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Published by Ronald Caplan on 1993/8/1

The following months were turbulent ones in the Canadian steel industry. There were several walkouts at the Sydney plant in early 1946 and it culminated in a general walkout on 15 July. Slim immediately wrote "The Steel Strike." The Steel Strike If you'll listen friend for a moment then A brief account I'll give Of a worker's woe when the rates are low And the struggle it is to live. Sure the plant's on strike, you can say what you like Or think what you like as well; But for years we've tried for a raise denied While Dosco's profits swelled. We- played the game and were not to blame, - We pleaded from board to board. But never a cent for the sweat we spent Would they give from their greedy hoard. I live in a shack but the rent fell back And the landlord threatened then That he'd get rid of my wife and kid While I was at work, my friend. So each day in the mill, my heart was filled With a dread that was always hell; For the law was strict and they might evict The ones I loved so well. How I've lain awake and my heart has ached Through many a lonely night. And I cursed and swore as I paced the floor With no relief in sight. Oh: I prayed to the saints in heaven, friend. And I cursed to tie IMPS in hell Till my nerves were frayed, but it didn't aid The hurt in my heart that swelled. No hope could I see in my misery But only a life of want, Tho' I scrimped and saved, and I toiled and saved Until I grew thin and gaunt. How we pleaded in vain again and again While the cost of living soared. On our failing rate we lost all faith In government labor boards. But at last there came an end to the pain And my heart no more could feel. Then the talks were stalled and the union called For a national strike in steel. So we're struck at last and all we ask Is a forty hour week So our brave young sons who fought the huns Can find the work they seek. And a slight increase that will give release From the worry we long have known. And a chance to pay for the right to stay In the hovel we call our home. That's our well-won right and we're proud to fight Till we all lie dead or jailed. For we just can't live on the wage they give • We've tried for years and failed. So now my friend my tale I'll end. Well, we know our cause is just. And God pity the scab that our pickets grab Who tries to betray our trust • Slim Steelworker iSc Miner, 27 July 1946 The Sydney steelworkers finally went back to work in October. The decline of the steel and coal industry in Cape Breton continued. In 1970 as Slim MacInnis was preparing to retire after more than thirty years at the plant he wrote "Steelworker's Lament." He was fifty-nine. Most of that time he had operated out of the General Yard and, as his verse suggests, had worked through? out the plant during those decades. Dosco had disappeared in 1967 and the Sydney plant was now operated by the Nova Scotia government (Sydney Steel Corporation / Sysco). The legal? cy, the costs, were still being added up. Perhaps this continuity is one of the reasons why "Steelworker's Lament" also continues to circulate. TAYLOR'S DENTURE CLINIC DENTURES | CONSTRUCTED, RELINED & REPAIRED J. B. TAYLOR • LICENSED DENTURIST D.V.A. & Dental Plans Accepted SPECIAL DISCOUNTS FOR SENIORS Registered with "TAPS" (Services for Veterans) MONDAY-FRIDAY: 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. (AFTER HOURS ON REQUEST) 92 Charlotte St., Sydney 564-9111



Steelworker's Lament I've worked on the steel plant all my life Since the time I was just a lad. The hours were long but my back was strong And I gave them all I had. I've shovelled their snow at ten below From tracks piled high and white While the city dozed I worked and froze There many a winter night. I've shovelled their coal to a boiler old And just as hot as the grates of hell. Just useless trash most stone and ash That the coal mines couldn't sell. I've loaded their rails and packed their nails And bundled their rods and bars. And I've gasped and choked in the poison smoke And the fumes of their hot coke cars. I've swung a sledge on the cmmbling edge Of a fumace wide and taU 'CO-OP' CO-OP SERVICE STATION STEPHENS Building Supplies Kerosene Available Exhaust Repairs Complete Brake Service Motor Vehicle Inspection Minor Repairs Lube • Oil'Greases Top Quality ...at Low, Gasoline... 562-2315 'ow Prices 503 PRINCE ST. • SYDNEY, N. S. Makita Power Tools Mason Windows Donat Flamand Windows All Types of Cedar Sidings CGC Gypsum Board Plywood Iko Roofing Vinyl Replacement Windows Stanley Entrance Systems Pressure Treated Lumber Cedar Lumber SICO Paints & Stains Kaycan Vinyl Siding Fibreglass Pink Insulation 199 Townsend Street, Sydney 564-5554 Free Computerized Estimates 57