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Cape Breton Miners Speaking, 1888 The following is taken from the transcript of evidence given by two Cape Breton coal miners before the Royal Commission on the Relations of Labor and Capital, In April of 1888. Prime Minister Sir John A. MacDonald appointed the Royal Commission in 1886 to study the effects of the Industrial Revolution in Canada. The "Q." below represents questions being asked by one of the four members of the Royal Commission in the evidence taken at Little Glace Bay; A. T. Freed, a Hamilton newspaper editor; Michael Walsh, a Halifax master carpenter; William Haggerty, a Sydney Mines school teacher; and John Kelly, a New Brunswick factory owner. The "A." represents answers by Cape Breton coal miners; in the first part, Alexander McGillivray; and then Duncan McIntyre. "???" In the late 1800s the Glace Bay district consisted of a few small villages clustered around the coal mines, and the population of the area was only 2,459 in 1891. But the basic pattern of life and work in the coal industry was well established. In 1888, the three mines produced about one-quarter of the coal mined in Cape Breton. Bridgeport produced 24,227 tons; Caledonia, 79,849 tons; Little Glace Bay, 112,785 tons. 477 men and boys worked in these mines. Alexander McGillivray Miner, Little Glace Bay Mine, Sworn. Q. How many men and boys are employed in the (Little Glace Bay) mine? A. I could not give a very definite account, but I think there would be about 45 pairs of men employed. Q. You are a coal cutter? A. Yes. Q. About how many hours a day do you work? A. We generally go down about 6 o'clock in the morning and come home sometimes as early as 4 o'clock. We generally come home from 4 to half-past 5 o'clock. Q. How much are you paid per ton? A. In some parts of the mine we are paid from 40¢ to 43¢--there is a difference of 3¢ between different parts. Q. Are you able to tell us how much you earned last year? A. I cannot exactly say, but I can tell how much I earned for several months. It would be \$198.60 for April, May, June, July, August, and September. The figures are: for April, \$22.51; May, \$27.87; June, \$38.50; July, \$25.13; August, \$33.94; September, \$40.67. Q. Was this what you made clear? A. No; powder, oil, doctors, school, and rent were to be deducted. Q. How much time have you worked since last September? A. We worked October fairly steady, I think, and the best part of November, and I think a little in December. In January I think I was idle altogether; in February we were idle; in March we worked. Q. Did you get a full month's work? A. No. Q. How often are you paid? A. Once a month. Q. Would fortnightly payments be of benefit to the men? A. It is my impression that they would. Q. They would be in a better position to purchase goods? A. I think so. Q. Do you belong to the Miners' Association? A. Yes. Q. Have they presented the question of fortnightly payments to the management? A. Not that I know of. Q. Do the men complain of fortnightly payments? A. Yes; they do. Q. But they have never presented their case to the management? A. No. Q. Are there many boys employed in the mine? A. I think there would be 13 or 16 drivers. Q. How many trappers are employed in the mine? A. I think there are 3 or 4. Q. Do you know what the trappers get? A. I am not sure whether it is 40¢ or 50¢. Q.



What do the drivers get? A. I think it is from 50¢ to 70¢. Q. Do you know what the laborers get? A. Some of them get 80¢ a day. I don't know whether any get more than that or not. Q. How is the school tax and the doctor's tax levied? A. The school tax and the doctor's pay are levied separately in the mine in which I am employed. The doctor's pay is 40¢ a month and the school tax 15¢ a month. Q. Do you pay 15¢ for the school every month? A. Every month that there is work. Q. Has that been talked over with the manager? A. Yes. Q. What was the result? A. He would not alter it. Q. Do you consider that tax is legal? A. I do not. Q. Have you presented it to the school inspector? A. We have not. Q. Would you not get more satisfaction by representing it to the proper authorities? A. If they have any authority to deal with it. Q. You are aware that you must pay a school tax any way? A. Yes; we pay a school tax beside that. - (54)