Miners’ Struggles in Western Canada: Class, Community, and the Labour Movement, 1890–1930

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Introduction

A study in “class, community, and the labour movement” in the context of the Canadian mining West confronts formidable obstacles, both empirical and interpretative. The canvas is as vast and geographically diverse as the territory upon which mining capital and labour were imposed, and that largely during the period under review. Unlike the highly concentrated, single-sector coal-mining communities of the East, the miners of the Far West were scattered among hundreds of mining camps, industrial villages, cities and towns in the coalfields of Alberta, and the coal and metalliferous mining areas of British Columbia. One may speak in very general terms of the expansion of a mining frontier, yet we must look also at the situation of local communities at various points on the compass of industrial growth and decline which, together with the wider transformation, structured their collective response. Economic and technological developments, as opposed to the exhaustion of resources, dictated the cycles of industrialization and deindustrialization in western mining; these were influenced, moreover, by the constraints of the ‘staples’ economy of the region. A shifting and often chaotic demographic picture is further complicated by the waves of migration and immigration that washed over the region from 1880s to the 1920s, leaving the western miners with a legacy of cultural fragmentation almost without parallel in Canadian industrial history.

Canada’s mining East produced not only a more homogeneous working class culture, but has generated a historiography that yields little or nothing in its sophistication to the Briton or the American. But the ‘new’ labour history in Canada has largely passed by on the other side of western workers in general, and the miners in particular. Their record is rich, but a modern historiography has been slow to develop. The most common theme in the ‘first generation’ of Canadian labour history which touch upon the subject are attempts to ‘explain’ largely assumed phenomena of class
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consciousness, militancy, and radicalism, in terms of the categories of political economy or industrial relations theory; "the peculiarities of western Canadian capitalism exemplified by the naked exploitiveness of the mining camps and the transparent interlocking of capital and the state"; or the "sorry shibboleths" of western exceptionalism, which have paradoxically missed most of that which is important and distinctive about western labour history: labour's role in creating a new society. More desultory debates over the "origins of western radicalism," however, are not needed. In the context of mining history, there is a need to unravel the thread of working-class experience from the tapestry of myth and folklore (both popular and academic) surrounding the miner as 'archetypical proletarian', here as elsewhere, and to uncover a human landscape from the overburden of untested hypotheses about life and labour on the industrial Canadian frontier. This paper asserts the prior necessity of a new empirical framework for discussion, and makes a small contribution towards that end, emphasizing the context and contours of miners' struggles in the region, 1890-1930. It seeks to call attention to, rather than provide answers for, the problems and questions arising from a vital and important chapter in Canadian working class history.

I

The quantitative methods of North American social history have scarcely been brought to bear upon and are in any case difficult to apply to studies of mining or other communities in the Canadian West. The resulting lack of basic information has allowed free rein for all manner of uninformed theorizing. Barriers to systematic research in western mining communities often seem insuperable but one historical geographer has recently stepped into the breach with a valuable study of industrial life in the Slocan Valley of British Columbia. Here, a number of small communities sprang up and within little more than a decade had been just as swiftly marginalized in the wake of the great Silver Boom of the 1890s. Save for a few localities favoured by geological conditions and investment decisions, this appears to have been a fairly typical pattern of boom-and-bust in hardrock mining communities which has done much to shape essentially negative historical impressions of all western mining communities. Even in the short life-span of industrialization in the Slocan, however, it created a complex and differentiated social structure, with a dense network of institutions of which, for the miners, the most important was the trade union. Its function was not so much collective bargaining — there was no important strike in the Slocan country after 1901 — but the administration of health and welfare, insurance and compensation matters, and other apparently benevolent activities. That was the Western Federation of Miners, "Federation of Dynamiters and Murderers" or
radical vanguard of the “resource proletariat”, depending on one’s point of view; the author of this study, Cole Harris, was not testing hypotheses about the western working class. The nature of his sources meant that as much if not more information was forthcoming about the resident middle class in the industrial community than about the miners — a revision of received wisdom insofar as middling strata are usually assumed not to have existed at all in the “totally polarized” environment of the western mines, where miners comprised an “isolated mass” par excellence.12

The apparent lack of militancy among the miners remains to be accounted for. The presence of moderating social institutions and the population of non-miners and non-working class citizens does not, however, seem to have greatly altered the miners’ ‘radical’ political outlook. Harris notes the millenarial ideology of the socialist movement13 that arose like a phoenix in the mining West after 1900 (Figures, 7,8). Sandon, the Slocan Valley community where miners were concentrated, returned a strong majority for the radical Marxist Socialist Party of Canada in the Dominion elections of 1908. New Denver, its predominantly middle class neighbour, returned less than a fifth of its ballots for socialism, although here was situated a tiny fragment of the radical petty bourgeoisie in late nineteenth-early twentieth century British Columbia: a class whose contribution to socialism and the SPC was considerable, though usually overlooked. The New Denver contingent would certainly have been overlooked if not for the fact that the Slocan author’s grandfather was its leading light! It is very difficult for an outside researcher to penetrate the external surface of these small towns. But to return to the methodological point at hand, had we not known something about the social structure of Sandon and New Denver, we would, surveying the results of the election in 1908, have been led to totally false conclusions about miners’ response to socialism in two adjacent silver camps.14

The geographer in question was armed with little more than an intimate knowledge of his community, a large group of interviews heroically and systematically conducted, and sources of indifferent quality, such as local directories. Directories are, in fact, available for dozens of western Canadian mining towns in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Attempting at first to enumerate all residents, they later evolved a strict formula that excluded all miners from enumeration: a measure of the miners’ migratory ways, the growth of the mining population, and emerging class antagonism. The one thing these directories do show is the futility of theories of ‘polarization’ and the ‘isolated mass’. The commercial, professional, and other non-mining classes leap off their pages, and if anything, there appears to be an inverse correlation between the weakness of middling strata in a given community, and radical attitudes among miners in that community. These middle class documents also negative the false assumption that non-British ethnic groups formed an
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undifferentiated proletarian mass in mining communities, and finally they
document a certain amount of upward mobility among miners.5

Studies based on such sources, of course, are inevitably limited. Harris
points out that information on the background of immigrants to New
France is easier to obtain than the equivalent for immigrants to British
Columbia. Through various expedients Harris was, however, able to piece
together a collective portrait of the industrial population in the Slocan
Valley which looks like a very diverse mosaic including, among other
fragments, a large slice of "Old Ontario". Our geographer was
unfortunately reluctant to confront the historians' catechism that British
Columbia's "Inland Empire" was for all intents and purposes an American
colony. This particular thesis gained prominence in the days when
Canadian historical research was primarily funded by U.S. endowments,
tended to emphasize the contributions of American capital, and the
"mingling of the North American peoples." It gained a new dimension in
labour history when scholars finally discovered movements like British
Columbia's metal miners' District 6 of the Western Federation of Miners,
logically assumed to be the other side of America's capitalist coin. But were
they in fact? R. Parmeter Pettipiece, journalist tribune of the Western
Federation in British Columbia, an eclectic socialist whose paper, the
Lardeau Eagle had a wide influence in the hardrock mining community,
came from Old Ontario. So did Chris Foley, then the leader of District 6,
whom Pettipiece and the Eagle nearly elected to Parliament in 1900, on the
strength of the largest single vote for any Labour or Socialist candidate in
the mining West under manhood suffrage5 [Figure 8]. These men had
their own ideas about the sources of oppression in the hinterland.
Pettipiece, very Canadian in this, blamed deteriorating class relations on
the greed and incompetence and of British capitalists who bought out the
practical entrepreneurs of the American-owned mines and replaced them
with a horde of "English chappie clerks [who] assume a know-it-all
attitude, adorn themselves with yellow leggings... and look upon the
miners as so much cattle." There was a grain of truth in such critiques,
which cannot, however, detain us here.7 The point is about problems of
interpretation of a labour and socialist movement in working-class milieu
which remains at best unclear.

Dominion census-takers canvassed western mining areas once a decade
from 1881 onwards. Miners appear as a category in the published reports in
1891 and different categories of miners ten years later (Figure 3–5). Not
until 1911 is any information given about their status, immigrant or
foreign-born; not until 1921 is there any information on national origins of
the immigrant majority of the miners. Without the manuscript of the
census, knowledge of even such a simple but vital matter as the ethnic
background of the mining population is, to borrow the phrase of the once
well-known but long forgotten 'miners' leader Frank Sherman, (founding
president of District 18, UMWR, 1903–1909) impossible of achievement.
Fortunately, in 1986, the Federal government waived the customary 100-year rule of confidentiality over such documents, and released the second of the two relevant nineteenth century census manuscripts. In just a few years a wealth of new information about the industrial community, at least for the nineteenth century, has become available. Herein lies some potential for a systematic approach to the social history of mining in the region, notwithstanding the immutable flaws and many imperfections in such sources and methods. Equipped with only hand techniques, we have chosen to make an initial sally into the best of two manuscripts available, that for 1891.

The census of 1891 has the saving grace of having canvassed a coal-mining area on Vancouver Island which had already made the transition to industrial capitalism. The area was pulled into development by its coastal location which gave access to markets, labour, and technology which were denied other regions before the advent of the railways, but also pushed forward by state policies and entrepreneurial designs.

