

[Page 28 - From 'Company Town' to 'Labour Town'](#)

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lage of homeowners." Other studies have also noted a further episode in the life of the company town: some communities have enjoyed new stability as a result of changing resource demands, economic diversification, or government policy. Like many single-Industry communities, the Cape Breton coal towns also experienced this general pattern of growth and expansion, decline and stabilization. But the history of the Cape Breton coal towns in the 1920s also suggests the importance of a neglected theme in the life of the single-industry community: the transition from "company town" to "labour town." By the 1920s the Cape Breton coal towns could no longer be regarded as company towns. "Glace Bay is a labour town," declared the Maritime Labor Herald in 1922. In the labour town community life was influenced less by the paternalism of a predominant employer than by the demands of working-class institutions such as the trade union and the labour party. The rise of the labour town reflected a general change in the balance of power in coal mining society. In the years at the end of the First World War the residents of the coal towns successfully challenged the power of the coal companies in several ways. Established in 1917, the Amalgamated Mine Workers of Nova Scotia won union recognition, wage increases and the eight-hour day. The union also began to call for public ownership of the coal industry. When the British Empire Steel Corporation attempted to introduce large wage reductions, several years of bitter industrial conflict followed. The coal miners' strikes enjoyed strong support in the coal towns and the miners were able to defeat some of the wage reductions and preserve their union. These were also years of political transformation. Under the banner of the Independent Labor Party, labour candidates achieved unprecedented success in the coal towns, where they led the polls in federal and provincial elections; in 1920 the labour ticket captured more than sixty-five percent of the coal miners' vote and returned four members to the provincial assembly. Changes in the realm of local government provided a significant illustration of the growth of working-class influence in the coal towns. In three of the towns labour candidates won control of the town council, an institution which in the past had often been dominated by company officials. At the town hall the labour mayors and labour councillors pursued policies which distinguished clearly between the interests of the community and those of the company. The labour towns challenged the coal companies on numerous issues, including the use of company police and the assessment of taxes; in the industrial conflict of the time they repudiated the corporation and gave their support to the coal miners. Persistently, the labour towns eroded the traditional authority of the coal company in the mining towns. Although the coal miners' search for power did not begin or end at the town hall, the history of local government in the coal towns in the 1920s provides insight into the close connection between industrial conflict and community life in the single-Industry town. By the time of the First World War, the days had long passed in the Cape Breton coalfield when, as one writer recalled, "every colliery was a kingdom of its own, with the mine manager the big boss." Since the 1890s the



enlarged scale of mining operations and the rapid growth of population had created communities which transcended the old colliery kingdoms. The rapid expansion of Dominion Coal and Nova Scotia Steel and Coal ended the pattern of seasonal operations and economic marginality associated with the nineteenth-century industry. Economic, geographic and cultural factors contributed to the growth of large centralized communities in which the

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