

CLASS CONFLICT AND COLONIALISM: THE COAL MINERS OF VANCOUVER
ISLAND DURING THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY ERA, 1848-1862

by

WILLIAM J. BURRILL

B.A., Sir George Williams University, 1972

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department


of


History

ACCEPTED
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

DATE 31 Dec 1987 DEAN

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard


Eric W. Sager


Peter A. Baskerville


T. Rennie Warburton


Norman J. Ruff

© WILLIAM J. BURRILL, 1987

University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced
in whole or in part, by mimeograph or other means,
without the permission of the author.

Dr. Eric W. Sager

Abstract

During the years 1848 to 1862 the Hudson's Bay Company began the mining of coal on Vancouver Island. In an attempt to assemble a skilled work force of coal miners, the Company sent out from Europe four separate groups of emigrant colliers. All of these men were bound to the Company by a written contract that imposed obligations and restrictions on both parties. This relationship was paternalistic. By the end of the period in question written contracts had become obsolete and the relationship between the miners and the Company had become a capitalist relationship.

This study is an analysis of that relationship and how it changed over time. The analysis was done within a theoretical framework originating in the ideas of Karl Marx. Principal amongst those ideas, and that which was used as an explanatory vehicle in this study, is Marx's concept of class. Class, according to Marx, is not only a social grouping of individuals but is also a relationship that exists between social groupings described as classes. This relationship is an exploitative relationship which involves the appropriation of surplus value, or profit, by the capitalist from the primary producer of the commodity being produced, in this case coal. Over the fifteen year period that the Company attempted to mine coal on Vancouver Island the means by which it appropriated the surplus value

from the primary producers of the commodity, the coal miners, changed. The Company accomplished this by continuously reducing its obligations to the miners and the costs of those obligations. By the end of the period the sole nexus between the miners and the Company was purely cash payment.

[REDACTED]

Eric W. Sager

[REDACTED]

Peter A. Baskerville

[REDACTED]

T. Rennie Warburton

[REDACTED]

Norman J. Ruff

	iv
<u>Table of Contents</u>	
Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Dedication	vi
<u>Introduction</u>	1
<u>Chapter I: Early Prospects and False Starts: 1848-1852</u>	16
<u>Chapter II: "A Melancholy termination to so hopeful an enterprise.": The voyage of the <u>Colinda</u></u>	63
<u>Chapter III: Pioneers and Proletarians: "The Formal Subsumption of Labour" and the Origins of Industrial Capitalism in British Columbia, 1854-1859</u>	94
<u>Chapter IV: The End of an Era, 1858-1862</u>	140
<u>Bibliography</u>	156
<u>Appendix I</u>	164
<u>Appendix II</u>	165

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I must thank my Supervisor, Dr. Eric W. Sager who has been a vigorous and constructive critic. From time to time the other members of my Committee have offered their kind advice which has proven to be of assistance. I would like to thank Ms. Betty Gibbs and her staff in the Inter-Library Loans Office of the McPherson Library for their expeditious handling of my many requests for obscure publications. This study has been greatly assisted by the kind cooperation of David Mason and his staff at the Provincial Archives of British Columbia. My visit to the Hudson's Bay Company Archives/Provincial Archives of Manitoba at Winnipeg proved to be that much more fruitful, thanks to the assistance of Mrs. Shilee Anne Smith and her staff. C.C Johnston, Registrar of the National Register of Archives(Scotland) was kind enough to respond positively to my request for help in locating some documentation of the existence of the subjects of this study. A special note of thanks is extended to Keith Ralston who suggested the topic for this study. Finally last but certainly not least I must thank my wife, Dr. Joan McHardy whose faith and support has helped more than anything to bring this task to a successful conclusion.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I must thank my Supervisor, Dr. Eric W. Sager who has been a vigorous and constructive critic. From time to time the other members of my Committee have offered their kind advice which has proven to be of assistance. I would like to thank Ms. Betty Gibbs and her staff in the Inter-Library Loans Office of the McPherson Library for their expeditious handling of my many requests for obscure publications. This study has been greatly assisted by the kind cooperation of David Mason and his staff at the Provincial Archives of British Columbia. My visit to the Hudson's Bay Company Archives/Provincial Archives of Manitoba at Winnipeg proved to be that much more fruitful, thanks to the assistance of Mrs. Shilee Anne Smith and her staff. C.C Johnston, Registrar of the National Register of Archives(Scotland) was kind enough to respond positively to my request for help in locating some documentation of the existence of the subjects of this study. A special note of thanks is extended to Keith Ralston who suggested the topic for this study. Finally last but certainly not least I must thank my wife, Dr. Joan McHardy whose faith and support has helped more than anything to bring this task to a successful conclusion.

Dedication

For Joan

INTRODUCTION

This study is firmly rooted in the belief that how men and women earn their daily bread is vital to any understanding of history. The purpose of this study is to cast some light where little has shone before. Until the mid-twentieth century the lives of people who earned their living through wage-labour was deemed unworthy of systematic study by most academic historians. Historians of the region that is now encompassed by modern day British Columbia have been no different. Until recent decades, local historians either ignored labour or trivialized the lives of working people. Where Edward Thompson sought to rescue working people "from the enormous condescension of posterity"¹, labour historians in B.C. have attempted to rescue working people from ignorance as well as condescension. This task must continue, because even the most recent popular history of the region persists in treating working people as a frippery.² As a small contribution to the growing volume of work in B.C. labour history, this thesis is a limited study of a specific group of workers engaged in a particular kind of work over a brief period of time when they were employed by a single employer.

This study will examine the records of those people who were engaged to mine coal for the Hudson's Bay Company between the year 1848 and 1862, when the Company

gave up the enterprise. The principal concern of this thesis is the relationship that existed between these workers and their employer, and about changes that took place in that relationship. Historians have written about the origins of coal mining in British Columbia, but we know far too little about the relationship that existed between employers and their workers when the industry was being established.³

We know that the Hudson's Bay Company officials were aware of coal deposits on Vancouver Island as far back as 1835. With virtually no market for the product and a management that was determined to stick to what it did best, trading furs with the Indians of the region, the deposits went undisturbed until 1848. In 1848 the soon to be inaugurated Pacific Steam Ship Mail Company contracted with the Hudson's Bay Company to supply it with 1,000 tons of coal. The Company brought six colliers and their families out from Scotland to work the coal at the Northeast tip of Vancouver Island at a Company post called Fort Rupert. For a variety of reasons that this study will examine in detail the men and their families deserted the Company's service and joined the gold rush in California in 1850. The Company brought out a second body of miners from Scotland who were no more successful than their predecessors in finding a viable seam of coal. The Company then shifted its activity to the area of present day Nanaimo where it did discover a workable seam of coal. The Company

carried on coal mining activities at Nanaimo until 1862 when it sold all of its interests to the newly formed Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company.

The first historian to mention coal mining on Vancouver Island was Hubert H. Bancroft. His History of British Columbia, 1792-1887 published in 1887, contains an elaborate sixteen page description of events at Fort Rupert. His description of events is flawed by its source, Michael Muir. Muir's account is based on his memory of events that took place nineteen years before when he was only nine years old. It is not surprising therefore that there are inaccuracies, some of which have generated controversy.⁴ The Hudson's Bay Company's operations at Nanaimo, which lasted twice as long as their efforts at Fort Rupert, occupies a scant four pages of Bancroft's work. None of this offered much insight into the relationship between the Company and the coal miners.⁵ Of the other pre-World War I histories of the region even less can be said. Scholefield and Gosnell's work is primarily a political history and makes no mention of coal mining.⁶ Judge F.W. Howay's discussion of coal mining begins after 1862 and merely mentions that the mines had been started by the Hudson's Bay Company.⁷

Between the end of World War I and the end of World War II a few historians discussed the origins of coal mining, with mixed results. Walter N. Sage gave the

Nanaimo coal mines cursory treatment in a brief four page description in his 1930 publication of Sir James Douglas and British Columbia.⁸ An article by Barrie Goult in the British Columbia Historical Quarterly in 1939 added considerable detail to our knowledge of the early coal miners and the perils of their ocean passage from England but said little if anything about their life in Nanaimo.⁹ B.A. McKelvie's article in the B.C.H.Q., "The Founding of Nanaimo," is precisely what its title says. It contains little about the work relationship between the Hudson's Bay Company and the coal miners.¹⁰ McKelvie penned another brief three page piece in the Hudson's Bay Company's official organ, The Beaver, in 1951 which discussed the connection between the Company and the British Admiralty.¹¹ Little else was produced between the wars save for a pioneer homily by the city's first mayor in 1924¹² and a fiftieth anniversary souvenir programme of questionable accuracy.¹³

Since the end of World War II the flood gates have literally been thrown open and a veritable deluge of material has been published by both academics and amateurs on every conceivable aspect of life in Nanaimo. Ideology has been high on the list of topics selected for discussion. There have been a variety of articles and books that link the historical development of Nanaimo to Catholicism,¹⁴ communism,¹⁵ socialism,¹⁶ and trade unionism.¹⁷

The City of Nanaimo and its historical societies have published no less than five books, since 1958, on the history of Nanaimo,¹⁸ none of which analyzes the relationship between the Hudson's Bay Company and its employees. Little if any attempt has been made to analyse the type of society the Company and its employees made during those early days at Nanaimo.

The only comprehensive history of the region written during the period, Margaret Ormsby's British Columbia: A History, is primarily political and only mentions the Hudson's Bay Company's mining operations in passing and then erroneously dates the sale of the mines as 1864 instead of 1862.¹⁹ Two other books on important aspects of British Columbia history deserve mention here. Rolf Knight's Indians at Work is one of those seminal works that alerted me to an element of labour that is entitled to more serious attention than it has received to date. If there is anything wrong with Rolf Knight's work, it is that his criticism of Robin Fisher is not harsh enough.²⁰ Fisher's Contact and Conflict cannot profess, as its subtitle implies, that it is a comprehensive analysis of Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890, without any discussion whatsoever of Indians as wage-labourers.²¹ As this thesis will demonstrate, Indians played not just an integral, but indeed a vital role in the production of coal on Vancouver

Island throughout the period of this study and beyond.

An examination of the secondary literature on the Hudson's Bay Company has shown much of it to be fruitful but frequently inaccurate with respect to the coal mines that the Company operated on Vancouver Island.²² The only study carried out to date that specifically studied the role of labour in the Hudson's Bay Company deliberately excluded the Western Department.²³ Keith Ralston's 1983 article, "Miners & Managers: The Organization of Coal Production on Vancouver Island by the Hudson's Bay Company, 1848-1862," was in many respects a guiding light and essential to the formulation of this thesis.²⁴ Ralston studied the management structure and how it changed over time but did not dwell extensively on labour relations.

The last body of secondary source material that was examined were the unpublished theses and dissertations that either specifically dealt with coal mining, the Hudson's Bay Company or the region during the period 1848 to 1862. Brian Smith's 1956 B.A. thesis was poorly documented and raised more questions than it answered. His depiction of Nanaimo as a harmonious and almost idyllic community flies in the face of the historical record.²⁵ John Malcomson's Master's thesis, while not dealing with the relationship between the coal miners and the Hudson's Bay Company, did add immeasurably

to an understanding of what the role of the state was during this era.²⁶ The men referred to in the title of Daniel T. Gallacher's 1979 doctoral dissertation, "Men, Money, Machines: Studies Comparing Colliery Operations and Factors of Production in British Columbia's Coal Industry to 1891", are the managers of the coal works. Labour, while a factor of production, received superficial analysis primarily based on questionable secondary sources and is particularly weak on the Hudson's Bay Company era.²⁷ Richard Mackie's economic history of the region from 1849 to 1858 has little to say about labour relations. As will be demonstrated in this thesis, Mackie's assertion that "Coal, then, was the first major export of Vancouver Island that was not the product of Indian labour",²⁸ is quite wrong.

Having completed an exhaustive examination of all the pertinent secondary literature, both published and unpublished, and having failed to find a satisfactory examination and/or explanation of the relationship between capital and labour on Vancouver Island between the years 1848 and 1862, an examination of primary source material was conducted. Both the Provincial Archives of British Columbia and the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba yielded a plethora of documentary evidence from which to construct the argument of this thesis.

The argument of this thesis is firmly grounded in the intellectual tradition of Marxism and class analysis. Before we can analyse class we must first define it. It is fairly well known amongst students of Marxist scholarship that Marx himself never wrote a systematic definition of the term. At the one point where he was about to address the issue (Chapter fifty-two of Volume III of his magnum opus Capital) the text abruptly ends and a note by his colleague Frederick Engels states: "At this point the manuscript breaks off."²⁹ As a result the literature on the subject, by both Marxist and non-Marxist scholars, is voluminous. Any definition that is accepted must therefore be carefully scrutinized by returning to the original text, wherever possible, in order to be certain that the integrity of Marx's original ideas have been maintained. Having done that, the one definition of class that appears to offer the greatest possibility for genuine historical understanding is that which has been put forward by Geoffrey de Ste. Croix. In his book, The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World, he offers the following definition of class.

Class (essentially a relationship) is the collective social expression of the fact of exploitation, the way in which exploitation is embodied in a social structure. By exploitation I mean the appropriation of part of the product of the labour of others:

in a commodity-producing society this is the appropriation of what Marx called "surplus value".

A class(a particular class) is a group of persons in a community identified by their position in the whole system of social production, defined above all according to their relationship(primarily in terms of the degree of ownership or control) to the conditions of production(that is to say, the means and labour of production) and to other classes.

He adds further that,

The individuals constituting a given class may or may not be wholly or partly conscious of their own identity and common interests as a class, and they may or may not feel antagonism towards members of other classes as such.

It is of the essence of a class society that one or more of the smaller classes, in virtue of their control over the conditions of production(most commonly exercised through ownership of the means of production), will be able to exploit - that is, to appropriate a surplus at the expense of - the larger classes, and thus constitute an economically and socially(and therefore probably also politically) superior class or classes.³⁰

De Ste. Croix's departure from previous interpreters of Marx lies in the emphasis that he places on exploitation.

It has been nearly twenty-five years since Edward Thompson published his Making of the English Working Class. That work, and Thompson's subsequent contributions to Marxist scholarship,³¹ have heavily influenced a great deal of the history that has been written by both Marxist and non-Marxist historians. Because of Thompson's work it is now recognized that Marx's concept of class is a relationship. Thompson, however, emphasised the aspect of struggle

in that relationship, not exploitation. Other scholars, most notably in Canada Bryan Palmer, have been influenced by this interpretation and as a result a great deal has been written about the struggle to control the work place.³² This effort has been further refined and influenced by Harry Braverman's Labor and Monopoly Capital The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century.³³ As a result a great deal has been written about the struggle to control the labour process, another Marxist concept that is currently in vogue.³⁴ All this material emphasizes struggle rooted in the division of labour and control over the technical means by which commodities are produced. It does not emphasize exploitation. This unfortunately tends to reduce Marx to the level of a technological determinist, something he definitely was not. This is where de Ste. Croix's interpretation of Marx and his emphasis on exploitation in his theory of class can save us from serious error.

What de Ste. Croix recognizes, as so many before him have also, is that the value of Marx's theories lie in their historical nature. It was Marx's great effort to determine what were the significant social features that differentiated one historical epoch from another that finally led him to write Capital. It is this aspect of his theory of class that makes de Ste. Croix's interpretation a genuine theory of history:

As I claim to have found the theory in Marx, I cannot of course pretend that it is new; but I have never seen it stated clearly and explicitly. My point is that the most significant distinguishing feature of each social formation, each "mode of production", is not so much how the bulk of the labour of production is done, as how the dominant propertied classes, controlling the conditions of production, ensure the extraction of the surplus which makes their own leisured existence possible.

Further on he adds,

What I think has been often overlooked is that what Marx is concentrating on as the really distinctive feature of each society is not the way in which the bulk of the labour production is done, but how the extraction of the surplus from³⁵ the immediate producer is secured.

Such an approach will give new understanding to the origins of coal mining in British Columbia. Following de Ste. Croix's definitions, this study will examine the relationship between the owners of the means of production, the Hudson's Bay Company, and the immediate producers of the coal, the miners, in an attempt to understand how the surplus value that they produced was extracted, and whether or not it changed over time. It is hoped that this study and this method will help us to understand the origins of industrial capitalism in nineteenth century British Columbia.

NOTES

¹E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class(Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1968), p.13.

²Terry Reksten, More English Than the English (Victoria: Orca Books, 1987), p.34.

³Three excellent introductions to the historiography of British Columbia that encompass the period of this study are: J. Friesen, "Introduction," and H.K. Ralston, "Bibliography," Historical Essays on British Columbia, ed. J. Friesen and H.K. Ralston, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), vii-xxvi, &, 281-293; Allan Smith, "The Writing of British Columbia History," B.C. Studies, 45(Spring, 1980), 73-102.

⁴John S. Helmcken, The Reminiscences of Doctor John Sebastian Helmcken ed. Dorothy Blakey Smith, Introduction by W. Kay Lamb, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1975), p.106 & n.1.

⁵Hubert Howe Bancroft, The History of British Columbia, 1792-1887, Vol. XXXII, The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft(San Francisco: The History Company, Publishers, 1887), 185-201, 568-571.

⁶E.O.S. Scholefield and R.E. Gosnell, A History of British Columbia(Vancouver: British Columbia Historical Association, 1913).

⁷F.W. Howay, Historical, Vol. II of E.O.S. Scholefield and F.W. Howay, British Columbia from the Earliest Time to the Present(4 Vols. Vancouver: S.J. Clarke, 1914).

⁸Walter N. Sage, Sir James Douglas and British Columbia(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1930), 172-176.

⁹Barrie H.E. Goult, "First and Last Days of the Princess Royal," British Columbia Historical Quarterly [Here after cited as B.C.H.Q.], III, 1(January, 1939), 15-24.

¹⁰B.A. McKelvie, "The Founding of Nanaimo," B.C.H.Q., VIII, 2(1944), 169-188.

¹¹B.A. McKelvie, "Coal for the Warships," The Beaver, Outfit 282(June,1951),8-11.

¹²Mark Bate, "Address to the B.C.H.A. Pioneer Reunion May 9,1924," B.C.H.A. Second Annual Report and Proceedings(Victoria:British Columbia Historical Association, 1924),12-14.

¹³The Daily Herald, Diamond Jubilee and Empire Day Celebration 1874-1934 Souvenir Programme(Nanaimo:The Daily Herald, 1934),unpaginated. The authors confuse Fort Rupert with the City of Prince Rupert which is located on the Northern coast of the mainland of British Columbia.

¹⁴"First Nanaimo Church Blessed 95 Years Ago," The Torch, XX, 3(April, 1960),p.2; Sisters of St. Ann's Convent, "St. Ann's was Nanaimo's First School," The Torch, XXII, 2(March, 1962),2-3.

¹⁵William Bennett, Builders of British Columbia (Vancouver:Broadway Printers, 1937); Harold Griffin, British Columbia: The People's Early Story(Vancouver: Tribune Publishing Company Limited,1958).

¹⁶J.T. Saywell, "Labour and Socialism in British Columbia: A Survey of Historical Development Before 1903," B.C.H.Q., XV, 3 & 4(1951), 129-150.

¹⁷Paul A. Phillips, No Power Greater: A Century of Labour in British Columbia(Vancouver:B.C. Federation of Labour and the Boag Foundation,1967).

¹⁸Patricia M. Johnson, A Short History of Nanaimo (Nanaimo:City of Nanaimo British Columbia Centennial Committee,1958); Patricia M. Johnson, John G. Parker and Gino A. Sedola, Nanaimo Scenes from the Past(Nanaimo: Nanaimo District Museum Society,1966); Patricia M. Johnson, Welcome to Nanaimo(Nanaimo:Trendex Publications & Western Heritage for the City of Nanaimo,1974); E. Blanche Norcross,ed. Nanaimo Retrospective, the First Century(Nanaimo:Nanaimo Historical Society,1979); T.D. Sale, and Devina S. Smith, Nanaimo the Story of a City(Nanaimo: Nanaimo and District Museum Society,1983).

- ¹⁹Margaret A. Ormsby, British Columbia: A History (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1958), 125 & 127.
- ²⁰Rolf Knight, Indians at Work, An Informal History of Native Indian Labour in British Columbia 1858-1930 (Vancouver: New Star Books Ltd., 1978), p. 9.
- ²¹Robin Fisher, Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia 1774-1890 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977).
- ²²John S. Galbraith, The Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor 1821-1869 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), p. 296; E. E. Rich, Hudson's Bay Company 1670-1870, II (London: The Hudson's Bay Company Record Society, 1959), p. 760.
- ²³Philip Goldring, Papers on the Labour System of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1821-1890 (2 Vols., Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1979 & 1980).
- ²⁴H. Keith Ralston, "Miners and Managers: the Organization of Coal Production on Vancouver Island by the Hudson's Bay Company, 1848-1862," The Company on the Coast ed. E. Blanche Norcross (Nanaimo: Nanaimo Historical Society, 1983), 42-55.
- ²⁵Brian A. Smith, "A Social History of Early Nanaimo," (unpublished Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1956).
- ²⁶John Malcomson, "Resource Development and the State in Early British Columbia," (unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of Sociology, Simon Fraser University, 1980).
- ²⁷Daniel T. Gallacher, "Men, Money, Machines: Studies Comparing Colliery Operations and Factors of Production in British Columbia's Coal Industry to 1891," (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1979).
- ²⁸Richard Mackie, "Colonial Land, Indian Labour and Company Capital: The Economy of Vancouver Island, 1849-1858," (Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Victoria, 1984), p. 163.