The Island is best known for its infamous nineteenth century robber barons, the Dunsmuir clan. This family, of apparently modest origins in the Scottish coalfields, was endowed with most of the Island's natural resources by the generosity of the John A. Macdonald Tories, and a supine 'non-partisan' provincial government at Victoria, which nevertheless overrode Robert Dunsmuir's strident objections and passed, in 1877, a Coal Mines Regulation Act which was the first significant piece of legislation for Canadian workers west of Ontario. A common antagonism towards the Dunsmuir's pushed farmers, coal miners, an the urban petty bourgeoisie into a series of populist alliances, which after 1900 flowered into a durable socialist tradition for which the Island is also justly famous. The Dunsmuir's (colliery owners at Wellington, Ladysmith/Extension, and Cumberland in the period 1869-1910), however, are not the whole of the extraordinary story of industrial Vancouver Island. Another page or two was written by the Vancouver Island Coal Mining and Land Company (or New Vancouver Coal Company), colliery owners at Nanaimo in the period 1863-1903, and, an item of possible interest to a Welsh audience, the fictional Trencartha Tin Plate Works of Galsworthy's Strife. As far as transparent connections between capital and the state are concerned, both firms did very well, and together, they controlled the lives of virtually every collier on Vancouver Island in the late nineteenth century (in turn, about 60 percent of the 5,038 'miners' whose heads were counted in B.C. and the North West Territories by the 1891 census). So far as exploitation goes, we have it on the authority of Samuel Gompers that the Dunsmuir's were one of the most tyrannical and villainous corporations that ever cursed the New World. But the Vancouver Coal Company falls a little short on the count of naked exploitation; it was described by William Lyon Mackenzie King, who built his political career by interventions in the western mines and was certainly
The combination of 'liberal' policies pursued in a most illiberal local environment conspired to make the Vancouver Company's domain, the City of Nanaimo, the centre of nineteenth century labour activism in the mining West. On February 1, 1890, a local mass meeting attended by a thousand people founded the first permanent union of mine workers in Canada west of Springhill, Nova Scotia. The Miners and Mine Labourers' Protective Association of Vancouver Island appears to have closely resembled the Provincial Workmen's Association founded in Springhill only eleven years before. Both were expressions of the 'independent collier' who dominated a united front with common labour, with a vital exception that the practical prerequisite for the success of such a programme on Vancouver Island at that time was the total exclusion of one class of labour: the Chinese. Nanaimo and Vancouver Island lay right on the mainline of Asiatic migration to North America; in 1889 the Chinese made up over a quarter of the Island's 3,000-strong colliery labour force (Figure 3). The formation and policies of the MMLPA, together with the Nanaimo Assembly of the Knights of Labour, with whose activities it was designed "in no way to clash", were part of a remarkable campaign, whose targets were all mine owners and the provincial state, around the Oriental and other issues. Women's suffrage was raised, for example, as a rallying cry in the course of the whole community's failed strike struggle against the Dunsmuir's in 1890, which James Dunsmuir laid at the feet of "outside agitators" from Nanaimo, Rossland, Pennsylvania, Australia and elsewhere. Four hundred "miners of the Nanaimo district," not thirty of whom could be induced to vote for a Knight of Labour against Robert Dunsmuir in the provincial election of 1886, signed a petition for Chinese exclusion two years later, and two years after that, an MMLPA militant, Belfast-born Thomas Keith, was a member of the provincial parliament for the City of Nanaimo.

The most salient of these events, however, was the signing of a collective agreement between MMLPA and the Vancouver Coal Company on July 24, 1891, evidence perhaps of manager Samuel Robins' far-sighted policies, but more immediately of effective working-class power. It was the first formal agreement at these mines, in the field, and in the region. The agreement did not have to specify Chinese exclusion, already peacefully achieved, however painful a plank on the labour platform for that group of toilers who had suffered a disproportionate share of a large number of fatalities in the collieries and for precisely that reason were successfully portrayed to the public as a menace to "our personal safety." The agreement did not specify wages or conditions, which were set by the state of the trade and the customs of the workplace. Nor did it specify management rights, as would all future agreements of the United Mine Workers of America. It did specify an ironclad closed shop, which the
UMW would not achieve until the Second World War, together with a promise to address grievances by conciliatory means, but no "no-strike" pledge (taken by the UMW on more than one occasion). By a happy coincidence, the 1891 census in Nanaimo surveys a group of very sturdy independent trade unionists, the families that supported them, and even future leaders of the miners. Oscar Mottishaw, the pit committee-man at Cumberland whose sacking sparked the titanic "Vancouver Island strike" of 1912-1914, is listed as an infant in the City of Nanaimo in 1891.¹⁴

For all of the reasons listed above, any demonstrable facts about the people of Nanaimo should be welcomed by labour historians. The first fact we learned is that probably less than half of its four and half thousand inhabitants — Nanaimo was and would remain the largest of the coal-mining communities of the West — were directly dependent on the mines: 1,900 miners, miners' wives, and children, accounted for 43 percent of the city's population. The true mining population was only a little larger. Six Nanaimo miners were in jail on census day, and were excluded from the original calculation for arbitrary reasons. There were few supervisors and very few white-collar employees of the mines. A mere 21 men managed its affairs above and below; the workplace must have belonged to the 870 colliers. (Salaried employment in western Canadian mines will increase at about twice the rate of all employment from this point on.)¹¹ A small number of miners lived in non-mining families¹⁶ and there is a last group among the mining population, unattached females and their dependents, who cry out for attention we have not yet been able to give. A disaster in the Nanaimo No.1 mine on May 3, 1887 "cast a BLACK PALL over Nanaimo" and more than anything else, galvanized subsequent class actions.³⁷ The victims included fifty-one "Chinamen, names unknown," and ninety-seven others, whose names can be found. The Chinese apparently left no dependents on this side of the water. The others left forty-six widows and 126 orphans who received no state compensation; they did, however, receive some of Robins' charity and $70,000 in miners' relief raised in a continent-wide subscription by the Knights of Labor.¹⁸ Reports in the provincial press, condemned as sensational by the local press but undoubtedly accurate, had described their grief as "beyond portrayal": "Like Rachael of old, they refuse to be comforted." And these were not the only widows and orphans in a killer field, whose safety the nineteenth century state could not begin to secure in spite of excellent laws. The last of the big explosions in the Vancouver Island field occurred at nearby Extension in 1909, which claimed the lives of thirty craftsmen including most of the members of the Welsh Glee Club of Ladysmith, B.C.¹⁹

While miners' experience at the workplace was unique, it could not have comprised the whole of the working-class experience which found expression in local politics in this community; there was no other major industry apart from a thriving waterfront and hundreds of craftworkers.
Commencing on 5 December 1891, the miners' leadership met in regular Trades Council in Nanaimo, where the list of other nineteenth century organizations includes the Coal Trimmers, Longshoremen, Teamsters, Merchants, Employees, Engineers, Tailors, Blacksmiths, and Carpenters. Miners tended to live in one of three wards in the City of Nanaimo, 60 percent in the south ward, where Number 1 mine was located. This does not suggest a high degree of residential segregation among the miners. Ordinary miners would have rubbed shoulders with other members of the community in the fraternal organizations in which they are known to have been involved: the Ancient Order of Foresters, whose patron, Robin Hood, was celebrated in an annual demonstration; the Oddfellows, and a number of Masonic organizations which surfaced to bury their comrades in May 1887, among whom were men respectfully described in the local press as "some of our earliest pioneers and prominent citizens". The more active would have been found in the councils of the mixed assembly of the Knights of Labor (which lost one of its leaders, Samuel H. Myers, in the 1887 disaster), the related activities of the Nanaimo Reform Club, and other aspects of community life.

If Nanaimo in no way resembles the stereotype of the mining camp the 1891 census does support a couple of observations that have been made about workers on the industrial frontier. First, they were young. Leaving aside a dozen or so boys, whose employment was restricted (though not absolutely prohibited) by the 1877 law, 55 percent of the miners were aged thirty or younger. A three-fold expansion of colliery employment in Nanaimo during the 1880s, the 1887 disaster, and the exclusion of the Chinese had produced this age structure. Can it be doubted that a union dominated by men in their twenties did not have some peculiar features? Second, and related to the first, was the presence of a large minority of men who were single and unattached (43 percent), and another large minority, more or less the same people, who lived as lodgers in local boarding houses (40 percent). Were these representative of a nomadic class, the highly mobile kind of workers who would become the object of the IWW's compelling imagery of the rebellious wage slave who truly had nothing to lose but his chains? Perhaps they were; perhaps they were not. The answer lies in a closed archive, the census manuscript for 1901.

The other part of the colliery labour force was mostly comprised of men or boys who were members of local families. Forty-six percent were heads of households, which in this community implied a high percentage of home owners. While migration was, and would long remain, the more important mechanism in the operation of the labour market, even at this early date the mining workforce was beginning to reproduce itself. Six percent of the
Nanaimo miners in 1891 were miners’ sons who lived at home; 7 percent were men, mostly youths, who lived with other kin; 45 percent were married men or widowers, though 5 percent were married men with families elsewhere. Married men who lived with their spouses and a small number of miners who were single parents supported a total of 705 children, or about 2.5 per family. These children were more likely than not to have been born in British Columbia, or to have had siblings who were. The general conclusion is pretty clear. The colliery workforce falls into two broad categories, almost evenly divided: family men and their offspring, and a single, unattached men, with a marginal group falling between (Figure 1).

