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A Social Worker Visits Cape Breton, 1925 This is an article to be read through. It begins with a portrait of the growth of corporate industry in Cape Breton, and then sets that against a description of the lives of the workers in that industry • all in the context of the 1925 strike. It is unquestionably a passionate, partisan plea • a call for aid for the striking miners and their families • but a call supported by a compilation of evidence, presented in a way we do not often get: business history compared with the local effects of the pursuit of that business. The article first appeared in Social Welfare magazine. We have included here as illustration photographs that appeared in the Halifax Herald during the strike. Sanction can become a dangerous power. Unfortunately for progress it has an uncanny hold on the minds of most of us. Because we today are born into a ready-made world we take its existence in the past for granted; and we accept the methods of acquiring, making and distributing the things in it, as deep-rooted, ever-present, unchangeable laws. We are too prone to simply accept, ungratefully use, and never question how our present life came to be. It is not quite our fault. We live in a mechanical civilization. Life is automatically easy. To our doorstep, at our finger-ends, to our bidding, come flying from all corners of the earth, all sorts of objects to minister to our every want, to our every idea of comfort and pleasure. Like Egyptian princes we are fanned into pleasurable indifference. There is so much polish, mahogany casing, white-stoned fronts, smooth elevators, elegant motor cars, embossed letter-heads, college-cut clothes, and artistically-bound rule books used in the acquisition and circulation of these comfort and pleasuring-giving mediums, that the method of making them, the life and energy used up, is obscured. Too often, in the industrial circle do we see the important-looking and awe-inspiring owners of goods. We do not usually see the makers of goods, the workers. They are hidden by the array of costly machinery, buildings, fine offices, law books, government machinery, regiments of police and soldiers. And so everything that is, becomes sanction for what was and will be. We are lulled into a belief that society as it is now constituted came about by careful planning. The reverse is true. Society as it is now constituted shot up by accidental combinations of polyglot forces. Like all living matter society has evolved and is still evolving. And it is the writer's opinion that a proper understanding and a fair judgment of social forces would assist a great deal in eliminating the accidental and substituting the rational forces in the process of social evolution. Assisted by this point of view the writer feels confident in saying that a good illustration of the blighting tyranny of sanction is the present upheaval in the mining industry of Nova Scotia. We need coal for our railways, ships, industrial furnaces, and for our own comforts. We know that coal is taken from underground mines. We know that mines belong to certain companies. We know that workmen mine the coal and bring it to us. But not many know or question just how and why these mines belong to certain companies, who these companies are and were, how the wealth from the mines is made, how much the earnings are and should be, and who in reality is being



advanced. Not many ques? tion or know who the workers are, what their condi? tions are and why, how much their earnings are or should be, and whether and how they are being ad? vanced for serving us with coal. A glance at the history of the mining industry, and at present conditions in the mine regions tend to strengthen the belief that the conditions we have inherited so far have not come by careful dir? ection, rather that they have happened through mis? direction, and that if improvements are to come, habits and usage and present methods of work and relationship cannot and must not be accepted as un? changing and unchangeable laws. The writer had the opportunity to visit Cape Bret? on this spring. She spent some time there while she delved into the history of the mining industry, and, by personal visitation she was able to ob? serve closely the living and working conditions of the miners and their families. Cape Breton's greatest wealth consists in its ex? tensive and valuable mineral deposits. Carbonifer? ous deposits cover about half of its whole area. The first regular mining of this vast coal area was started at Cow Bay by the French soldiers and

INNOCENT VICTIMS OF THE
UNEMPLOYMENT SITUATION IN CAPE BRETON

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