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From 'Company Town to Labour Town' by David Frank In the early years of the twentieth century the northeast coast of Cape Breton Island was a booming industrial frontier. The coal and steel industries of this district played a large part in the Canadian economy, and in Cape Breton County they created the most dynamic industrial community in the Maritime Provinces. Although the roots of industry reached back to the 1820s, unprecedented growth took place from the 1890s to the 1910s. The population of the coal district more than tripled and by 1921 included more than 40,000 people. The newly-arrived Dominion Coal and Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Companies built steel plants, opened collieries, created new settlements and expanded old ones. The influence of the coal companies on the life of the coal industry was pervasive. It was often echoed in local place-names. Communities such as Dominion and Dominion No. 6 were named for the collieries of the Dominion Coal Company. In New Waterford streets were named in honour of company directors J. H. Plummer, Sir Henry Pellatt and E. R. Wood. Most importantly, the coal companies enjoyed great economic power in the mining district. As the only important employers in the coal towns, they dominated the local labour market. In Glace Bay in 1930 the Dominion Coal Company employed two-thirds of the male work force. Furthermore, as the owners of company stores and company houses, the coal companies were also powerful merchants and landlords. When the huge British Empire Steel Corporation merger was completed in 1921, the concentration of economic power in industrial Cape Breton seemed most complete. In 1908 the Canadian Mining Journal described the largest of the Cape Breton coal towns in these words: "Everybody in Glace Bay is either the servant of the Coal Company, or the servant of the servant of the Coal Company." Disappointed union organizers agreed. In 1911 a correspondent in the Industrial Cape Breton Louisbourg Journal Eastern Labor News reported sadly: "Glace Bay is gently moving to that status which will enable it to take rank with the finest corporation-owned cities and towns on the North American continent...anybody with half an eye can see that the Coal Company has complete control over the doings of the town." But were the Cape Breton coal towns company towns? Discussions of the concept of the "company town" have generally agreed that the term describes communities inhabited mainly by the employees of a single company which also dominates other important aspects of community life. Rolf Knight has made a useful distinction between "company towns" and "single-enterprise communities"; he suggested that company towns must be regarded historically as one type of single-industry community in which the company's control extends into most parts of the community's social life. Another helpful study has distinguished three historical stages in the "rise and decline of a company town": (1) the temporary work camp, (2) the "fully developed paternalistic town," and (3) the "small, declining vil-

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