There is no particular reason to assume that the first group were immobile, but they were men with some sort of ‘stake’ in the community. The Vancouver Coal company was proud of its advocacy of working-class independence. The British-owned firm had kept itself afloat over several bad patches in the trade by selling most of its town lots and all its tied housing — a typical pattern of financial dealing among coal-mining companies, wherever they obtained freehold tenure from the Crown: which is to say that the bane, or boon, of company housing was a typically transitional stage in the evolution of most mining communities in the West. Unique to the Nanaimo experience was the policy of encouraging working miners to lease agricultural smallholdings on a company lands at rates as low as 50 cents per acre: part of a wider state-inspired scheme, yielding mostly indifferent results, to settle or resettle urban-industrial workers on “Five Acre Lots” and thereby spare the new province of British Columbia from the scourges of industrial poverty, unemployment, strikes, and presumably socialism. Robins observed the “excellent moral influence of the experiments” later in the decade. Such experiments, in the context of a generally low level of industrialization, where mining was never steady work and mining families (across the region) supplemented their incomes by petty agriculture, fishing, and jealously guarded hunting rights meant a basic trade-off for capital. Trade cycles and wage reductions were more easily endured; on the other hand, it became difficult, if not impossible, to literally starve a community into submission. Robins’ successors at Nanaimo, hard-driving scientific managers from the United States, would find this out in strikes from 108 days to fifteen months in duration in the period 1905–1914.

Nanaimo on the eve of the epoch of monopoly capital was, then, a relatively benign environment for the independent collier. The ethnic character of the colliery workforce was both cause and effect of this fact. Just over 60 percent of 1891 were immigrants from the British Isles, two-thirds of them English. Another large group of skilled immigrants were from Nova Scotia, 10 percent of the Nanaimo miners. All told, the Canadian-born (at 14 percent) outnumbered the American-born (a mere 7 percent) by a margin of 2:1 (Figure 2). That Nova Scotians have hitherto
been completely un-noticed by historians of western Canadian coal mining speaks, perhaps, to some pervasive colonial and regional biases. But there was also a strong tendency in western Canadian mining communities for provincial and national distinctions to be subsumed into a wider category of Anglo-Saxon or English-speaking miners — the British-born, old-stock Canadians and Americans. The Welsh (7.5 percent of the British or Irish-born in 1891) were not entirely spared the rod of ethnic condescension. A delegate of the District 18 convention of 1912 described his Welsh brothers as “not quite up to the English ways. They are good men for 'chewing the rag' and taking up grievances . . . but poor men on the Secretarial work.” This sort of thing paled by comparison, however, to attitudes of the skilled towards the unskilled: Mike and John, the proverbial Slavic-Italian immigrants. “I tell you just what is wrong with us,” another delegate at the 1912 convention frankly declared. “We live in a world by ourselves . . . we meet Mike and John in the street and we never even notice them.”

By just the same token, all other ethnic distinctions diminished to the status of friendly rivalry in the face of the common front that was created in Nanaimo and elsewhere against the “indispensable enemy,” the Chinese. “I do not think we have anything to fear from the Immigration Scheme of the Coal Operators,” suggested F.H. Sherman at convention in 1907, “so long as they confine themselves to bringing in miners from Great Britain, and other European countries (my emphasis) Asian immigration, on the other hand, is a most serious menace (and) every effort should be made to stop this class of immigration from coming to our shores.”

Ethnicity and cultural biases were complex phenomena that were quite adaptive to the environment.

The great migration from southern and eastern Europe that would later change the cultural face of the Western Canadian mining community had not yet commenced in earnest in the early nineties. Still, Nanaimo in 1891 had a somewhat cosmopolitan flavour, and the mining community at nearby Wellington seems to have been particularly so. The Miners and Mine Labourers’ Protective Association could not and did not ignore the European, even as it agitated against the Oriental. One pit committee in 1890 included John Suggett, apparently French, a German, a Belgian, and Italian, and one “Russian Finn”: a fairly representative cross-section of the smattering of non-English speaking nationalities in Nanaimo in 1891. Nanaimo in the nineties had only one organized ethnic group, and a very important one, the Finns, by far the largest ‘ethnic’ group in the local collieries (7 percent of the miners and 70 percent of all miners born in fourteen different European countries).

The Finnish experience nicely illustrates the conjunctures between ethnic identity and the response to industrial capitalism. The Finnish community in Nanaimo-Wellington grouped itself in temperance and improvement societies that became fertile ground for the preachings of Matti Kurikka, utopian socialist intellectual, at the end of the nineties.
Kurikka persuaded a large number of miners and mining families to join his communitarian colony up the coast on Malcolm Island, another agricultural experiment initially supported by the state, in 1900. But many remained, to proselytize (in the absence of a vanguard party) for an emerging secular religion among Finnish working-class immigrants based on the trinity of radical industrial unionism, Marxian Social Democracy, and socialist feminism, in descending order of their attractiveness to, and impact upon the wider community. This was a group with little industrial and no mining experience, which explains the partial exodus from the mines. But it became the hard, militant core of the miners’ movement on Vancouver Island. When shortlived coal miners’ District 7 of the Western Federation of Miners began to organize on the Island, ousting the MMLPA in the process, in 1902–3, its meetings were chaired by British miners, but convened in the Finn Hall.51

If Nanaimo in 1891 is at all representative, the data provides some basis of comparison with later changes and continuities in the region’s mining population. With the ‘new’ immigration of the Laurier Boom the percentage of native-born workers in the coalfields dropped below 10 percent in 1911, rising only slowly thereafter to 13–16 percent, according to the census reports for 1921 and 1931 (see Figures 3–6). Confirming our earlier impression, and for reasons that may only be speculated upon, the percentage of native-born workers in hardrock mining over the same period ranged from 19.5 to 40 percent between 1911 and 1931.52 Oriental Exclusion would be highly successful in hardrock mining and also Alberta coal-mining, but Asian-born workers accounted for one-tenth of the colliery workforce in British Columbia as late as 1931, nearly all of them concentrated on Vancouver Island, apart from Nanaimo itself. Most twentieth century mining communities, then, would be freed from the structured racial cleavages that tortured their nineteenth century counterparts, if that may be termed a measure of working-class effectiveness and a working-class achievement. Continental Europeans would comprise up to 57.5 percent of the industrial army, in the Alberta coalfields, but the data tends to discount the relevance to western Canada of the U.S. experience, and nativist theory of ‘slav invasion’. The radical restructuring of the workforce in many American mining communities made its own contribution to the historic failures of the miners’ movements led by John Mitchel and John L. Lewis.53

British immigration continued to far outweigh the contribution of any other single group, although the presence of the British-born can be seen to have diminished in each of the three census categories of regional mining employment — B.C. collieries, hardrock mines, and Alberta collieries — from between 20 percent and 48 percent in 1921 to between 25 and 42 percent in 1931. The British presence appears to have peaked at some point prior to the First World War. Unrest in the mines between 1900 and 1914 might be laid at the feet of British miners, but was not the direct outcome of
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a losing battle with Slavic or Italian competition. The British Columbia Labour Commission of 1913–1915! and voluminous police reports on the Vancouver Island strike of 1912–1914, emphasize the pivotal importance of the English-speaking class: a disappointing finding for the state. A payroll for the giant Crow's Nest Pass Coal Company in the B.C. interior for 1911 shows that 52 percent were English, Scots, or Welsh immigrants; another 4 percent "Canadians and Americans": 23.5 percent Italian, 16 percent "Slav"; and the remaining 4.5 percent belonging to other European nationalities, skilled immigrants from Belgium, Bohemia, Germany and France, and the Finns. This area was a hotbed of labour militancy almost from the moment of the creation of a local organization in 1899 that proudly called itself, after the fashion of the independent collier, the Gladstone Miners' Union. Yet 20 years later, had the largest component of its membership been so included, the Gladstone Miners' Union (from 1919 known as the Gladstone Unit of the One Big Union, Coal Miners' District No. 1) could well have been renamed the Garibaldi Miners' Union!

The Great War, rather than capitalist developments closer to home, appears to have had the most negative impact on the British-born community in the key coal-mining sector. In 1916, for example, the whole of the English-speaking class accounted for only 29 percent of the workforce at the Crow's Nest Pass Coal Company. "Enemy aliens" (a wartime class of a somewhat arbitrary nature that did not include, in this payroll document, the Bohemians, who were Austrian citizens, together with Russians, "Finlanders," Belgians, French and Italians) were almost as large a collectivity. Taking into consideration the industrial decline in this region after 1912, a thousand British-born miners had simply disappeared. The names of about forty of them are inscribed on the monument to the Great War dead in Fernie, B.C., which could indicate that at least half had enlisted, many never to return. *La Grand Guerre* similarly decimated the Franco-Belgian communities which at one time made up 10 percent of the whole population, and larger percentage of the coal miners, in mining communities in southwestern Alberta, where immigration had followed the flag of French mining capital after 1903. There, August 1914 was celebrated with squibs and speeches by representatives of all the Entente Powers, pro-war socialists (the majority, notwithstanding the dissent or divided stand of Finnish, Ukrainian, or Russian socialists, not to mention the Germans), 'loyal' nationalities from Austria Hungary, and of course the bourgeoisie. The wave of post-war militancy is most often connected in historians' eyes with the political activities of a handful of anti-war activists. Insofar as it was indeed connected with this most traumatic moment in the mining community's history, postwar militancy flowed instead out of complex of immigrant nationalisms and the well-founded conviction that miners had done more than their fair share in the "Great fight for Democracy."
Of the phenomenal transformation and capitalist expansion of the mining industry that occurred after 1891 we can but barely speak here. Hardrock mining areas produce the most dramatic reports. “During 1895”, Rossland, capital of the Inland Empire built on a complex of ores, “sprang from a few shacks to a town with a population various estimated at 2,000–3,000 inhabitants, and boasts of electric light, water works, and no less than four newspapers. . . The mining plants are of the most modern (type) and include the latest and best appliances.” Here, on, July 16, 1895, was chartered the first of thirty-two locals of Canadian Districts 6 and 7 of the Western Federation of Miners formed between 1895 and 1905. Alberta-based District 18 of the United Mine Workers of America (District 18, with one functioning local at Nanaimo, had paper jurisdiction over Vancouver Island), comprising as many as 40 to 50 locals in Alberta and southeastern B.C. between 1903 and 1925, emerged out of the opening the Crow’s Nest Pass coalfield, following the famous agreement of the same name between the Canadian Pacific Railway, and the Laurier government in 1897. Between 1898 and 1911 this region, straddling the border between British Columbia and Alberta, high in the Rocky Mountains, was flooded by at least 15,000 European settlers, over whom the native Indians are alleged to have cast a grimly prophetic curse of seven decades of “fire, flood, strife, discord, and want.” (It is more likely that the superstition of the miners created this tale, but the Kootenai people obliged their descendants by lifting the spell in a 1964 ceremony.)

