

Star-Phoenix,

Oct. 6/31

Miners Describe Their Star-Phoenix Oct. 6/31 Grievances At Hearing

Canadian Press

ESTEVAN, Sask., Oct. 5.—When employees of the Bienfait mine protested against alleged bad working conditions, the invariable reply of the management was to the effect, "If you don't like it, pack your tools and get out," it was charged by witnesses before the royal commission investigating the Estevan-Bienfait strike situation here today.

The inquiry opened at the court house with His Honor Judge E. R. Wylie presiding. An order-in-council bearing the great seal of Canada and the signature of the Earl of Bessborough, governor-general, was read by W. H. S. Glew, announcing His Honor's appointment as a commissioner to fully investigate the causes and circumstances leading up to the strike, which is now 28 days old.

TO LAST A MONTH

Two of the 20 employees of the Bienfait mine who will give testimony, were heard today. One of them had not completed his statement when His Honor called an adjournment late in the afternoon. Men from six deep seam mines of the field will appear during the hearing which, it was estimated tonight, will last about 30 days.

In another room at the court house Tuesday morning miners and operators will meet to draw up a temporary agreement by which the men will return to work pending the commission inquiry. The conference is slated for 10 o'clock, and there was every indication this evening that it would be successful.

The two witnesses who gave evidence were J. H. Harris and Harry Hesketh. The latter is secretary of the local branch of the Mine Workers Union of Canada. Harris and Hesketh both stated that, of each car of coal which passed over the tippie scales from the diggings, 950 pounds was deducted for slack. This was unfair, they claimed, because the coal was forked by the miners when it was loaded and the deduction was far in excess of the actual slack weight. They contended that wage scales should be on the basis of all coal loaded, regardless of slack. They also charged that, although cars were often loaded as heavily as three tons, the tippie records never credited them higher than two tons.

"No matter how we bank them up," Hesketh said, "they are still two tons."

"Black damp", a poisonous gas found in old workings at the mine, had been another grievance contributing to the strike, the witnesses claimed. Ventilating fans to clear the air in the mine were not properly located, and were not operated often enough, with the result that the men often had to leave their work for short intervals on account of the impure atmosphere.

The miners received no pay for bailing out water each morning from the "rooms" in which they worked. This often took from 30 minutes to an hour. Nor was any remuneration received for timbering the roof of the "room" or re-

moving "clay falls" from the tracks, it was claimed. These were injustices causing discontent among the men, witnesses stated. Men who had protested against conditions had been discharged and "blacklisted" among the operators of the field.

Owing to the fact that neither Harris nor Hesketh had completed their evidence when the commission rose, there was no cross examination by W. W. Lynd, K.C., representing the deep-seam operators. Presentation of evidence was conducted by W. J. Perkins, crown prosecutor and counsel for the commission. The provincial government has offered to provide counsel for the miners, but tonight they had not named an attorney.

TROUBLE AT COAST?

REGINA, Oct. 5.—Thirty men of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, who arrived in Estevan last Tuesday evening to reinforce the police contingent against further strike outbreaks will entrain Monday afternoon for Vancouver under command of Inspector Carnock, according to word received here today.

Rumors of rioting at Vancouver are said to be the cause of their departure. The exodus of these men will reduce the police strength at Estevan to 50.