate with a citizen of that country in settlement of our own affairs. . . ."<sup>74</sup> Moreover, the trek to see Mitchell was well suited to promoting a good UMWA image. It was

<sup>72</sup> One might question the chronology presented in the King Memo. for one wonders if King did not use the information about the leanings of the Alberta government on the eight-hour question to both soften and prod Sharp and Sherman *before* rather than after making the agreement to appeal to Mitchell.

<sup>73</sup> Leth. Concil. File, C.W. Cross to King, telegram, 26 November 1906. Cross also stated his support for the idea of a compulsory arbitration act patterned after that of New Zealand. An eight-hour mine law had been legislated in the Northwest Territories in 1899 but had been repealed in 1900 (see *Herald*, 17 January 1907; and L.G. DeVeber to Editor, n.d., in *Herald*, 7 February 1907).

<sup>74</sup> Leth. Concil. File, King to Lemieux, telegram, 26 November 1906. Lemieux left the decision to his deputy (see *ibid.*, Lemieux to King, 27 November 1906).

clear recognition of the power of the union. In addition, Mitchell's acceptance of the tentative agreement would mean that the UMWA and the Lethbridge strikers legitimately could appear to have acted magnanimously in view of the public emergency, thereby deserving the gratitude of King, governments on various levels, and the public.

King's last-ditch effort the following day (Tuesday, 27 November) to settle the strike immediately, thus avoiding the excursion to Indianapolis, failed, but not because of union intransigence.<sup>75</sup> By that evening King apparently had "sufficient assurance" from the committee that had he been able to get management to accept the rewritten clause on discrimination, he believed that a settlement would have been concluded then and there. But word came that Nanton insisted on his earlier clause. Thus, at midnight Sherman, Sharp, and King boarded the train, to be joined *en route* by Saskatchewan's Premier Scott as King had requested.<sup>76</sup>

One might speculate on why King decided to proceed to Indianapolis since the main stumbling block to an agreement now seemed to be the Company. It seems that the Deputy Minister felt that his time and talents had to be focussed on the union rather than management; that the union required close and personal attention but that Nanton could be convinced without great difficulty. Using the argument of the damage to the Company's reputation which would result by insisting on the original clause, King pressured Naismith into wiring Nanton recommending acceptance of the revised clause.

In return Naismith received a statement signed by King "that it was thoroughly understood by the men that the Company retains all the privileges and rights secured to it under the clause proposed by you" and that the new clause "in no way changes the purport of the clause originally proposed."<sup>77</sup> Even King must have recognized that this was stretching the truth to the breaking point. There is no evidence that the men "thoroughly understood" this point and

<sup>75</sup> Evidently King was moved to make this final effort by the appearance in the press of an open letter to Laurier describing desperate conditions created by cold weather and fuel shortage around Batoche (see Leth. Concil. File, newspaper clipping of W.L. Ramsay to Laurier, 19 November 1906).

<sup>76</sup> King Report in *Labour Gazette*, 7 (December 1906), 657-8; Leth. Concil. File, King to Scott, telegram, 26 November 1906; and King Memo., C9106. King's confidential Memorandum contains very little information on the events of 27 November (curiously enough, nothing is mentioned about the attempt to obtain an immediate settlement) and abruptly ends at that date. It is certainly unfortunate that the King Memo. does not continue until the end of the strike. King's published report to Lemieux contains an elaborate justification of King's decision to go to Indianapolis. While the rationale was valid and genuine in part, much of it was spurious because it claims that Tuesday's events made it imperative for him to go. But King had decided on Monday to appeal to Mitchell. If anything, Tuesday's developments brought into question the necessity of the excursion to Indianapolis since the committee seemed prepared to accept the proposed agreement on its own hook.