The Crow’s Nest Pass became the largest single concentration of industrial population in the mining West before the War, and its working class community continued to be the fighting edge of western Canadian mining labour even after its economic promise was betrayed by capital and the state. Employment in the local mines and coking plants peaked at 4,997 in 1913, declining to 2,808 in 1919. Crow’s Nest Pass locals of the UMWA voted 2,350–73 in favour of the One Big Union and lined up for Bolshevism and workers’ control in the post-war general strikes. It was one of the few mining areas in all Canada where unionism survived the open shop drive, restructuring, and ‘cheap labour’immigration of the twenties, and Crow’s Nest Pass provided the bulk of the miner’s leadership in the West between 1900 and 1945. As the miners of Fernie developed the programme of international unionism on the lines of UMWA for the coal miners around the turn of the century, the miners of Blairmore, following the defeat of the OBU and the smashing of the impotent UMW bureaucracy by the mine owners in the twenties, developed the programme of the “Mine Workers of Union of Canada”—an idea that had first been mooted by the miners of the West, and should have been adopted by the miners of Canada, around 1908. This area is well remembered in the oral tradition. “(History) is distorted and I’m wondering how the Pass story is being told
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for the archives," I was asked by one of several respondents to a deliberately bad-tempered article in a local newspaper in 1986:

"Willing to talk to you anytime but warning you that most of my memory is impressions . . . I was born in Frank (Alberta) November 18, 1910. My parents came from some village in Cumberland, England. Furrneau was the name I heard. By 1912 we lived at the Lime Kilns between Frank and Bellevue where George Pattinson managed the plant. In 1922 George started a hardware store in Coleman. He was on the town council and was elected Mayor over Andrew Dow the "communist" candidate by a very narrow margin. When my father started his store he knew he had to cater to the 'ethnic' element in town. The establishment had furniture and carpets (although) the newcomers needed a kitchen table and a mattress. Because of the payroll we had good teachers and doctors. I met all the women in my store . . . I remember the Chataqua in Blaimore, dances, parties Badminton in the Miners' hall Sunday afternoons, skating, good movies in Bellevue. Life was sweet for a young person like me. I look at the skeleton of Coleman [where the last mine on the Alberta side, opened in 1905, shut down in 1979] and think of the town with 2 mines working a newspaper, and trains every day . . ."

From a middle class perspective, my correspondent recalled little about industrial relations except that "strikes were a plague", but from a woman's viewpoint, urged research into the fates of the survivors of the Hillcrest, Alberto explosion of June 1914 — the largest mine disaster in Canadian history, after which Nanaimo in 1887 comes second — which killed 189 men, half of whom left widows and orphans in the Pass. There is an intriguing history of "class, community and the labour movement" here, which remains to be told.60

VII

We leave these impressions for a final look at some of the structural dimensions of the miners' past: first the demonstrable fact that no regional perspective can actually encompass the sectional differences that may help to explain a basic fragmentation of mining labour in the West. As even the rawest sort of data on employment and production shown in Figures 3 and 4 suggest, the historical development of coal mining in British Columbia was not similar to the historical development of coal mining in Alberta. Falling employment and output, on a secular trend, is recorded in the B.C. coal industry even before the First World War, in Alberta, during the twenties and thirties. But as the census numbers and much better data on the annual average of employment calculated by the provincial mines departments also show, coal mining was and remained a major employer. Coal mining employment in British Columbia rose from 3,974 in 1901 to 7,130 in 1912, declining thereafter to 4,654 in 1930. In Alberta, the annual average begins in 1906 at 2,800, peaks in 1921 at 10,018 declining thereafter
to 8,889 in 1930. Hard rock mining (Figure 5) presents yet another picture again, and contrary to expectations raised by enthusiastic discussions of the northward expansion of the American hardrock “mining frontier”, it was not that important for western Canadian miners before the thirties. Hardrock mining was very important for Canadian and foreign capitalism, metals production accounting for 91 percent of the declared profits of B.C. mining companies in a fifty-year period beginning in 1897. But hardrock mining employed relatively few men, unlike the coal-mining industry (that was not a ‘staple’, but largely dependent upon the home market). Over the first third of the twentieth century, employment in hardrock mining was essentially static, in a range of 2,330 (the annual average for 1921) to 5,488 (for 1917), figures that illustrate the wild gyrations of the international metals-market. Averaging the annual numbers over two decades for which comparable data are available, 1906–1925, we find that hardrock mining accounted for only 21.5 percent of all mining employment in the two westernmost provinces.

The indices for metals-production are too complex to be summarized in a table, but the gross tonnage of ores produced in British Columbia increased from one to seven million tons a year between 1901 and 1929. This means that the productivity of the hardrock miner in British Columbia increased by 500 percent over three decades (that of the B.C. coal miner, by a slight 20 percent). Herein lies the basic difference between a traditional and a revolutionary mode of production. The first sustained a labour movement, the second destroyed one, though not without a fight, in the words of the Silverton Miners’ Union in 1899: “CROMWELL AND THE GOOD PEOPLE OF ENGLAND CUT OFF THE SACRED HEAD OF CHARLES THE FIRST . . . LET TYRANTS TAKE WARNING.” Hardrock mining either proletarianized or thrust off to the wings of history’s stage a mass of free miners and petty producers in the nineteenth century. In the early twentieth century, considering the miner, in the words of a resolution of District 6, “as so much machinery or some kind of animal that lives on black bread and hog’s fat, ” the industry deskillled and all but eliminated hardrock mining’s equivalent of the independent collier, the “self reliant miner, jack of all trades, master of several.” The Western Federation of Miners often look like the Chartists of the mining West, for the very good reason that “while struggling for a cooperative Commonwealth and the establishment of justice and equality among men” they were also struggling against the tide of Political Economy itself. Their critique of the orthodoxies of the day, the alleged benefits of Trade, Investment, and Immigration, ring true to the present day. “The higher wages and fewer hours that we favour would fill this country with the most intelligent, effective, and happiest workmen of the world, a citizenship to be proud of. The dollar-a-day labourers that would most encourage the capitalists would drive every self-respecting citizen out of the country, leaving only cabins here for houses, while palaces would be
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built in Spokane, Butte, Salt Lake and London.” Add Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, and New York to the list and that is more or less what happened.65

The coal mining industry did its looting, of course, and it was also more dangerous to the worker involved in it. Coal mining was, however, the more socially and economically rational activity (according to the precepts of the miner's moral economy). And sustained legislative and industrial pressure by the coal miners eventually brought the industry's 'casualties,' in the apt phrase of the state authorities, down to the level of the metalliferous mines, which were "comparatively light" [Figure 10].64 Mechanization made very few inroads into its conservative practice, with the one and important exception of the very same Nanaimo collieries that produced our 1891 sample. Here, after the turn of the century, the miners paid a heavy price for Chinese exclusion (or rather, the failure of the larger programme in the competitive Island field) by the introduction of even cheaper coal-cutting machines, that weakened, then destroyed, their once-powerful union.65 Apart from this example, it was only later and wider technological changes that eliminated the coal mines and miners with them. The Canadian railways played a particularly important role in killing off the independent collier in the West in the forties and fifties, after starving him progressively in the twenties and thirties.