²⁹Karl Marx, Capital, A Critique of Political Economy, III, Introduction by Ernest Mandel, trans. David Fernbach (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981), p. 1026; E.J. Hobsbawm, "Class Consciousness in History," Aspects of History and Class Consciousness, ed. Istvan Meszaros (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 5; G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World, From the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests (London: Gerald Duckworth & Company, 1981), p. 32.

³⁰de Ste. Croix, Op.cit., 43-44.

³¹Two essays have been particularly influential: "The Poverty of Theory," and "The Peculiarities of the English," both of which are available in book form: E.P. Thompson, The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978).

³²Bryan D. Palmer, A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton Ontario, 1860-1914 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979).

³³(New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974).

³⁴Craig Heron and Robert Storey, "On the Job in Canada," On the Job, Confronting the Labour Process in Canada, ed. Craig Heron and Robert Storey, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986), 3-46; a brilliant examination of the topic.

³⁵de Ste. Croix, Op. cit., p. 52, his emphasis.

CHAPTER I: Early Prospects and False Starts: 1848-1852.

The Honourable Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay, better known as the Hudson's Bay Company, began in 1670 as, and by and large remains to this day, a house of merchant capital. As such, its capital was not part of the means of production which produced the commodities that it sold. During the course of its history, however, the Company has on occasion invested capital in the direct production of the commodities which it sold. As such it became industrial capital. There are important differences that distinguish the two forms of capital that directly bear on this study. In particular the relationship between capital and labour is significantly different. Marx points out for example:

...merchant's capital, which commissions a number of immediate producers, then collects their produce and sells it, perhaps making them advances in the form of raw materials, etc., or even money. It is this form that provides the soil from which modern capitalism has grown and here and there it still forms the transition to capitalism proper. Here too we find no formal subsumption of labour under capital. The immediate producer still performs the functions of selling his wares and making use of his own labour.¹

Conversely, under industrial capital the immediate producer sells his labour, which is incorporated into the end product that the capitalist then sells, appropriating the profit. This transaction alters the relationship of the immediate producer, the wage-labourer, to the capitalist.

Labour is now subordinate to capital and alienated from the product of its own labour. The tension in such a relationship breeds conflict. Indeed, class conflict is inherent in the very existence of industrial capital according to Marx.

Industrial capital is the only mode of existence of capital in which not only the appropriation of surplus value or surplus product, but also its creation is a function of capital. It thus requires production to be capitalist in character; its existence includes that of the class antagonism between capitalists and wage-labourers.²

Therefore to understand the emergence of industrial society on Vancouver Island, it is important to pay careful attention to the subtle nuances of the changing relationship between capital and labour at this very early stage of development. As discussed briefly in the introduction, the key to understanding the different economic formations of society is to understand how capital appropriates surplus-value, that is to say profit, from labour. In the case of the Hudson's Bay Company's coal mining operations on Vancouver Island, the Company attempted to increase its profits by reducing its cost of labour. In doing so the Company changed its relationship with its employees from its initial "paternalistic" relationship to a purely capitalist one that approximated the cash nexus of the free market.

I

When the Company signed its first contract to supply coal to the Pacific Steam Ship Mail Company in 1848,³ it possessed absolutely no expertise in the area of coal mining. It therefore turned to outside sources for assistance. Through the auspices of Lord Selkirk, Company officials were introduced to David Landale.⁴ Landale, who had himself started his career in the coal pits, was one of the most "eminent" mining engineers in nineteenth century Scotland.⁵ He agreed to act as purchasing and recruitment agent for the Company's mining venture. From late May until early July of 1848, Landale advertised throughout the Scottish mining districts for an Oversman (foreman) and six miners.⁶ Finally on July 9, 1848, Landale was able to write triumphantly to the Company that he had located a likely candidate in Ayrshire.

The man's name is John Muir age 43 - his oldest son Andrew is 21 - the second John 19 the third Robert is 17 and the fourth is nearly 15 and at present makes as half a man in the pit.⁷

During the following four months the Company struggled to adapt existing Company policy to a new set of circumstances. There was to be a formal written contract signed by both parties, the Company, or its agent, and the miners. Being completely unfamiliar with the coal industry, the Company left the details of the contract to the negotiating skills of David Landale.

No written version of these contracts has survived. Some of the details of both the contracts and the negotiations can be gleaned from the Company's correspondence. In a letter of May 31, 1848, Sir John Pelly, a member of the governing Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, proposed to Lord Selkirk that the oversman be paid £100 per year and a bonus of ten per cent on all the coal produced by the miners over and above their required monthly quota. The miners were to be paid fifty pounds a year with a monthly quota of thirty tons; they were to receive 2S 6d per ton for every ton produced over thirty tons per month.⁸ The oversman's bonus was ultimately set at five per cent.⁹

By nineteenth century standards these were high wages. A full week's work in Scottish coal mines was five and a half days. If they could, miners would work the entire fifty-two weeks of the year. If fifty pounds is divided by 286 working days, the average daily wage would be 3S 6d, which is consistent with wage levels that prevailed in Scotland at that time.¹⁰ The 2S 6d, which the miners fully expected to make each day (see appendix I) increases their annual income to approximately eighty-five pounds. An important consideration which must be made when comparing incomes is that miners could not be sure that they would work every day. Short time was a constant problem for all miners in Great Britain and it could reduce a man's annual income to well below fifty pounds. In contrast, the miners

hired to go out to Vancouver Island were guaranteed an annual income of fifty pounds.¹¹

By Hudson's Bay Company standards, fifty pounds a year was an exceptional salary for a manual labourer. In 1848 the Company was paying seventeen pounds a year to labourers and twenty-five pounds a year to a skilled tradesman.¹²

A more interesting comparison is to contrast them to the annual salaries of the Company's management in the field. Fifty pounds a year would have placed these men on a similar financial footing as an apprentice clerk or postmaster. At eighty-five pounds a year, including their bonus, these men were receiving more money than the average full-fledged clerk. The oversman's salary of £100 a year plus bonus exceeded that of a senior clerk, who would have received the same salary but would not have been eligible for a bonus.¹³

Salaries were not the only inducement to going out to Vancouver Island. When the men asked if they could bring their wives and children the Company cautiously agreed. All transportation expenses were to be paid by the Company. Landale was encouraged to hire men with one or two children at the most in order to limit the outlay of the Company. During the voyage rations for husbands and wives would be provided at Company expense. Children's rations were to be debited to each miner's account. The Company's Secretary, Archibald Barclay, thought that this would not amount to

much since the two adult rations would "probably be sufficient for all".¹⁴ We will return to the topic of food later. At this point suffice it to say that the Company's interest in the welfare of its employees' families concerned production, not reproduction. Indeed, women and children were considered "unproductive", and their purpose to the Company was neatly summed up in a letter to one of their recruiters:

The object of our Company in wishing to have married men is to prevent desertion and to ensure some degree of steadiness, but children are an encumbrance, and therefore the fewer the better.¹⁵

The Company offered high wages, free transportation and full provisions in order to encourage these Scottish emigrants. Such high expenditures dictated that the Company would have to intensely exploit its labour force in order to recover these expenses. The execution of the recruitment scheme, first of all, went a long way towards discouraging their departure. Landale, inexperienced with the workings of the Hudson's Bay Company, took a tentative departure date as firm and so informed Muir and his party. He was embarrassed to explain his error to both the men and the Company. On October 4, 1848 he wrote Barclay:

The men are exceedingly anxious to know the day they are likely to be wanted in London. Some of them are now situated very uncomfortably. Trusting to the earlier day named by me, they had sold their furniture - and are now out of a house & out of work.¹⁶

Nothing appears to have been done to rectify this state of affairs for at least three weeks. Despite such abuse the men all signed their contracts on the twenty-fourth of October when Landale visited them in their home town of Irvine. No doubt nearly destitute, they must have been anxious to get their hands on their advance money.¹⁷ Landale told them to be in Troon on the eighth of November to catch the coastal steamer to London.¹⁸

Once again this turned out to be a false start. In fact, Barclay did not want them in London before the twenty-eighth of November. Realizing the inconvenience, he offered to provide them with ration money, which he calculated to be worth one shilling per ration per day. Husbands, wives and children over fourteen were entitled to a full ration each, and children under fourteen were calculated to be the equivalent of half a ration each. Funds were to be provided from the twelfth of November.¹⁹

Landale was "vexed" by the news and protested to Barclay that the salaries and rations should start on the original date of embarkation, the eighth of November.²⁰ Barclay agreed with Landale.²¹ The additional four days of funds was no doubt appreciated, as the situation for some appears to have become desperate. Muir informed Landale that he was moving into a single house in Troon with John Smith, John McGregor and the families of all three miners, to await their departure to London. This would have been seventeen or

eighteen men, women, children and infants in one house.²²

They would remain in this cramped condition until the 25th of November. It comes as no surprise that by the 16th of November John Muir reported to Landale that the men were "not in very good spirits."²³

They all sailed from London on December 1, 1848, aboard the vessel, Harpooner, but their faith in the Hudson's Bay Company must have been badly shaken by their recent experiences.²⁴

The party consisted of:²⁵

John Muir, Oversman	his wife, daughter and two sons 8 and 9
John Smith, Miner	his wife and one child
John McGregor, "	his wife, two small children, one infant
Archibald Muir, "	nephew of John Muir
Andrew Muir, "	son of John Muir
John Muir Jr., "	" " " "
Robert Muir, "	" " " "
Michael Muir, "	" " " "

Six months later, after a long and storm-tossed voyage around the Horn, they arrived in Victoria harbour on June 1, 1849.²⁶

Whatever abuse this group had suffered due to the incompetence of the Company or its agent would appear to have been stoically endured up until then. Upon arrival in Victoria this changed. The group demonstrated a willingness to protest a perceived injustice with a high degree of cohesiveness and solidarity. The reasons for this are straightforward. With the exception of Smith, they were all related to one another, and the small size of the group

probably lent itself to a quickly achieved consensus necessary for concerted and effective action.²⁷ They demonstrated this as soon as they came ashore in Victoria.

With the exception of John Muir the entire group of immigrants from the Harpooner presented themselves to the Hudson's Bay Company's Chief Factor, James Douglas, to complain about the provisions on the voyage out from England. Douglas investigated and found that the ship's surgeon, Dr. Alfred Benson, had, in an economy move, allowed the captain of the ship to blend together the passengers' provisions with those of his crew. He condescendingly dismissed their principal complaint that the salt beef was inferior. Douglas, always with an eye to saving a penny, did report to his superiors in London that:

From the report of Dr. Benson and other parties it appeared to me, that these passengers who are chiefly from North Britain, and accustomed from infancy to an oatmeal diet would have preferred it to any other kind of food, and I am of the opinion, that in future shipments of Scottish immigrants for this country, the stock of preserved meats which were not relished by those who arrived this year, might be reduced and replaced by an additional supply of oatmeal, equally to the advantage of the Company and of the emigrants.²⁸ †

This was not just the first of a string of baseless complaints from a bunch of "malcontents" that some historians would have us believe.²⁹ This was, in fact, the first manifestation of conflict over an issue that the miners perceived as substantial and, indeed, was fundamental to their very existence and prosperity. Management viewed

the same issue as being inconsequential and the miners' behaviour as being insubordinate.

The issue of diet and the supply of food is worthy of more sophisticated analysis than it has received to date in the study of labour history both inside and outside of British Columbia. Regardless of venue it cannot be denied that:

Labour-power exists only as a capacity of the living individual. Its production consequently presupposes his existence. Given the existence of the individual, the production of labour-power consists in his production of himself or his maintenance. For his maintenance he requires a certain quantity of the means of subsistence.³⁰

The supply of that means of subsistence in colonial Vancouver Island was a contentious issue that was not easily resolved. The Company was contractually obliged to supply a daily ration of food to every worker that it brought out to North America. It was not obliged to supply food to workers' wives whom it viewed as "unproductive", their presence necessary only to prevent the desertion of their husbands. Children were not supplied with rations either as they were considered an "encumbrance", unless, as in the case of fifteen year old Michael Muir, they could be put to some kind of useful work.³¹

The problem was not the quantity of food, although the Company came precariously close to running out on several occasions. The real problem was the food itself. As the Company's official historian, E.E. Rich, put it,

"...fish was the mainstay."³² Until the 1860s and 1870s fish, except in London, was quite foreign to the British working class diet.³³ It come as no surprise then to learn that there had been trouble with workers in the fur trade over food.³⁴

On the Pacific Northwest coast of America the origin of the problem was somewhat different. Many workers brought to Vancouver Island in these early days of the colony objected to the fish diet, but others saw it as a welcome relief from the monotony of salted meat sent out from England. Douglas wrote to his Chief Trader at Fort Rupert, describing the trauma that a recently arrived blacksmith was experiencing.

He appears to dread the idea of living on salt provisions and I hope you will often be able to treat him to a mess of fresh fish.³⁵

The problem was in fact not so much fish as it was salted fish. Furthermore, discontent with the Company's rations originated not only with what was provided but also with what was not provided and what was expected.

Tea, which John Burnett has amply demonstrated, had by 1850 become "the drink of all classes", and sugar consumption both increased dramatically in the last five years of the 1840s.³⁶ Tea and sugar certainly were desirable enough commodities that emigrant workers either demanded or were offered a daily ration of both as an inducement to go to Vancouver Island. In May, 1850, two groups of recently arrived labourers demanded rations of tea and sugar. Backed

by the opinion of the recently appointed Governor of the Island, Richard Blanshard, the labourers threatened to strike or desert the Company. Douglas conceded a weekly ration of two ounces of tea and one pound of brown sugar which he calculated would cost the Company less than forty shillings a year and a small price to pay compared to the high wages that prevailed in nearby Oregon and California.³⁷ As we shall see, other working and living conditions at the coal workings could not be so easily ameliorated.

Anticipating the arrival of the coal miners and their families, Douglas had dispatched Captain William McNeill, his son-in-law, clerk George Blenkinsop, along with their wives and families and a party of labourers to the site of the coal discovery. This was in early May, 1849.³⁸ Plagued by illness, and with no resident doctor, the work of constructing the fort went slowly. Work came to a complete standstill on the 30th of July when the sick list hit a peak of twelve men, which included all the carpenters.³⁹ They did not even begin to square lumber for their own dwellings until the 20th of August.⁴⁰ It is therefore not at all surprising that Douglas kept Muir and his men in Victoria until the end of August. They were not idle. In fact they were kept very busy digging a well and blasting rock for a dockyard. The dockyard work was of such primacy that Andrew Muir noted in his diary that they were kept working

"...9 hours per day to hasten completion of the dockyard before we should leave."⁴¹ Here is an issue that requires closer examination than it has received in the past by historians.

The derogatory language used by historians to describe these early coal miners and their actions, by and large, has its origins in the documents that they used. Their disparaging comments has less to do with their own ideology than it does with the ideology of the author of the documents that they used and their failure to carry out even the most superficial analysis. The case in point is the three months that the miners spent in Victoria. In her "Introduction" to Fort Victoria Letters 1846-1851, Margaret Ormsby wrote:

For almost three months they were around Fort Victoria, consorting with the listless English labourers who had been their shipmates. Douglas had to use persuasion to get them to move to Fort Rupert in August, 1849, and then, he said, he had to coax and pet them.⁴²

First of all the use of the verb "consort" and the adjective "listless", two words that have invidious overtones, is worthy of note. Second, while she gets the spirit of what Douglas said correct by saying that he had to use persuasion, she distorts the degree of persuasion that Douglas used by misrepresenting his use of the words "coax" and "pet". What in fact Douglas did say was:

I had the utmost difficulty last summer, in getting them off to Fort Rupert, and they have been kept in the service since solely by coaxing and petting;⁴³

Ormsby's major mistake however, is her whole-hearted acceptance of the veracity of Douglas' statement. Unlike Andrew Muir, Douglas is not making his statement in the days or months immediately following the miners' dispatch to Fort Rupert, but rather after the miners have deserted the Company's employ the following summer.⁴⁴ Douglas had good reason to cast aspersions on the character of these men: it was easier than explaining the complexity of the relationship that had developed between the Company and the men, which possibly Douglas did not even understand himself. If Douglas' statement is true then how do we reconcile it with Andrew Muir's observation that what delayed their departure was the priorities of the Company, not their behaviour? Moreover, if Douglas felt this way about the miners one would expect that he would have confided in his superiors at an earlier date about their behaviour while in Victoria. He had ample opportunity. Eden Colvile, acting Governor of Rupert's Land for the Hudson's Bay Company visited Fort Victoria shortly after the Muirs had left for the coal workings. He reported to Sir George Simpson in a letter dated October 15, 1849:

Mr. Douglas speaks very well of Mr. Mure[sic] the headman of the coal miners, & the rest left this place very well satisfied. They worked very well while they were here & I have no doubt a great quantity of coal will be got out this winter.⁴⁵

The fact is that it was easier at the time for Company officials, as it subsequently has been for historians, to blame the desertion of these miners on a failing in character and the attractiveness of the California gold rush, than it was to acknowledge the harshness of the working and living conditions or the ineptitude of the management.

It is doubtful whether or not Muir and his party could have anticipated what they would be facing when they arrived at Vancouver Island. They sailed from Victoria for Fort Rupert on the 28th August, 1849.⁴⁶ They arrived at Beaver Harbour twenty-eight days later after a "tedious" voyage in the Company's brig the Mary Dare.⁴⁷ They did not find a hospitable environment.

They found a handful of white men, living in communal housing, in a half completed fort, surrounded by 3,000 Indians and a primeval forest. The first task that faced them was the construction of their own homes. The miners were capable of little more than the blasting of rock with which they laid the foundations of the chimneys for their houses. Their inability or their unwillingness to contribute more to this task was an irritant to the fort's management. George Blenkinsop noted in the Fort's Journal: "Smith &

McGregor are the only two who keep steadily at their jobs the others merely 'log attendance.'"⁴⁸

Antagonism between the management and the men, between capital and labour, surfaced early in their relationship at Fort Rupert. On October 10, 1849, Muir and his men demanded possession of the recently completed eighty foot house which had been intended for the fur trade labourers. Captain McNeill, the Fort's Chief Trader, refused them the house but offered a compromise. A twenty-two foot extension would be built on to the existing structure which they could occupy almost immediately. The miners agreed to work on the chimney as before, but absolutely refused to do any mining until they had four fireplaces, in front of which they could dry their clothes. Once again George Blenkinsop confided to the Fort's Journal:

I fear they will turn out to be a troublesome set and as far as my humble opinion is concerned they have fully made up their minds to do just nothing.

He added in French,

Nous verrons.⁴⁹

The problem with writing about this group of workers, as with so many others, is that few documents were generated which will allow us to hear the authentic voice of the workers. In this case the problem has been compounded by the fact that most historians have turned to the one document that has a coherent narrative and chronology, the Fort's Journal. This gives the view of local management. From its

beginning in May, 1849 until January 27, 1850, and again from March 23, 1850, until it suddenly breaks off, the author is George Blenkinsop. Between January 27, 1850 and March 23, 1850 the author was Charles Beardmore.⁵⁰ Beardmore, the junior of the two, followed the Company's standard procedure and entered a daily weather report and a rather laconic description of what was done by whom over the course of the day, with little or no editorial comment.

Blenkinsop's bias and strongly held views have acted like an intoxicant on the narrative of some historians,⁵¹ who have made little or no attempt to examine the living and working conditions of these workers in any systematic way. Blenkinsop's prejudiced view of the miners' conduct seems to have its origins in the issue of housing. On November 13, 1849, Blenkinsop complained bitterly in the Fort's Journal that:

Both miners and servants have good houses to shelter themselves from the wind and rain, good warm comfortable ones too. But we unfortunate ones have but a miserable cold shed to hide us in. Ah! who would not be a tyee to be so situated and so provided for.⁵²

These sheds, which were probably the same ones erected upon their arrival in May, 1849, must have offered miserable accommodation indeed. They had been thrown up in a matter of twelve hours with the most primitive of tools and not a particularly skilled work-force. They were composed of logs felled with an axe and were lined and covered with cedar bark.⁵³ Housing was not the only source of grievances at

Fort Rupert.

