CHAPTER THREE

THE BIG STRIKE 1912-14

"The attempts of labour through organization to better its conditions are thoroughly justifiable, and in the interests of liberty and justice, as the history of trade unionism amply proves."

B.C. Royal Commission on Labour, 1914

IN CUMBERLAND, Goodwin often boarded with the family of John and Margaret Clark at 2725 Penrith Avenue. The Clark home was known as the Red House, not because of the politics of those who lived there, but because it was painted red. It was a single-family house built in 1894 with two bedrooms on the main floor, a living room and a kitchen, and four bedrooms upstairs. Goodwin's room upstairs had a glass door. The garden was full of fruit trees. Goodwin and John Clark spent many hours together in the living room, talking union business and politics. Clark, a Scottish miner who came to Cumberland in 1908, bought the Red House in 1912 for $1,200. He was one of 150 miners who put their names to a request in 1911 that the United Mine Workers of America organize on Vancouver Island. The Clark family was big — John and Margaret had 10 children, six girls and four boys. Goodwin later became good friends with one of the girls, Mary.[1]

Goodwin continued playing soccer with his friends Arthur Boothman and Tom Carney. But it was stiff competition to keep a regular place in the BC Professional Football League and Goodwin would sometimes be spotted as a reserve player. The three friends played for the local No. 5 Thistles — a team from that mine — and, in the League, for Cumberland in the 1911-12 season. John (Scotty) Clark, the oldest of the Clark boys, played in goal. Vic-

[1]Author's interview with Jean Letcher of Trail, BC, 16 March 1988. Letcher was one of the Clark daughters and was 15 years old when Goodwin was killed; UMWA District 28 Records, UMWA, Washington, DC; Land Title Office, Victoria, BC.

Cumberland soccer players in their striped shirts in 1911, likely the team in the B.C. Professional Football League, pose with trophies (the Merrifield 1909 Perpetual Charity Cup in the middle). Goodwin is front row, second from left, and his friend Arthur Boothman is front row, second from right, and between them is Tom Carney. The goalkeeper (with cap) is John (Scotty) Clark, with whose family Ginger often boarded. *Cumberland Museum and Archives, C261-015.*

toria was the runaway winner of the league championship in 1911-12 and its team, the press said, had four players who had turned out for some of the best clubs in England and Scotland, one of them for the Scottish national team.[2]

In Cumberland, Goodwin became active in the union and the Socialist Party of Canada. He was close friends with Joe Naylor, a hewer at No. 7 Mine in Bevan, a few miles from Cumberland, and a strong-minded activist in union and Socialist causes. A stubborn miner from Wigan, Lancashire, Naylor arrived in Cumberland in 1909 by way of Montana and Nanaimo. Fifteen years older than Goodwin, he became a mentor for the young miner. Naylor was secretary of Cumberland Local 70 of the Socialist Party

[2]Cumberland *Islander*, 10 June, 9 September, 21 October 1911; 2 March 1912; Cumberland *News*, 17, 24 October 1911; Victoria *Daily Times*, 24 October 1911.

Goodwin (front row, second from left) played for No. 5 Thistles soccer team in Cumberland. In this photograph, his friends and fellow forwards join him in the front row, Tom Carney (third from left) and Arthur Boothman (fourth from left). Goodwin worked at No. 5 mine in Cumberland. According to some newspaper accounts, this became Cumberland's entry in the B.C. Professional Soccer League in 1911. *Cumberland Museum and Archives, C261-009.*

of Canada, which had about 90 members, and first president of the Cumberland Local 2299 of the UMWA. In the Socialist hall opposite the Post Office on Dunsmuir Avenue, the party offered regular economic classes twice a week.

The UMWA was invited by miners to represent them and it chartered District 28 in 1911 after Island miners, who had earlier formed the Canadian Federation of Miners, showed enough interest. In the summer of 1912 everyone knew a showdown was coming after decades of failed efforts to start various unions to address workplace problems and give the miners a collective voice. The issues included wages, methods of piecework, payment of wages only once a month, safety, compensation for clearing rock from coal, company mark-up on the price of explosive powder, discrimination against union members, and non-compliance with provincial laws including the eight-hour day. The Dunsmuirs never accepted a union and neither would their corporate successor, Canadian Collieries (Dunsmuir) Limited. UMWA District 28 sent a letter on 1 June 1912 to all companies on Vancouver Island seeking talks about wages and other questions. There was no response. Subsequent communications would also be ignored.

The *B.C. Federationist*, organ of the BC Federation of Labour, suggested on 27 July 1912 that there were prospects of a complete tie-up of the mines on Vancouver Island. The UMWA's effort to get a Chinese organizer-interpreter from the United States into BC was blocked by George Lawson Milne, who held the position of Controller of Chinese at the federal government's Emigration Branch in Victoria. Milne wrote on 31 July 1912 to George Pettigrew of Ladysmith, District 28's member of the International Executive Board of the UMWA: " ... that Chinese are not permitted to come from any country than their own, namely China, unless he is a merchant, and then only passing through from port to port."