<sup>77</sup> Leth. Concil. File, King to Naismith, 27 November 1906, and King to Lemieux, 27 November 1906; and King Memo., C9108.



much to suggest that they did not accept it. There is nothing to indicate that King consulted with union representatives about this understanding either before or after the memorandum was written. It appears that in this instance King betrayed the workers, or at least was not above-board. In any case, Naismith's telegram, along with representations by King, Scott, Lemieux, and Laurier, convinced Nanton to accept the new clause.<sup>78</sup>

On Saturday, 1 December, King *et al.* arrived in Indianapolis.<sup>79</sup> Mitchell was ill and saw only Sharp, leaving the Canadians to cool their heels. But Mitchell agreed speedily and, one would surmise, perfunctorily. Sherman wired back to union representatives in Lethbridge to call an immediate meeting of the rank and file to ratify the terms. That meeting took place the following day and, although there appears to have been considerable discussion of the terms by the strikers, their decision was to end the nine-month strike and report for work on Monday, 3 December.<sup>80</sup>

The trip from Lethbridge to Indianapolis may appear to have been a period of marking time when nothing was accomplished. Indeed, the absence of any account of what transpired on this excursion reinforces this impression. To be sure, no changes in the terms of the agreement took place. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to suggest that important developments did indeed take place. One must note that the settlement had been made, and negotiations had been completed and the party on the train could relax, socialize, and discuss general matters. King was not one to avoid taking advantage of such opportunities to cement relationships and propound his views. He had, for example, read excerpts of his book on Harper, "which went to show the Government's sympathy with labour," to Sherman and Sharp on the evening of 26 November.<sup>81</sup> But while a rapprochement between King and UMWA officials began in Lethbridge, it seems clear that prior to the two-day trip, neither Sherman nor

<sup>78</sup> Leth. Concil. File, King to Lemieux, telegrams, 27 and 28 November, King to Nanton, telegram, 28 November, Lemieux to King, telegram, 28 November, King to Giddens, 28 November, Giddens to King, telegrams, 28, 29 and 30 November, Naismith to King, telegram, 29 November 1906; Laurier Papers, vol. 435, 116142-4, Scott to Laurier and Laurier to Scott, telegrams, 28 and 29 November 1906; Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon office, Walter Scott Papers, Scott to King, 4 December 1906. King had even started to make arrangements to have the Governor General speak to Nanton. A statement in Laurier's message to Scott is notable: "You say that this government must take and operate Lethbridge Mine. It is far more easy for you than for us. We will back you with all our power."

<sup>79</sup> Information on exactly what happened in Indianapolis is sparse and confusing. See King Report in *Labour Gazette*, 7 (December 1906), 659; Leth. Concil. File, King to Lemieux and to Naismith, telegrams, 1 December; *Herald*, 6 December 1906; and *Avaland Report*.

<sup>80</sup> *Herald*, 6 December 1906; and King Report in *Labour Gazette*, 7 (December 1906), 659.

<sup>81</sup> King Memo., C9105. The book referred to is King's *The Secret of Heroism* (Toronto 1906). According to King his listeners "seemed much pleased with these extracts and spoke highly of them."

Sharp was on particularly close terms with King. Afterwards, however, they considered him a friend. King went through a similar transformation of attitude.<sup>82</sup> As important as warmer relations were, however, the evaluations made by Scott and King at the termination of the strike were even more significant. Scott made a statement to the effect that the Company rather than the strikers had been the most intractable party and that the men had conceded a great deal in response to the public emergency.<sup>83</sup> King returned to Ottawa critical of the AR&I and convinced, as he told Laurier, that the Company had been "mostly to blame."<sup>84</sup> Not only was this an about-face from King's initial perception of the strike, or even the one he had held on 26 November, but also the Company's refusal to negotiate or arbitrate was one of the factors which led him to draft the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act.<sup>85</sup> Whatever judgment one makes about the operation of this important legislation, it should be noted that King's immediate motivation was to overcome two serious difficulties which had been evident in the Lethbridge strike: to protect the public from the threat of fuel famine caused by industrial strife; and to provide a recourse for miners who faced an intransigent employer who simply refused to bargain.<sup>86</sup> For Lethbridge miners the IDI Act proved immediately effective. Local 574 of the UMWA was among the first to appeal to the Department of Labour under the terms of the IDI Act in spring 1907. The prospect of government involvement moved the AR&I to settle with the UMWA and sign a collective agreement which won for the miners virtually everything they had demanded in March 1906.<sup>87</sup> It would be absurd to suggest that Sherman and Sharp brought about all this during their trip with King and Scott. But it does appear that they were quite successful in giving King a positive outlook on the union and its leading spokesmen. Equally, King had impressed UMWA leaders and had overcome their earlier negative images.

