

Estevan Mercury

Sept. 3/31

Molloy Will Study Situation In Mines

Sept. 3/31
Commissioner of Labor
Arriving This Evening
to Attempt Adjust-
ment.

In a statement over long-distance telephone at 3.00 o'clock this afternoon, Hon. M. A. MacPherson, attorney-general for the province, announced that Thos. M. Molloy, Commissioner of the Department of Labor, will make a complete investigation of the situation that has developed in the mines of this district.

This decision was reached at a special meeting of the Cabinet which went into session at 1.30 o'clock. Mr. Molloy was to leave immediately for Estevan, and will arrive this evening. He will study the differences which have arisen between the coal operators and the miners, and will, if possible, arrange an adjustment between them.

A conference between its representatives and the coal operators of the district has been called for this, Thursday, evening by the newly organized local branch of the Mine Workers' Union of Canada, at which proposals for the improvement of wages and working conditions in the Coalfields will be submitted.

James Sloan of Calgary, Dominion president of the miners' union, has been the leading spirit in the formation of the local branch, which now boasts over 600 members. "There will be nothing unreasonable in our demands," he stated again in an interview on Tuesday, "but if we can't get them we may have to take united action." Over his signature the following letter has been sent by registered mail to each of the district's coal operators:

7.30 Tonight

"At a meeting held at Bienfait on August 30, 1931, comprised of committees representing the employees of all mines in this district, which have now formed themselves into the Mine Workers' Union of Canada, I was instructed to request you to be present at a joint conference of all operators and miners' representatives, for the purpose of reaching an agreement on hours, contract and day wage rates, and housing and working conditions in and around the mines in this district.

"The Conference will be held in the Town Hall at Estevan on Thursday, Sept. 3, at 7.30 o'clock. "You are urgently requested to attend."

It was learned by The Mercury this morning that the operators of the larger mines of the field, representing over 90% of the total output, would refuse to attend the conference and were notifying Sloan to that effect today. One of them expressed his attitude as follows: "We will not meet Sloan or any other representative of an organization such as his, that by his own statement boasts a direct connection with the 'entire workers' Unity League and the Red Internationale of Soviet Russia.' We have, at any and all times, been willing to meet the employees of our company to discuss any grievances or complaints. This policy we will continue to follow, and welcome discussing matters of mutual interest." This, it is found, is the attitude of the majority of the operators.

Denies Red Connection

Sloan vigorously denies the "Red" connection attributed to his organization. The Mine Workers' Union of Canada, he says, is directly linked up with the Red Internationale of Labor Unions. This latter body, he declares, has no political affiliations, and is not a branch of the Communist party as has been stated. He claims to be interested solely in securing "their rights" for the miners of the district. In an address last week he branded working conditions here as "deplorable." Miners were not getting credit for all the coal they dug; they were being cheated on the tally sheets. Many were working fourteen and sixteen hours a day. They were forced to deal at mine company stores where, Sloan charged, mistakes in addition of their accounts often cost them as much as \$10.00. Single men who lived anyplace but in the mine boarding houses had to pay an overhead tax of \$1 a month. Steady workers were constantly in debt to the mining companies, and many of them had labored month in and month out without receiving any cash at all. These were some of the grievances held by the miners against the operators which will be covered in the proposals the Union will present tonight.