A complex relationship developed at Fort Rupert involving the miners, the Company and the indigenous population. There was constant tension. The Company had developed a trading relationship with the Indians long before the miners had even arrived.⁵⁴ The Indians gathered up the coal from the surface outcroppings and traded it with the Company for shirts, beads, blankets and other trade goods.⁵⁵ By the time the miners arrived the Indians had established a certain possessive right to the working of the coal. The subsequent conduct of the Indians would indicate that they saw the newly arrived miners, in the fall of 1849, as a group of interlopers. Conversely, the newly arrived miners provided an additional source of work and proved to be an alternate and competitive source of trade goods.

The relationship between the miners and the Indians at Fort Rupert may well have been prejudiced by the miners' initial encounter with North American Indians in the Straits of Juan de Fuca. Andrew Muir recorded in his diary how their ship had been becalmed just after they had passed Cape Flattery. The local Indians came along side in their canoes and boarded the ship to trade. The Captain, crew and passengers attempted to get them off the ship and finally had to physically push them overboard. The Europeans then found themselves surrounded by about forty canoes containing a large body of Indians making an unfamiliar and fearsome

noise. The brandishing of bows, arrows and spears added to their fears. Fortunately a stiff breeze came up making escape possible. Once the passengers started to trade tobacco and other "trifling" items with the Indians for salmon, they calmed down. At the end of a long sea voyage with their destination in sight, this would appear to have left a lasting impression on the mind of at least one miner.⁵⁶

The Indians at Fort Rupert not only traded coals for goods, they also traded their labour. Six Indians were employed by the Company to assist Muir with the sinking of his shaft. For this they were paid one three-point blanket per month. The relationship was further complicated by the fact that they had to be supervised by their chief, who also received one three-point blanket per month.⁵⁷ The Indians were employed in skilled and unskilled jobs that largely had to do with the construction of the establishment. They performed such menial tasks as digging drains, taking out tree stumps and hauling logs. Their skill as axemen was employed squaring timber. The Indians were virtually indispensable. George Blenkinsop noted in the Fort's Journal that "the Indians do a third of our work. Unless it rains we have usually from 50 to 100 employed daily at the above jobs."⁵⁸ By November of 1849 the Hudson's Bay Company had become an integral part of an expanded local economy in the area of Fort Rupert.

The integration of the indigenous population into the

economy of British Columbia has remained problematic to this day. Insensitivity to their culture, and a desire to have them conform to a model European work-force, has been an integral part of capitalist ideology since the early days of settlement. On the 25th of June, 1850 Sir George Simpson responded to James Douglas' latest report on Fort Rupert:

The report of the peaceable behaviour of the natives, their industry & anxiety to see us settled among them are very satisfactory; with good management we have no doubt they will be found very useful & in due time we hope to see them adopt the habits of civilized life & work as labourers at the mine.⁵⁹

The reason for this was simple. The scarcity of labour, particularly skilled labour, constantly threatened to drive the cost of production, or for that matter doing any kind of business, beyond the limits that would allow for a good return on investment. The number of Indians available for work far exceeded the demands of the Hudson's Bay Company. They were able therefore to establish a tariff for the exchange of coal as well as the transportation of coal by canoe from the shore to the ships, and maintain it. This proved to be so inexpensive that it was seen as an alternative to employing the miners.

In his [Work's] letter to Sir George Simpson he says 'the 1000 tons of coal contracted for by Captain Stout have all been collected entirely by Indians, at a cost of about $2/3\frac{1}{2}$ per ton paid to the Indians, besides the labour of receiving them and shipping off to the vessel; which for the 130 tons shipped on board the "Mary Dare" cost in the shipping about 3p per ton, together

2/6½' This is most important information, as it was feared they had been much more expensive - too many Indians cannot be employed in this way.

The Committee do not suppose the coal can be got much cheaper by the miners when they get their machinery up...⁶⁰

The surface outcroppings that the Indians had been exploiting were of a limited nature and by July of 1852 Douglas was reporting that they had exhausted this source. "The Indians have not procured any coal this season," he stated, "as the labour of getting them out at the depth of ten feet below the surface is greater than the Indians are willing or able to encounter."⁶¹

Management's enthusiasm for Indian labour was not shared by the miners. A certain amount of antipathy developed between the Indians and the miners. Since 1846 white Europeans had been exchanging trade goods for coal, or the labour necessary to transport coal to awaiting ships in Beaver Harbour. By so doing the Europeans, whether they be Hudson's Bay Company officials or the Royal Navy's "King George Men", had established a relationship that acknowledged the territorial preeminence of the resident Kwakiutl Indians. Thus when John Muir and his party began digging a shaft in order to exploit the underground deposits of coal it is not at all surprising that they should be viewed as intruders by the indigenous people of the area. To the Indians, this was their territory and their natural resource to be exploited and traded. They took steps to

drive off their rivals, the Muirs.

Andrew Muir confided to his diary that the miners were constantly faced with "...Indian annoyance by day and depredations by night."⁶² They were threatened with guns; rocks and other debris were thrown down on top of them as they worked in the pit; their tool shed was broken into on several occasions and valuable tools stolen. The situation continued to deteriorate until the early spring of 1850. On the morning of April 16th an exasperated John Muir informed George Blenkinsop that they had had their tool shed broken into for the last time. They were abandoning the pit unless Blenkinsop would erect pickets for the protection of the men and their property.⁶³ The conflict between the Indians and the miners had led to a conflict between the miners and the Company. The creation of a wage-labour force in mining had led to another unexpected problem: conflict with the pre-industrial labour force which claimed the resource.

This complicated an already existing rivalry that the Company had with the miners in their relationship with the Indians. The Company held a Licence for Exclusive Trade with the Indians. On occasion it was violated by rival trading companies for furs, and from time to time by its own employees for fresh provisions and other wants.⁶⁴ In some instances it was even officially condoned, but if not carefully regulated it could seriously complicate the Company's trading relationship with the Indians. George

Blenkinsop explained the specific problem that arose at Fort Rupert in the Fort's Journal:

Some time ago the miners applied for leaf tobacco to pay the Indians who drew water & did little errands for them. Captain McNeill allowed them some and now we find we get no ducks or geese though there are plenty in the camp; on enquiry we found the miners were paying 12 leaves for a goose while we gave only 8. After this we shall of course be short of leaf tobacco when asked for.⁶⁵

Muir's decision to abandon the coal workings on the 16th of April exacerbated the conflict that arose out of this rivalry, and contributed to the more substantive conflict over the control of work. The shortage of provisions turned into a veritable drought as the well paid miners outbid Company officials for fresh provisions from the Indians. Blenkinsop bemoaned his fate in the Fort's Journal:

Trade now a days very dull we get but few furs and very little provisions, the miners going out into the camp and buying up all they can get at an enormous price, more than we can afford to give.⁶⁶

Since their arrival, the miners had been a destabilizing influence on the normal order of society that existed at a Hudson's Bay Company fort. Their wages were different, the means of calculating their wages was different, their hours of work were different, even their rations were different. For example, Douglas had allowed them one pound of sugar and four ounces of tea per week.⁶⁷ Most important, their relationship to the officers of the Fort was different, as demonstrated by the instructions of

James Douglas to the Fort's Chief Trader, Captain William McNeill:

John Muir Oversman, and 7 miners are now forwrded by the brig 'Mary Dare' for the new establishment where they are to be permanently stationed and employed in mining and procuring coal under your order.

It is however understood that the conduct and management of these men, while employed at their trade, is to be left to the Oversman an, a practical man who understands the business and can work them to the greatest advantage.

They are of course subject to all the rules and regulations of the establishment, and are bound to receive and obey all your lawful orders. Mr. Muir will apply to you for such assistance and all the materials he may require for mining purposes, which we are bound to furnish, and otherwise to forward their work by every possible means.

You will herewith receive a statement of the rations, we have agreed to give them, and a copy of the same is left in their own possession they will be entitled to only one ration per man, and those with families support them at their own expense. Mr. Muir should be treated with attention, and supplied with fresh food as often as possible. He is a respectable man and by no means hard to please, by keeping on good terms with him, you will have no trouble with his gang; ⁶⁸

The contradictory nature of these orders is obvious. Douglas has instructed McNeill that the men are to be "employed in mining and procuring coal under your order," and in the next sentence he is told "the conduct and management of these men while employed at their trade, is to be left to the Oversman". Douglas' intentions are obvious. He clearly envisioned McNeill as the overall manager and ultimate decision maker, as a Chief Trader would be at any Hudson's

Bay Company post. Muir's position was that of technical operations manager and immediate supervisor. The problem was where did one job end and the other one begin. Moreover, Douglas could not have been familiar with the miners' work habits, which were so dramatically different from the ordinary routine at a Company post, or he surely would have given McNeill advance warning. The conflict that arose at Fort Rupert did not confine itself to the workplace and must be seen in a wider social context.

The privileged position of the miners, combined with the material and social egalitarianism of the frontier, challenged the hierarchial structure of the Hudson's Bay Company. Those charged with the maintenance of the social and political order of the Fort resented this challenge. Charles Beardmore, the Fort's junior clerk, wrote his sponsor in London, Aaron Chapman, M.P., complaining of the situation:

Again there is no difference between the men's goods and the Gents. goods. A man going to the store and clothing himself and wife just as well as the commander of that Fort or Depot. This the single gents. don't care much about but the married feel it very galling to see the men's wives dressed as well as their own and they not able to help it.⁶⁹

One of those married men was George Blenkinsop, senior clerk and son-in-law of the Fort's Chief Trader, Captain William McNeill. Blenkinsop resented everything about the miners, their Saturday night "rows", their free use of

"grog", their dancing, and most of all their perceived attitude to work.⁷⁰ Blenkinsop was literally beside himself on October 31, 1849, as he raged away in the Fort's Journal about the miners having "knocked off" work because it was raining too hard. He became obsessed with the idea of collecting evidence by which the Company could prove that the miners had broken their contracts and were therefore subject to disciplinary measures.

On November 7th, Blenkinsop noted in the Fort Journal:

The miners progress but slowly seldom or never are more than half of them at work at the same time, this arises from their system of spelling each other viz 4 work and 3 look on & vica versa.⁷¹

By November 10th, he was timing their absence from the Fort down to the minute:⁷²

Miners absent from the Fort only 7 Hours
18 minutes.

Four days later he once again turned his attention to the system of spelling one another that the miners used.⁷³ He accused the miners, in the safety of the pages of the Journal, of working less than four hours each. He took great delight in recording that any direct challenge to authority was met with a firm hand. On November 21st, John Muir brought two of the miners, Smith and McGregor, before Captain McNeill and accused them of refusing to obey his orders. McNeill threatened to put them in irons. Seeing that the Captain was prepared to carry through with his threat,

the two men agreed to go back to work.⁷⁴

Dissatisfaction with the situation was not confined to management. As convinced as Blenkinsop was that the miners were not working hard enough and that the Company was not getting a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, the miners were equally convinced that they were not getting all the pay for which they had originally contracted. On March 27, 1850 all the miners, except John Muir, petitioned James Douglas, demanding 2S 6d increase in pay per day. The miners claimed that the statements made to them in Scotland had led them to believe that they would be raising coal as soon as they arrived, not prospecting for it or sinking a shaft. They therefore had expected that they would have no problem whatsoever in achieving their bonus of 2S 6d per ton over and above thirty tons a month on a daily basis. Unless these demands were met the miners proposed to work out the remainder of their contracts as labourers, as provided for if they did not find coal.⁷⁵ It is impossible to know whether the miners realized by the Spring of 1850 that there was no workable seam of coal at Fort Rupert. Certainly the prospect of never being able to raise coal and earn the additional half crown would be discouraging. On the other hand, it could encourage them to attempt to earn it another way. The terms of their contract gave them some leverage and they used it.

Douglas wrote his superiors asking for advice⁷⁶ while

the management at the Fort attempted to cope with a new set of circumstances. On April 22nd, Andrew Muir and John McGregor blasted rocks, miners' work, until breakfast. The tide being too high after breakfast, George Blenkinsop proposed that they be put to work digging a drain, which was labourers' work. Muir and McGregor demanded that Blenkinsop clarify their situation; were they miners or were they labourers? Blenkinsop was infuriated by Muir's "impudence" and ordered all of the miners into the Fort's hall. He strapped on sword and brandished a pistol while threatening them with dire consequences if they did not go back to work. They reluctantly went to work.⁷⁷ Muir's and McGregor's efforts over the next few days further infuriated Blenkinsop and led to another confrontation. The result was that Muir and McGregor declared that since they could not work to Mr. Blenkinsop's satisfaction they would not work at all.⁷⁸

Muir and McGregor idled away their time hunting, canoeing and exploring the woods for more than a week. On the 3rd of May, Captain McNeill convened a meeting of all the miners in the hall. McNeill ordered Muir and McGregor to go back to work. They refused, demanding a trial by English law for the charges made by Blenkinsop that they had broken their contracts. McNeill ordered them put in irons and fed on bread and water. They remained in irons until the 9th, at which time they were given another chance to go to work.

They refused again until they were tried. On the 11th they were released from the bastion where they had been incarcerated. Events were moving rapidly to a close.⁷⁹

In the interim all the miners had stopped work. They wrote separately to Douglas protesting Blenkinsop's conduct and expressing doubt in the Company. Douglas implored the men to return to work and assured them that if Blenkinsop, or any other officer of the Company, had mistreated them, he would be dealt with. Finally, he reassured them that they would get the 2S 6d per day and that it would be paid weekly.⁸⁰ Governor Richard Blanshard, who had visited Fort Rupert in late March and, in fact, had carried the miners' petition personally to Douglas, was aware of the chaos that gripped the Fort in June and took steps to check it. On June 22, 1850 he appointed Dr. John Sebastian Helmcken, the Company's doctor at Fort Rupert, to the position of magistrate and justice of the peace for the area.⁸¹

On the 29th of June the miners appeared before Helmcken to lay charges against McNeill, Blenkinsop and Beardmore for false imprisonment and ill-treatment. Andrew Muir laid a separate charge of defamation of character against Blenkinsop.

As McNeill and Beardmore were both absent from the Fort, Helmcken had to adjourn the case. Helmcken, having no familiarity with the law, referred the matter to Governor Blanshard.⁸² It was too late. The bonds of legitimacy had

been broken.

Andrew Muir's entry in his diary is an evocative articulation of a nineteenth century worker's sense of injustice:

27th. The steamer Beaver arrived from Fort Victoria bringing the letters which contained nothing satisfactory we were to get our greviances[sic] redesst[sic] by the Dr. on the 29th we laid our case into him but he told us he could do nothing in it. This morning the Steamer left for the North end 2nd July started with our canoe after dinner determined to make for some Christian place since we could get neither rights nor privileges here neither one way nor another⁸³

As Barrington Moore Jr. has poignantly pointed out, people have a high level of tolerance in the face of injustice. Authority is undermined and people revolt when they perceive that the established authority in any given society has failed to fulfil a mutually agreed upon function that legitimates its existence, or legitimates the occupation of a position of authority by a given individual.⁸⁴ It was not the antics of McNeill and his son-in-law, Blenkinsop that drove Muir to desert, but rather the failure, first of Douglas, then of Blanshard, and finally of Blanshard's appointee, Helmcken, to address or redress the miners' grievances. It would have been a meaningless revolt if he had not been joined by all the other miners and their wives and children. Only his father, mother and youngest brother stayed behind.

The deserters eluded Company officials and escaped to

California aboard the brig England, which had been loading coal in the harbour. John Muir refused to continue the sinking of a mine shaft without the assistance of qualified miners and all mining operations came to a halt. The situation at Fort Rupert deteriorated even further.

On August 17, 1850 Douglas reported to Company officials in London that:

Walker the blacksmith and six other men recruits by the "Norman Morison", whose names are enclosed, absconded at the same time as the miners. The other men in the establishment consisting of 11 of the "Norman Morison" recruits and a party of 11 Canadians influenced by their example had struck for double pay and many other allowances inconsistent with the rules of the service. Another party of eight men left the Fort in the presence of the officers and made their way by canoe to this place.⁸⁵

Various attempts were made to get the men to return to work. These involved both persuasion and coercion and a diet of bread and water. However the Company failed to restore order for fifty days.⁸⁶ Once relative calm was restored to the Fort, the Company resumed trading with the Indians for coal they gathered from the surface outcroppings. Douglas knew, however, that this would not produce enough coal to supply the Pacific Steamship Mail Company and the burgeoning market in San Francisco. It was essential to recruit new miners in England in order to resume mining operations.

As soon as Company officials in London heard of the desertions they took steps to hire replacements.⁸⁷ Neither

they nor Douglas doubted the wisdom of their judgement or their ability to manage coal miners. They put down their initial failure to a lack of good character in the miners. As if to demonstrate that they believed the men's collective action was due to individual failings, Barclay emphasised to their recruiter, Landale, that "You will of course be careful to select men of good character and quiet sober habits."⁸⁸ Barclay made no mention of the desertions. Within three weeks Landale had managed to recruit an Oversman, Boyd Gilmour and four miners.

Just as they were about to leave for London things began to go wrong. News of the events at Fort Rupert had reached Scotland and were circulating in the coal fields. Men began to back out of their agreements. Distraught by this turn of events, and with less than six days to go before the men were due in London, Landale wrote to the Company's Secretary, Barclay, and recounted the frightening rumours. Barclay was astounded. He indignantly replied to Landale:

With respect to the story about the men being shot by Mr. Blenkinsop, and himself being hanged, I can only say that this is the first intimation the Company have had of these occurrences, and they do not believe that⁸⁹ there is one word of truth in the report.

A few more soothing words were added to assuage the miners' worst fears.

Gilmour found three more miners to replace those that

had refused to go. They joined a blacksmith in London and sailed aboard a chartered vessel, the Pekin, on the 23rd of December, 1850. The party consisted of:

Boyd Gilmour	Oversman
Robert Dunsmuir	Miner
Adam French	"
Archibald French	"
Arthur Quiggley	"
William H. Preston	Blacksmith ⁹⁰

The ship arrived in the Columbia River in early August, 1851. As soon as the ship dropped anchor, the Company's worst fears were realized. The better part of the crew deserted, as did Quiggley, the miner, and Preston, the blacksmith. The rest of the party carried on to Fort Rupert in the Company's brig, the Mary Dare.⁹¹ There they would stay until December, 1852.

The Company's difficulties in getting men to work for them, in controlling men while they worked for them, and in keeping those men working for them were not unique.⁹² Their difficulties however were greatly aggravated by the great distances over which they had to transport their labour-force and the immense lengths of time it took. Thus the Company's investment in labour was more than mere wages and this heightened the value of that labour. It is therefore not surprising that the Company would try vigorously to control such a valuable commodity regardless of the feelings of the men.

The miners who had deserted Fort Rupert for California,

with the exception of John Smith, all returned to Victoria in the Spring of 1851. Douglas attempted to persuade them to return to Fort Rupert but was unsuccessful. They made demands that Douglas characterized as "unreasonable" and "extravagant". John Muir had rented a sawmill and moved his extended family to Sooke on the Southwest tip of Vancouver Island.⁹³

The arrival of a new group of miners at Fort Rupert did nothing to resolve the problems that were inherent to mining coal at that location. The new group was just as resistant to attempts by fur trade officials to supervise their work as the old group had been. In one instance the French brothers struck work for a day in an attempt to establish the principle of picking their own work place. This failed but, if nothing else, it demonstrates that the adversarial relationship between capital and labour had not disappeared with the departure of the Muirs.⁹⁴

Indeed an atmosphere of dissatisfaction was pervasive. In March of 1852 Douglas reported to his superiors in London:

The miners have of late shown frequent signs of discontent, but the arrival of the new boring rods, and the payment of their arrears of wages in cash gave great satisfaction and removed every trace of despondency. I hope that my next report may contain more satisfactory intelligence, but really our frequent disappointments are discouraging.⁹⁵

It was in fact this failure to find coal that was the source of the greatest discontent.

- Gilmour and his gang had been engaged on precisely the same terms as the Muir party.⁹⁶ Those terms included the payment of 2S 6d per ton for every ton of coal raised over thirty tons a month. As long as they did not discover coal, their incomes remained at the basic rate of fifty pounds a year. No doubt the workers would not have calculated their future prospects of earning at a minimum, but rather at a maximum. Any failure to obtain that maximum would not only be discouraging, but would also give rise to feelings of resentment towards whomever had promised it. The workers wished to maximize the money exchanged for their labour, whereas their employers wished to minimise the payment that they had to make for this commodity.

This in fact is the real substance to the dispute which took place between the Muirs and George Blenkinsop. It was not, as Keith Ralston has suggested, over whether or not they worked as labourers. That was the symptom not the cause.⁹⁷ The Muirs had agreed to work as labourers, though only after the prospect of finding coal appeared remote and the deprivations of the Indians had become so great as to seriously interfere with those prospects. Whether as miners or as labourers, the Muirs appear to have been determined to control the intensity of the labour that they exchanged for 3S 6d per day. This conflict led Blenkinsop and McNeill to

resort to the only management technique they knew: brute force and ship's discipline. This was, as Keith Ralston has correctly pointed out, out-moded and ineffective.⁹⁸

David Landale had warned the Company when the men were initially hired:

They will have to be treated mildly in the ship; and if possible put under the order of the oversman who knows their ways.