The UMWA complained officially that provincial laws about the eight-hour workday were being violated but District 28 president Robert Foster of Nanaimo said he was not able to bring proof because miners were afraid of being fired and blacklisted. He said miners were being discriminated against because they belonged to the union. On 4 August 1912, Foster told a mass meeting at the Recreation Grounds in Cumberland that discontent among the workers portended a coming upheaval. Miners intended to ask for a wage increase and better conditions in the near future. He said that while they were looking for a peaceable working agreement, they would fight if they did not get their demands. It was several weeks before formal proposals were drawn up and communicated to the Island companies, which did not reply.

Canadian Collieries president William Mackenzie, whose well-known objections to union recognition were mirrored by general manager Walter

L. Coulson, sent a confidential report on 19 July 1912 to preference shareholders. Mackenzie complained that profits were "unfavourably affected by the general conditions of disturbance which have prevailed in coal mining during the past year." There was "an undercurrent of unrest among the men" although he claimed there was no substantial grievance and hoped that the unrest was only temporary. He blamed "deliberate attempts made from outside to stir up trouble," undoubtedly a reference to the UMWA organizing drive, and said the efficiency of miners had fallen off.

Later, others suggested another explanation for the company's decreased profits — specifically, that Mackenzie was scapegoating the union for his speculative over-capitalization of the company and the bloated purchase price. Long afterwards, Joe Naylor said miners were convinced that over-capitalization was the reason for the strike.

The Vancouver trade journal, *Mining, Engineering and Electrical Record*, said the strike was engineered to paper over coming financial losses. Coulson told shareholders in 1913, however, that management carefully and deliberately chose to resist UMWA's attempt to "obtain control of your mines" and that "the ultimate consequences to the Company of surrendering its destiny into the hands of this foreign body would be disastrous." Union demands would make it impossible to operate at a profit, he said.

Coulson's phobia about foreigners was strange given that he was an American mining engineer working in Canada for a company that was mainly British-owned. But he came from the notoriously anti-union Somerset area of the Pennsylvania coalfield. Coulson was general superintendent in 1902 of the Pittsburgh and Baltimore Coal Company of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. It opened Edna No. 1 Mine in Westmoreland County adjacent to Somerset County in 1900 and Edna No. 2 in 1902. Though by 1910 the company had fallen into receivership, it still managed to defeat the UMWA's 16-month strike in 1911.

The BC Royal Commission on Labour, appointed just after the strike started but not reporting until it was almost over, dismissed managerial fears of foreigners. "Whilst some employers oppose the international unions on the grounds that the authority exercised by union officials resident in the United States may produce conditions injurious to Canadian industrial interests, yet we find no definite evidence of any such effect; and, on the other hand, it must be said that many large corporations employ managers and superintendents and are controlled by directors who are themselves aliens," reported the commission.

The pending crisis exploded on 16 September 1912 when Cumberland miners stopped work in an unofficial walkout to protest the dismissal of Oscar Mottishaw and a refusal to hire James Smith, both union members. The dispute centred on Mottishaw who had worked at the company's Extension

mines between Ladysmith and Nanaimo. He and fellow miner Isaac Portrey, who made up the employees' gas committee, had reported gas in Extension on 12 June 1912. This was confirmed, but not until 20 July 1912, by Chief Inspector of Mines Thomas Graham, who also noted other deficiencies. On 19 August, Mottishaw's workplace was mined out of coal but he was not given a new place to work. Portrey, whose place had not been worked out, continued at work.

Mottishaw moved to Cumberland looking for new work and was hired by a contractor, Richard Coe, as a mule driver in No. 4 Mine. He worked for a few days and then was fired by Coe on orders from mine manager Robert Henderson. The miners' interpretation was this: Mottishaw was let go at Extension because he reported gas, and dismissed at Cumberland for having done that. Company officials in Cumberland, however, denied any discrimination on the basis of the Extension gas report and said they did not know about it. Mottishaw was discharged in Cumberland solely because he had started work underground without Henderson's approval, they said.

In addition, the company said Mottishaw had voluntarily quit at Extension and when he asked to be rehired, was turned down because he had called some firemen at the mine "scabs" and "blacklegs" — strange words since a strike had not started then. Mottishaw denied using the language. Pointedly, Coe said his hiring of Mottishaw was the only one in which the company interfered. Given the long practice of companies getting rid of union-minded miners by simply not giving them further work when their places were worked out, the miners' interpretation was understandable enough, especially with everyone's heightened awareness that trouble was brewing. Both sides maintained their own view of what had happened to Mottishaw.

After a day's work stoppage, the company ordered the miners to remove their tools from the mines. This order was interpreted by the miners as a lockout. The company said it was securing the equipment. Then the company insisted that miners sign two-year contracts at the pre-dispute rates and conditions. Miners at Extension, meanwhile, voted to stop work in sympathy with the Cumberland miners. They went out on 18 September 1912. Several committees which sought to meet management over the Mottishaw matter were turned away by company officials but one committee did meet superintendent J.R. Lockard who denied any discrimination against Mottishaw but said it was the company's prerogative to hire who it wished.

