

SITUATION IS GRAVE IN COAL MINE DISPUTE

Nine Thousand Workers in Eastern British Columbia and Alberta May be Involved.

LEADER SAYS OPERATORS
WILL NOT MEET STRIKERS

Demand One Eight-Hour Shift
—Threaten to Call Out
Pumpers.

Unless the demands of the miners in the Fernie district for one shift of eight hours is granted, or the operators consent to meet the men and discuss their request, a general strike involving 9000 men, and including the coal mining sections of all of eastern British Columbia and part of Alberta, will be declared, representatives of the miners now in Vancouver stated today.

On Wednesday, Hon. Wm. Sloan, minister of mines, and W. H. Armstrong, fuel administrator for the Dominion government for eastern British Columbia, conferred with the operators and afterwards met the miners' representatives, but little progress was made at these conferences, another meeting being held this morning with the minister, fuel administrator and men, in an endeavor to bring both sides together. This afternoon the minister and Mr. Armstrong will meet the operators again.

Twelve Hundred on Strike.

Twelve hundred men are now out on strike in the Fernie and Michel districts, they having quit work as a protest against the two shifts system, with four hours intervening between each, declaring that the time allowed was not sufficient to permit the gas to escape from the mines. The men state the cessation of work came when a "bump" occurred in one of the mines, through an explosion of gas which resulted in a 300-foot airway being closed. Their representatives declare the mines to be as dangerous as any and say the one eight-hour shift a day is the only way in which their work can be made reasonably safe for them.

"We are in Vancouver to discuss the men's side of the case with the minister of mines, the fuel administrator or the operators, but so far the operators have refused to meet us," said Thos. Biggs, president of the miners, and one of their representatives. "We are ready to go into the question and point out why the men refuse to work under present conditions. If the operators will not meet us then we must so notify the men, who are waiting expectantly the outcome of our trip. The pumpers have been allowed to remain at work, but they will be called out as soon as we are given definite notice that the operators will not meet us. Furthermore all of the miners in Eastern British Columbia and part of Alberta are ready to quit work if they are notified that our mission has failed."