It is to be kept in mind by the party in command, that these people have been in the habit of earning high wages, and on piece work - that is they worked hard, or easy, and when they liked and they may take it ill at first with the regulations of a ship.⁹⁹

Nowhere in the Company's correspondence does this advice appear to have been passed on to the management in the field. Douglas did instruct McNeill that the men were to be under the supervision of the oversman, but even this was done in a confused manner that clearly contributed to the conflict that arose. Moreover, there still remained the problem of finding a workable seam of coal at Fort Rupert.

At the end of July, 1852, Douglas followed up on a report that Indians had discovered coal on the east coast of Vancouver Island. He rehired John Muir to prospect along the coast of the Island in the "canal de Arro" (Georgia Strait).¹⁰⁰ On August 18th Douglas enthusiastically reported a coal discovery at Wentuhuysen Inlet which is the site of present day Nanaimo.¹⁰¹ Muir's sons, John and Robert, and his nephews, John McGregor and Archibald Muir were rehired and sent .

to Nanaimo.¹⁰²

By mid-September, Douglas had more or less given up on the prospect of ever finding a workable seam of coal at Fort Rupert. He issued instructions to the clerk he had posted to Nanaimo, William McKay, to commence construction of houses in anticipation of transferring the men and women from the coal operations at Fort Rupert.¹⁰³ In late November, with fresh reports of Muir's successes and Gilmour's failures, Douglas issued the order to abandon Fort Rupert.¹⁰⁴

Genuine coal mining would now begin at Nanaimo. During the five years that the Hudson's Bay Company had attempted to exploit the coal deposits at Fort Rupert, the traditional relationship between capital and labour to which the Company was accustomed had been challenged. The work force, though never large,¹⁰⁵ possessed a sufficiently rare skill that a strike or desertion posed a threat significant enough to exact concessions and privileges unheard of before in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company. To offset this the Company had made changes of its own.

To introduce an element of stability, the Company had not only allowed but encouraged the miners to bring their wives and children with them. This was a privilege previously only extended to officers of the Company. They had retained the tradition of provisioning their employees, but not their dependents. The additional mouths to feed not

only stretched the food supply to its limits but it also had disrupted another established practice. Faced with the need to supply their families with fresh food, the men had attempted to trade with the Indians. This was a violation of the Company's Licence for Exclusive Trade. At first this had been tolerated, but when the men went on strike, the rule was vigorously and violently enforced in an attempt to force the men back to work.¹⁰⁶ This proved to be both expensive and an ineffective means of social control.

The harsh living and working conditions and the dangers of the frontier dictated that the Company maintain firm control over the personnel in its employ. These same conditions amplified the conflict between capital and labour that is inherent in the industrial extraction of natural resources. The Company had in the past not only paid its employees wages but had also supplied them with food and shelter. Any inadequacies were tolerated in the isolation of the frontier. The growth of population and settlement, the expansion of communication systems, and the presence of alternatives undermined this tolerance and was an impetus to grievance and agitation. The Company's Licence to Exclusive Trade however made it the only source of food and shelter. If the Company was to successfully exploit the coal resources of Vancouver Island then it would have to find a way to obviate such a conundrum.

The solution was simple and straight forward. They

would pay the men cash in lieu of rations and the men were free to buy food from the Company or buy trade goods and trade with the Indians for food. Thus when the Muirs were rehired to work at Nanaimo they were paid a shilling per day in lieu of rations. When Douglas informed his officer in charge, William McKay, of this change in the Company's routine, he remarked that this "...will save you much trouble."¹⁰⁷ This also loosened the bonds that tied the men to the Company and made their exchange a more economic one.

The Company's first attempt to bring miners to the Pacific Northwest had been something of a failure, but had exposed the conflict inherent in relations between capital and labour on the mining frontier. The Company's next attempt to control workers over a great distance would involve a much larger body of workers and would result in a much greater disaster.

NOTES

¹Karl Marx, Capital, A Critique of Political Economy, Intro. by Ernest Mandel, Trans., Ben Fowkes, I (Harmondsworth:Penguin Books,1976),p.1023, his emphasis.

²Karl Marx, Capital, A Critique of Political Economy, Intro. by Ernest Mandel, Trans. David Fernbach, II (Harmondsworth:Penguin Books,1978),pp.135-136.

³Ralston,"Miners and Managers,"p.43.

⁴Lord Selkirk to Sir John Pelly, May 27,1848
London Inward Correspondence - General, A.10/24 fo.412,
Hudson's Bay Company Archives/Provincial Archives of
Manitoba(Hereinafter referred to by number and HBCA/PAM.).

⁵"Death of an Eminent Mining Engineer," Engineering,
December 27,1895.

⁶J.H. Pelly to Lord Selkirk, May 31,1848, A.10/24 fo.
415; D. Landale to A. Barclay, June 20,1848 A.10/24 fo.491;
Landale to Barclay, July 9,1848 A.10/25 fo.41, HBCA/PAM.

⁷Landale to Barclay July 9,1848, Ibid.

⁸Pelly to Selkirk May 31,1848, Loc. cit.

⁹Barclay to Landale, September 14,1848, London
Correspondence Book Outwards - General Series A.5/16 fo.41
HBCA/PAM.

¹⁰Gordon M. Wilson, The Strike Policy of the Miners of
the West of Scotland, 1842-1874," Essays in Scottish Labour
History, A Tribute to W.H. Marwick, ed. Ian MacDougall,
(Edinburgh:John Donald Publishers,1978),p.37, fig.2.

¹¹John Benson, British Coal Miners in the Nineteenth
Century:A Social History(London:Gill and MacMillan,1980),61.

¹²W & R Morrison to Barclay May 3,1848, A.10/24 fo.
340, HBCA/PAM.

¹³List of Clerks & Postmasters - Western Department,
Outfit 1855, London Correspondence Inward from HBC Posts
A.11/76 fo.144; Rich, Hudson's Bay Company, II, 406-407.

¹⁴Barclay to Landale July 27, 1848 A.5/16 fo.35-36,
HBCA/PAM.

¹⁵Landale to Barclay July 9, 1848 A.10/25 fo.41;
Barclay to J. Curtis Hayward September 20, 1850 A.5/17 fo.11,
HBCA/PAM.

¹⁶Landale to Barclay October 4, 1848 A.10/25 fo.307-
308, HBCA/PAM.

¹⁷This could have been as much as half a years'
salary, which was Hudson's Bay Company policy, but there is
no record of how much was actually paid.

¹⁸Landale to Barclay October 30, 1848 A.10/25 fo.401-
402, HBCA/PAM.

¹⁹Barclay to Landale November 3, 1848 A.5/16 fo.68,
HBCA/PAM.

²⁰Landale to Barclay November 5, 1848 A.10/25 fo.420,
HBCA/PAM.

²¹Barclay to Landale November 6, 1848 A.5/16 fo.69,
HBCA/PAM.

²²John Muir to Landale November 6, 1848 A.10/25 fo.323,
HBCA/PAM.

²³Muir to Landale November 16, 1848 A.10/25 fo.454,
HBCA/PAM.

²⁴Andrew Muir, "Private Diary," December 1, 1848 Ts.,
Provincial Archives of British Columbia (hereinafter PABC).

²⁵Barclay to Ogden, Douglas and Work November 16, 1848
London Correspondence Book Outwards - HBC Official A.6/27
fo.329, HBCA/PAM.

²⁶Muir, "Diary," June 1, 1849, PABC.

²⁷Margaret Ormsby, "Introduction," Fort Victoria Letters 1846-1851, ed. Hartwell Bowsfield, (Winnipeg: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1979), lviii, n.4; Rudolf Herble, Social Movements (New York: Appelton Century Crofts, 1951), 271.

²⁸Douglas to Barclay September 3, 1849 A.11/72 fo.87, HBCA/PAM.

²⁹Ormsby, "Introduction," p.lviii; Dorothy Blakey Smith, Reminiscences of J.S.Helmcken, p.106, n.1; W.K. Lamb, "The Governorship of Richard Blanshard," B.C.H.Q., XIV (January-April, 1950), p.8.

³⁰Marx, Capital I, p.274.

³¹E.E. Rich, "The Fur Traders: Their Diet and Drugs," The Beaver, XXVII (Summer, 1976), pp.42-53; Landale to Barclay October 30, 1848 A.10/25 fo.401-402; Barclay to Hayward September 20, 1850 A.5/17 fo.11; Douglas to Captain William McNeill August 25, 1849 A.11/72 fo.85, HBCA/PAM.

³²Rich, "Fur Traders Diet," p.45.

³³John Burnett, Plenty and Want a Social History of Diet in England from 1815 to the Present Day (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966), p.135.

³⁴Rich, "Fur Traders Diet," p.45.

³⁵Douglas to McNeil August 25, 1849 Loc. cit; Douglas to Barclay May 15, 1850 A.11/72 fo.224; Douglas to Barclay August 17, 1850 A.11/72 fo.293, HBCA/PAM.

³⁶Burnett, Plenty and Want, p.36.

³⁷Douglas to Barclay November 16, 1850 A.11/72 fo. 347-348, HBCA/PAM.

³⁸Fort Rupert Post Journal May 12, 1849 B.185/a/1 fo.1, HBCA/PAM.

³⁹Ibid July 30, 1849

⁴⁰Fort Rupert Post Journal August 20, 1849 B.185/a/1, HBCA/PAM.

⁴¹Muir, "Diary," pp.82-83 Ts., PABC.

⁴²Ormsby, "Introduction," p.lviii.

⁴³Fort Victoria Letters, p.103.

⁴⁴Ibid, pp.100-106.

⁴⁵Eden Colville's Letters 1849-52, ed. E.E. Rich and A.M. Jonson, (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1956), p.182.

⁴⁶Douglas to Barclay September 3, 1849, Op. cit.

⁴⁷Muir, "Diary", pp.82-83, PABC; Fort Rupert Post Journal September 24, 1849 B.185/a/1 fo.18, HBCA/PAM.

⁴⁸Fort Rupert Post Journal October 18, 1849 B.185/a/1 fo.19, HBCA/PAM.

⁴⁹Fort Rupert Post Journal October 10, 1849 B.185/a/1 fo.20, HBCA/PAM.

⁵⁰Fort Rupert Post Journal April 27, 1850 B.185/a/1 fo.59, HBCA/PAM.

⁵¹See note 29 above.

⁵²Fort Rupert Post Journal November 13, 1849 B.185/a/1 fo. 29, HBCA/PAM.

⁵³Fort Rupert Post Journal May 12, 1849 B.185/a/1 fo.1; September 4, 1849 B.185/a/1 fo.15, HBCA/PAM.

⁵⁴Barry M. Gough, Gunboat Frontier, British Maritime Authority and Northwest Coast Indians, 1846-1890 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984), p.38.

⁵⁵Douglas to Barclay April 3, 1850 A.11/72 fo.206; Barclay to Douglas August 30, 1850 A.6/28 fo.314-315, HBCA/PAM; McKay to Douglas September 9, 1852 "Nanaimo Correspondence 1852-1853", Ts, PABC.

⁵⁶Muir, "Diary", June 1, 1849 p.80.

⁵⁷Fort Rupert Post Journal October 30, 1849 B.185/a/1 fo.25, HBCA/PAM.

⁵⁸Fort Rupert Post Journal November 22, 1849 B.185/a/1 fo.34, HBCA/PAM.

⁵⁹Simpson to Douglas June 25, 1850 Correspondence Inward - Fort Victoria B.226/c/1 fo.38, HBCA/PAM.

⁶⁰Barclay to Douglas August 30, 1850 A.6/28 fo.314-315, HBCA/PAM.

⁶¹Douglas to Barclay July 11, 1852 "Correspondence On The Affairs of Vancouver Island Colony, 1850-55", Ts, PABC.

⁶²as quoted in Gough, Gunboat Frontier, p.39.

⁶³Fort Rupert Post Journal April 16, 1850 B.185/a/1 fo.52, HBCA/PAM.

⁶⁴Rich, Hudson's Bay Company II, pp.751-752.

⁶⁵Fort Rupert Post Journal February 18, 1850 B.185/a/1 fo.44, HBCA/PAM.

⁶⁶Ibid, April 23, 1850 B.185/a/1 fo.55, HBCA/PAM.

⁶⁷Muir, "Diary", p.83.

⁶⁸Douglas to McNeill August 25, 1849 Loc. cit.

⁶⁹Beardmore to Chapman September 26, 1849 A.11/72 fo.148, HBCA/PAM.

⁷⁰Fort Rupert Post Journal October 7, 1849; November 10, 1849; November 12, 1849; October 31, 1849 B.185/a/1 fos. 19, 29, 38 and 26, HBCA/PAM.

⁷¹Fort Rupert Post Journal November 7, 1849 B.185/a/1 fo. 28, HBCA/PAM.

⁷²Ibid, November 10, 1849 B.185/a/1 fo.30, HBCA/PAM.

⁷³Ibid, November 14, 1849 B.185/a/1 fo.30, HBCA/PAM.

⁷⁴Ibid, November 21, 1849 B.185/a/1 fo.32, HBCA/PAM.

⁷⁵See Appendix I

⁷⁶Douglas to Barclay April 8, 1850 A.11/72 fo.222, HBCA/PAM.

⁷⁷Fort Rupert Post Journal April 22, 1850 B.185/a/1 fo.55, HBCA/PAM; Muir "Diary", April 22, 1850, pp.93-94, PABC.

⁷⁸Fort Rupert Post Journal April 26, 1850 B.185/a/1 fo.57-58, HBCA/PAM; Muir, "Diary", April 26, 1850, p.95, Ts., PABC.

⁷⁹Muir, "Diary", pp.95-106, Ts., PABC.

⁸⁰Douglas to John McGregor, Archibald Muir, John Muir Jr., Robert Muir, James Smith and the miners at Fort Rupert June 19, 1850 A.11/72 fo.264, HBCA/PAM.

⁸¹Lamb, "Governorship", p.9; Blanshard to Helmcken June 22, 1850, "Richard Blanshard - Correspondence - Outward, 1849-1851", Ms, PABC.

⁸²J.S. Helmcken "Magistrates Diary", June 29, 1850 Ms, PABC.

⁸³Muir, "Diary", pp.117-118, Ts, PABC.

⁸⁴Barrington Moore Jr., Injustice The Social Basis of Obedience and Revolt (White Plains: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1978), p.84

⁸⁵Douglas to Barclay August 17, 1850 A.11/72 fo.291, HBCA/PAM.

⁸⁶Douglas to Barclay November 16, 1850 A.11/72 fo.351, HBCA/PAM.

⁸⁷Barclay to Landale November 14, 1850 A.5/17 fo.42, HBCA/PAM.

⁸⁸Barclay to Landale November 19, 1850 A.5/17 fo.43-44, HBCA/PAM.

⁸⁹Barclay to Landale December 7, 1850 A.5/17 fo.53, HBCA/PAM.

⁹⁰Barclay to Landale December 23, 1850 A.5/17 fo.67; Douglas to Barclay August 18, 1851 A.11/73 fo.159-160; Grand Journal December, 1850 A.15/55 fo.90, HBCA/PAM.

⁹¹Barclay to Ogden December 13, 1850 A.6/29 fo.26; Barclay to Ogden January 1, 1851 A.6/29 fo.37-38; Douglas to Barclay August 18, 1851 A.11/73 fo.159-160; Gilmour to Douglas August 22, 1851 B.226/c/1 fo.165, HBCA/PAM.

⁹²E.J. Hobsbawm, Labouring Men Studies in the History of Labour (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), pp351-352.

⁹³Douglas to Barclay April 23, 1851 A.11/73 fo.48; Douglas to Barclay June 3, 1851 A.11/73 fo.51, HBCA/PAM.

⁹⁴Douglas to Barclay October 6, 1851 A.11/73 fo.62, HBCA/PAM.

⁹⁵Douglas to Barclay March 18, 1852 A.11/73 fo.400, HBCA/PAM.

⁹⁶Barclay to Landale November 19, 1850 A.5/17 fo.43-44; Barclay to Landale November 28, 1850 A.5/17 fo.50, HBCA/PAM.

⁹⁷Ralston, "Miners and Managers", p.47.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Landale to Barclay October 30, 1848 A.10/25 fo.401-2, HBCA/PAM.

¹⁰⁰Barclay to Douglas April 30, 1852 A.6/29 fo.346, HBCA/PAM; Douglas to Barclay July 31, 1852, "Correspondence On the Affairs of Vancouver Island Colony 1850-1855", PABC.

¹⁰¹Douglas to Barclay August 18, 1852, "Correspondence On the Affairs of Vancouver Island Colony 1850-1855", PABC.

¹⁰²Douglas to McKay August 26, 1852, "Nanaimo Correspondence 1852-53", PABC.

¹⁰³Douglas to McKay September 18, 1852, Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Douglas to Barclay October 5, 1852; Douglas to Barclay December 3, 1852, "Correspondence On the Affairs of Vancouver Island Colony 1850-1855", PABC; Fort Rupert remained a H.B.Co. fur trading post until 1885, see Helmcken, Reminiscences, pp.105-106, n.4.

¹⁰⁵At least three historians have overstated the size of the work-force at Fort Rupert by an enormous number. Beginning with John S. Galbraith who stated: "The first large contingent of immigrants to Vancouver Island, a group of eighty, mostly miners, arrived on the Norman Morison in March, 1850." The Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor, p.296. This error was repeated by E.E.Rich in 1959, Hudson's Bay Company 1670-1870 II, p.760; and also by Derick Pethick, Victoria: The Fort (Vancouver: Mitchell, Press), p.84.

There were eighty men aboard the Norman Morison; none of them were miners. Of that eighty, at the most sixteen went to Fort Rupert, twelve (8 labourers, 2 carpenters & 2 drivers) of whom were specifically assigned to work on the mining operations. The total number of people at Fort Rupert does not appear to have ever exceeded forty.

Douglas to Muir April 23, 1850 A.11/72 fo.86; Douglas to Barclay May 15, 1850 A.11/72 fo.238, HBCA/PAM; Helmcken, "Magistrates Diary", PABC.

¹⁰⁶Muir, "Diary", May 16, 1850 - May 19, 1850, pp.106-13, Ts., PABC.

¹⁰⁷Douglas to McKay August 26, 1852, "Nanaimo Correspondence 1852-53", PABC.

CHAPTER II: "A Melancholy termination to so hopeful an enterprise.": The voyage of the Colinda.

Because the Company was uncertain that it would ever find a viable seam of coal it had kept each group of miners that it had brought out to Vancouver Island deliberately small. This lessened the danger of them ending up with a large body of men on their hands whose skills were unsuited for any of the tasks normally associated with the fur trade. The coal discoveries that John Muir had made at Nanaimo now changed that situation. Estimates of the size of the coal reserves were such that it would justify a much larger work-force than the Company had assembled to date. Failure to take the initiative would mean that the Company would miss an opportunity to get in on the ground floor of a growing market in San Francisco for coal. A decision was called for. In his year-end report for 1852, Douglas reported their progress to date and made his recommendations:

I am daily expecting the arrival of the steamer "Beaver" with Mr. Gilmour & his party of miners from Ft. Rupert: that reinforcement added to Muir's party now at Nanaimo, will make a gang of 9 regular miners, & I expect to be able to induce a # of our common labouring servants, by an increase of pay, to undertake miners' work. The # of men employed in the pit may be thereby raised to about twenty hands, say 9 miners & 11 labourers but I have no doubt there is an opening for a much greater number of hands...

Further on he added,

In case the Committee should decide on sending out the miners, I would recommend young married men with 1 or 2 children, being selected for that purpose...₁

Douglas cautiously recommended that the Company recruit and dispatch as soon as possible twenty additional miners. A report from John Muir, the Nanaimo Oversman, arrived on Douglas' desk a few days later. He disagreed with Douglas on the number of miners that could be successfully employed, recommending a force of thirty to forty, but concurring with Douglas that they should all be married with children. As Muir put it,

I would have all married men with families and no young men, as I know that young men would be troublesome.₂

There are two things about this decision that stand out.

First, Douglas' sole inducement for labourers to take up the dirty and dangerous task of mining coal is strictly economic, "an increase in pay". There is no talk of elevated social status, self-improvement or a challenging career opportunity here; the motivational factor is strictly economic. Second, all the new miners are to be married with children. The idea that men with wives and children were more stable and less likely to desert the Company's service appears to have been a widely held belief among Hudson's Bay Company management.

Muir's endorsement of the necessity of hiring only married men would indicate that this belief knew no social

bounds. As we have seen Muir was no rebel. When his sons and nephews found the Company's rule tyrannical and deserted, he stayed behind. His views are more likely to have been conformist or "respectable". He would clearly appear to have endorsed the wide spread Victorian belief that marriage had a profoundly positive effect upon the moral character and behaviour of its participants, especially men. As Walter E. Houghton has so well demonstrated, this idealization of marriage and family life was excessively romantic.³ The notion that men would exercise self-discipline and would restrain themselves from rebelling against oppression, unsafe or unsatisfactory working and living conditions because they had a wife and family was a middle class delusion, that no one perceived as such until the Edwardian period.⁴ Delusion or not, that marriage and a family were criteria for hiring an employee reveals an attitude on the part of the Company that its relationship with its employees extended well beyond the work-site. The coal miners' families should not just be seen as a means by which the Company could control its labour force, but rather they should be seen as an integral part of the means of production.