In summarizing why this transformation had taken place it is now possible to see that the praise given King by Sherman and other UMWA leaders at the end of the strike was not false flattery, nor was it that King had hoodwinked or

<sup>82</sup> Indications of friendship are evident in the Sherman-King and Sharp-King correspondence in the King Papers. See also the Mitchell-King correspondence in the King Papers and the Mitchell Papers. In a speech in Lethbridge in December Peter Patterson also praised the work done by King (see *Herald*, 20 December 1906, 9).

<sup>83</sup> *The Fernie Ledger*, 6 December 1906. See also Laurier Papers, vol. 435, 116142-3, Scott to Laurier, telegram, 28 November 1906.

<sup>84</sup> King Papers, part 13, G1993 and 8557A, diary entry, 4 December 1906.

<sup>85</sup> Craven, *Impartial Umpire*, 271-352 has an interesting discussion of the IDI Act and its operation until 1911. The Act itself is found in *Statutes of Canada*, 6-7 Edward VII, 1906-7, c. 20.

<sup>86</sup> During a night of fitful sleep after making the arrangement with Sherman and Sharp to visit Mitchell, King vowed to himself that when he returned to Ottawa he would attempt to draft legislation "making it impossible for such a situation [as the Lethbridge strike] to arise in the future" (see King Memo., C9107).

<sup>87</sup> *Labour Gazette*, 7 (June 1907), 1415-7; and 8 (July 1907), 83-5.

bought off union spokesmen. It was true that union officials may well have realized that King could be influenced by friendships and compliments but praise was more the reward the union bestowed on King for good behaviour than the means of inducing such conduct. As for King hypnotizing or corrupting union spokesmen, the evidence does not support such a contention. Nevertheless, a reasonable case could be made questioning the ability of UMWA leaders to act solely for the benefit of the miners. Leaving aside the issue of whether the union as an organization had concerns and goals which differed from those of the strikers, key men involved in the negotiations either had or might have been in a conflict of interest situation. Aside from a serious drinking problem Mitchell not only had enormous investments in American companies involved in or connected to coal mining, but also, through his secretary, was an investor in the Knee Hill Coal Co. near Drumheller.<sup>88</sup> This was in District 18, of course, and the potential for collusion is evident in a portion of a letter sent by the secretary to the Knee Hill management: "If Mr. Thomas Burke, a representative of the United Mine Workers, calls to see you, I trust that you will give him whatever courtesy you may. He is absolutely reliable and is much interested in our property."<sup>89</sup>

Burke appears to have been a henchman of Mitchell. Possibly Sharp was as well, for Mitchell seems to have trusted him and to have delegated tasks to him. But since little is known about Sharp it would be unfair to convict him without evidence. Sherman had a vulnerable spot which might have made him malleable. He had political aspirations. He had already run as a Labour candidate in a Lethbridge by-election for the Alberta legislature in April, 1906, and in 1907 was to discuss with King the possibility of becoming a federal candidate in an Alberta constituency where he could run unopposed by a Liberal candidate.<sup>90</sup> As far as the other chief UMWA negotiators, Patterson and Galvin, are con-

<sup>88</sup> The illness which had prevented Mitchell from meeting with the delegation from Lethbridge had been, in fact, a state of intoxication. A few months later King, who had suspected as much, told Sherman that "my interests in the labour movement would have prevented me from ever disclosing this fact and putting a weapon so undeserved into the hands of labour's enemies. Also, that inasmuch as it was a human infirmity and I was sorry for Mitchell myself and would not as far as I was concerned, be a party who would subject him to exposure." Mitchell's health, his instability and a rising distrust of his judgment by UMWA members, led to his resignation as president in 1908. See King Papers, part 13, "Memorandum re. Industrial Disputes in Crowsnest Pass and Albertan Coal Fields" (hereafter cited as King Memo. CNP 1907), G2013 and 24; Coleman, *Men and Coal*, 79; and Morris, "Acquisitive Spirit," *passim*.