The miners were left with no real choice: Either they capitulated or they protested what they believed was yet another case of discrimination over a safety and union membership issue. The unofficial walkout quickly became an official strike with the UMWA seeking talks to settle the immediate issue as well as presenting collective agreement proposals to all coal companies.

Young lad in Cumberland demonstrates his support for the miners' strike of 1912-14 on Vancouver Island posing with the United Mine Workers Journal. *Cumberland Museum and Archives, C110-128.*

There was no response. The real issue was clear: Union recognition. UMWA weekly strike benefits of $4 per miner (plus $2 for wife, $1 for each child) replaced daily wages of $2.85 to as much as $4.50 a day for some ($17.10 to $27 for a six-day work week, assuming full-time work, not including any deductions from wages).

Thus began one of the longest, costliest, and most bitter strikes in Canadian labour history. Immediately, it involved 1,600 miners at Cumberland and Extension. The strike spread to the mines in and around Nanaimo on 1 May 1913 and involved 3,777 miners on Vancouver Island. It did not end until 20 August 1914. Except at the Jingle Pot mine near Nanaimo where the UMWA gained recognition and a collective agreement, the strike was unsuccessful in the short term.

Two royal commissions favoured collective bargaining. The federal royal commission reported that it was desirable and of benefit to both sides that collective agreements "voluntarily and formally entered into for a specified time between employees and employer, or between an employees' union and their employer, should be given the sanction and protection of law." The BC royal commission, while supporting legalized collective bar-

gaining, appeared to favour committees of employees, citing the instances in and around Nanaimo. Unions viewed employees' committees as a form of company unionism, not providing recognition to the union, nor any bargaining power for employees. An employees' committee drawing up an agreement was, however, more than miners in Cumberland and Ladysmith (Extension) had before 1912. Not long after the strike ended, employees' committees were put in place.

The provincial government did not intervene on behalf of the miners in the strike but instead sent in special police to maintain access for strikebreakers to the mines. After serious riots in August 1913, the provincial government dispatched the militia to the coalfields for the balance of the strike. Various interventions and overtures by the federal government ran into a brick wall, with companies refusing to recognize the union. While the Extension mines remained closed for many months, the Cumberland mines were reopened after a month and production slowly resumed. Chinese miners, who supported the strike for the first month, returned to work under the old conditions. White miners were evicted from 100 company houses. Nor did the company wait long: The first Notice to Quit orders were issued 10 days after the walkout began, on 26 September 1912, to be effective at the end of October. Those who did not vacate their company houses had judgment against them in County Court starting on 4 December. No reason was given in the eviction orders (such as non-payment of rent) leaving the assumption that striking miners were ordered out to open up accommodation for imported strikebreakers. Displaced miners put up tents in a public park in Cumberland. First tents and then shacks appeared at nearby Royston at what came to be called Strikers' Beach. A trickle of strikers returned to work. The company recruited strikebreakers from the Prairies, the US and Britain.

The events had a major political and economic influence in BC. The cost to the UMWA has been variously put at $1,250,000 and $1,500,000. Benefits to strikers alone certainly came to about $1,250,000 and there were other costs, especially legal. The company ran into a loss position, defaulted in 1914 on interest payments to British bondholders, and found itself taken over by a management committee chosen by the bondholders. The legacy of memories of which side everyone was on during the strike lasted, even extending to the children and grandchildren of the strikers and strikebreakers. The story is told of two brothers who were on different sides in the strike — one went to work, one didn't. They lived in the same room. The striker hung a curtain across the middle of the room and wrote "scab" on one side

and "union man" on the other. The rancour was to remain strong in the coal mining districts of Cumberland, Ladysmith, and Nanaimo.[3]

Early in the walkout, and later, churches supported the strikers. Members of the First Baptist Church of Nanaimo approved a resolution of sympathy unanimously and urged the government to protect the miners. Pastor J.H. Howe spoke on "Jesus, Capitalism and Labour." He said: "The church, like the individual, cannot serve God and Mammon. Our present commercial system is one in entire opposition to Christianity. Its principles and precepts are unchristian." He said capital expected labour to be absolutely subservient. "In a thousand ways through its many agencies and satellites, it can exploit and tyrannize labour," he said. "Labour must protect itself. Its only hope lies in intelligent combination. Labour must insist on proper recognition, even though it entails suffering."[4]