Douglas reported to his superiors in London that Muir,

calculates that each head of a family is to have the assistance of two or three boys each of whom he supposes capable of performing half a man's work, and that each full grown miner will produce $1\frac{1}{2}$ Tons of coal per diem.⁵

The separation of the home from the work-place, the segregation of the family from labour, was a Victorian middle class ideal, and like so many other Victorian middle class ideals it had a double standard in its application accentuated by an acute class dimension. The miners' families that were to be brought out were, in fact, to be integrated units of production. While wives and daughters were not directly employed in the pit or even above ground they cannot be excluded from this unit of production. As Jeanne Boydston has cogently argued, women's housework was an integral part of producing the "means of subsistence" that was "necessary for the production of labour".⁶ Before these productive units could be employed they first had to be recruited.

It was no accident that the Company turned to Scotland to recruit its coal miners. To say that they had a strong bias in favour of Scottish workers would be an understatement. James Douglas, having just resolved a strike of newly arrived English farm labourers in May, 1850, expressed his opinion that,

I would suggest that not over ten engaged servants be sent out by sea from England at one time unless at our special requisition and there[sic] should be chiefly from the Orkneys, which supply the most orderly, faithful and honest men in the Company's employ.⁷

The Governor and Committee of the Company generally shared Douglas' point of view. As a result they had established a team of recruiters based in the Orkneys, the Shetlands and the Isle of Lewis. These three areas had continuously supplied the Company with a steady source of labour for many years. In 1849 the Company began to experience difficulties in recruiting sufficient numbers of both skilled and unskilled labour from this traditional source. Their first rival had been railway construction, which had its last great boom in Scotland during the late 1840s and early 1850s. Their second rival, emigration, was far more formidable. By the Fall of 1852 the situation had become serious. Barclay wrote to James Douglas, John Work and Peter Skene Ogden, who comprised the Board of Management for the Western Department:

Unfortunately the Orkneys have ceased to furnish recruits for the service, owing to extensive emmigration [sic] of the inhabitants to Australia, and the same rage for emmigration [sic] is extending itself to the Western Isles, so that the Company will soon have to look to Canada alone for labourers.⁸

The Company did not look to Canada, however. Instead it looked to Norway. Sir George Simpson, the Company's chief of North American operations, renewed an old acquaintance with the British consul general in Christiania(Oslo), J.R. Crowe.⁹

It would be to Crowe that the Company would turn in the Spring of 1853 when they began to have difficulty recruiting for the coal mines.¹⁰

The Company had at first turned to David Landale in Edinburgh at the beginning of April, 1853.¹¹ They instructed him to hire thirty miners and ten mine labourers who would do the more mundane chores like pushing tubs of coal or operating the hoist. The miners were to receive the same rate of pay and provisions as the last gang that Landale had sent out in 1850. The labourers on the other hand were to be paid the same as labourers in the fur trade, seventeen pounds per year for five years. The coal miner contracts were to be for only three years. All were to be married. The total number of adults was not to exceed 100. "Families in which there are boys, two of whom can do work equal to that of one man are to be preferred."¹² Landale's efforts did not appear to the Company to be having much success. Impatient for results they turned first to Crowe in Christiania and later made inquiries of a man named Kedston in Glasgow. It would appear that Landale was not having any trouble recruiting the more skilled "hewers" who actually picked and dug the coal at the face. It was the less skilled "drawers" or "pushers", who pushed the coal tubs that eluded the Company's efforts.¹³

Even a bonus of twenty-five acres of land could not induce Scottish labourers to sign on with the Hudson's Bay

Company for work in the coal fields of Vancouver Island.¹⁴ Part of the problem may have been the Company's tenacious adherence to their established wage scale that only paid labourers seventeen pounds per year. In January, 1853 the Company admonished their recruiter in Stornoway for even suggesting that they offer "a small increase in wages". They further criticised him for having hired in the past, labourers from the Isle of Lewis who could not speak English.¹⁵ Here the Company was clearly contradicting itself. It had just issued instructions to Crowe in Norway to try and find them labourers there for the coal mines and that language was not a problem. He could dispense with interpreters.¹⁶ The Norwegians apparently possessed qualities that superseded any foreseeable linguistic difficulties.

Barclay had written to Simpson in March of 1853 expressing great enthusiasm for more Norwegians as the first batch recruited for the fur trade in the Fall of 1852 seemed such ideal servants.

Mr. Consul General Crowe of Christiania, by whom they have been procured, describes them as being as fine a set of young men as the Company can desire, most of them having just served their military term of servitude, with excellent characters for subordination and sobriety...¹⁷

Servitude, sobriety and subordination, three attributes the Company clearly deemed important. This was consistent with the Company's rigidly structured hierarchy and military

method of operations, which is worthy of closer scrutiny.

Some idea of the relationship that men had with the Company and among themselves can be ascertained by examining the terms which the Company used to describe its employees. All employees were referred to as servants, when all employees were being described collectively. Management personnel were referred to as officers. Officers entered the Company as apprentice-clerks, clerks, or surgeon and clerk. An apprentice-clerk could be promoted to a clerk, a clerk to a trader, a trader to a chief trader, a chief trader to a chief factor. A surgeon and clerk was so titled because when not attending to medical matters a surgeon was expected to busy himself performing the duties of a clerk. A surgeon and clerk would be expected to follow a similar line of promotion as a clerk, if he so chose. All of these positions ranked above that of servants. The term servant was most commonly used to describe a skilled or unskilled manual labourer. That labourers were prescribed to a life of servitude is without doubt. In 1862 a group of students at the University of Edinburgh applied to the Company as "day labourers". The Company's Secretary, Thomas Fraser replied,

It is to be hoped that you and your friends will turn your university education to better account than to become day labourers. It is unnecessary to enter into details as to the duties imposed on that class of persons in the Hudson's Bay service. They are sufficiently severe in themselves

but undoubtedly they might be borne by young men of spirit looking for promotion as a reward. But unfortunately there is no chance of rising in the service and your object would therefore never be obtained.¹⁸

In contrast the management of the Hudson's Bay Company could expect a continuous elevation in status and income commensurate with their authority and responsibility. This was not some corporate eccentricity but a representation of the society in which these people lived. In this society

class in its turn achieves an independent existence over against the individuals, so that the latter find their conditions of existence predestined, and hence have their position in life and their personal development assigned to them by their class, become subsumed under it.¹⁹

That the Hudson's Bay Company wished to create such a society on Vancouver Island is without doubt. The Company's Secretary had written to James Douglas at Fort Victoria in December, 1849,

The object of every sound system of colonization should be, not to reorganize society on a new basis, which is simply absurd, but to transfer to the new country whatever is most valuable and most approved in the institutions of the old, so that society may, as far as possible consist of the same classes, united together by the same ties, and having the same relative duties to perform in the one country as in the other.²⁰

That the coal miners were to be permanent members of this colonial society is fairly certain. Like all other Company recruits, their contracts contained a clause guaranteeing them a passage out and home. No other group of

recruits had to date been offered the privilege of taking their families with them. A five month trip around the Horn was not something any emigrant was likely to want to repeat in the reverse unless they were absolutely distraught with homesickness. The odds were in favour of the Company retaining their services after their original contracts had expired. The Company's principal concern was insuring that once under contract, and having received their advance money that they embarked for Vancouver Island.

Barclay wrote to Landale on July 5, 1853 informing him that,

The Governor & Committee approve of the amount of advances you recommend, but before an advance is made, the party requiring it should find security for his embarking according to agreement. This appears to be a reasonable and necessary precaution against breach of contract.²¹

While this may have been necessary, Landale thought that it was anything but reasonable.

I have muted the subject at the beginning and the thing is impossible. From their rank in life it cannot be got of.

and he explained why,

Their masters are angry at losing them and nobody else will be security for them and to attempt it now would be to lose the half of them or more. Indeed several have already drawn back.²²

By the twelfth of July Barclay was beginning to have second thoughts on the subject and advised Landale that,

... all things considered it may be as well not to proceed with the demand for security, but to run the risk of desertion & take the chance of repayment should any breach of contract occur.²³

Landale had taken the initiative however and had come up with an apparently ingenious solution to the problem, though he himself appears to have been apprehensive. On the 13th of July he wrote to Barclay from Kilmarnock.

... I had procured the securities (such as they are) & herewith enclosed. The men of each district have become security for one another. That is, if any one of their number desert, the advance to be stopt off the wages of the remainder. We, the Company endeavouring to follow them & recover the money for them in this country which I think a good choice as it gives them all an interest in bringing the whole to life.²⁴

The securities consisted of three contracts signed by the recruits. On the 12th of July, Landale had fifteen men sign one document in Kilmarnock. The following day twenty-four more men signed a similar document in the neighbouring community of Crosshouse. It is impossible to say whether it was because they ran out of room on the one document or because certain men would only sign for certain others, but a second contract was signed at Crosshouse by five men.

Eleven of the forty-five men or twenty-five percent, made their mark and were clearly illiterate. Most of the rest of the signatures are shaky or awkward which would indicate that these men were unaccustomed to signing their

names and may have learned to do so by rote. Their level of literacy is therefore questionable.

Comparing the names on the contracts with those on a list sent to James Douglas reveals a number of discrepancies between the documents. Seven of the signatories appear to have not made the trip. One man whose name was crossed out on the contract, Allen Foulds, turns up on the list. Two young men, William Hunter and Peter Hunter were signatories but do not show up on the list. They may however be the "sons" listed under Andrew Hunter and sons.²⁵ Some of the discrepancies were due to desertions that took place between the time that the contracts were signed and when the list was made up just prior to the men's departures.²⁶

The replacement families found to take the place of the deserters were apparently larger. Landale indicated in the letter that accompanied the contracts that he had secured fifty-three and three quarter "dargs".²⁷ The list indicates fifty-five and three quarter dargs. The darg was the means by which Scottish colliers measured their daily output of coal. Its significance is far greater than a mere measurement of productivity. It goes a long way to explaining the type of relationship that the colliers expected to establish with the Company upon their arrival on Vancouver Island and it also gives us some idea of their own self image. In a discussion of the relationship that was developing between the collier and the nascent trade union

movement in the Scottish coal fields at this time, Alan Campbell and Fred Reid point out that,

Traditionally, he did not see himself as a wage-hand at all, but rather as an independent contractor, offering the labour power of himself and his family to the capitalist who had opened up the pit. The length of time that he was prepared to work was known as his "darg", meaning dark, and was seen as very much his own affair. So, in consequence, was the amount of coal he was willing to hew. It was natural, therefore, for colliers' unions to try to regulate the supply of coal, and hence its price and their wages, by shortening their "darg" and so restricting their output.²⁸

Needless to say the Company was determined to see that quite the opposite took place — an expansion of output wherever possible.

The relationship between the Company and its existing labour force at Nanaimo clearly demonstrates the Company's concern to expand output well before the Colinda recruits had been signed to their contracts. Gilmour and his gang, who were now working at Nanaimo, had been engaged on exactly the same terms as Muir and his gang had been: £100 per year for the Oversman, fifty pounds a year for the miners, with a bonus of 2S 6d to each miner for every ton of coal brought up over and above thirty tons a month. When Muir and his gang had been reengaged in September 1852, the same terms applied.²⁹

The first signs of trouble emerged in January, 1853. Gilmour's gang struck over what Douglas described as "a long

string of petty complaints" which he claimed to have "disposed of in a very summary manner".³⁰ Evidence of further discontent surfaced in April when Douglas reported:

I have sent up 10 assistant miners, engaged at £25 per year, who turn out as much coal as the regular hands who came from Scotland. The latter are rather annoyed at this and disposed to be sarcastic at the expense of the novices.³¹

It was in the following month that the miners began to attempt to press home the advantage that they obviously knew they had over the Company. The demand for coal began to out-pace production and the men literally kept ships waiting in the harbour while they refused to produce more than their required monthly quota. They stated that 2S 6d was not sufficient inducement for them to produce extra. Fearing it would "have a bad effect upon the others" Douglas refused to meet their demands.³² By the 12th of July Douglas began to acknowledge the fact that he was going to have to deal with the problem of stagnating production. Douglas' dilemma is graphically illustrated by the report that he sent the Company's Secretary on that date.

The labourers, whom we employ as assistant miners, became somewhat restive, as soon as they fell under the training of the regular miners, but they have now settled down quietly to their work, and turn out as much coal as the other, who are by no means an industrious set of men, and seldom deliver more than a single ton of coal per diem; though if so disposed they might easily cull a much larger quantity. The oversman assures me that he has seen them dig two tons of coal between 7 and 10 o'clock in the morning and

do nothing more for the rest of the day, which, was spent in idleness, as we have no further claims upon their time; their agreements with the Company requiring them to deliver only one ton of coal a day.³³

He added

I shall take the first opportunity of visiting that place, for the purpose of inducing them to be a little more industrious.³⁴

Douglas reported the results of that trip to Barclay in a letter dated September 3, 1853. Up until this time the isolation of their posts and the dangers of the wilderness had always given the Company the upper hand in dealing with discontented employees. The frustration of having to concede to his subordinates' demands and the pressures of the market place are evident in Douglas' report. Douglas certainly did not share the impression of the miners that they were underpaid.

Every conceivable argument has been tried to remove that impression, without success and as a last resort I offered to raise the per centage on the extra coal, to $\frac{4}{6}$ a ton, being induced to take that step by the present large demand for coal, which I have raised to 11 dollars when delivered at the mines, and have lately sold 230 tons to American ships at that rate. I was also much influenced towards that step, by the consideration that the "Pugets Sound Coalmining Association," an American Company, who have lately commenced digging for coal in Bellingham Bay, are paying their servants at the rate of $2\frac{1}{2}$ dollars a day, with board and lodging, and that unless our man [sic] are placed nearly on an equality in point of pay and emoluments, they would desert and join the American Company.

The presence of the rival American Company was not

all bad. It afforded Douglas an opportunity to hire additional miners on different terms of pay. He reported,

I found three of the "Puget Sound Coalmining Association," discharged miners at Nanaimo, in search of employment.

Being stout able young fellows, originally from the North of England, and accustomed to mining work, I hired them for six months, in the capacity of Colliers Miners Shankers Linkers, or Labourers. Instead of giving them a fixed rate of wages like the other miners I agreed to allow them 4/6 a ton, on the coal they produce, in lieu of wages, and to provide, tools and implements for labour, a free house and medical attendance, but their food is to be paid for out of their earnings. Those men expect to produce about two tons of coal daily, which will make their wages amount to 9/- a day, a remuneration that will always secure a sufficiency of hands for the Company's service, even should we be reduced to the necessity of having recourse to the labour market of California.³⁵

This was certainly not the laissez-faire labour market of the classical political economists, but, Douglas would appear to have taken another firm step in that direction. Contracts of only six months duration were unheard of in the Hudson's Bay Company service. This clearly gave both parties more flexibility should wages move up or down during the term of the contract. Moreover, Douglas had managed to maintain a rough parity with the other miners. Both Gilmour's and Muir's men earned fifty pounds a year which works out to 3S 6d per day, added to the new piece-rate of 4S 6d for the second ton of coal, raises their daily earnings to eight shillings, an additional one shillings in lieu of rations, brings their total daily earnings to nine shillings

the same as the new men. The significant difference was of course that they got paid the first 3S 6d per day whether they worked or not, whereas the new group only got paid for what they produced. Finally it should be noted that Douglas' use of five different occupational descriptions was a deliberate attempt to avoid the situation that the Company had found itself in at Fort Rupert where Muir's men had declined work because it was not specified in their contracts and they did not consider it miners' work. This solution to the problem had been suggested by Landale who was in the process of incorporating these terms in the new contracts for the miners who were to come out by the Colinda.³⁶ It should not be forgotten that the problems at Fort Rupert had not originated with the men refusing to do work other than that of a miner or "hewer", but rather with their efforts to maintain control of how much labour they exerted.

As merchant capitalists, the Hudson's Bay Company officials had had little if any experience in dealing with the immediate producers of any of the commodities that they traded. They had had no need of knowing how to regulate or control how much labour was exerted in order to produce a given quantity of a commodity. The idea that someone should not work from dawn until dusk six days a week, let alone that a labourer should exercise any control whatsoever over

the labour he exerted was totally foreign to their experience. It was, in their eyes, the labouring classes' duty to labour, and it was the middle class' duty to keep them at it. This, in the opinion of most middle class Victorians, was best accomplished by keeping wages low. The idea that high wages was an incentive to sustained or hard work flew in the face of accepted opinion.³⁷ This confusion of moral high mindedness and material self interest is well demonstrated by a report that James Douglas sent to London in March of 1854. It also illustrates some of the details of the agreement that the Company had come to with the miners who had been dispatched by the Colinda, and is worth quoting from at length.

You will observe by my various reports since last September, that the miners have been quiet orderly and industrious. The additional sum allowed last summer for extra work, has been the main cause of stimulating them to more vigorous exertion and of rendering them more happy and contented. The miners by the "Colinda" will as you suggest be put upon the same footing as to pay on their arrival here.

I acknowledge the force of your remarks on the general effect of high wages in diminishing exertion, of which this country offers every day examples: the miners have however so far proved an exception to the rule and have worked most steadily, each of the regular miners producing at the rate of about 2 8/20 Tons of coal per diem, and the assistant miners at the rate of 30 tons of coal per month. That has now become the "established darg," or days work, with the full consent of the miners themselves, and the newcomers will therefore be obliged to work at the same rate, that being our object in establishing so large a darg before their

arrival, and it required some management to bring them over to our view.³⁸

As one can see from this report the Company was now intricately concerned with the exploitation of labour. What constituted an acceptable "day's work" was of prime importance. The number of tons of coal that a man raised in an eight hour day had now become central to the measurement of profitability, since the Company's fixed costs could only decline as a percentage of the selling price with the maximization of output. Moreover the men had been stimulated to a "more vigorous exertion" of labour by the introduction of higher per ton rates of pay which acted as a means of self-discipline and control over their behaviour. It was precisely this issue, the Company's attempts to control its labour force, which contributed the most to the catastrophe of the Colinda.

The Colinda had set sail for Vancouver Island on the 4th of August, 1853. The voyage should have taken five to six months at the most. The ship had been making good time until it approached the Horn. As the ship rounded the Horn, the most dangerous part of its voyage, the Captain, John Mills, was found to be drunk.³⁹ This was only one of a whole series of incidents. Captain Mills' erratic behaviour and the response of his passengers are chronicled in the journal of the ship's surgeon, Henry William Alexander Coleman.

Coleman, an experienced surgeon who had been to sea

before, had been appointed Surgeon and Super Cargo of the Colinda on July 11, 1853.⁴⁰ He began to keep his journal on August 4, 1853 because of "a sense of foreboding". Coleman's apprehension was not ill-founded. Two days into the voyage the passengers complained about the condition of the potatoes, which Coleman found upon examination that they were indeed, "uneatable". The following day the steward omitted a ration of oatmeal from the daily fare, which immediately generated further complaints from both the Scottish and Norwegian emigrants. He was most disturbed, as a Doctor, by the condition of the medicine chest:

...still more inconvenient was that the Druggist who sent the chest spared a great deal of his time in as much as there was not a single pill made up ready for use, the raw extract sent & no pill machine sent, & the extracts were quite soft & as they will seem to get softer & they will be totally useless in a very short time.⁴¹

Needless to say the journal reflects the Doctor's profession and a great deal of the entries concern the medical health of the passengers and crew. The general discomfort, over-crowding, and overloading of the vessel are amply testified to in the pages of the Doctor's journal. On August 22nd, Coleman noted that the "male Hospital" was full of "oil & trade things", while the "female hospital" was jammed with "provisions", which meant he was unable to isolate the contagiously ill from the rest of the passengers and crew. Further on he added that the cargo was piled on

top of the water casks in the hold, as a result it took a morning's work to get the daily water ration out.⁴² The most serious problem remained the behaviour of the Captain.

The Captain's reign of terror began with petty harassments, such as ordering that only four lamps be left on between decks.⁴³ This escalated to the point where he was directly interfering in the Doctor's work. He went about the ship telling the sick passengers that they were not getting the proper treatment and that the Doctor did not know what he was doing.⁴⁴ One night he frightened the passengers by firing off a pistol on deck. He began to go about the ship with a brace of pistols in his belt. Fear spread rapidly through the ship with the report that the Captain had been overheard to say, "That it would be better for some of the owners if the ship was sunk."⁴⁵ During all this a steady stream of thefts and misappropriations from the passengers' store of food was being carried out by the crew.⁴⁶ It was becoming increasingly obvious to the passengers that they would not make it to their destination without a stop at a port along the way for further provisions. They first petitioned the Doctor and then the Captain asking that the ship put into port.⁴⁷ There is clear evidence of the Captain's collusion with the crew and his own malfeasance.