<sup>89</sup> Mitchell Papers, [E.C. Morris] to G.P. Ovans, 2 March 1907, in reel 11. See also *ibid.*, C. McPherson to Morris, 13 May 1906; Morris to McPherson, 27 May 1906; promisory note, 10 October 1906; Company description, filed at end of 1906 materials; [Morris] to Ovans, 5 January 1907; ? to "Katie" [Morris], 27 January 1907, in reel 11; and Morris, "Acquisitive Spirit," 11, 29. Burke's activities during the Crowsnest Pass negotiations of 1907 were highly suspect (see King Memo. CNP 1907, G2031).

<sup>90</sup> King Memo. CNP 1907, G2038. See also C.A. Seager, "F.H. Sherman of Fernie and

cerned, little is known about Patterson. Galvin, on the other hand, was suspected, on dubious grounds, by King of being a spy for the Company during the 1906 negotiations. Moreover, two sources informed King in 1907 that Galvin had killed a man in Virginia, had escaped from justice by coming to Canada, and had left behind a wife and children who now presumed him dead.<sup>91</sup> Yet, in spite of all these vulnerable points, union spokesmen by and large fought tenaciously and relatively skillfully on behalf of the strikers. They used their talents and power to push King as long and as far as they could. They did so without incurring the lasting hostility of King or the intense antagonism of the general public. Certainly they did not roll over and play dead at the behest of the mediator. If they were neither mesmerized, nor bought off, nor being flattering, union leaders must have believed that King had performed useful services. This they certainly did believe, and there is much to verify that in the specific case of the Lethbridge strike and within the parameters of the gradualist approach of the UMWA, they were correct.

Union officials must have recognized that if the strike had been allowed to run its course there was a very good chance that the union would have been smashed in Lethbridge and the strikers defeated. The outcome of federal government intervention was that this did not occur. Of course the mediator had become involved not to prevent the defeat of the strikers, but in order to protect the public interest. Even so, the union must have realized that King's intervention had resulted in important gains for the workers. They had not achieved everything they wanted, but they had won a substantial wage hike, a grievance procedure and the right to belong to the union on a basis of equality. They had not gained formal recognition from the Company but management had been forced to bargain, both directly and indirectly, with the union, thereby providing substantial informal recognition for the union.<sup>92</sup> The momentum thus established led to a signed agreement half a year later and contributed to the continued existence of a Lethbridge local of the UMWA for decades to come. Partly through King's efforts consideration was given by the Alberta government for an eight-hour mine law which finally passed the legislature in 1908.<sup>93</sup> The Deputy Minister had facilitated making these gains. In a sense, he had made them possible. For King, however, the specific conditions of work for Lethbridge miners were a means to an end rather than the end itself. Thus in another sense the union negotiators had won these gains through their own

---

the United Mine Workers of America 1902-1909: A Study in Western-Canadian Labour Radicalism," unpublished paper presented to the B.C. Studies Conference, Vancouver, 1981.

<sup>91</sup> King memo., C9108; King Papers, part 13, G1993 and 8557, diary entry, 4 December 1906; King Memo. CNP 1907, G2032.

<sup>92</sup> Terms of the final settlement appeared in *Herald*, 6 December 1906; and in King Report in *Labour Gazette*, 7 (December 1906), 660.

<sup>93</sup> *Statutes of Alberta*, 8 Ed. VII, 1908, c. 17.

efforts; King merely had responded, effectively for the most part, to their demands. The interplay between the mediator and union spokesmen on the whole was beneficial for Lethbridge miners. Sherman's changed attitude to King was deserved.

