

# WILL NOT ARBITRATE

## MINERS BELIEVE STRIKE WILL NOT LAST LONG

**They Declare That Under No Circumstances Will They Arbitrate, and if Forced Into it by Lemieux Act, Will Let the Case Go By Default—Diplomatic Move is Made by the Operators.**

Fernie, B.C.—Summing up the situation Secretary Carter said: "I do not believe the strike will last long. When the operators realize the strength there is behind us they will be ready to seek a compromise. We demand the advance of 12½ per cent. and the continuance of present arrangement as to closed shop. Under no circumstances will we arbitrate, and if we are forced into it under the Lemieux act we will let the case go by default. If the advance we desire in wages means the price of coal will go up, let it go up. That matter will adjust itself when the government constitutes the commission which the British Columbia Federation of Labor is asking for, and investigates the cost of coal and indicate where the unfair profit comes in."

A report is current that some non-union men who have been deprived of work will ask for a conciliation board. Under the Lemieux act such men are entitled to make an application.

J. D. McNiven, fair wage officer, has heard nothing of this and has had no communications of any kind from anyone excepting his superiors. Under instructions from the department of labor he is still on the ground, reporting to the department the various authenticated moves or events in this drama of the coal fields.

The provincial police here report not an arrest in the Pass since the beginning of the strike, one week ago. In Fernie the situation is equally pacific. The Italian band is making hay while the sun shines, by daily serenading, while the moving picture shows for the first time in their history are putting on matinees.

The action of the operators' executive board, taken at Frank, has yet to be interpreted, President Stockett at the time giving out that the operators stood on their last offer at the Calgary conference. Other board members intimated for publication that this meant the offer of arbitration. Another theory now presents itself, that the offer meant was that of a 5.55 per cent. advance in wages.

"The point should be made perfectly clear," said James Ashworth, retiring operating manager of the Crow's Nest Pass company, "that the operators are now paying, and have paid since April 1, the new scale, involving a 5.55 per cent. raise, to all the men now working in the mines on maintenance work. The new scale is now in force at all the collieries in the Western Coal Operators' association. I think if this fact were known it might influence the men generally in the direction of returning to work. This information has not been conveyed, of course, to the mine workers' executive board. The operators have simply communicated the notice to their own men, in the usual way, through the superintendents of the collieries."

If this is the "last offer" referred to by Mr. Stockett presumably the operators' association is willing to concede the increase of 5.55 per cent. on the old day wage scale, and on contract prices, "except on pillars and lumbering," and demands the clause providing that the operators shall not discriminate against union men and that the union shall not discriminate against non-union men.

Mr. Ashworth expressed the view that the backing of the international board was over-rated by the newspapers. "Will \$3 a week from the strike funds support a man in this country?" he asked, adding, "It is not even real money, but provisions. We are not told what it will be, perhaps red herring."

"Not more than 5.55 per cent. increase will be given under any circumstances," continued Mr. Ashworth, "and if we have to give more when the price of coal will go up. The reciprocity agreement has raised the duty on coal from 40 to 45 cents."

"And if it is enacted, we will have that added burden. As it is, we have serious enough competition in our provincial market, which is across the line."