The Captain and crew had been feasting on the provisions that had been supplied exclusively for the passengers. The crew's stores, which were of an inferior

quality were then substituted, wherever possible, for the passengers' victuals. The crew's gluttony had exhausted the provisions long before the ship was due in port. The Captain knew he would have to put into port, but to do so would have been a violation of his contract, or charter party. The penalty for interrupting the voyage was half the cost of the freight, £2,000. If however, the Captain was forced to put into port by a mutinous crew or passengers the penalty would not apply. Captain Mills' solution to his dilemma was to stage a couple of boisterous meetings on deck, where there were ample witnesses to the fact that the passengers had demanded to be put into port, and then make an entry in the log book that this behaviour had constituted a mutiny. They changed course for Valparaiso, but feigning a poor wind they changed course again and ended up in Valdivia. They dropped anchor on the 7th of November, 1853. They remained there until December 10th, 1853, when they were towed to Valparaiso by a Royal navy steamer.⁴⁸

The admiralty struck a court at Valparaiso to hear the charge of mutiny against the passengers of the Colinda. They were found not guilty. The court then took the extraordinary step of severely admonishing the Captain for his behaviour and ordered him to pay all costs for the court proceedings. The Captain was only able to pay these costs and to reprovision the ship by broaching the ship's cargo and

selling part of it off to local merchants. Two of these merchants, messrs Cousino and Garland, were actively recruiting the coal miners to work for them at their coal mine at Lota, South of the Bay of Concepcion. When the Captain was finally ready to leave he found that all the Scots and twenty-five of the Norwegians refused to go on with him in command.⁴⁹

The ship sailed on to Victoria where James Douglas, in his capacity of Governor of the Colony of Vancouver Island placed it under arrest. The Captain was charged with having broached the cargo; he was unable or unwilling to reimburse the Company for the loss. The crew had deserted as soon as the ship had dropped anchor. The Captain himself eventually deserted the vessel and left for California. Coleman, the ship's surgeon was paid off and shipped out to Callao. The ship sat in Victoria harbour for almost a year before it was sent to California with a cargo of coal in an effort to recover some of the loss incurred by the Company.⁵⁰

The loss to the Company was not just financial, though that was substantial; actual monies paid out appear to have exceeded £1,300.⁵¹ The greatest loss came in other ways. First, the Company lost the labour of the men permanently after having incurred considerable expense. Second, the Company lost ten months of intensive production which would have allowed them to enter the San Francisco coal market in a serious fashion. When they finally did enter the

San Francisco market they found that one of their chief rivals was coal from Chile, dug by the very men they had brought out to the new world at such great expense. Finally, they lost their reputation as a respected employer in the coal fields of Scotland.⁵² It was no accident that the Company's next recruits were from South Staffordshire, the southern most coal field in nineteenth century Great Britain save for the Forest of Dean.

The voyage was not a complete loss, however. Some lessons appear to have been learned. The Company never again used an embarkation contract like the one that David Landale had designed. Whether it was obvious to them or not, it was these contracts that had contributed most to the decision of the miners to leave the Colinda at Valparaiso. The men had been willing to enter into these contracts only because they knew each other, had undoubtedly worked with each other, and over the years had come to trust each other. As coal miners they knew that a sense of co-operation and brotherhood was essential for their survival in a crisis.⁵³ The contracts not only amplified this solidarity but accentuated the crisis. As each individual miner and his family decided whether to go on or not, a critical point was reached beyond which, the number unwilling to continue became an unbearable financial burden for the remainder who were willing to go on. This was of course due to the outrageous behaviour of

the Captain of the Colinda, from which the Company would appear to have learned another lesson.

The Colinda was not a Company owned ship but had been chartered. Nowhere in the records of the Hudson's Bay Company is there to be found either a testimonial or a letter of reference on behalf of the master of the Colinda, Captain John Mills. This is quite surprising when one considers the care with which the Company chose not only its merchandise but also its employees, whether they be common labourers or ship's captains. Whether a check into Mills' background would have revealed that he was the unprincipled rogue that he was, cannot be said for certain, but the fact that the Company appears to have made no effort whatsoever to check into his past, was quite uncharacteristic. The next gang of miners to be sent out by the Company would be in a Company owned ship mastered by a man who was familiar with the voyage and the Company.⁵⁴ Moreover they would be under much closer supervision. The Company accepted the necessity of not only having the miners recruited by a mining specialist but also that they must be accompanied to their destination under his supervision.⁵⁵

To date, historians have treated the voyage of the Colinda with indifference, as though it were some obscure incident with nothing to teach us. Moreover, the parochialism of the profession has in a way left these men and their families without a flag. Having left one country

and having failed to arrive in another, they are neither emigrants nor immigrants, and have been allowed to vanish into the historical ether. This is unfortunate, as the recruitment of these men, their perilous voyage, their collective behaviour, and the Company's response casts some light on an otherwise dark moment in time.

As Eric Hobsbawm has written, "...the global triumph of capitalism is the major theme of history in the decades after 1848."⁵⁶ The development of the coal mines on Vancouver Island, the efforts of the Hudson's Bay Company to recruit skilled labour in Europe and transport it thousands of miles around the world, the introduction of industrial wage labour into the region of Vancouver Island are all part of that theme. The voyage of the Colinda is a demonstration of how that "triumph" was fraught with difficulties and was not without its casualties. To use the words of James Douglas, the arrival of the Colinda in Victoria was, "A melancholy termination to so hopeful an enterprise."⁵⁷

NOTES

¹Douglas to Barclay December 3, 1852, "Correspondence On the Affairs of Vancouver Island Colony 1850-55", Ts PABC.

²Muir to Douglas December 6, 1852 A.11/73 fo.650, HBCA/PAM.

³Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), Chapter 13, particularly p.346.

⁴Gareth Stedman Jones, Languages of Class, Studies in English Working Class History 1832-1982 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p.196.

⁵Douglas to Barclay December 7, 1852 A.11/73 fo.652, HBCA/PAM.

⁶Jeanne Boydston, "To Earn Her Daily Bread: Housework and Antebellum Working Class Subsistence," Radical History Review, 35 (April, 1986), p.9.

⁷Douglas to Barclay May 15, 1850 A.11/72 fo.224, HBCA/PAM.

⁸Barclay to the Board of Management, Columbia River Novmber 1, 1852 A.6/30 fo.51; Governor and Committee to Sir George Simpson April 4, 1849 A.6/28 fo.30-31, HBCA/PAM; Terry Coleman, The Railway Navvies (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968), p.24.

⁹Simpson to Crowe November 6, 1852 A.5/17 fo.352-353, HBCA/PAM.

¹⁰Barclay to Crowe May 20, 1853 A.5/18 fo.117, HBCA/PAM.

¹¹Barclay to Landale April 9, 1853 A.5/18 fo.88-89, HBCA/PAM.

¹²Barclay to Landale April 9, 13, and 21, 1853, A.5/18 fos. 88-89, 91 and 95; Barclay to Ellice April 15, 1853 A.5/18 fo.92, HBCA/PAM.

¹³Barclay to Landale May 25, 1853 A.5/18 fo.120; Barclay to Crowe May 20, 1853 A.5/18 fo.117; Barclay to Kedston June 7, 1853 A.5/18 fo.128; Barclay to Landale June 9, 1853 A.5/18 fo.132-133, HBCA/PAM.

¹⁴Barclay to Landale May 26, 1853 A.5/18 fo.121-122, HBCA/PAM.

¹⁵Barclay to W & R Morrison January 14, 1853 A.5/18 fo. 37, HBCA/PAM.

¹⁶Barclay to Crowe November 6, 1852; Barclay to Crowe May 20, 1853, Loc. cit.

¹⁷Barclay to Simpson March 18, 1853 A.6/30 fo. 135, HBCA/PAM.

¹⁸Fraser to McAllister March 31, 1862 A5/25 fo. 276, HBCA/PAM.

¹⁹Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The German Ideology Part One ed. and Intro. C.J. Arthur, (New York:International Publishers, 1970), p.82.

²⁰Barclay to Douglas December, 1849 "Fort Victoria Correspondence Inward 1849-1859", A/C/20 vi7 Ts, PABC.

²¹Barclay to Landale July 5, 1853 A.5/18 fo. 149, HBCA/PAM.

²²Landale to Barclay July 7, 1853 A.10/34 , HBCA/PAM.

²³Barclay to Landale July 12, 1853 A.5/18 fo.157, HBCA/PAM.

²⁴Landale to Barclay July 24, 1853 A.10/34 fo. 97, HBCA/PAM.

²⁵List of Labourers engaged for Vancouver Island by Mr. D. Landale A.6/30 fo.221, HBCA/PAM.

- ²⁶Landale to Barclay July 24, 1853 Loc. cit.
- ²⁷Landale to Barclay July 13, 1853 A.10/34 fo.65-66, HBCA/PAM.
- ²⁸Alan Campbell and Fred Reid, "The Independent Collier in Scotland," Independent Collier: The Coal Miner as Archetypal Proletarian Reconsidered ed. Royden Harrison, (Hassocks: The Harvester Press Limited, 1978), p.64.
- ²⁹Barclay to Landale November 28, 1850 A.5/17 fo.50; Douglas to Barclay September 9, 1852 A.11/73 fo.552, HBCA/PAM.
- ³⁰Douglas to Barclay January 20, 1853, "Correspondence On the Affairs of Vancouver Island Colony 1850-55", Ts, PABC.
- ³¹Douglas to Tolmie April 29, 1853, Report of the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Sessional Papers 1913, V-99, Appendix VII, p.20.
- ³²Douglas to Barclay May 16, 1853, "Correspondence On the Affairs of Vancouver Island Colony 1850-55", Ts, PABC.
- ³³Douglas to Barclay July 12, 1853 Loc. cit.
- ³⁴Ibid.
- ³⁵Douglas to Barclay September 3, 1853, "Correspondence On the Affairs of Vancouver Island Colony 1850-55", Ts, PABC.
- ³⁶Barclay to Landale June 9, 1853 A.5/18 fo. 132-133, HBCA/PAM.
- ³⁷Hobsbawm, Loc. cit.; Houghton, Op. cit., 187-190; for the most thorough analysis of this subject see Gertrude Himmelfarb, The Idea of Poverty England in the Early Industrial Age (New York: Vintage Books, 1983).
- ³⁸Douglas to Barclay March 15, 1854 A.11/75 fo.89, HBCA/PAM.

³⁹Henry William Alexander Coleman, "Journal of the Voyage of the Colinda," [Hereinafter cited as Colinda Journal], October 8, 1853 C.1/242 fo.48, HBCA/PAM.

⁴⁰Barclay to Coleman July 11, 1853 A.5/18 fo.156, HBCA/PAM.

⁴¹Colinda Journal August 6, 7 & 9, 1853 C.1/242 fos. 3, 4 & 11, HBCA/PAM.

⁴²Ibid, August 22, 1853 C.1/242 fo.19, HBCA/PAM.

⁴³Ibid, September 10, 1853 C.1/242 fo.30, HBCA/PAM.

⁴⁴Ibid, October 13, 1853 C.1/242 fo.51, HBCA/PAM.

⁴⁵Ibid, October 25, 27, 1853 C.1/242 fos. 81 & 88-89, HBCA/PAM.

⁴⁶Ibid, September 25, October 14, 18, 20, 25, 1853 C.1/242 fos. 39-40, 52, 56-57, 58, 59-60, 65 & 76-79, HBCA/PAM.

⁴⁷Ibid, November 2 & 3, 1853 C.1/242 fos.112-115, HBCA/PAM.

⁴⁸Ibid, November 3, 5, 7 & December 10, 1853 C.1/242 fos.116-119, 122, 133 & 230; Cameron to Barclay March 15, 1854, P.S. to March 10, 1854 A.11/75 fo.85-85; Douglas to Barclay April 6, 1854 A.11/75 fo.124; Smith to Crowe May 2, 1854 A.5/18 fo.307; Smith to Landale May 23, 1854 A.5/18 fo. 324-325, HBCA/PAM.

⁴⁹Smith to Landale May 23, 1854 Loc. cit.

⁵⁰Douglas to Barclay April 9, 1854 A.11/75 fo.149; Douglas to Colville June 21, 1854 A.11/75 fo.245; Douglas to Barclay June 11, 1854 A.11/75 fo. 221; Douglas to Barclay March 22, 1855 A.11/75 fo.555, HBCA/PAM.

⁵¹Findlay to Landale July 26, 1853 enclosed with Landale to Barclay July 29, 1853 A.10/34 fo.126-127; Grand Journal 1850-55, November 30, 1853 A.15/55 fo.559-560, HBCA/PAM.

⁵²Barclay to Landale February 15, 1854 A.5/18 fo.270;
Smith to Landale May 23, 1854 A.5/18 fo.324-325, HBCA/PAM.

⁵³Campbell and Reid, Op cit., p.61; Michael Yarrow, "The Labor Process in Coal Mining: Struggle for Control," Case Studies On the Labor Process, ed. Andrew Zimbalist, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), p.180.

⁵⁴Helmcken, Reminiscences, p.76n.2; John T. Walbran, British Columbia Coast Names 1592-1906 (Vancouver: J.J. Douglas, 1977), pp.532-533.

⁵⁵Ralston, Op. cit., p.52; Randolph S. Vickers, "George Robinson, Nanaimo Mine Agent," The Beaver Outfit 315-2 (Autumn, 1984), p.44.

⁵⁶E.J. Hobsbawm, The Age of Capiatl 1848-1875 (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975), p.1.

⁵⁷Douglas to Barclay April 19, 1854 A.11/75 fo.149, HBCA/PAM.

CHAPTER III: Pioneers and Proletarians: "The Formal
Subsumption of Labour" and the Origins of
Industrial Capitalism in British Columbia,
1854-1859.

The historical development of industrial capitalism in North America has differed significantly from the British experience in particular, and the European experience in general. No one was more acutely aware of these differences than Karl Marx. In an address to the Council of the First International in June of 1865, Marx placed great emphasis on the differences in the relationship of capital and labour that existed in North America. Capital was constantly frustrated by the insubordination of labour. As a result, wages, working conditions and even the social structure were decidedly different from Europe.¹ The development of coal mining operations on Vancouver Island were very much a part of that North American experience.

North American capitalists faced a number of different problems that their European counterparts did not, but first and foremost, and the one which concerns us, was the problem of labour. First of all, it was scarce; second, when it could be obtained it cost more than it did in the European market; third, the first two problems made labour highly mobile; and finally all three problems were added to and amplified by a fourth problem, the availability of large amounts of cheap and even free land which offered an alternative to wage labour. Such circumstances seriously

inhibited the development of the British Columbia economy. The steps that the Hudson's Bay Company took to overcome this situation appear to be confusing, contradictory and even paradoxical unless placed within the proper theoretical framework. It must not be forgotten that what we are looking at is one company, involved in one particular type of production, involving a limited work force, over a brief period of time. Thus many of the most prominent contradictions will not work themselves out, nor are they comprehensible within the confines of this study, and must be seen within the context of being the origins of an economic and social system that came to fruition much later. Nevertheless, we are still able to identify those elements of production which distinguish capitalism at this rudimentary stage of its development. The most recent English translation of Marx's great work, Capital Volume I contains new material which can assist our analysis.

The editor, Ernest Mandel, has appended an originally planned part seven to Volume I which has not previously appeared in the English language. Entitled: "Results of the Immediate Process of Production", the text offers new insight on Marx's concept of the labour process. It is his distinction between "formal" and "real" subsumption of labour that is most useful to our analysis of early coal mining on Vancouver Island. After having described the

changes that take place when wage labour is introduced into the economy, Marx goes on to say:

All this notwithstanding, this change does not in itself imply a fundamental modification in the real nature of the labour process, the actual process of production. On the contrary, the fact is that capital subsumes the labour process as it finds it, that is to say, it takes over an existing labour process, developed by different and more archaic modes of production. And since that is the case it is evident that capital took over an available, established labour process. For example, handicraft, a mode of agriculture corresponding to a small, independent peasant economy. If changes occur in these traditional established labour processes after their takeover by capital, these are nothing but the gradual consequences of that subsumption. The work may become more intensive, its duration may be extended, it may become more continuous or orderly under the eye of the interested capitalist, but in themselves these changes do not effect the character of the actual labour process, the actual mode of working. This stands in striking contrast to the development of a specifically capitalist mode of production (large scale industry, etc.): the latter not only transforms the situation of the various agents of production, it also revolutionizes their actual mode of labour and the real nature of the labour process as a whole. It is in contradistinction to this last that we come to designate as the formal subsumption of labour under capital what we have discussed earlier, viz. the takeover by capital of a mode of labour developed before the emergence of capitalist relations.²

Coal mining in general, and on Vancouver Island in particular, is an industry in which the real subsumption of labour did not take place until the twentieth century. Until that time technological innovation, the application of

machinery, was confined to methods of moving the coal from the underground workings to the surface, from the pit mouth to its destination, pumping water, and circulating air. The actual hewing of coal at the face changed little in seven hundred years. Thus the subsumption of labour was in form only, the formal subsumption of labour.³ The formal subsumption of labour restricts the means by which capital may exploit labour, restricts the means by which capital appropriates surplus value from labour.⁴ It is these restrictions that underlie the conflict and struggle that took place on Vancouver Island during these years. Because this human element, actual physical exertion, is so important to the production of coal, the means by which the capitalist may increase his profit, or surplus value, is not only restricted but, the struggle to extract that surplus value from labour is intensified. Marx suggested that with the formal subsumption of labour, "surplus value can be created only by lengthening the working day."⁵ As we shall demonstrate, it is attempts by Company officials to lengthen the working day, or variations of that, which bring labour and capital into conflict. These conflicts are generally resolved in favour of capital but not without considerable cost.

I

As soon as Company officials in London learned the

outcome of the Colinda affair, they took steps to hire replacements for the men who had deserted in Chile. They advertised in the London newspapers for "miner-colonists".⁶ This time they went about things somewhat differently. It had been brought to their attention that someone with a more sophisticated knowledge of coal mining than either of their oversmen possessed was needed to run the coal mines.⁷ Therefore this time they sought out a man who was "capable of undertaking the entire charge & management of the Company's Coalpits & Brickfields in Vancouver's Island, bearing in mind that he will have to be his own engineer, & to keep his own accounts &&." ⁸ Having received satisfactory references, the Company offered the job of "manager" to George Robinson on the 20th of March, 1854.⁹ Over the next few months Robinson negotiated the terms of his own contract, established the terms of the miners' contracts and recruited the miners. Once again the Company demonstrated that it was of the firm belief that its problems originated in the individual characters of its previous recruits. Robinson's former employer was informed that,

Particular information is required in regard to his honesty, sobriety, temper & health.¹⁰

Robinson himself informed the Company in May of 1854 that he had concluded his recruitment and that he had hired no one "who could not produce me satisfactory testimonials."¹¹

The recruitment process completed, the men were signed to a uniform contract, based on the original that Landale had drawn up, but with some changes suggested by Robinson.

In the new contracts the fixed annual salary had been increased to seventy-eight pounds from fifty. The term of the contract was to begin on the date of the arrival at Vancouver Island, not on the date of departure. They were to be paid, or more accurately credited, 2S 6d per day from the day they signed their contracts until they actually started work. They and their families were to receive free rations on the voyage out. Their first actual cash payment was to be thirty days after their arrival. Their bonus, like their predecessors', was set at 2S 6d per ton for every ton raised over and above their monthly quota. Their monthly quota had been raised from thirty tons to forty-five. Regardless of what was agreed to in England, the Company knew that the final arbiter of the terms that the men would actually work under was the conditions that prevailed in the colony at their time of arrival.¹²

George Robinson, the miners and their families left London aboard the Hudson's Bay Company ship, Princess Royal in the early hours of the morning on June 3, 1854. They arrived in Esquimalt harbour, Vancouver Island on November 23, 1854. They were quickly dispatched to Nanaimo. What they found upon their arrival there was a situation that had gone from chaos to order and back to chaos again.

Throughout the first six months of 1853 the Company had two oversemen and five coal miners at Nanaimo, along with an assortment of labourers, assistant miners and transient miners. This proved to be two oversemen too many. Muir and Gilmour, who thought little of each other's abilities, bickered constantly. Muir fell ill in the summer of 1853 and returned home to Sooke, leaving Gilmour in charge of the entire operation.¹³ After an adjustment in wages (see pp.77-78 above) production continued smoothly until the following summer. On August 8, 1854 the four contracts that the Company had with Boyd Gilmour, Adam French, Archibald French and Robert Dunsmuir expired. The ensuing negotiations reveal new developments in labour management relations.

The Scots had the upper hand on the Company until the Princess Royal arrived with her passengers from South Staffordshire. It would appear that they tried to press their advantage. Douglas' report of August 11th speaks for itself.