[3]While various books touch on the strike, the only full-length treatments are Alan John Wargo's unpublished BA graduating essay "The Great Coal Strike: The Vancouver Island Coal Miners' Strike, 1912-1914" (UBC 1962) and John Norris "The Vancouver Island Coal Strike, 1912-1914: A Study of an Organizational Strike" *BC Studies* 45 (Spring 1980). Helpful also were Lynne Bowen, *Boss Whistle: The Coal Miners of Vancouver Island Remember* (Lantzville, 1982); H.A. Logan, *Trade Unions in Canada: Their Development and Functioning* (Toronto, 1948); D.E. Isenor, E.G. Stephens, D.E. Watson, *One Hundred Spirited Years: A History of Cumberland 1888-1988* (Campbell River, 1988); Fox, *United We Stand*. Also, UMWA District 28 Papers, Washington, DC, has fragmentary records. The causes of the strike are well set out in transcripts of hearings before the (BC), Royal Commission of Labour, BC Archives GR 684, Boxes 1-4. Two royal commissions dealt with the strike: (Canada), In the Matter of the Coal-Mining Labour Troubles on Vancouver Island, 1912-1914, and the Industrial Situation Connected Therewith; (BC), Royal Commission on Labour, 1912-1914. Another royal commission, (BC) On Vancouver Island Riots, 1913-1914, is largely concerned with an itemized list of property damages awarded. The (BC), Royal Commission on Coal and Petroleum Products, Volume 2 (1937) and Volume 3 (1938), deal with Canadian Collieries and the controversy about the 1910 sale and watered stock. Publications of note include: *B.C. Federationist*, 6 January, 13 July, 27 July, 3 August, 21 September, 5 October 1912; 24 December 1920; *Mining, Engineering and Electrical Record*, 1 April 1915; Cumberland *Islander*, 1 April 1911; 10 August, 28 September, 5, 12 October 1912; Cumberland *News*, 28 March, 8 November 1911; 25 September 1912; *The Times*, London, 20 March 1915; Nanaimo *Free Press*, 5 July, 20, 25, 27, 28 September, 2, 5, 9, 12 October, 1912. Subsequent issues of these and other publications deal with further developments in the strike, especially the Nanaimo *Free Press* for coverage of the August 1913 riots and later court cases; BC Archives, NW 971.35, C197a, Third annual report to shareholders of Canadian Collieries for the year ended 30 June 1913; Coulson in Pennsylvania, Virtual Museum of Coal Mining in Western Pennsylvania (http://patheoldminer.rootsweb.com). Eviction orders are in BC Archives, GR 1946, Box 1, Files 4 to 9.

[4]Nanaimo *Free Press*, 5 October 1912.

An opposite view was taken by the Cumberland *Islander*. In an editorial, the newspaper said most miners were not in sympathy with the strike and no secret ballot had been taken. As well, "Strikes, or cessation of work, never was of any value to the employer or employee." The *Islander* said: "The present industrial deadlock is one of the most unfortunate instances of labour tyranny that has ever come to our notice. We often hear and read of the tyranny of capital, but we doubt if the annals of capitalism can show a more glaring example of despotism." Unions must choose as leaders "men of responsibility and sound judgment, capable of restraining and holding in check the rash and the headstrong, such as those responsible for the present crisis."[5] Thus one editorialist summarized the great divide that lay behind the 1912-1914 strike for union recognition.

Fresh to activism, Goodwin worked mostly in support of the Socialist Party of Canada but also became active in the union, attending two conventions of the BC Federation of Labour and a convention of UMWA District 28. Just before the strike began, he wrote in the *Western Clarion*, the SPC's newspaper, about the spirit of revolt because of miserable working conditions. "Now, then, we know that all this misery is the outcome of someone's carelessness, and that someone is the capitalists, those who own the machinery of production. Now, as this class of parasites have been living on the blood of the working class, they are responsible for the conditions existing at the present time," wrote Goodwin, under the headline "The Iron Heel." What was to be done? "In order to throw this system over we have got to organize as a class and fight them as class against class. And so I say we have got to back our forces against them, and our weapons are education, organisation and agitation ... "[6]

Halfway into the strike, he wrote under the headline "Capitalism the Leveller" that the institutions and values of society were based on property rights that kept the working class in subjection. He called for the abolition of the capitalist system. Drawing on his strike experiences, he wrote: "When we find the workers howling about not getting 'justice' and that it is 'not right' — that is proof that they do not understand the class nature of society. It has been in evidence during the coal strike that this sentiment is nothing but a sham, for those that have [been] brought up before the court and are strikers are given the maximum penalty, while those that are helping the masters to defeat the strikers are let off with the minimum penalty — showing conclusively that the courts are at the disposal of the master class."

Goodwin was apparently referring to police and court responses to occasional disturbances in the strike because his comments were published just after the serious riots but — and here he was certainly being prophetic —

[5]Cumberland *Islander*, 8 October 1912.
[6]*Western Clarion*, 10 August 1912.

before severe sentences were handed down. Goodwin's Marxist political and economic message, sharpened by personal experience in evictions and strikes in Denaby Main, Glace Bay, and now Cumberland, had come full circle: "This is no sentimental movement, and the masters can howl; we do not hide our intentions, for we are what they have made us — the dispossessed class that is out to overthrow them," he wrote.[7]

Goodwin himself was never charged with any offence though a Cumberland miner named Richard Goodwin was. The two men were not related. One of the Provincial Police constables stationed in Cumberland during the strike, Albert Thomas Stephenson, who later became chief constable for the Nanaimo district, said later that he had known Albert Goodwin and that his reputation was inoffensive.

