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Fr. Fraser Fights for the Miners, 1909 Taken from Newspaper Accounts and Letters Gathered by Paul Steele INTRODUCTION: What follows are important documents in Cape Breton history: newspaper accounts, as well as letters between Rev. Fr. John Fraser and Sir Wilfred Laurier, Prime Minister of Canada, during the 1909 Strike. Fr. John Fraser was born in St. Andrews, Antigonish County, in 1851. He entered the priesthood from St. Francis Xavier University in 1875 and was ordained in Rome in 1881. He was appointed to his eighth parish, St. John's, located in New Aberdeen, Glace Bay, in 1908. In July, 1909, a coal miners' strike began • a strike including the Dominion Coal Company, the Provincial Workmen's Association (the organization the company recognized), and the United Mine Workers (who were fighting to become the bargaining agent for all the miners). What follows is not the story of the strike but an at-

GLACE BAY STANDARD, Aug. 10,1909: Rev. Father John Fraser Condemns Slanderous and Lying Statements and Urges Miners to Stick Together Rev. John Fraser, P.P., of St. John's church, New Aberdeen, in a forceful, impressive and concise sermon to his parishioners, ably dealt with the labor dispute between the Dominion Coal company and its employees. Situated in the very heart of the strike scene. Father Fraser has a first hand knowledge of the events that transpire from day to day.... In the beginning of his discourse Father Fraser exhorted his parishioners to pray unceasingly for a peaceful settlement of the strike.... The rev. speaker next cautioned the men as to the necessity of preserving the peace. He pointed out how public opinion, at home and abroad, had been poisoned by MISLEADING AND SLANDEROUS REPORTS SENT OUT, of every petty occurrence taking place during the present strike. He made clear the reason, therefore, of committing NO ACTS THAT WOULD ENABLE THE MISCHIEVOUS LIARS TO GET IN THEIR WORK. Father Fraser complimented the strikers in no unmistakable terms on their excellent behavior unto the present time. He assured them that public opinion was slowly, but surely, turning in their favor. The next point taken by the preacher was that of unity. He advised the men who were on strike to hold together, to stand firmly by one another, and that in the end they would be the victors. They were backed by an organization whose membership ran into the hundreds of thousands, and whose funds numbered millions of dollars. But, said the speaker, as the chain is no stronger than its weakest link, neither is your union stronger than you yourselves make it. Therefore in order to reap the full benefit of these vast resources at your disposal, you must REMAIN UNITED AND FIGHT SHOULDER TO SHOULDER. The Rev. Father followed by pointing out how shameful and outrageous was the action of the company in attempting to force its employees into belonging to a labor organization that was of no service or help to the men, but on the other hand, a plaything of the company. Then, when the men wanted to ally themselves with a powerful union, one that could cope with the Coal company on an equal footing, the company refused to recognize that union or have any dealings with it. This, said the speaker, was coercing the miners into a condition equal to slavery.

SYDNEY POST, Oct. 7,1909: Father Fraser Is Asked for Explanation • And Is



Forbidden to Speak on the Strike Under Pain of Suspension Monsigneur Sbarretti, the Apostolic Delegate, has asked Rev. Father Fraser, of the church at New Aberdeen, near the Dominion Coal Company, No. 2, Glace Bay, N. S., for an explanation of the state- tempt to bring to the forefront the bold activities of Fr. Fraser during that strike • long before we think of priests like Tompkins and Coady fighting for social justice. We'll let the doc? uments speak. .', ir' ments attributed to him by the press in connec? tion with the min? ers' strike. At the same time Father Fraser has been forbidden, under pain of sus? pension, from speaking directly or indirectly on the Fr. John Fraser (St. F. X. Archives) question of the strike, and the obligation is imposed upon him to take no further part in the strike.

EASTERN LABOR NEWS, Jan. 22, 1910: Priest Gives Facts About Nova Scotia In the Sydney Record..., that paper undertakes to lecture me severe? ly concerning my attitude in the strike now in progress. Allow me to say that the record is very much mistaken in stating that at an early stage in the strike I manifested enthusiasm for the cause that led to it. The fact of the matter was that I did all in my power to prevent it, not because I believed that the men on strike had no real grievance, but on the ground that I feared it would be less tolerable for them to bear these grievances than to suffer the consequences of a strike. The truth of the matter was that the coal company wanted the strike and forced it on them, believeing as they did, that in less than a week they could crush ail organizations of labor in the collieries. Some of the officials told rtie positively, more than once, that at a meeting which they held in the general office with Mr. Duggan, long before the strike, the latter showed a decided desire to precipitate the strike, af? firming that the U. M. W. of A. had only \$10,000, which in less than one week they would easily burn up. The men on strike fully realized that unless they would voluntarily stop working they would be forced gradually to do so by ill treatment and unfair dismissals. It always appeared to us that the coal compa? ny did not wish their employees to be free men, but simply slaves, whom they could use as half-starved beasts of burden. I have known many of the employees of the coal company to come to me after pay time on Saturday night showing their pay sheets, wherein there was nothing coming to them after two weeks' employment and begging me to give them fifty cents or so to buy bread for themselves and children to pass Sunday and Monday for them, while they positively declared that they had not a morsel of food in their houses, and could get nothing in the company's store, as long as there was nothing to their credit there. I have known also many to go into the pit on Mon? days to do a hard day's work with nothing in their cans but a couple of cold potatoes or a piece of cabbage. Some have been known like? wise to have fainted in the pit from want of nourishment. How do these cold facts strike you, Mr. Editor? The Record editor knows what it is to work hard in the pit on a fare of cold potatoes and salt. He should remember that the poor miners