The contours of miners' struggles in the region seem to reflect these cycles of industrial growth and decline, primarily in the coal mining industry, and the impact of technological change, primarily in hardrock mining. Industrial conflict was endemic in the mining industry, as the inevitably incomplete list of 250 strikes ad lockouts in Figure 6 reveals. There is no possible way of quantifying 'striker days lost' over the period 1890–1930, but we are probably in the region of twenty million, of which coal-mining disputes would have accounted for about 90 percent.66 Except for a period of high activity around the turn of the century, however, strikes were not a plague in the hardrock mining industry (as Cole Harris local study suggests). Most of the strikers after 1905, when the Western Federation of Miners in the major copper, silver, and lead mines of the Inland Empire were forced to accept some variant of the sliding scale or worse, occurred on the margins of the industry, in remote localities, and in the smelters, which were militant during the War.67 Not one miners' strike is recorded outside of the coal mining industry after 1921; with the failure of post-war insurgency led by the OBU, hardrock mining became a clear field for the open shop until the Second World War. The once-militant coal mines of British Columbia, where industrial decline was first in evidence, become largely quiescent after the War, with no strikes recorded after 1925. The coalfields of Alberta, the most heavily unionized sector of western Canadian mining, accounted for at least two-thirds of all strikes and lockouts involving miners in the region between 1890 and 1930.68 Alberta coal miners alone carried the tradition of western miners' militancy
forward to the end of the period under review. We can only speculate on
the underlying reasons: the relative economic vigour of Alberta coal
mining, and the presence of communities which had some ‘frontier’
characteristics, like the Drumheller Valley in the 1920s. “We owned that
valley, it belonged to us,” proudly recalled a former Communist militant
from the area in conversation some ten years ago. My informant was a very
Welsh immigrant who insisted, however, that he came out of a “very
religious Calvinistic Methodist family”, suggesting some process of
cultural and political syncretism at work in the western Canada of that
era.69

VIII

Doubtless it is in the realm of politics that the miners’ struggle of the era left
its most indelible mark, which had to be recorded and noticed by the state
and the bourgeoisie because the miners, to a remarkable degree, always
played by the rules of parliamentary combat. Regardless of party or
ideology, the rules of the game in the mining community were almost
always the same: “appeal to the reason of our men .. appeal to their class
instinct, to their class consciousness.”70 The opposition was always strong
and usually clever enough to appeal to some part of the miners’ class
instinct — and when that strategy failed there were always others:
condemnation of the miners’ leadership, the appeal to religious or ethnic
prejudice, drink, bribery, vote-rigging, threats and blandishments of all
kinds. The miners’ cause in politics was always hobbled by the salient fact
that not all miners had the vote, but we have been able to find only one solid
document on the thorny question of enfranchisement. There were 323
miners on the voters’ list for Nanaimo District in 1885. Miners comprised
47 percent of all electors, and the 203 enfranchised miners in Nanaimo City
represented 62 percent of the white males employed in local collieries in
1885.71

In that precise context the miners’ struggle for power in the region
began, a struggle that did result in the election of one miner Member of
Parliament, elected from industrial Vancouver Island on a straight Labour
ticket in 1900, and over a dozen provincial deputies, who were more easily
elected and also more useful to the miners on the questions pertaining to
state regulation of mines and protective labour legislation. B.C. coal miners
had straight class representation in the provincial house for all but four of
the forty years under review (1894–1898). Hardrock miners did less well,
having straight class representation for less than a decade (1903–1909), and
unlike the coal miners, they stopped running candidates after the War. The
picture is brightened again, however, by the Alberta coal miners, who had
straight class representation for 17 of the first 25 years of their provincial
legislature (1909–1913, 1921–30).72
Electoral success is the distinguishing characteristic of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century western Canadian mining community, occurring almost in a vacuum of successful parliamentary labour politics in the Dominion. What did it mean? The answer is unclear because, among other things, it cannot be found in miners’ history, but rather in the wider history of class, politics, Labourism, Socialism, Liberalism, Conservatism and non-partisanship in the region for which there are few fixed or relevant guideposts. We do know that electoral success, a very relative thing, was only the tip of a veritable iceberg of political organization in the mining districts. The mining politicians of the Canadian West tasted the fruits of office from an orchard tilled by thousands of independent labour or socialist campaigners in at least one hundred constituency elections between 1890 and 1930 (Figures 7,8). Eight-eight percent were provincial campaigns, where the rate of success was close to one in three. But a surprising 12 percent were Dominion elections, where the rate of success was less than one in them. Most of the Dominion efforts, and large percentage of the provincial ones as well, were purely propagandistic and educational exercises which were by no means cheaply bought at $200 to $250 a time, the minimum deposit, and lost goodwill, especially with Edwardian Liberalism in the Age of Laurier and King.73

The mining politicians were a rogue’s gallery for whom a collective biography might be useful. They ranged on the ideological scale from the tepid Tyneside liberalism of Nanaimo’s Ralph Smith, who promptly joined the Grit caucus in Ottawa after his election in 1900, to the very radical Marxism of C.M. O’Brien, a full-time agitator of no fixed address, prewar provincial deputy for Rocky Mountain Alberta, the Socialist Party of Canada’s favourite “Proletarian in Politics” and, incidentally, Ontario-born. The longest-serving of them, Fernie’s Tom Uphill, who spent thirty six years in the British Columbia ‘gas house’, as he called it, was the only miner who ever ran for the Tory party, before he found a winning formula as a one-man Labour Party, who lobbied for the interests of the bankrupt municipality, of which he was the former Mayor, for coal miners, and for Communists in Victoria. Another notable was Parker Williams, a Welsh miner, elected five times on the provincial SPC slate from industrial Vancouver Island, whom the Vancouver comrades called “a decent plug, but no socialist.” The most distinguished among them was James Hurst Hawthornthwaite, also of Nanaimo, son in law of Mark Bate, Sam Robins' predecessor as local mines manager: the Engels to Vancouver Island’s Marx, a fishmonger named E.T. Kingsley. He spent 15 years in Victoria and nearly made it to the House of Commons, running against Smith in the federal riding of Nanaimo in 1908. None of the mining politicians was a woman, but interesting to note, the first female legislator in British Columbia was a former miners’ wife whose husband and self rose to higher station, Mary Ellen Smith.74 Most of the political losers were fairly impressive figures as well, like F.H. Sherman, who at thirty-five years of
age was "fast approaching the status of a national character" and the successful leader of a successful trade union, exceedingly rare in the brutal environment of mining 'industrial relations,' which routinely destroyed unions, the men who led them, or both: by coercion, corrosion or corruption. Sherman, born in the Forest of Dean though "predominantly Welsh", was a former chapel preacher and Gladstonian liberal who predicted in 1904 that "Organized labor in Canada will follow the example set by the 'Old Country' and will strive to be represented in the councils of the nation". In 1908 he had his last chance, but missed it, by agreeing to run on the Socialist Party ticket in a hopeless Alberta riding. He wrote Hawthornthwaite during the campaign:

Dear Comrade: I am in the thick of the fight with good prospects of a heavy vote in Calgary riding. I am sending copies of correspondence in my possession which you can use and show the people of Nanaimo how they try to fix labour leader. I had the alluring prospect of a Liberal-Labor nomination held out with a senatorship dangling at the end Jim, you know how I feel and I would rather go down and out than be a second Ralph Smith. . . . that 'SKUNK'. Wishing to be able to see you in Ottawa, Yours in the Struggle, F.H. Sherman.71

Politics is about choices and what data from the mining community can be gleaned from Dominion elections (Figure 9) suggests that the miners themselves came to support the 'radical' option in politics, out of habit, class instinct, ideological conviction, or a combination of factors. They supported a trade union leadership that was politically engaged, or a political leadership, like the Socialist Party, that supported the miner's struggles. The Nanaimo miners elected, than rejected Ralph Smith, symbol of the more compromising attitudes of the independent collier. Although straight Labour men were probably better vote-catchers than one-plank platform socialists, the latter had a political programme, while the former did not. And there are not that many questions about the allegiance of unenfranchised miners, like the Slavs and Italians who turned up at a special mass meeting held during the Socialist Party's provincial convention at Fernie in 1908 to hear comrades Tomoshavsky and Susnar, the party's foreign-language organizers who worked, we are told, on a volunteer basis: "if one's eyes convey any information [the] meeting of two and three hundred of these nationalities in the miners' hall on Monday night fanned a fire of revolt that forbode ill for the representatives of capitalism at the next election."76 The real question is how the prospect of "the next election" came to inspire any of the miners, even the OBU men, who were inveterate political campaigners and returned one deputy to the Alberta legislature in 1921: P.M. Christophers, the sort of Bolshevik who belonged to a Masonic lodge, claimed to yield to no man in his loyalty to King and Country, and asked for a mandate form the voters of Rocky Mountain on the basis of his need for a 'meal ticket' to feed his seven children after being blacklisted out of the coal mines, and UMWA, by the operators and American union bosses.77
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Conclusion

This paper has intended to focus attention on, rather than offer a hypothesis about, miners' struggles in western Canada between 1890 and 1930: a period of international labour upheaval that found an echo in hundreds of miners' strikes or labour representation campaigns which were the foam on the wave of working-class, community, and labour movement protest in coal and metalliferous mining areas in the region. The social, economic, and cultural context of these struggles was quite a bit more complex than the traditional assumptions of both Marxist and liberal commentators have allowed and if it is difficult, in the late twentieth century, to generate much enthusiasm for institutional labour history, then perhaps there is hope for continuing interest in other aspects of the miners' past. New sources offer avenues of approach towards a social history of mining communities, and a recognition that there is more to mining industrial relations or mining politics than examples of Western radicalism similarly offers a wide scope for ongoing research in these areas. We have argued for a more systematic approach to the topic, while leaving issues of comparative theory and method for another time. But in the final analysis, the spirit rebels against mining historiography's "functional approaches" and "structured structures"78 as models for the Canadian West, a region that enjoyed a particularly broad range of a lived experience in an era of colonization and settlement, as well as industrialization. Few documents, let alone conventional theories, "can generate the emotion of the time,"79 yet those who seek to address it will find the task rewarding, if always problematic.