The Socialist Party of Canada was a small Marxist party of probably never more than 2,000 disciplined, even dogmatic, members. But despite its small size, historian Desmond Morton writes, party members "would have a lasting influence on the tone and temper of the West Coast labour politics."[8] The party emphasized education and political action as the methods to achieve a society where the means of wealth production such as natural resources, factories, mills and railways would become "the collective property of the working class." Industry would be organized and managed democratically by workers and production would be for use instead of profit.

The party's guiding rule for considering legislation was simple: "Will this legislation advance the interests of the working class and aid the workers in their class struggle against capitalism? If it will, the SPC is for it; if it will not, the SPC is absolutely opposed to it." The SPC was founded as the Socialist Party of BC in 1901. Socialist members of the legislature, James Hawthornthwaite of Nanaimo and Parker Williams of Ladysmith, with independent labour MLA William Davidson from Slocan in the Kootenays, soon held the balance of power, enabling passage of progressive legislation such as the eight-hour workday for miners, amendments to the Coal Mines Regulation Act, protection of unions from damage suits, and the first Workmen's Compensation Act. Miners in BC and Alberta turned to the SPC in the first two decades of the 20th century.

The SPC held an influence far beyond its size in the trade union leadership. Prophetically, the SPC foresaw from 1909 war between Germany and Britain and attributed it to business trying to revive trade. War, the SPC said, "will claim as its victims countless thousands of our class in a quarrel that is not their's (*sic*), it behooves the workers not to be carried away by the frenzied clamourings of the interested advocates of war, the vaporings of capitalist 'statesmen' or the blare of martial music. In no conceivable manner,

[7]*Western Clarion*, 16 August 1913.
[8]Morton, *Working People*.

shape or form could the interests of the workers in any of the nationalities involved be furthered or protected by their participation in the conflict."[9] Although SPC members of the legislature supported restrictions on Chinese immigration, one of the leading domestic political issues of the time, the *Western Clarion*, official organ of the party, said capitalists were inflaming working class minds "with the idea that the Japanese, Hindo or Chinese working man coming to Canada, comes as an enemy to the white workers." The issue was cheap labour holding down wages, it said, not race.

The Cumberland local of the UMWA, in common with other unions, supported Asiatic exclusion but local president Joe Naylor distanced himself from the prevailing racism. He told the BC Federation of Labour he was under instructions from his local to vote for Asiatic exclusion. In January 1914, when the Chinese and Japanese were often made the scapegoats for the failing strike, Naylor said the Orientals "would not have gone to work until the white men had gone if they had been left to themselves." It was not the Chinese or Japanese "that are the curse of BC, it is the white men, and especially the men who have come from the same country as myself, and that is England, that are the real curse in this province, it isn't the Asiatics at all."[10]

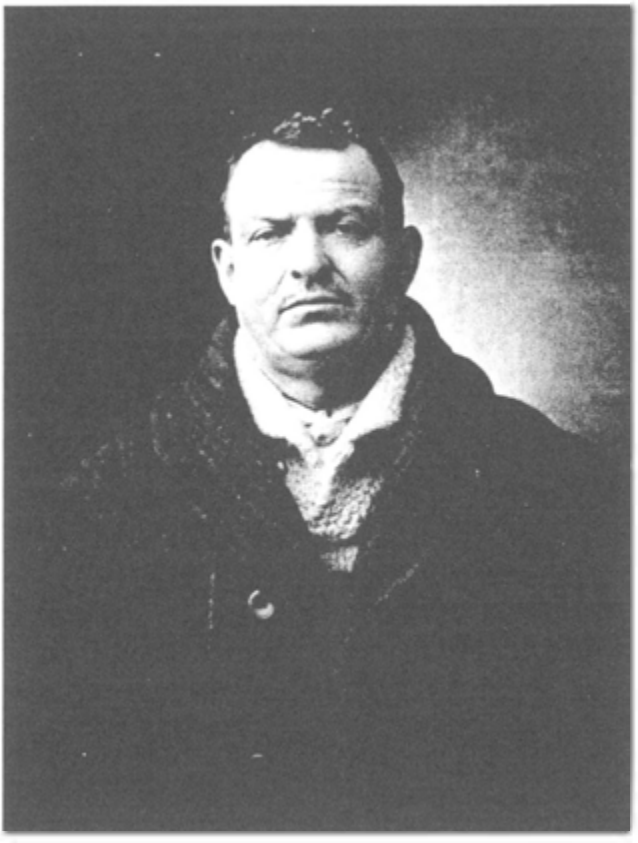
Within the SPC, there was a split between the Possibilists and the Impossibilists. The first favoured steps towards Socialism and some relief from present economic hardship while the latter were uncompromising Marxists who dismissed strikes as mere commodity struggles. Goodwin, a Possibilist, later found himself at odds with the Impossibilists.