I have just returned from Colville town [Nanaimo], where I have been on a visit, chiefly for the purpose of reengaging the miners on the expiration of their three years contracts with the Company on the 8th inst. They had declared to the officer in charge of Nanaimo that they would not work beyond that date, unless they entered into a new agreement with the Company and they were resolved to have favourable terms.¹⁴

There appears to have been genuine negotiations, which is significant in itself. Manual labourers were generally

engaged on terms prescribed by the Company. Throughout the rest of the report Douglas made much of his steadfast refusal to give into "absurd" and "extravagant" demands and he tried to play down the significance of his concession of an additional sixpence a ton bonus money. The agreement was to remain in effect until the arrival of the Princess Royal at which time they would either negotiate a new agreement or the miners would take their passage home.

One thing that this incident highlights is how the miners stood out from all the other "servants" of the Company in their contractual relationship. The only surviving contract that we can refer to, between the Hudson's Bay Company and its coal mining employees is one that was signed by a South Staffordshireman. There were changes in that contract from the one signed by the Scots, but, they were apparently in the area of remuneration. The South Staffordshire contract omits a key clause that was common to contracts signed in the fur trade. The fact that Douglas made no mention of it in his report would suggest that it was not in the contract that the Scots had signed either. That clause states,

And the said _____ also engages and agrees that in the case the said Company shall not have any ship which will sail from North America for Europe immediately after the expiration of the said term of _____ years or of such further term as herein before mentioned, then he hereby promises and engages to remain in the service as a hired

servant of the said Company in North America until the next ship provided by them shall sail from thence to Europe upon the like terms as are contained in this contract...¹⁵

Needless to say that clause was designed to prevent precisely the situation that had just arisen at Nanaimo. Until the arrival of the next ship, in this case the Princess Royal, the Company had to negotiate with its employees or cease production. This is not to say that there were not alternate sources of labour.

By December of 1854 the Company had persuaded thirteen labourers to become assistant miners. The problem with the assistant miners was that they lacked the approbation of the regular miners, they had proven themselves just as obstreperous as the regular miners about pay rates, and most important they lacked the skill and experience of the regular miners.¹⁶ The occasional skilled miner did turn up on his own looking for casual work, but they were few and far between and not particularly reliable.¹⁷ In order to ensure the continuity of production necessary to become a force in the Pacific coast coal market the Company had to secure a large body of labour under a firm contract. On the other hand the Company seemed anxious to rid itself of many of the obligations that were part and parcel of the agreements that it regularly entered into with its employees both inside and outside of the fur trade.

On the very same visit that Douglas had paid to Nanaimo

for the purpose of reengaging the Scottish miners, he had hired two other men under entirely different terms. Douglas reported to Barclay in his letter of August 11, 1854,

I also engaged two other miners for a period of 12 months, one of them Edward Walker, a very strong able man, on a different footing, that is to say, they are to receive no fixed wages, like the Scotch miners, but are to be paid for all the coal they put out, at the rate of 4/6 a ton with victuals for one person and to be found with the necessary working tools. While idle or off duty from sickness or other causes, they can earn nothing having in that case neither food nor pay except at the option of the Company.¹⁸

By the time that the South Staffordshiremen showed up in late November of 1854 local officials were actively engaged in a wide variety of differing employment agreements. Some of this was necessitated by the increasing diversity of occupations.

The coal mining operation was generating much of this work itself. McKay reported to Douglas in July of 1853 that "One man is nearly constantly employed handling picks;"¹⁹ Owing to the overall shortage of men, particularly with underground experience, the miners themselves were often forced to do work that ordinarily would have been done by lesser paid men in a British coal mine. Douglas reported to Barclay that in February of 1854 they had been forced to employ most of the miners in building roadways and air courses.²⁰

With the arrival of the South Staffordshiremen the

ranks of the miners were swelled and specialized ancilliary occupations were filled. Nanaimo's work force was as follows:²¹

Mining Department	Saw Mill
1 Manager	1 Millwright
28 Miners	<u>5</u> Labourers
13 Assistant miners	6
1 Pit headsman	General Work
1 Engine driver	1 Clerk in charge
1 " assistant	1 Interpreter
3 Carpenters	1 Storeman
1 Blacksmith	1 Carpenter
<u>1</u> " assistant	<u>5</u> Labourers
50	9
Grand Total 66	1 Educational Dept.

Neither the nomenclature nor the specialization of the British collieries appears to have become a part of the early operations of the mines on Vancouver Island. Nowhere in any of the documentation can one find any reference to occupations such as: putters, shifters, stonemen, rolleywaymen, onsetters,²² or banksman, filler, oncost worker, hurrier, carter, drawer, barrowman, trapper or wagonwayman.²³ With the exception of the hewers, or coal miners as the Company referred to them, there appears to have been a good deal of occupational flexibility. On at least one occasion the assistant miners were put to work cutting timber for the mine on a piece-work basis, and on another they were used to load scows with coal.²⁴ Workers from the fur trade were used on an as-needed basis. The nature of the work determined the method of remuneration. For example two men who had been employed on a daily wage basis were put under contract to

supply timber at the rate of "ten cents a foot, fourteen inches square", for the construction of a shed to house the steam engine at Number 3 pit. They evidently went back on day wages for a period as two months later, on May 1, 1856, they are recorded as going back on a contract basis to square more timber. Two weeks later they were employed to erect the timber framework on a daily wage rate.²⁵ By the late 1850s workers had to be not only more flexible but also mobile.

It was not uncommon for unskilled workers to travel from one Hudson's Bay Company outpost to another looking for work. Casual labour of this sort seems to have been employed on a daily wage basis in general, although those possessing special skills such as axemen would be hired on a piece-work basis of so much a foot of timber cut. Many of these men had lengthy employment records with the Company, some having come over the Rocky Mountains with fur trading parties while others had served as deck hands on vessels sailing between Victoria and the Sandwich Islands.²⁶ On the other hand the Company was prepared to hire men who they knew nothing about and pay them top dollar if their skills were scarce enough in the colony. William Hughes, an experienced sawyer, was immediately hired at an annual salary of thirty-five pounds and one shilling four pence a day ration money when he turned up as a passenger on board a ship calling at Nanaimo for coal.²⁷ Unless placed under a contract, it was of course

impossible to hang on to men when a more attractive prospect surfaced. In September of 1856 six men gave their notice and were paid off after rumours circulated that gold had been discovered in the area of Fort Colvile. Six weeks later three of them returned and were rehired, but the other three remained permanently lost to the Company's service.²⁸ The rumours, and ultimate discovery of gold were not all bad for the Company's coal mining operations. For every two miners who caught the gold fever the Company was able to hire three who had been attracted by the initial rush but then decided they preferred steady employment. By the end of 1857 Douglas was able to write his superiors in London,

I think it will hereafter be unnecessary to send any miners from England, as we shall always be able to pick up as many men of that class as we require for the Company's coal works.²⁹

The diversity of economic activity that the Company undertook, the growing number of occupations and the various methods of payment used were representative of the overall growth in economic activity in the colony.³⁰ It is important to understand that the instability that accompanied this growth and diversification was a contributing factor to the dynamics of the relationship that developed between the Company and the coal miners.

II

In January, 1855 Boyd Gilmour, Archibald French, Adam

French and his children sailed home to Great Britain in the Princess Royal. James Douglas was not entirely sorry to see them go. Gilmour had already shown himself unable or unwilling to work under the supervision of someone else. Moreover, Douglas' favourable opinion of the man had changed.

Though a good honest man Gilmour is indolent and deficient in energy and knows just enough of physical geography to confuse himself and every one about him.³¹

On the other hand the French brothers were a genuine loss that Douglas regretted but deemed necessary if order was to be maintained among the colliers at Nanaimo. They had refused to accept the terms that the South Staffordshiremen had agreed to "and," as Douglas put it, "I know from experience, that any concession in their favour, would have been the signal for every miner at Colville Town to clamour for the same."³² The departure of the French brothers was not the end to conflict in the Nanaimo coal fields. Indeed the South Staffordshire miners had proven themselves willing to strike before they even arrived in the country. On the 29th of July, as the second month of their voyage was coming to an end, seventeen of the twenty-three miners struck in protest over the poor condition of the rice they had been given. The Captain managed to persuade them to return to work the following day after he had promised an inquiry into their complaints. Incidents before and after

would indicate that their grievances were well founded.³³

It also would appear that whether or not they had signed an agreement to act as deck hands they were not prepared to go beyond self-imposed limitations on just what work that entailed. When the ship docked in Honolulu the miners refused to unload the ship and the Captain was forced to hire coolies to do the work.³⁴ It was not until they came ashore on Vancouver Island and became part of the means of production that any real struggle took place.

It must be remembered, as de Ste. Croix pointed out, class struggle does not always involve all members of a class in collective action simultaneously. The outcome will however effect all members of a class that are in a class, that is to say an exploitative relationship, with a capitalist. What took place in Nanaimo during the years 1854 to 1859 was, as is so much of class struggle when it overtly takes place, indecisive. What must be kept in mind is that the reason for class struggle is that one or both parties to the struggle wish to effect change in the exploitative relationship that exists between them. For the capitalist it is an attempt to extract greater surplus value from the commodity that labour produces by reducing the cost of producing that commodity either by reducing the amount of money that he will exchange for that commodity, or by increasing the amount of the commodity that must be produced in order to exchange it for the same amount of money. For

the labourer, it is most frequently an attempt to resist the efforts of the capitalist to extract a greater amount of surplus value, but on occasion it is also an attempt on the part of the labourer to retain a greater portion of the surplus value that he produces or at least to reduce the amount of exertion that he must employ to produce an equivalent amount of remuneration. At Nanaimo the miners struck first.

The miners had two weapons at their disposal, to cease work and/or threaten to desert the Company's service. They employed both almost as soon as they arrived. On Christmas Day, 1854 Douglas reported to his superiors in London.

Previous to my arrival at Colville Town the new miners had come to a strike, in consequence of discontents industriously fomented by various parties, and especially by emissaries from the American collieries in Bellingham Bay, who offered to pay their passage money from England, pretending that would be a sufficient compensation to the Company, for the loss of their services, and to allow them some enormous rate of pay, providing they would engage in their service.

Their minds were entirely unsettled by the mischeivious influence of those persons, and we had some trouble in inducing them to resume work.³⁵

A current of discontent flowed just below the surface as tensions mounted and rumours circulated. In January Douglas reported that the rumours had reached him of continued dissatisfaction and the possible desertion of the men to the neighbouring American collieries.³⁶ By March outright rebellion had flared anew.

Our operations at Colville Town have their roughs and smooths, the newly arrived miners give a great deal of trouble; a few weeks ago they tried the effect of another strike, but we soon brought them to a proper sense of duty. They make the most of Bellingham Bay, holding that retreat before our eyes, as a scare crow on all occasions of difficulty.

They would certainly not improve their condition by going there, and would no doubt wish themselves back at Nanaimo. However if they once left the service, fear and shame might prevent them from returning to it again we therefore never urge them too far, and treat them with all proper kindness and liberality.³⁷

"Kindness and liberality" were not enough. On April 11, 1855 the first of a series of desertions and strikes took place that lasted approximately eighteen months.

Despite claims to the contrary by at least one author, there has not been to date any serious attempt to analyse the nature and contours of "labour-management relations", or to place it in the larger context, of class conflict.³⁸ A close look at the evidence quickly reveals a level of turmoil that was neither conducive to continuous production nor harmonious relations and class collaboration.³⁹ No less than sixteen of the twenty-two South Staffordshiremen, or seventy-two percent of the work force, either struck work or deserted the Company; some more than once. At one extreme was a man like Elijah Ganner who did not desert the Company, never struck work and never tried to renegotiate his contract. At the other extreme was Thomas York who deserted the Company for the first time in April, 1855 with five

other men. They all returned eleven days later. In September of that same year York participated in a strike; he and seven others deserted the next day only to return twelve days later. York and three other men are reported missing November 5, 1855. He returned with two other men on January 22, 1856. He deserted for the last time with three other men on July 15, 1856 and is never heard of again.⁴⁰

All these strikes and desertions were an attempt by the men to improve their lot. They moved backwards and forwards across Puget Sound playing one mining company off against the other. Temporarily improved wages and the occasional bottle of free liquor seems to be all they gained and even that is uncertain.

What is certain is that the relationship between the Company and those men who had deserted and returned changed substantially. The Company declared them to have violated their contracts and they were therefore cancelled. The returnees had no choice but to accept the new terms on which the Company offered to reemploy them. Before turning to those terms it is important to address the question of the legitimacy of the Company's conduct.

There is nothing that more clearly demonstrates the pre-capitalist nature of society on Vancouver Island than the relationship between the Hudson' Bay Company and the government of the Colony of Vancouver Island. As John Malcolmson has pointed out in his 1980 Master's thesis, the

Company was the state and the state was the Company.⁴¹ Until 1859 when Douglas resigned from the Hudson's Bay Company, he wore several hats. As Chief Factor, he was the highest ranking Company official in the colony. As Governor of the Colony of Vancouver Island, he was the executive head of government. From the Colony's inception in 1849 until Douglas' resignation in 1859 every Justice of the Peace that was appointed was an employee of the Company. In 1856 Douglas created a Supreme Court, an act that seriously concerned the Colonial Office in London, and appointed as its first Chief Justice his brother-in-law, David Cameron, who was also responsible for keeping the books for the coal mining establishment at Nanaimo.⁴² Company interest and government action were intricately interwoven. In 1852 Douglas was seriously enough concerned about the lack of subordination of labour to capital that he proposed regulatory legislation to the Council of Vancouver Island, which it "deferred for consideration".⁴³ Douglas was also aware of the fact that any coercive actions that the Company might take to enforce the contracts that it had with any of its employees was illegal.⁴⁴ Thus both the cancellation and the enforcement of labour contracts was not legal within the Colony. What the Company could not accomplish by law it accomplished by bluff and posture. The cancellation of the contracts and the imposition of new terms of agreement more favourable to the Company were in fact arbitrary acts,

sanctioned only by the moral indignation of the Company in response to the men having committed the initial violation. In fact, the only penalty that the contract provided for was a fifty pound fine if either party failed to fulfil its terms.⁴⁵ The threat of a fifty pound fine might have persuaded the men to have accepted the inferior terms of a strictly piece-rate wage but it would not ensure their subordination. The Company sanctified this duress and legitimated its behaviour by elevating the reengagement of the men to the level of a ceremony. The men's desertion was castigated by the mine manager, Robinson, and after the appropriate expressions of contrition, the men were dispatched to Victoria for a similar session with the Governor who, after showing them the error of their ways would rehire them on the less favourable terms.⁴⁶ The Company was therefore able to coerce subordination and obedience of its employees like a feudal landlord, while simultaneously reducing its monetary and non-monetary obligations to them in a manner resembling a laissez-faire labour market.

The new terms seem to have had, at least initially, the desired effect on the miners' behaviour. Three months after their initial imposition, Douglas commented optimistically on their effect in a report to London by Robinson.

Mr. Robinson, I presume by this remark that the men should be paid by the ton and

not by the year; as in the latter case when the employer is the only sufferer, there are too many inducements to idleness, and a great many sick days, which materially increase the expense of production.

I have observed that the miners who are paid by the ton are the least troublesome and deliver the largest quantity of coal. Such miners are allowed $\frac{4}{2}$ per ton for all the coal they produce, $\frac{1}{4}$ day for salaries, and are provided with mining tools and medical attendance, but receive no other pay or allowances whatever.⁴⁷

The terms did not prevent desertions, repeat desertions or even strikes for that matter. Such events were not entirely unbeneficial to the Company. Each new group of deserters or strikers promptly had their contracts cancelled and the new terms imposed on them. By July of 1856 sixteen of the twenty-two miners were working on a piece-rate basis. Four of the sixteen deserted that month and disappear from the Company's records. In September of 1856 four of the miners working under the original terms agreed to in England, together with two men working on a piece-rate basis, journeyed to Victoria in an effort to have an improvement in their agreements. Several days later they returned with a letter to Captain Stuart from James Douglas, which outlined the new terms under which they were to work. There does not appear to have been any improvement at all and they agreed to return to work only "after a great deal of discussion" had taken place.⁴⁸ Thus with the possible exception of two men, the entire mining work force had been shifted from a guaranteed annual wage and bonus scheme to a strictly piece-

rate wage scale by September 11, 1856 (see Appendix II). This of course had important ramifications for the relationship between capital and labour.

As previously mentioned (page 97 above), under the formal subsumption of labour surplus value, or profit, can only be created by increasing absolute surplus value, ie. by lengthening the working day.⁴⁹ The introduction of a piece-rate system has precisely that effect. The increase in productivity becomes internalized as the whip is now handed from the capitalist to the worker himself. As Marx observed:

Given the system of piece-wages, it is naturally in the personal interest of the worker that he should strain his labour-power as intensely as possible; this in turn enables the capitalist to raise the normal degree of intensity of labour more easily. Moreover, the lengthening of the working day is now in the personal interest of the worker, since with it his daily or weekly wages rise.⁵⁰

This is dramatically illustrated by the reports of the mine manager, George Robinson. On April 11, 1855, Robinson complained that under the old annual wage contract "...nearly one half the miners are idling away their time, and most of those who pretend to work, do not perform much more than a fourth of what they ought to do..."⁵¹ In contrast, nearly two years later under piece-rate wages Robinson happily reports that, "At the Parkhead level no.1 there is now eight miners employed in putting out coals averaging when at work about 3 tons of coals per day each man."⁵² Another

important alteration in the relationship between capital and labour which accompanies the piece-rate wage system is the introduction of sub-contracting.

The introduction of sub-contracting into the coal fields of Vancouver Island has been the source of a great deal of controversy and involves, by far and away, the most controversial businessman in the history of the region, Robert Dunsmuir. Dunsmuir's employment as a sub-contractor has become part and parcel of the mythology of both the political left and right in present day British Columbia. To the political right, he is the veritable embodiment of individuality, entrepreneurship and all the rest of the clap-trap that goes with the Horatio Alger myth, who became an "independent" operator as a reward for having counselled against a strike by a bunch of "hot-heads" in September of 1855.⁵³ To the political left, he was an unscrupulous, ruthless capitalist who got his start in business life as a reward for being the first scab, or strikebreaker, in the history of the province.⁵⁴ Dunsmuir's character does not really concern us here. Suffice it to say that even an ardent hagiographer like Daniel Gallacher has had to acknowledge that Dunsmuir's "coal miners were amongst the worst-treated labour forces in Canada" and "it is hard to argue that this is a false view."⁵⁵ Both the right and the left have misrepresented the events which took place during

the Fall of 1855 to suit their own ideological purposes. Both have proffered the argument that one event was contingent upon another, when in actual fact there is no proof whatsoever to support such a view; that is to say both have argued that Dunsmuir was employed as a sub-contractor because at the very least he refused to participate in, and at the very most, he actively counselled against taking part in the strike of September 11, 1855. There is absolutely no documentary evidence in either the Provincial Archives of British Columbia or the Hudson's Bay Company Archives of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba which would support such a point of view. Indeed, what documents do exist would suggest a different sequence of events.

Dunsmuir had been part of a very small body of Ayrshire colliers sent out from London in December, 1850. Their contracts had commenced when they arrived in August, 1851, and ran for three years to their date of arrival. Upon their expiry, on August 8, 1854 the colliers had announced that they would not continue to work under the same conditions and demanded concessions from the Company. Douglas had agreed to an interim agreement, the terms of which were contingent upon those of the South Staffordshire's who were to arrive in November, 1854. Upon their arrival, three of the Scots, namely Adam French, Archibald French and Dunsmuir's uncle, Boyd Gilmour, announced that they would be

exercising their option and taking a free passage home rather than accept the terms under which the South Staffordshiremen were to work. Dunsmuir remained behind at Nanaimo.⁵⁶ From this point onwards the relationship between the Hudson's Bay Company and Robert Dunsmuir is somewhat vague. Even after he does become a sub-contractor in October, 1855 the details of his agreement are strewn over a number of different documents, and Dunsmuir's standing has to be peiced together. We must therefore reason things through.

Douglas' letter of August 11, 1854 does not mention any of the Scots miners by name except Boyd Gilmour the oversman. Douglas informed Barclay that he had reengaged the "Scotch Miners" and gave the details of their interim agreement. He also informed Barclay that he had engaged two other miners for twelve months but only gives the name of one of them, Edward Walker. Was the other miner Dunsmuir? He may have been but we will never know. The reason for this speculation will become apparent shortly.⁵⁷ In order for Dunsmuir to have remained with the Hudson's Bay Company after the South Staffordshiremen had arrived in November, 1854, he would have to have agreed to the terms of their contracts or one that was not materially better. Certainly a strictly piece-rate contract such as Walker and his unnamed associate signed would so qualify. Whatever agreement Dunsmuir signed it would have expired in August, 1855.⁵⁸ Even if Dunsmuir's contract was altered in November

1854, those alterations would have been viewed as adjustments to an already existing contract and the dates of commencement and expiry would have remained unchanged.⁵⁹ Thus when "Dunsmuir commenced working on his own account,"⁶⁰ on October 12, 1855 it was not because he had supported the Company and opposed the strike by the miners but rather that he was free to do so, as his existing agreement with the Company had expired. Nowhere, in any of the surviving documents is there to be found any reference to Dunsmuir as having participated in any way in the strike of September 11, 1855. He certainly was not one of the strikers, who are all listed in the Fort's Post Journal.⁶¹ If his opposition to the strike had been so outstanding as to have earned him a favour, such as a contract to mine coal on his own account, it would have merited mention in the Fort's Post Journal. The reason that the Hudson's Bay Company employed Robert Dunsmuir as a sub-contractor was because he was an entrepreneur who was prepared to take risks and employ his capital where they were not. Dunsmuir was only one of a growing number.

