

[Page 56 - Cape Breton Miners Speaking, 1888](#)ISSUE : [Issue 46](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1987/8/1

. Q. Give us an idea of how many days' work you do in a year. A. I think we work about 8 months of 22 days in the year all put together. Q. During the other 4 months do you think you do nothing at all? A. I think not. Q. When you work a full day, about what are your earnings? A. I know we all work harder than we can stand it. We work harder digging coal than we can stand it a long time. Q. Some pairs of men dig 10, 12, or 13 tons? A. I think 10 tons of coal is very good work for one pair of men in that colliery. Q. Do you shovel your own coal? A. We do. Q. How much do you receive per ton for shovelling coal? A. 33¢ a ton in summer. The price paid in the banking season is 25¢ a cubic yard. Q. Are you able to tell us how much you made last year? A. No. Q. The work began on the 8th March, 1887? A. The miners were idle until that time. In June 1887, the gross amount of my work was \$29.75. Q. How much was deducted from that? A. Powder and oil, \$2.84; sundries, \$1.90; store, \$20.23; check-weighman, 35¢; cash, \$5 (that was in advance). There was a balance of \$4.18. Q. How frequently are you paid? A. Once a month. Q. If you require money between the days of payment, do you get it? A. It depends on circumstances. If they see you are not able to meet the store bill, they are very dubious about advancing money; but if you are able to meet the store bill, it is very likely that they will give the advance. Q. The company keeps a store then? A. I am not prepared to say whether it is the company or one of the company. As far as I have seen, the flour and molasses and the cases goods are all marked D.M.K., which I think means David McKeen. Q. Who is he? A. He is the manager of the Caledonia Coal and Railway Company. Q. Are you required to deal at that store, or may you deal at any store you please? A. I will just speak of my own case. The clerk in the store told me personally it was in our option whether to deal there or not. But in the spring I began to work there, I think it was the spring of 1884 or 1885, I went there to look for work in April, and I got work on the understanding that I would take goods for work during the banking season. But he only specified the banking season. In the winter the people that own farms and timber land make contracts to furnish timber for the colliery, and they are paid out of the store because they do not want to advance any cash for timber in the winter. I have that from one of the bosses. I was getting timber for them, and one of the bosses said he did not want to give me the timber because I was not enough in debt at the store. Q. Do most of the miners deal at that store? A. I think so. I don't think there are half a dozen families at the colliery but deal at the store. Q. How many different varieties of goods do they keep at the store--groceries and dry goods? A. They keep a nice store in summer; there are groceries, boots and shoes and family supplies. Q. How is it in the spring? A. In the spring those who depend on the store get flour, tea, oatmeal, and molasses. I think that is all that has been there since work commenced on the first of March. Q. If you have not money in the winter when there is no work, to what extent will they give you credit? A. I will give you my experience. In 1887 I left about \$200; that is, I dealt there to that amount. On the 1st of January I wanted a barrel of flour; we get orders from one clerk to the clerk of the warehouse. I asked



him for the order, and he went into the company's office, and when he came out he came to me and said. You will not be supplied this winter at all. How is that? I asked him. He said. You did not make any arrangement with Mr. McKeen for supplies. I went into the office and asked Mr. McKeen if he would not trust me with a barrel of flour, and he said. No, he did not see what claim I had to ask for a barrel of flour. I said that I had dealt at the store to the amount of \$200 in 1887, and I thought he should give me the barrel of flour. He then told the bookkeeper to write me out an order, and we had no further talk about it. That is the way they served me. I think they are a little freer with others. Q. You are working for the company now? A. I am. Q. Are you a married man? A. I am. Q. Do you live in one of the company's houses? A. I do not. Q. Can you get as good a house from other persons as you can from the company? A. No. Q. Does it make any difference in reference to getting work whether you live in a company's house or someone else's? A. I think it does. Mr. McKeen told me that the only ones that had any claim on him were those who lived in his houses. EXPANDED I.N DOOR SHOWROOM LLOYD MacDONALD SALES KINGS ROAD - SYDNEY Toll Free 1-800-565-9427 "Service-Is'-a-Feature, Not '87 Pathfinder 4x4 NOW IN STOCK Promise" Bretoner MOTEL (56) 560 King's Road Sydney, Nova Scotia, Canada B1S 1B8 phone (902) 539-8101 call toll free 1-800-528-1234 Located on the Sydney Harbour Front away from road traffic, yet only 3 minutes from Downtown Sydney WHERE IS YOUR FUELWOOD? Is it still in the Forest, Uncut? Or is it Cut, Split, Stacked, starting to dry out and season? To burn your wood more safely, and for more heat value, you should have your firewood supply now. Properly seasoned wood should contain no more than 18% moisture. Remember that dry wood may be hard to get in the Fall. I FOR SERVICE, DEPENDABILITY AND HONESTY, PHONE: 562-8400 or 562-1784 | Caribou Marsh Fuelwood Co. Supplying Firewood Is Our Profession-Not Our Sideline!