Notes


Victoria, 1986, but see also John Douglas Belshaw, “Mining Technique and Social Division on Vancouver Island, 1848–1900,” British Journal of Canadian Studies (June, 1986), 45–55.


For a critique of western exceptionalism, as a crude dichotomy between a ‘radical’ West and a ‘conservative’ East (organically linked with the even sorrier shibboleth of North American exceptionalism), see Gregory S. Kealey, “1919: The Canadian Labour Revolt,” Labour/Le Travail 13 (1984), 11–44. The more genuine regional approach is suggested in Gerald Friesen, The Canadian Prairies (Toronto, 1984), ch.12, “Capital and Labour, 1900–1940.”


9 This paper is very much in the way of a progress report on research into three aspects of mining history in the Canadian West—industrial demography, strikes and lockouts, and miners’ politics—that is far from complete.

10 Not to say that North American social history has been free from uninformed theorizing. See Bryan D. Palmer, “Emperor Katz’ New Clothes; or with the Wizard in Oz,” Labour/Le Travail 13 (1984), 190–197. Yet it could be said that while the quantitative method corrupts, the lack of it corrupts absolutely. See Robert Sweeney, Protesting History (Montreal Business History Project, 1984).


Similarly, the attempt to gauge the radicalism or "the alleged radicalism" of the larger mining community by analyzing the aggregate of votes cast in mining constituencies leads to tremendous confusion. See Carlos Schwantes, Radical Heritage: Labor, Socialism, and Reform in Washington and British Columbia 1885-1927 (Vancouver, 1979), p.182.


"Chris Foley Outlines the Position of the Labour Party — Plain Facts Worth Reading," Lardeau Eagle, 28 November, 1900; "Foley's Address Worthy of Consideration by All Classes — Its What the People Want," ibid., 24 October, 1900, and other election material.


What follows are preliminary results from a research project begun in January 1987, designed to profile the whole of the mining community on Vancouver Island in 1891, data we hope to link with the far smaller 1881 population. I am greatly indebted to my assistant Marilyn Janzen, who laboured long and hard during a very sort time to generate enough information for Figures 1 and 2.


Statutes of British Columbia 1877,33-63, "An Act to Make Regulations with Respect to Coal Mines," Petition Against Coal-Mining Bill" (signed by Robert Dunsmuir and the proprietors of the Vancouver Island Coal Mining and Land Company, n.d.), B.C. Sessional Papers, 1877, p.504. Although 1877 was a year of labour violence in the Dunsmuir mines, it is probably true, as has been argued in the parallel Nova Scotia case five years before, that "The act was almost entirely the product of pressures exerted from within the government, not as most later amendments would be, of demands by the mining population." Certainly the issue is deserving of study along the lines of: Donald MacLeod, "Collier, Colliery Safety, and Workplace Control: The Nova Scotian Experience, 1873-1910," Historical Papers (Canadian Historical Association annual, 1983),
The other basic legislation covering the mines were the B.C. Metalliferous Mines (Inspection) Act of 1898 and the Alberta Coal Mines Regulation Act of 1908, which emerged out of a more complex dynamic among the state, capital, trade unions and politicians.


Or at least this seems to be the most logical conclusion to be drawn from what little is actually known about Chinese labour in the mines. For a particularly interesting discussion, see Jack Scott's review of Anthony B. Chan, *Gold Mountain: The Chinese in the New World* (Vancouver, 1983) in *Labour/Le Travail* 15 (1985), 193-200.


Robert Dunsmuir received 366 votes in Nanaimo-Wellington in 1886, Collier Sam Myers, 30 votes. There were 686 electors and 323 of them were miners. "List of Persons Entitled to Vote in the Electoral District of Nanaimo," *B.C. Sessional Papers*, 1885,33-43.

For the petitioners see *B.C. Sessional Papers*, 1888,367-8. Political developments in Nanaimo and district after 1886 are not easily summarized. When Robert Dunsmuir died in 1889, the double-member constituency he represented was divided into two separate constituencies (1890), then three (1894). Elections in 1894 afford the best data on labour's political strength. Of 1,658 votes cast in three ridings (each contested by nominees of the Nanaimo Reform Club, MMPLA officers Tom Keith, Tully Boyce, and Ralph Smith) 40 per cent went labour. Nanaimo city (taken by Keith by acclamation in 1890) was lost to the local Tories by only 20 votes. The voter turnout in 1894 was 85 per cent.

On April 26,1890, Section 4 of the 1877 Act was amended to prohibit "Chinamen" from underground work, not quite the same as total exclusion, and eventually overturned in the courts (1899). Robert Dunsmuir and Sons successfully defied this amendment, illustrating the importance of community as opposed to legislative sanctions over hiring policies.

Text of the 1891 agreement as an appendix to Orr's "Western Federation of Miners" in Currie, *op.cit* p.57, informs us that while the Nanaimo miners had not sympathy with the financial problems of the Vancouver Coal Company, they did accept a 10 percent reduction of wages in the years 1893-96.
Every agreement ever signed by the UMW contained, in the first clause, the statement that “The right to hire and discharge, the management of the mine, and the direction of the working faces are vested exclusively in the Company.” The second clause of the 1911 agreement between District 18 and the Western Canada Coal Operators’ Association (signed after an eight months strike in the interior coalfields costing the international union $600,000) read that “It is distinctly understood and agreed between the parties, that there is to be no discrimination . . . on the part of Union men against non-union men employed.” For an examination of UMW policy in the age of emerging monopoly capitalism, see Bruno Ramirez, *When Workers’ Fight: The Politics of Industrial Relations in the Progressive Era* (Westport, Conn., 1978).


The supervisory class in Nanaimo supported around 80 dependents, boosting the core mining population to 2,000 [Figure 2]. The Dominion census for 1901 still enumerated less than 500 mining officials, deputies, direbosses, etc. across B.C. and the N.W.T (Alberto), among a total workforce of about 10,000 (487 salaried to 9,787 non-salaried workers). By 1911 there were over 2,000 among 20,000 (2,005 to 17,910). The provincial Mines Department and Mines Branch (Alberta) reports contain better data on coal-mining employment than the census, but only the census provides aggregate numbers (including metalliferous mining).

Some 15 Nanaimo miners were the main breadwinners in households headed by their mothers, arbitrarily classed as a “non-mining family” in this discussion. Another 25 were sons of “non-mining families” (similarly classed) who lived in their father’s household. These account for the bulk of the “Other kin” in Figure 1.

For accounts of the disaster, see *Nanaimo Free Press*, 4–7 May 1887; *Victoria Colonist*, 4–6 May 1887.


Viola Johnson-Cull and E. Norcross, Compilers, *Chronicle of Ladysmith and District* (Ladysmith, 1980), 82–84. Systematic research into coal-mining fatalities in B.C. has yet to be undertaken, but in the years 1887–1897 there were 358, which looks like an average of over 10 per thousand employees for the Vancouver Island field in the late nineteenth century. See note 64 below.

Forsey, *op.cit*, p.343.

Nor can a tendency towards segregation among ethnic groups in the mining population be discerned. Taking the non-British, non-American, non-native-born minority as a ‘non-English speaking’ class, for example, we find such individuals making up 21 percent of miners in the South Ward, 14 per cent in the North Ward, 13 percent in the Middle Ward, and 18 percent overall. The 1891 census gives few other indications of address. Nanaimo boarding houses appear to have been small; some large boarding houses containing as many as forty men, however, turn up in the Dunsmuir area — altogether a less wholesome environment.

Fraternal orders can be shown to have been ubiquitous in any sizeable coal-mining town in western Canada (to the leaders of the Communist Party, the colliers were “a Masonic group of Elks, etc.”). Their popularity had several
sources, including highly pragmatic insurance reasons. One of the great
differences between the United Mine Workers and the Western Federation of
Miners was that while both international unions flowed out of the KOL, the
former renounced the benevolent function while the latter never did.

43 In theory, a boy aged 13 could work in a thin seam in British Columbia under
ministerial permit, and 13 to 16 year-olds were allowable on surface jobs. But
the laws and customs of the mining West appear to have been less tolerant of
child labour than in the mining East. McKay's Cumberland mines in the 1880s
employed 16 percent boys during the 1880s; the average for the Vancouver
Island mines in the same decade is less than 1 percent.

44 True company towns in the mining West persisted only in more remote areas
like northwestern Alberta, where mining was carried out on inalienable Crown
lands and where there was no private ownership of any land prohibited by law.
Robert and James Dunsmuir, however, controlled large numbers of company
houses, evicting their occupants during the strikes of 1887 and 1890.

45 PABC, Premiers' Papers, vol. 13, Misc. Unnumbered documents, 1895-1898,
22-page memorandum on land settlement prepared for John Turned n.d.

46 See Resolution of the Gladstone Miners re shooting and hunting, n.d. 1906.
Ibid. Box 27, f.15.

47 "[The miners] grow weary of discussing strike subjects... They seem to enjoy
each day as it tolls by and maintain a cheerful air and always seem to have a little
change in their pockets to but beer for one another," PABC, Gr 68 (Attorney
General's Papers), Vol.2, f. “Correspondence re Nanaimo Strike”, Operative
£29-S, 3 January 1914.

48 Glenbow Archives, District 18 Papers, Minutes of Convention, 1912 (Third
Day), Delegate Longworth, p.34, Delegate Hyslop, p.58.

