

MEMORIES AND EXPERIENCES OF THE PAST 75 YEARS

I am going to write now about Organized Labour.

In the early years of 1890, Labour realized they must be organized in a body to get any recognition from the employers. Employees fought an uphill battle during the first forty years. Employers of Labour always blamed the employees for any labour troubles.

The first time labour got really dangerous was in the early 1930s when John L. Lewis got control in the United States of America of the United Mine Workers of America.

For the first twenty years of 1900 the mines in Saskatchewan were operated in a very primitive way. Wages were very poor and working conditions very bad in the mines in those days. The coal was blasted from the face with black powder and the mines were full of powder smoke all day long and the ventilation was very bad. There were few safety devices in the early years. It was not until the year 1924 that the Compensation Board came into existence. Some of the larger mines had some insurance for employees but most of the smaller mines did not carry any insurance. Some of the larger mines supplied low-rental houses and supplied coal to their employees at cost, which helped the employees with their cost-of-living.

My first experience with mine strikes was in the year 1893 at a coal mine in Lancashire, England, three miles from the Town of St. Helens. The mines were called Ashton Green Collieries Ltd.

The strike lasted seventeen weeks and ended in a riot with the police from St. Helens. An organizer for the United Mine Workers Union in Alberta came to the coal fields in Saskatchewan about the year 1920 and he was kidnapped and driven out of the district and told not to come back. The One Big Union tried to come into Saskatchewan about the time of the Winnipeg riot. The Communist party tried to organize the miners in Saskatchewan which ended up with a riot in Estevan in 1931 when three men were ^{killed}