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When the Employees Owned the Trams The Cape Breton Electric Company provided power, tram service and a linking ferry service in industrial Cape Breton. It was also the only Canadian tramline directly controlled by a United States holding company. When it went into bankruptcy in 1931, the Glace Bay employees decided to try to save their division, at least for a while. Dougald Blue was among them.

Dougald Blue, Glace Bay: I was born in 1901 in a place called River Denys. I was born the same year as the Cape Breton Electric Company. They operated till 1931. I was on from 1923. I worked a few months on the track, then I went on as motorman. From the original crowd I'm the only one left. In 1931 the company was taken over by the employees, because the Cape Breton Electric Company went out of business. They were losing money. Cars were becoming more plentiful and buses were coming into view. But the cars were the biggest thing. But the employees didn't let it go under. (Had the employees decided before it closed up that they would do anything to save it?) No. There was no thought of such a thing until it finally closed up. One day a bulletin came out that they would close up on a certain day. And it was the Depression' and everything was down pretty flat, and nobody knew what he was going to do or what was going to happen because chance of getting a job was almost nil. We had a good man to head the thing off • Angus D. LfecDonald • he was the inspector with the old Cape Breton Tram Company. He'd been the overseer over the Glace Bay division. I think it was his idea first to form a company. Btentioned it to different fellows, wondered if we could do such a thing. It was talked over among the men. (Was there anybody who thought it couldn't be done?) Oh, I don't think. Because the conditions things were in, everybody had CAPE BRETON'S MAGAZINE the idea, well, there was nothing else for them to do. We figured if we took it over' and ran it • supposing we ran it for a year or two • if we could maintain the wages we were getting or even less, for even a year • that it would be worth our while to take it over. (Were there any who said they wouldn't take the chance, and quit instead?) I don't think there were any in Glace Bay. I think all the Glace Bay fel? lows were agreeable to try it. There was a little doubt among some, but really we had no alternative. We formed a company. I think there were 32 or 33 employees, and we were all share? holders. (You were all equal owners?) Yes. Started out everybody had two shares. (And an equal vote in the company?) Yes. (Was this part of the co-operative movement?) Oh no, that had nothing to do with the co? operative movement at all. It was just a private employees' affair. It was in des? peration. Now, the Sydney part of it, they were in the same box • that division was being done away with too. The city of Syd? ney wanted to do away with the tram cars. Do away with the old tracks. They were putting on a paving program and wanted to get clear of them altogether. But they did offer the employees if they wanted to form a co-operative like we had and put buses on • they'd agree to that. But after much discussion and figuring the expense of buying buses, the employees on the Sydney division gave up the idea. They figured

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