49 President's Report, District 18 convention, Fernie Ledger, 31 December 1907.

50 Evidence, Select Committee on the Wellington Strike, British Columbia,
Journals of the Legislature Assembly, 1891, p.ccixxiv.

51 On the Finns see Varpu Lindstrom-Best and Allen Seager, "Toweritar and
Finnish Canadian Women, 1900-1930," in Christiane Harzing and Dirk
Horder, eds., The Press of Labor Migrants in Europe and North America 1880s to
1930s (Bremen, 1985); Bowen, Boss Whistle, 19,25,30,56, passim: Ali Anderson,

52 The figure of 40 percent in 1921 seems to have been something of an anomaly
caused by the low rate of employment and post-war preference of employment
to English-speaking workers, later sharply reversed.

53 It cannot be shown that the Alberta coal-mining community had ever been, like
its British Columbia counterpart, predominantly English-speaking. For a
contemporary document, see F.J. Warne, The Slav Invasion and the Mine Workers
(Philadelphia, 1904).

54 PABC, GR 684, Evidence, Provincial Labour Commission, vol.2, f.4,
Testimony of Thomas Stockett, Western Fuel Corporation, Nanaimo: "The
majority are British subjects, English and Scotch, with some Welsh, and there
are a few Slavs and men of the lower sections of Europe, but not many, and
those we have are a very good class of men." PAVBS, GR 68, “Correspondence
re Nanaimo Strike,” op.cit, Operative 29-S, 28 January 1914: "It is a curious
state of affairs when one can hear apparently sane men, old countrymen mostly,
stand and berate their own government and prophecy all sorts of evils for the
nation and in every way show the earmarks of ranting anarchists which heretofore one has associated with European peoples and anything but British born men."


57 PABC Premiers’ Papers, f. “copies, drafts, etc., 1896”, mining memorandum n.d.


59 Allen Seager, “A History of the Mine Workers Union of Canada 1925–1936” (MA thesis, McGill University, 1977). An early exponent was the remarkable William Henry Jackson from Wingham, Ontario: former aide de camp of the rebel Riel, Knight of Labour, organizer for metal miners’ District 6 WFM, and personal secretary to F.H. Sherman. At a time of souring relations between the district and international offices of the UMWA he stumped through the Crow’s Nest Pass “harping on an ALL CANADIAN UNION... and might have been the cause of some trouble.” (Glenbow Archives, District 18 Papers, Minutes of Convention, 1910, Delegate MacDonald, p.271.) “General Jaxon” appears to have been a stalking horse for Frank Sherman, who was advocating the formation of a “Canadian Miners’ Federation” at the time of his death in 1909.

60 Jean Reid, correspondence with the author, 3 January 1987; a voluminous source on local history is the 914-page Crow’s Nest and its People (Crow’s Nest Pass Historical Society, Florence E. Kerr, Chairperson: Coleman, 1979).


62 PABC, Premiers’ Papers, vol.25, f.5. “Resolutions Passed by the Silverton Miners’ Union, 10 June 1899.”

63 Ibid., vol. 14 f.18, “Resolution Passed by District No.6, Western Federation of Miners” re 8-hr day, n.d. 1899; “jack of all trades” from Engineering and Mining Journal, 8 March 1913, quoted in Logan Hovis, “The Origins of ‘Modern Mining’”, p.24. This technological progress was not of course as even as we imply. Hovis notes, for example, the persistence of traditional hardrock mining technique in the Slocan Valley surveyed above.

64 British Columbia Sessional Papers Mines Reports, 1897, p.1160. There is a vast scope for research into all aspects of industrial health and safety in the western mines. See Transactions of the Canadian Mining Institute, V, 1912,569–581; David Jay Bercuson, “Tragedy at Bellevue: Anatomy of a Mine Disaster,” Labour/Le travailleur 3 (1978), 221—231.

65 In 1916 the Western Fiel Corporation (which purchased the Nanaimo mines in 1903), was producing 82 percent of machine-mined coal in British Columbia, an output that accounted for 50 percent of local tonnage and 11 percent of provincial tonnage.

66 John Reginald Mooney, “Labour Problems in the Mining Industry of Canada” (MA thesis, University of Toronto, 1929), 199–201, passim, Figure 6 is drawn out of Mooney’s analysis of strike data in the Labour Gazette (monthly); my own reading of the same document and its primary source, Department of Labour,
"Strikes and Lockouts File," Public Archives of Canada, from 1900 and 1907, respectively; Glenbow Archives, Western Canada Coal Operators’ Association Papers, f.1908, “Strikes in District 18,1919–1920”: and newspaper research for British Columbia in the 1890s, courtesy of Marilyn Janzen and Douglas Cruickshank.

67 Stanley Scott, “A Profusion of Issues: Immigrant Labour the World War, and the Cominco Strike of 1917,” Labour le travailleur 2 (1977), 340–78; Mike Solksi and John Smaller, Mine-Mill: The History of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers in Canada Since 1893 (Ottawa, 1985). Of the strikes recorded in the metalliferous mining sector between 1902 and 1921, only about a third engaged hardrock miners in the Kootenay Inland Empire, the heartland of the WFM and later Mine-Mill. The status of the WFM locals on the eve of World War One is very unclear. They were certainly present: responsible in 1913, for example, for the administration of the larger part of $112,697 in benevolent funds collected by Denver headquarters and paid out across the border to 22 Canadian locals of the union. Canada, Report of the Deputy Minister of Labour, 1914, 114—5. But testifying at the Provincial Labour Commission, the leader of Grand Forks local 180 described industrial relations as “very far from satisfactory. . . the company fail practically to have anything to do with us,” and noted that the alleged Boundary (sliding) scale “isn’t the same at all points in the boundary.” A manager for Granby Consolidated at Phoenix (local 8) admitted that “There is a union here. You can’t help recognizing the union but we don’t have any dealings with the union. . . We’ve had no trouble with the union for a long time. We don’t worry much about that.” Evidence, op.cit, vol 5, 235—6, 269. On the OBU insurgency and the final demise of District 6, see Jensen, Heritage of Conflict, pp.459–60; Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men: The Rise and Fall of the One Big Union (Toronto, 1971), ch.8, “Battle for the Mining Frontier: The Hardrock Miners.”

68 Figure 6 includes no data on strikes in Alberta coal mines in the Territorial period (1883–1905), when the Lethbridge area was a major centre of labour activity including at least a half dozen strikes leading up to the famous 1906 confrontation. For a local study, see. A. A. den Otter, Civilizing the West: The Gaits and the Development of Western Canada (Edmonton, 1982), 238–311. Between 1906 and 1926 60 to 80 percent of Alberta coal miners were unionized. Even in 1930 the annual directory of Labour Organizations in Canada counted over 30 Alberta locals of District 18, UMWA, or District 1, Mine Workers Union of Canada. B.C. coal mines were never more than 50 percent unionized prior to 1938 while in hardrock mining the figure would be in a range of virtually zero in the 1920s to roughly 75 percent at the turn of the century.

69 Interview, Art Roberts (Canadian Union of Public Employees), Calgary, 1977. Drumheller Valley mines accounted for a growing share of mining employment in Alberta, ranging from 2.5 percent in 1913 to 20 percent in 1928. They were responsible for a third of the record number of strikes in 1918 and kept the pot boiling throughout the 1920s. I am not aware of research into this field, but see, for a popular account of the ‘wildest spot on the prairies’, James H. Gray, Red Lights on the Prairies (Toronto, 1971), 171–181.

70 Glenbow Archives, District 18 Papers, Convention Minutes, 1909, Delegate Gildea, p.411. The 'rules of the game' also included a lot of electoral discrimination and irregularities. Demands for basic democratic rights and
Miners' Struggles in Western Canada

procedures "cherished by the intelligent workingmen of this province and guaranteed them by the constitution" — though certainly not the BNA Act of 1867 — are staple themes in petitions and resolutions by the miners and their unions. Quotation from PABCS, Premier's Papers, Box 25, f.809, Resolution of the Rossland Miners' Union re "rights of voters, other than assessed property holders," n.d. 1905.

71 See above, note 29. The Vancouver Coal Company's "Colliery Returns" in the annual Mines Report show 327 whites, 312 Orientals, 8 native Indians, and 7 boys employed in 1885. This very excellent data for the 1880s deteriorates from the 1890s to the 1920s. Dominion electoral data, somewhat more systematic than provincial, yields some ambiguous numbers. The Federal voters in Nanaimo in 1911 represented 25 per cent of the census population of the city. The same exercise for nine other western coal-mining towns in the interior of British Columbia and Alberta produces figures in the range of 20 to 44 percent; average, 29 percent; mean, 27 percent. These are reasonably high figures but cannot account for unknown variables such as age and gender.

72 Among 15 mining deputies elected in the West between 1890 and 1926, nine were from B.C. five from Alberta; 11 were miners by trade. Three were elected on the Socialists' Party of Canada ticket, one for the schismatic Social Democratic Party. Two were straight Labour men who crossed over to the SPC caucus in Victoria between 1903 and 1909. All were born between 1860 and 1890, one in Ontario, one in Prince Edward Island, the rest in the U.K. These individuals served a collective sentence of 126 years in the legislatures.

