
FURTHER RETURN

To an Order of the House for copies of all correspondence between the Government, or any member thereof, and the Dominion Government, or any member thereof; also, all correspondence between the Government of British Columbia and any person or persons, miners' or mine-owners' unions, relating to the enforcement of the provisions of section 4 of an Act intituled "Inspection of Metalliferous Mines Amendment Act, 1899."

J. FRED HUME,
Minister of Mines.

*Department of Mines' Office,
25th February, 1900.*

NELSON, B. C., 26th May, 1899.

*The Honourable J. Fred Hume, M. P. P.,
Victoria, B. C.*

SIR,—On the occasion of your meeting with the Council of the Nelson Board of Trade it was suggested that if the mine-owners were made aware, authoritatively, by the Government of the reasons that had weighed with it in leading it, in the first place, to assent to the enactment of the eight-hour law for miners, and, in the second place, after the enforcement of the law had been postponed, upon representations of mine-owners and others, to decide upon its enforcement, it might be possible either to prove to the satisfaction of the Government that the reasons which weighed with it were ill-founded, or if, on the other hand, there were real objections to a miner being permitted to regulate his own hours of labour, these objections might be removed.

On that occasion you were good enough to suggest that I should write to you upon the subject, and to offer to bring the matter, upon the receipt of my letter, before the Executive, and to endeavour to obtain an answer from it for the information of the mine-owners, and I have now the honour to submit the matter for your attention.

The hope is entertained that the Government will see fit to repeal the section in question as early as possible in the next Session, and that its action in enforcing the Act during the interval is due to a feeling of responsibility for the carrying out of laws which have been enacted, rather than to a conviction that the law is, under existing conditions, a desirable one.

As yet there is uncertainty as to the action of the miners upon the coming into force of the regulation, with its accompanying reduction of wages, in this district and the Slocan. If they decide to abstain from a strike, the most serious evil will be averted for the time being, but we will, nevertheless, have a reduced production with the same investment upon plant, as in most cases only two eight-hour shifts can be worked. We will lose from the district a large proportion of the most skilful miners, who will go where their hours of labour are not restricted, and their earnings will be proportionately greater; the district will be in disrepute with capital on account of the law, and other disadvantageous conditions will obtain, which is unnecessary that I should go into in this letter, but I may say that it is due to a widely-spread belief that the law will be repealed at the earliest opportunity that no more serious results have been felt, as this belief is a good reason for both employers and employees making concessions (of which the Rossland mine operators are a marked instance), rather than enter upon an inevitably disastrous conflict, the cause of which is likely to be soon removed.

I have, &c.,

(Signed) J. J. CAMPBELL,
Secretary-Treasurer, Nelson District Mining Association.

DEPARTMENT OF MINES,
VICTORIA, 31st May, 1899.

SIR,—I beg to acknowledge your letter of the 20th inst., stating that the mine-owners of your Association would be glad to know, in the first place, the reasons that induced the Government to assent to the enactment of the eight-hour Act, and, secondly, why, having postponed the enforcement of the Act for a time, they ultimately gave directions that it should be carried out.

I shall have much pleasure in calling the attention of the Executive to the representations you have made on behalf of the mine-owners of your district, and at the same time beg to thank you for placing their views before me.

I am, &c.,
(Signed) J. FRED HUME,
Minister of Mines.

*J. J. Campbell, Esq.,
Secretary, Nelson District Miners' Association,
Nelson, B. C.*

DEPARTMENT OF MINES,
VICTORIA, 5th June, 1899.

SIR,—I beg to acknowledge your letter of the 26th ult., stating that the Council of the Nelson Board of Trade would esteem it a favour if the Government would inform them as to the reasons the Government had, in the first place, in assenting to the eight-hour law, and, secondly, after the action of the law had been held in abeyance for a time, ultimately to decide upon its enforcement.

I have called the attention of the Executive to these questions, and they have decided that there is no object to be gained by re-opening this matter for the present, as it will be gone into thoroughly at the next Session of the Legislative Assembly, when more definite views as to the result of the working of the Act can be ascertained.

I am, &c.,
(Signed) J. FRED HUME,
Minister of Mines.

*J. J. Campbell, Esq.,
Nelson, B. C.*

VICTORIA, B. C.

Printed by RICHARD WOLFENDEN, Printer to the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty.

1900.