In early 1914, Goodwin worked for four months as a party organizer. He got no pay but supporters provided room and board as he toured the southern Interior and Crowsnest Pass.

In one speech, he predicted a struggle in the very near future for supremacy between the governing and governed class. He was complimented for his knowledge and oratory. He was also, several months before the Island strike was called off, looking for work but there was none because of the economic depression. He was often asked about the strike. "This query gave me the chance to show that the forces of government had been used to beat the miners into subjection," he said, five months before the strike ended.

[9]Ross Alfred Johnson, "No Compromise — No Political Trading: the Marxian Socialist Tradition in BC," PhD dissertation, UBC 1975.

[10]*B.C. Federationist*, 5 April 1912; 6 February, 17 July 1914. For a more detailed look at the SPC, see Martin Robin, *Radical Politics and Canadian Labour 1880-1930* (Kingston, 1968); Paul Phillips, *No Power Greater: A Century of Labour in B.C.* (Vancouver, 1967); Peter Campbell, "Making Socialists: Bill Pritchard, the Socialist Party of Canada, and the Third International," *Labour/Le Travail*, 30 (Fall 1992); Johnson, "No Compromise"; Allen Seager, "Socialists and Workers: The Western Canadian Coal Miners, 1900-21," *Labour/Le Travail*, 16 (Fall 1985).



Joe Naylor, president of Cumberland Local 2299 of the United Mine Workers of America during the Big Strike 1912-14, and president of the BC Federation of Labour, 1917. He was one of the leaders of the One Big Union after World War I. *Cumberland Museum and Archives, C192-030.*

The courts had passed "inhuman sentences" on strikers but he said it would be "invaluable material as propaganda for the workers' movement (Socialism)." When told that the Methodist Church was taking up the question of Socialism at a meeting, Goodwin, an atheist, retorted that it was "very strange how the church was turning from an institution of superstition to one of learning ... to try to reconcile science with superstition was out of the question altogether." He also wrote, under "Christians and Socialists," that it was "ridiculous" for a Socialist to be a Christian.[11]

[11]Fernie *District Ledger*, 28 February, 7, 16, 21 March 11, 18 April 1914; *Western Clarion*, 11 April 1914; *Western Clarion*, 9 May 1914.

The strike on Vancouver Island ground on. But even its extension on 1 May 1913 to the mines in and around Nanaimo failed to dent the resolve of the companies, except at the Jingle Pot mine of Vancouver-Nanaimo Coal Mining Company where 350 UMWA members gained union recognition and a collective agreement in August 1913. In that month, serious rioting erupted at Ladysmith, Extension, South Wellington, and Nanaimo. Disputes quickly arose as to whether the incidents were provoked by strike-breakers or deliberately caused by strikers. The provincial government dispatched 1,000 militiamen into the coalfields. After several weeks, this number was scaled back to 265. But they remained until the end of the strike a year later. Canadian Collieries president Sir William Mackenzie and his partner, Sir Donald Mann, also benefitted by additional provincial government assistance for their Canadian Northern Railway and by a grant for $10 million for terminal facilities.

In all, 213 men were arrested and 166 of them were committed for trial as a result of the riots. In the end, 50 men were convicted and sentenced to prison terms. While many charges such as attempted murder and rioting were reduced to unlawful assembly and some sentences were simply time served (though this often amounted to many months), some stiff sentences in the two-year range were handed out. One of the two-year sentences went to Sam Guthrie, president of the Ladysmith local of the UMWA. Later, he was for many years the local member in the BC legislature representing the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, predecessor of the New Democratic Party. The most serious sentence for those charged immediately after the riots was four years given to Joe Angelo for six charges including rioting and riotously destroying property. He was the UMWA's Italian-speaking organizer from Bridgeport, Ohio, who came to Vancouver Island early in the strike.

Punishment would not come until after the strike for William (Tangle) Jackson, a bartender at the Grand Hotel in Ladysmith during the riots, and Mike Adams of Ladysmith, described in the press only as "an Austrian." For turning King's evidence against them, barber William Stackhouse — who had spent just over four months in prison for rioting — was not charged with dynamiting the home of Alexander Neil McKinnon, 34, of Ladysmith, a striker who had accepted UMWA benefits but returned to work while the strike continued. McKinnon retrieved the dynamite thrown through a bedroom window of his house on the late night-early morning of 12-13 August 1913 but it struck a blind. He picked it up again and it exploded, blowing off his right hand. Justice Denis Murphy, on 17 October 1914, sentenced Adams to seven years in the penitentiary and Jackson to six years. He said: "If I thought that you two men had concocted this crime without suggestion you would get a life sentence from me but I am convinced you were influenced

by other persons." He did not identify the "other persons" but Stackhouse soon left Ladysmith and did not return.[12]