73 Apart from socialism and community-based labour politics, the other great political project in the mining West was Liberalism, as evidenced by the defection of Ralph Smith, M.P. (1900–1911) of the MMLPA, B.C. miners' affiliation with a short-lived Liberal-Labour alliance in 1916, an the failed Liberal candidacies of at least three district officers of the UMWA in Alberta before 1914. Craven, 'An Impartial Umpire' is the most serious consideration of Labour and Liberalism in pre-war Canada; see also Craig Heron, "Labourism and the Canadian Working Class, 1900–1914," Labour/Le Travail, 13 (1984), 45–66.


76 "Convention impressions," Western Clarion, 6 June 1908.

77 Christoppers' biography in Crowsnest and its People 465–6; Tim Buck, Lenin and
188

Canada (Toronto, 1970), 12–14.

78 Belshaw, “Mining Technique”; McKay, “Realm of Uncertainty.”

79 Jean Reid, letter to the author; 16 December 1986.
## Household and Family

### Nanaimo Coal-Mining Community 1891

#### Householding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Miners who were:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heads of household</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sons (in father’s household)</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other kin (in family household)</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodgers (unrelated)</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Miners who were:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single, unattached</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowers</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miners’ Spouses living in Nanaimo</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families with children</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With children born in B.C.</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of dependent children</td>
<td>705</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coal-mining population: 1,900 - 2,000

Population of Nanaimo, 1891-4,595

Source: 1891 Manuscript Census
National Origins of Nanaimo Coal Miners
1891 Census (mss)

No. born in:

England 360
Scotland & the Shetland Is. 105
Wales 42
Ireland 20

Nova Scotia 85
British Columbia 19
Other Provinces & Newfoundland 16

United States 69
Finland 61
Italy 22
Germany 14
Sweden 11
Belgium 10
Austria 8
France 7
Denmark 5
Norway 2
Iceland 1
Poland 1
Russia 1
Spain 1
Switzerland 1

TOTAL 870

1891 Census
Population of B.C. born in:

United States 6.6%
Other provinces 20.6%
European 3.3%
British Empire 21.7%
Born in B.C. 37%
Other 10.8%

Figure 2.
Miners' Struggles in Western Canada

BRITISH COLUMBIA COLLIERIES
CENSUS ENUMERATION OF MINERS & MINE WORKERS
1889 - 1931
(BIRTHPLACES)

From Report of the Minister of Mines, "Colliery Returns".
No information on birthplaces available in 1891, 1901 census reports.
Figure 4.

ALBERTA COLLIERS
CENSUS ENUMERATION OF MINERS & MINE WORKERS
1891-1931
(Birthplaces)

COAL PRODUCTION IN ALBERTA
1890 - 1930

- Million Tons per Annum

- 1890
- 1900
- 1910
- 1920
- 1930

USA 6.5%
Europe 49%
Other Countries 90.5%
Canada 9.5%

Asia 1%
Asia 2%
Europe 57.5%
British Isles 25%
British Isles 30%
Canada 12.5%
Canada 13%

1891 1901 1911 1921 1931

NUMBER
9,000
8,000
7,000
6,000
5,000
4,000
3,000
2,000
1,000
BRITISH COLUMBIA METAL MINES
CENSUS ENUMERATION OF MINERS & MINE WORKERS
1891 - 1931
(Birthplaces)

* Estimates of proportion of 4,566 "miners" employed in B.C. in 1891 not engaged in collieries.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>BC metal mines, smelters, quarries</th>
<th>BC collieries</th>
<th>Alta collieries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td></td>
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<td>1897</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 —district</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>district 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>1910</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 —district</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td></td>
<td>Vanc. Isl. strike</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td>1915</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4 —district</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 —district</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 —district</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 —district</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTALS** 46 44 159 249

* "district" denotes a strike or lockout involving the 5,000 - 10,000 members of District 18, United Mine Workers of America, counting for one of the bold figure.
Figure 7. Provincial Elections, Western Canadian Mining Districts 1890-1930

- Elections/By-elections
- Contested by Independent Labour or Socialist parties
- Won by Lab. or Soc. candidates

Vancouver Is.*
- 43
- 17
- 30

Kootenay Region**
- 82
- 5
- 32

Alberta Coal Field (1905 - 1930)***
- 23
- 8
- 15
* Provincial Electoral Districts in British Columbia variously drawn as Nanaimo, Nanaimo City, Nanaimo North, Nanaimo South, Newcastle, Cowichan-Newcastle, and Comox (Industrial Vancouver Island).

** Provincial Electoral Districts in British Columbia variously drawn as Kootenay East, Kootenay West, Kootenay South, Kootenay North, Kootenay North-East, Kootenay South-East, Greenwood, Grand Forks, Nelson, Rossland, Slocan, Revelstoke, Ymir, Kaslo, Trail, Grand Forks-Greenwood, Kaslo-Slocan, Rossland-Trial, and Fernie (The Kootenays).

*** Provincial Electoral Districts variously drawn as Pincher Creek, Rocky Mountain, Lethbridge, and Edson (Alberta Coalfields).

Source: Canadian Parliamentary Guide (annual), 1890-1930.

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Figure 8. Miner's Candidates for Parliament, Alberta and British Columbia 1890-1930

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Trade-union affiliation</th>
<th>Federal riding</th>
<th>Date of votes</th>
<th>Number of votes</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chris Foley</td>
<td>(Lab) WFM</td>
<td>Yale-Cariboo</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>2,562</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralph Smith*</td>
<td>(Lab) MMLPA</td>
<td>Vancouver Is.</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>1,256</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Baker</td>
<td>(Soc)</td>
<td>Kootenay</td>
<td>1904</td>
<td>662</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed Fenton</td>
<td>(Soc)</td>
<td>Nanaimo</td>
<td>1904</td>
<td>717</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wm. Davidson</td>
<td>(Soc)</td>
<td>Kootenay</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>1,337</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.H. Hawthornthwaite</td>
<td>(Soc)</td>
<td>Nanaimo</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>1,312</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Harrington</td>
<td>(Soc)</td>
<td>MacLeod</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>662</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F.H. Sherman</td>
<td>(Soc) UMWA</td>
<td>Calgary</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>743</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed Fulcher</td>
<td>(Soc)</td>
<td>MacLeod</td>
<td>1911</td>
<td>902</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.A. Prichard</td>
<td>(Soc)</td>
<td>Nanaimo</td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>3,958</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Fairhurst</td>
<td>(Lab) OBU</td>
<td>MacLeod</td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>1,407</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Reports of the Chief Returning Officer, 1905-1922

*Elected
Figure 9.

Labour/Socialist Party Vote in British Columbia Mining Districts, National Elections, 1900-1908

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1900 (Lab.)</th>
<th>1904</th>
<th>1908 (Soc.)</th>
<th>1908 (Soc.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver Island</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanaimo (city)</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladysmith</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northfield</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So. Wellington</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kootenay Region

“Hardrock”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1980 (Soc)</th>
<th>1911 (Soc)</th>
<th>1921 (Lab)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rossland</td>
<td>519 51.7%</td>
<td>114 19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson</td>
<td>252 29.6%</td>
<td>167 21%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandon</td>
<td>178 70%</td>
<td>41 58.5%</td>
<td>58.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenwood</td>
<td>141 54%</td>
<td>116 36%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaslo</td>
<td>120 47%</td>
<td>19 10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slocan</td>
<td>94 64%</td>
<td>26 27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moyie</td>
<td>101 85.5%</td>
<td>85 41%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimberley</td>
<td>61 89.7%</td>
<td>6 35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trail</td>
<td>34 20%</td>
<td>43 15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silverton</td>
<td>59 78.6%</td>
<td>17 39.5%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferguson</td>
<td>45 64.2%</td>
<td>7 19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairview</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>55 35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Denver</td>
<td>45 45%</td>
<td>12 17.5%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ymir Mines</td>
<td>51 53.6%</td>
<td>18 40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix</td>
<td>86 57.7%</td>
<td>116 55%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coal-mining:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1980 (Soc)</th>
<th>1911 (Soc)</th>
<th>1921 (Lab)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fernie</td>
<td>74 48.7%</td>
<td>30 11%</td>
<td>123 39.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michel</td>
<td>11 57.8%</td>
<td>15 46.5%</td>
<td>90 67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal Creek</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>105 68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Labour/Socialist Vote in Alberta Coal Mining Towns, National Elections, 1908-1921

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1980 (Soc)</th>
<th>1911 (Soc)</th>
<th>1921 (Lab)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coleman</td>
<td>153 43.5%</td>
<td>227 57.5%</td>
<td>304 64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blairmore</td>
<td>13 10%</td>
<td>98 29%</td>
<td>138 36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>39 25.5%</td>
<td>87 44%</td>
<td>50 54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillcrest</td>
<td>83 67.5%</td>
<td>124 70.5%</td>
<td>131 69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bellevue</td>
<td>64 46.5%</td>
<td>50 49.5%</td>
<td>117 61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lille</td>
<td>12 11.5%</td>
<td>61 67%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canmore</td>
<td>54 28.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bankhead</td>
<td>77 46%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Reports of the Chief Returning Officer, Electoral Districts of Yale, Cariboo, Vancouver (Island), Kootenay, MacLeod, and Calgary 1901-1922
### Figure 10. Mining Fatalities per Thousand Employees (5-Year Averages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Range</th>
<th>BC Coal Mines</th>
<th>Alta Coal Mines</th>
<th>Metal Mines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901-1905</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906-1910</td>
<td>6.41</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911-1915</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>7.20</td>
<td>5.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916-1920</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-1925</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NO FATALITIES,**
1901-1925 901 653 409