*The author gratefully acknowledges the research support provided by The University of Lethbridge, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation. David Bercuson, Andy den Otter, Steven Patten, and James Tagg provided valuable and appreciated criticism and advice on an earlier draft of the paper.*

---

#### LABOR HISTORY CONFERENCE

The Fifth Annual North American Labor History Conference will be held October 13-15, 1983, at Wayne State University.

For further information, please contact Professor John J. Bukowczyk, Chair, Labor History Conference Committee, Department of History, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan 48202.

---

# Social History

An International Journal

Edited by Janet Blackman and Keith Nield

Department of Economic and Social History, University of Hull

'Social History has without a doubt immediately established itself as enormously superior to all English-language journals in the field, with the possible exception of *Past and Present*.'

*The Times Educational Supplement*

**Social History** publishes the best work available in social historical writing of a theoretical and polemical kind as well as empirical analysis. The journal seeks to be international in content, to cover all periods, and to explore links with other disciplines that increasingly seek historical perspectives, especially sociology, social anthropology, politics, demography and studies of the process of economic development and growth.

**Subscription Rates for 1982:** Individuals (UK) £15.50 per annum;  
Institutions (UK) £22.50 per annum; Individuals (Overseas) £18.50 per annum;  
Institutions (Overseas) £25.00 per annum; Airmail £28.50 per annum;  
Single copies £9.25

**Frequency:** Three issues per year (January, May and October)

**Methuen & Co Ltd, 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE**

## Canadian Historical Association Conference 1984

The 1984 Canadian Historical Association Conference will be held in Guelph, Ontario, at the University of Guelph, 90 km west of Toronto. The Program Committee invites proposals for papers and sessions from members, other historians and members of related professions. Three areas have been selected for special emphasis at this conference: the eighteenth century; rural history; and the North American ethnic experience. As usual, the conference will also present papers in Canadian, American, European, Asian, African and other historical fields. A selection of papers presented will be published in the association's *Historical Papers 1984*.

Those wishing to propose papers or sessions are asked to write to the program chairman or appropriate member of the committee: Terry Crowley (History, Guelph), chairman; Pierre Tousignant (History, Montreal) and Jack Burnstead (History, Manitoba), co-ordinators for the eighteenth century; Norman Séguin (History, Québec à Trois-Rivières) and Don Akenson (History, Queen's), co-ordinators for rural history; Howard Palmer (History, Calgary), co-ordinator for ethnic history; Kathleen McCrone (History, Windsor), co-ordinator for CHA member sub-groups; Phil Buckner (History, UNB); Jamie Snell (History, Guelph).

Deadline for submissions: 15 September 1983

## Congrès de la Société Historique du Canada, 1984

Le Congrès de la Société historique du Canada se tiendra en 1984 à Guelph, Ontario, à l'Université de Guelph, 90 km à l'ouest de Toronto. Le Comité du programme invite les membres, les historiens et les collègues d'autres disciplines à proposer des sujets de communication ou de séance. Trois thèmes ont été privilégiés pour ce congrès: le dix-huitième siècle, l'histoire rurale, et l'histoire ethno-culturelle nord-américaine. Comme d'habitude, des communications dans des domaines de l'histoire canadienne, américaine, européenne, asiatique, africaine ou d'autres secteurs seront présentées. Une sélection des communications sera publié dans le *Communications Historiques* de la SHC.

Les personnes intéressées à proposer un sujet de communication ou de séance sont priées d'écrire au président du comité du programme ou à un de ses membres: Terry Crowley (Histoire, Guelph), Président; Pierre Tousignant (Histoire, Montréal) et Jack Burnstead (Histoire, Manitoba), coordinateurs pour le dix-huitième siècle; Norman Séguin (Histoire, Québec à Trois-Rivières) et Donald Akenson (Histoire, Queen's), coordinateurs pour l'histoire rurale; Howard Palmer (Histoire, Calgary), coordinateur pour l'histoire ethno-culturelle; Kathleen McCrone (Histoire, Windsor), coordinatrice pour les regroupements des chercheurs de la SHC; Phil Buckner (Histoire, UNB); Jamie Snell (Histoire, Guelph).

Date limite pour les propositions: 15 SEPTEMBRE 1983