One of the strikers sentenced to one year for throwing stones at the homes of strikebreakers in Ladysmith never left prison alive. Joe Mairs, 21, whose family hailed from Scotland and whose father was also a striker, held numerous trophies for bicycle racing. He died after serving five months of his sentence in Oakalla Prison on 20 January 1914 from tubercular peritonitis causing bowel obstruction. The coroner's jury, headed by James McVety, a leading trade unionist in Vancouver, was critical of the several days it took for prison authorities to respond to Mairs' illness. But McVety said Mairs had previously been operated on for the same problem "and nothing could be done for him." Dr. J.S. Conklin also said, "an operation would have been useless." The funeral for Mairs on 25 January 1914 was the biggest in Ladysmith and Thomas Doherty, acting president of Local 2338 of the United Mine Workers of America while Sam Guthrie served his prison sentence, led the graveside service. The union erected a monument above Mairs' grave that still dominates Ladysmith cemetery. The inscription reads:

> *"Remember me as you pass by,*
> *"As you are now so once was I.*
> *"As I am now soon you will be*
> *"Prepare for death to follow me.*
> A martyr to the noble cause — the emancipation of his fellow man.
> Erected by his brothers of District 28, UMW of A.[13]

The riots produced opposite views perhaps best summed up by Judge Frederick Howay, who sentenced the strikers, including Mairs, who chose trial without jury, and John Wallace deBeque Farris, one of the lawyers for the miners and a leading Liberal, later the first minister of labour in BC, then attorney-general and a senator.

Said Howay: "This was not an ordinary riot. It was not a sudden ebullition of pent-up feeling but shows all down the line a deliberate scheme, a

[12]"Strike on the Island," Victoria *Times Colonist*, 23 March 1997; (BC), Royal Commission on Vancouver Island Riots: Claim for damages by Alexander Neil McKinnon, BC Archives, GR 518, Box 2, File 34; Ladysmith *Chronicle*, 11, 25 October 1913; 4 April, 25 August, 1, 9 September, 17 October, 17 November 1914; 14 July 1966; Vancouver *Province*, 2 September, 15 October 1914; Nanaimo *Free Press*, 9, 14, 17, 25 October 1913.

[13]"Prison Martyr: the death in Oakalla of Joe Mairs," Victoria *Times Colonist*, 30 March 1997; Ladysmith *Chronicle*, 27 January, 8 August 1914; "Mairs, Joseph." *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Volume XIV 1911-1920 (Toronto, 1998).

design from one end to the other. The riots at Nanaimo, South Wellington, Extension and Ladysmith were all for one purpose, were simultaneous and were carried out with one line of action. Bombs were thrown, property destroyed and peaceful citizens made to flee for their lives and a persistent state of terrorism."[14]

Farris, in his famous two-hour Address at the Labour Temple Forum in Vancouver in 1915, after the strike, indicted the Conservative provincial government. "I have a grave charge to make against the government ... I leave it to you to reach a verdict of guilty or not guilty: That the miners on Vancouver Island have been unfairly treated; that there has been a failure to enforce the proper precautions for the safety of human life in these mines; that the government of this province is responsible; that there has been, and there is, a bond of sympathy and understanding between the coal mine operators and the government of this province, which is a menace to the interests of labour, and a crime against the coal miners and their families." Disagreeing with Judge Howay, Farris said that in August 1913 "human endurance could stand it no longer and they got mad." The men "had become so desperate, from the conditions existing and the high-handed treatment they were receiving, that these well-known riots started." He blamed the coal companies and the government.[15]

Rev. John Hedley of the Haliburton Street Methodist Church in the south end of Nanaimo, where many miners lived, was similarly sympathetic to the miners. Men were arrested on doubtful and trivial charges, he said, and there was a breakdown of regard for law and justice. "As far as the miner can see the law and the administration of law exists solely for the protection and help of the mining companies. All loyalty to the state must vanish when it is recognized that the state does not stand for justice or fair play," he said.[16]

In many ways, as production picked up, the strike was lost before the riots in August 1913. The riots became the symbolic turning point. Manager Coulson, who led the opposition to unionization, left Canadian Collieries late in 1913 because of ill health.[17] By the following June, the UMWA had spent well over $1,000,000 without immediate practical result and needed to end the strike. The provincial government also wanted the strike over.

Premier Richard McBride communicated with Canadian Collieries of Cumberland and Extension, Pacific Coast Coal Mines of South Wellington

[14]Ladysmith *Chronicle*, 25 October 1913.
[15]*B.C. Federationist*, 21 January 1916.
[16]"The Labor Trouble in Nanaimo District: An Address Given Before the Brotherhood of Haliburton Street Methodist Church," (undated, but after the riots), by Rev. John Hedley, BC Archives, NWp 971.7, H455.
[17]Cumberland *Islander*, 6 December 1913.

and Western Fuel Company of Nanaimo suggesting it was in the interests of everyone that the strike be called off. After discussions, McBride communicated with strike director Frank Farrington the companies' proposal to re-employ strikers "without discrimination and as rapidly as physical conditions of the mines will permit." The companies also said they would "so long as the best interests of the properties under their control may be fully conserved" not employ new miners until strikers had been reinstated "provided, however, that in each and every case due regard be had for a proper standard of efficiency." The companies conceded that the miners had the right to join the UMWA "and the companies shall not discriminate against any of the men because of their affiliation therewith. This, however, is not to be understood as a recognition in any respect by the companies of the United Mine Workers of America." Farrington, with little bargaining power, could only accept. But he sought assurance that strikers would be rehired before new miners were hired. McBride told him that the companies replied that rehiring would be done in good faith.

By any measurement, the proposed settlement was a defeat for everything strived for over almost two years and on 20 June 1914 the miners voted 1,464 to 206 to reject it. Debate continued. A special convention of the BC Federation of Labour, at which Goodwin was one of four delegates from the Cumberland UMWA local, was held 13-15 July 1914. By a vote of 48 to 36, delegates agreed to a referendum vote by all affiliated unions on a call for a general strike to support the miners. But 21 of the 48 "yes" votes came from delegates of striking UMWA locals. It was the fourth general strike call during the miners' strike. The first, for a 24-hour general strike, came at the BC Federation of Labour convention in January 1913 from the Cumberland miners, but it was defeated. That was the first specific demand in BC for a general strike. The July 1914 convention decision provided for four organizers to fan out to get support for a general strike. But on 18 August 1914 the federation announced it was not going to give the result of the vote (which, it disclosed next year, had been defeated) and would not take any action.

The strike was now very clearly over: The miners voted next day 1,030 to 363 to accept the settlement they had rejected on 20 June and the strike was formally called off on 20 August 1914. Premier McBride had assured the union earlier: "From my conferences with the operators I feel personally convinced that they will spare no effort to carry out in full sincerity the spirit of these proposals, and that they have no intention of evading anything fair and reasonable in the undertaking they agree to give in the event of such proposals being accepted." Within months, UMWA leaders accused the com-

panies of reneging on the agreement by hiring new employees in preference to some strikers.[18]

Farrington, who started work in the coal mines of Illinois in 1882 at the age of nine, told international president John White that the outcome "will not be satisfactory in any respect, nor such as will reward those splendid men for the sacrifices they have made, nor compensate them for the fight they have fought so courageously and well." The union was "surrounded by a combination of insurmountable obstacles that leave us no choice but to accept terms that are far short of our expectations." However, "the educational effect of the strike and the experience gained by the men involved has been such as must eventually result in a betterment of their condition. While, on the other hand, the penalty paid by the companies and the government for our defeat has been so heavy as to make both hesitate and make a reasonable effort to avoid future trouble with the United Mine Workers of America."

He told White that he had made it clear to the miners that the agreement "meant absolutely nothing for them; that under the terms submitted by the mine owners it was entirely within the hands of the companies to sift out the men at will; I pointed out the financial position of the International Union and made it clear to the men that it would be practically impossible for us to continue financing the strike much longer." He listed these reasons for contributing most to "our failure" in the strike: Oriental labour; importing cheap coal from New Zealand, Australia, and Japan; industrial depression; the provincial government which assisted the companies to break the strike; and the use of armed forces. He opposed a general strike as impractical.[19]

Robert Foster, District 28 president and a former Cumberland miner, said later the strike was lost because the companies got enough replacements to operate the mines. He too opposed a general strike, saying it would not stop the strikebreakers. "It was impossible to reach the thing with a general strike or any other kind of strike," he said. Foster said the provincial government "established a ring of police around the Vancouver Island mines, and made it impossible for our men to visit the men shipped in there or to inform them of the conditions or what we were fighting for on Vancouver Island."[20]

[18]Wargo, "The Great Coal Strike"; Margaret Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History* (Vancouver, 1958); Ladysmith *Chronicle*, 11, 25 October 1913; 25 August, 1 September, 17 October 1914; Nanaimo *Free Press*, 14, 17 October 1914; *B.C. Federationist*, 17, 24 July 1914; Fernie *District Ledger*, 22 August 1914.

[19]UMWA District 28 Papers, Farrington to White, 19 June 1914.

[20]Glenbow Museum and Archives, Calgary, UMWA District 18 Papers, File 23, 12th annual convention of UMWA District 18, Lethbridge, Alta., 15-24 February 1915, transcript pages 246-7; *B.C. Federationist*, 21 January 1916.

The remaining imprisoned rioters were released very shortly after the strike was called off. Farrington had earlier received what he called Premier McBride's "solemn promise" that if there was a return to work, "he would set machinery at work to secure the immediate release of our men in prison, Angelo included."[21] The last man to be released was Angelo, on 25 September 1914, and he was immediately deported to the United States. The amnesty did not include Adams and Jackson who were yet to face trial and go to prison for dynamiting McKinnon's house.

The strike was over. And World War I had just begun.

[21] Farrington to White, 19 June 1914.