When Edward Walker's contract expired with the Company he used his accumulated capital to lengthen a boat he had and began a small coastal service. There is no record of how big a boat it was but it did carry two and a half tons of coal and some other cargo on its maiden voyage to Victoria.⁶² Walker returned to Nanaimo some time during the

Fall and took a job screening coal for which he was paid in kind, one blanket for every one hundred barrels of coal.⁶³ In the meantime Dunsmuir had begun to mine coal as a sub-contractor.

There is little doubt that Dunsmuir initiated this engagement; the documents reflect that. Indeed, the Company was not quite sure how to deal with him or even how much to pay him.⁶⁴ In December, 1855 the mine manager, George Robinson suggested that in future all the mining should be done by "Contract Miners", like Dunsmuir and Walker, and urged the Governor to come to Nanaimo as soon as possible to put them under contract. This was done on January 22, 1856.⁶⁵ In March Baker, Bull and Biggs, three South Staffordshiremen started working on "their own account". Sub-contracting required more than just a strong back and some initiative. Baker and company were soon in debt to the Company and Douglas gave orders that their enterprise was to be wound up and that they were to be reemployed "on their former footing".⁶⁶ Edward Walker also had difficulties and it would appear that he eventually gave up his sub-contract to dig coal and went into construction work, building the first coal shipping wharf in Nanaimo in 1858.⁶⁷ Dunsmuir appears to be the only one to have made a success of the venture, but not without problems.

Dunsmuir's principal problem was labour. He was evidently a harsh task master and men worked for him under

duress or only as a last resort. On October 5, 1856 four new miners arrived in Nanaimo. On the 8th they went to work for Dunsmuir. On the 16th they left for Bellingham Bay.⁶⁸

Dunsmuir did not fare any better with the men that were already in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company. If they did not object to him personally, they objected to him in principle. On December 20, 1856, George Robinson wrote to Douglas,

Dunsmuir, I am sorry to say, is going on but slowly, owing principally to the miners objecting to be employed by contract miners. He has now only two miners and one assistant miner in putting out coals.⁶⁹

When work was short, as it had been in April, 1856, the men had to swallow their objections and accept a transfer to Dunsmuir's workings.⁷⁰ Their objections could not have been over pay as the Hudson's Bay Company acted as paymaster and carried the wages of the men working for Dunsmuir on their books as an advance against the sale of his coal.⁷¹

Moreover, with most of the men having broken their original contracts and working under new terms they were in no position to object; there was no longer any pay for idle days. Had those contracts not been broken the Company would never have been able to introduce a piece-rate wage system or entertain the idea of a sub-contractor.

Both the piece-rate wage system and the sub-contracting of labour were essential ingredients in what Marx referred

to as, "The mystification inherent in the capital-relation [that] emerges at this point."⁷² What this method of payment did was to hide the exploitative nature of the relationship between capital and labour behind the mask of a merchant engaged in an equitable exchange of commodities, cash for coal. A relationship that the Hudson's Bay Company, as experienced merchants, could more readily understand. In the words of James Douglas,

We have found it advantageous in working the coal to substitute contract work for the old system of monthly wages.

By this plan the coal is produced at a cheaper rate, and we know exactly what it costs.⁷³

The difference here was that the purchaser of the commodity not the supplier owned the means of production. Nevertheless the illusion was created that it was not the capitalist that was lengthening the working day and intensifying the output of labour, but it was labour itself that was the medium of exploitation. If the men wanted more money they could dig more coal. When the men became dissatisfied with their rate of pay they were told that market conditions merited a reduction not an increase.⁷⁴ Another faceless entity had been introduced into the relationship between capital and labour, the market. It was not the kindly capitalist who was exploiting them but rather the evil forces of the market place. This was of course accompanied by the appropriate nebulous promise of better things to come. On the 28th of

March, 1857 Douglas wrote to his senior officer at Nanaimo,

You may inform the miners that we cannot make any alteration in the present rate of wages, which are really more than we can afford to pay, but should trade revive, we shall have no objections to allow them to participate in our prosperity.⁷⁵

Prosperity did return to the Company but the coal miners were not to share in it.

The Company's fortunes did take a turn for the better as a result of the Fraser River gold rush. The power to command high wages conferred on the coal miners by the scarcity of their skills was diluted by the flood of humanity that engulfed the colony in the Spring of 1858. The upsurge in domestic demand that accompanied the gold rush was so inconsequential that it barely made a dent in the stock-pile of coal that had accumulated over the previous two years. Despite the fact that the collieries had been extended sufficiently to employ as many as thirty-five men in a single shift, at the beginning of 1858 the Company could find work for no more than eighteen miners and six assistant miners.⁷⁶ By the end of March, 1858 the price of coal in San Francisco had fallen once again and Douglas was of the opinion that the Company could not rid itself of its accumulated stock-pile for more than fifteen shillings a ton, a price that he deemed to be unacceptably low.⁷⁷ As a result the Company ignored rumours and threats of desertion to the gold fields made by the miners and even overlooked

their failure to work "thriftily".⁷⁸ Total sales for the fiscal year ending October 31, 1858 were a mere 5,226 tons, barely more than a ton per man per day. According to Douglas production could "be increased ad libitum by employing additional hands."⁷⁹ The only thing that could hold up production, and it did on several occasions, was a lack of Indian labour.

Indian labour played a variety of roles at different phases in the development of the coal mines at Nanaimo. When the Company first arrived in 1852, the Indians worked in a fashion similar to their counterparts at Fort Rupert.

The relationship between the Company and the Indians was that of traders exchanging commodities. The Indians gathered up the coal from the surface out-croppings and exchanged it for a variety of trade goods such as cut glass beads, kettles, tobacco, axes, soap, shirts and blankets. The Company established a tariff of so much coal equalled one shirt. All other goods were exchanged in relationship to one shirt. "An able man can earn at the rate of one shirt per diem", claimed the Company's resident clerk.⁸⁰ A blanket equalled several shirts, and the Indians would accept "tickets" in exchange for their coal in order that they might accumulate enough credit to earn a blanket.⁸¹ The "S'neyemos" or Nanaimos Indians viewed the mining of coal on the surface in the same manner as the Indians at Fort Rupert had. It was their exclusive jurisdiction. Thus the

neighbouring "Skuwhomish and Seshalls" Indians had to go into the cedar shingle business as the local Nanaimos would not let them mine coal.⁸² The Indians could not rely on the whites for food; in fact the reverse was true. Therefore the Indians did not allow the mining of coal to interrupt the regular rhythm of the annual fish run and left for the Fraser river fishing grounds in late October of 1852.⁸³ This annual migration to the fishing grounds continued to be an annual event well up into the twentieth century.⁸⁴ As the nature of the coal mining operations at Nanaimo changed so did the relationship between the Company and the Indians.

It is certain that by August of 1855 the Indians were working underground.⁸⁵ Their principal task seems to have been to act as "pushers", pushing the coal wagons from the coal face to the mouth of the pit.⁸⁶ They were also employed in other ancilliary roles, "pumping out the water, winding out the refuse, etc."⁸⁷ Until the coal wharf was built in 1858, both the Indian men and women were employed to transport coal in their canoes to the ships in the harbour and to load it on board.⁸⁸ Indians would appear to have at least maintained a presence on the docks, acting as stevedores or coal "trimmers" up to as late as 1912.⁸⁹ Their labour was, at least initially, an indispensable part of the labour hierarchy that developed at Nanaimo. The work that they performed and the earnings that they received at the coal mines were not an indispensable part of a Nanaimo

Indian's life however. As a result the Hudson's Bay Company was plagued with production problems.

The annual salmon run was not the only reason that the Indians would absent themselves en mass. James Douglas wrote his superiors in London complaining bitterly about the ill effects of the murder of a Nanaimo Indian chief in the summer of 1855.

This act has had a very injurious effect upon our business, as the Indians distrusting each other, have fled in all directions, causing a great scarcity of labourers about the place.⁹⁰

George Robinson, the mine manager found the situation so frustrating that he proposed making one of the gate roads in Number 3 Shaft larger in order to accomodate horses pulling the tubs, thus dispensing with Indian labour in that part of the mine. In October of 1855 Robinson kept the miners busy drilling test bores until the Indians returned.⁹¹ In December of 1856 Robinson announced the opening of a new mine in which all the roadways had been made high and wide enough to use a horses to move the coal to the surface.⁹² As if to illustrate the need of such a move, the Company's clerk noted in the Post Journal that same month: "Owing to the snow, the Indians declined working."⁹³ Wage labour was such an insignificant part of their income that Indians were quite able to decline working at it whenever it suited them. On the other hand it was the very fact that the amount of money was so small that made the Indians indispensable to

the operation of the mines. Horses could not do everything and white men who were totally dependent upon wage labour for their living would not work for as small a sum of money as the Indians. The miners had become so totally dependent on the Indians that when they absented themselves for the annual salmon run in the summer of 1857, the miners stopped work. They journeyed to Victoria in a futile attempt to find alternate employment. Failing to find any, the miners returned to Nanaimo. Douglas commented in a letter to his officer in charge at Nanaimo,

The miners have all safely arrived at this place, they can find no work to do which pleases them so that they are again on the way for Nanaimo. The want of Indian labor is certainly a great inconvenience for the miners, but really they must learn to be independent of Indians for our work will otherwise be subject to continual stoppages.⁹⁴

And so it continued. An influenza attack swept through the Indian village in October of that same year and "severely slowed down their ability to load coal."⁹⁵ Faced with a choice between suspending operations and employing more expensive white labour to perform such menial tasks as pumping water out of the pit or "winding out the refuse", George Robinson chose to suspend operations at the Park Head slope.⁹⁶ It remained shut for more than six months.

Despite their apparent unreliability, what guaranteed that the Indians would continue to be employed underground for some years to come, whenever they wanted to, was a

combination of market forces, which forced the Company to cut costs and standard practice. Standard practice in coal mines dictates that all coal sent to the surface must be "clean", that is to say there must not be anything in the tub other than coal. Shale and clay are two elements that are commonly found in coal bearing ore and they were both present at Nanaimo. Naturally enough the Company insisted that the coal and clay be removed at the face. In March of 1858 the price of coal fell in the San Francisco market and Douglas found himself in the unenviable position of trying to cut costs without cutting wages. He ordered Robinson to stop supplying assistant miners, who were paid 4S 6d per day to the miners for the purpose of cleaning their coal.⁹⁷ Rather than perform this task themselves, the miners hired the Indians to do it for them. This remained the standard practice until at least 1866 and possibly longer.⁹⁸ It would appear to have survived even the arrival of the first Chinese workers, an event that precipitated a six week strike and ended with an agreement excluding the Chinese from underground work which came into effect on July 1, 1867.⁹⁹ The fact that there are no readily identifiable North American Indian names amongst any of the dead in subsequent mining disasters would tend to confirm Dan Gallacher's conclusion that the Chinese had supplanted the Indians by 1889.¹⁰⁰

During the period that the Hudson's Bay Company operated the coal mines at Nanaimo, Indian labour was an integral part of the white economy. At the same time it must be understood that wage labour, regardless of the means of exchange, was not an integral part of the Indian economy. To put it another way, as far as the Indians were concerned, wage labour at the coal mines was the icing on the cake and was not necessary to their subsistence. The amount of money or goods earned was not sufficient to support an individual but added to whatever means of subsistence that they already had, life was just that much more pleasant. It is precisely because the work that they performed cost, at first the Company then the miners, so little that the Company was able to compete in the San Francisco coal market.

III

The development of the coal mines at Nanaimo brought to British Columbia the first capitalist enterprise capable of the large scale production of a commodity. By 1858 Douglas estimated that the mine was capable of an annual production of 50,000 tons of coal.¹⁰¹ The coal miners who were brought⁷ out to Vancouver Island in 1854 constituted the largest single body of skilled labour in the colony. Over the course of the following five years the relationship between the miners and the Company changed from one of semi-feudal paternalism to one which more approximated the archetypal laissez-faire capitalist employer/employee relationship.

It would be wrong however to mistake rhetoric for reality. Laissez-faire was by this time what one author has referred to as a "militant creed".¹⁰² Capitalists like James Douglas had to carefully weigh the value of a relationship whose sole element was the cash nexus against the exigencies of the frontier and the continuity of production. Besides, if such so-called pre-industrial practices as provisioning the miners and their families was also good business, only an inept capitalist would give it up. The first order of goods that was placed for the Company store at Nanaimo, after the arrival of the men from South Staffordshire, was worth over £6,000 at cost.¹⁰³ The Company was paternalistic where it suited its purposes and at the same time it was capitalistic where it suited its purposes.

By 1859, the written contract and the fixed annual wage were a thing of the past. In order to compete in the San Francisco coal market the Company needed the flexibility to raise or lower wage rates at will. The influx of population that came with the gold rush provided a surplus floating supply of skilled labour that had previously been denied the Company. Most important of all, wage rates had been changed from a calculation by the day or the year to one that was measured by the ton. The introduction of piece-rates increased production and extended the working day. By May of 1857, Robinson had even managed to introduce a three shift system in a twenty-four hour day.¹⁰⁴ Thus the amount of

fixed capital investment remained constant while the amount of labour was tripled. The more coal that the Company raised, the greater was its return on invested capital. As Marx has argued, in an industry where there is only the formal subsumption of labour, profitability may only be increased by an extension of the working day and an intensification in the exertion of labour. Sub-contracting, the logical extension of the piece-rate system, reduced the amount of fixed capital investment that the capitalist had to make even further. For a portion of the surplus value, successful entrepreneurs like Robert Dunsmuir interposed themselves between capital and labour to provide the intensive supervision necessary for the maximization of output that is imperative when only the formal subsumption of labour prevails.

By 1859 the Company had reached a point where it once again had to make a decision as to whether or not it was a fur trading enterprise or a coal mining company. If it was to be the latter then it would have to make a greater capital investment than it had to date in order to capture a significant portion of the Pacific coast coal trade.

NOTES

¹Karl Marx, "Wages, Price and Profit," Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Selected Works in One Volume(New York: International Publishers, 1968),p.226; for a differing opinion see Bryan D. Palmer, "Social Formation and Class Formation in North America, 1800-1900," Proletarianization and Family History, ed. David Levine, (New York:Academic Press, Inc., 1984),p.232.

²Marx, Capital, I, p.1021.

³Mike Holbrook-Jones, Supremacy and Subordination of Labour, The Hierarchy of Work in the Early Labour Movement (London:Heinemann Educational Books, 1982),p.23; Daniel T. Gallacher, "Men, Money, Machines:Studies Comparing Colliery Operations and Factors of Production in British Columbia's Coal Industry to 1891," (unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1979).

⁴Holbrook-Jones, Op. cit.,p.92.

⁵Marx, Loc. cit.

⁶Vickers, Op.cit., p.44.

⁷Ralston. Op. cit., p.52.

⁸W.G. Smith to James Thompson March 17,1854 A.5/18 fo.282, HBCA/PAM.

⁹Smith to Robinson March 20,1854 A.5/18 fo. 282-283, HBCA/PAM.

¹⁰Smith to Thompson March 17,1854, Op. cit.

¹¹Robinson to Smith May 3,1854 A.10/35 fo. 305d, HBCA/PAM; as quoted in Stan Hill, "From Brierly Hill to British Columbia," Blackcountryman 7(Spring,1974),p.25.

¹²Smith to Robinson March 20, 30, April 7, 10, 17, May 11, 15,1854 A.5/18 fos. 282-283, 288, 292-293, 294, 298-299, 316, 312-313; Sadie Gough, "Agreement Between Edwin Gough and the Hudson's Bay Company, May 1,1854, Ms, PABC.

¹³McKay to Douglas June 2, July 13, 1853, "Nanaimo Correspondence 1852-53," Ts, PABC; Ralston, Loc. cit.; Douglas to Barclay April 21, 1854 A.11/75 fo.151, HBCA/PAM.

¹⁴Douglas to Barclay August 11, 1854 A.11/75 fo.265, HBCA/PAM.

¹⁵"Agreement between the Hudson's Bay Company and Jean Chaulifaux, 1855" Ms, PABC; Sadie Gough, Loc. cit., PABC.

¹⁶Douglas to Tolmie April 29, 1853, Report of the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Sessional Papers 1913, V-99 Appendix VII, p.20; McKay to Douglas May 18, 1853, Douglas to McKay June 4, 1853, "Nanaimo Correspondence 1852-1853," Ts, PABC.

¹⁷Douglas to Barclay April 21, 1854 A.11/75 fo. 151, HBCA/PAM.

¹⁸Douglas to Barclay August 11, 1854, Loc. cit.

¹⁹McKay to Douglas July 31, 1853, "Nanaimo Correspondence 1852-1853," Ts, PABC.

²⁰H.F. Bulman, Coal Mining and the Coal Miner(London: Methuen & Co., 1920), pp10-17; Douglas to Barclay February 11, 1854 A.11/75 fo. 45, HBCA/PAM.

²¹Douglas to Barclay December 25, 1854 A.11/75 fo. 449, HBCA/PAM.

²²Bulman, Op. cit., p.14.

²³John Benson, British Coalminers in the Nineteenth Century: A Social History(London: Gill and MacMillan, 1980), pp.221-223.

²⁴"Nanaimo Journal 1855-1857," September 22, 29, 1855, Ts, PABC.

²⁵"Nanaimo Journal 1855-1857," March 6, May 15, 1856, Ts, PABC.

²⁶"Nanaimo Journal 1855-1857," October 30, 1855, Ts, PABC; Douglas to Stuart June 18, 1857, Hudson's Bay Company, "Correspondence Outward December 21, 1856 to January 25, 1858, Ms, PABC.

²⁷"Nanaimo Journal 1855-1857," January 25, 1856, Ts, PABC.

²⁸"Nanaimo Journal 1855-1857," September 8, October 13, 1856, Ts, PABC.

²⁹Douglas to Smith December 13, 1857 A.11/76 fo. 807-808, HBCA/PAM.

³⁰Richard Mackie, "Colonial Land, Indian Labour and Company Capital: The Economy of Vancouver Island, 1849-1858," (unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Victoria, 1984).

³¹Douglas to Barclay December 25, 1854 A.11/75 fo. 447, HBCA/PAM.

³²Douglas to Barclay January 11, 1855 A.11/75 fo. 507; Wishart to Barclay January 13, 1855 A.10/37 fo. 44, HBCA/PAM.

³³"Log of the Princess Royal," July 29 & 30, 1854 C.1/975 fo. 30; July 13, 1854 C.1/975 fo. 20; Smith to Messrs. Edmund Phelps & Co. June 5, 1855 A.5/19 fo. 191-192, HBCA/PAM; Stan Hill Op. cit., p.27; Barrie E. Goult, "First and Last Days of the Princess Royal," BCHQ, III no.1 (January, 1939), p.18.

³⁴"Log of the Princess Royal," October 24, 1854 C.1/975 fo. 74; Wishart to Pelly October 24, 1854 A.10/36 fo. 320-321, HBCA/PAM.

³⁵Douglas to Barclay December 25, 1854 A.11/75 fo. 447, HBCA/PAM.

³⁶Douglas to Barclay January 23, 1855 A.11/75 fo. 531, HBCA/PAM.

³⁷Douglas to Barclay March 22, 1855 A.11/75 fo. 556, HBCA/PAM.

³⁸Gallacher, Op. cit., pp.215-216ff.

³⁹For the fantasy gardens version of Nanaimo society see Brian A. Smith, "A Social History of Early Nanaimo," (unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1956), particularly pp.124-131.

⁴⁰See Appendix II

⁴¹John Malcomson, "Resource Development and the State in Early British Columbia," (unpublished Master's Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1980).

⁴²James E. Hendrickson, "The Constitutional Development of Colonial Vancouver Island and British Columbia," British Columbia Historical Readings ed. W. Peter Ward and Robert A.J. McDonald, (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd., 1981), p.249.

⁴³Douglas to Barclay September 3, 1849 A.11/72 fo. 92-93, HBCA/PAM; E.O.S. Scholefield and F.W. Howay, British Columbia from the Earliest Times to the Present (Vancouver: S.J. Clarke, 1914), II, p.530.

⁴⁴Douglas to Barclay February 24, 1851 A.11/73 fo. 73, HBCA/PAM.

⁴⁵Sadie Gough, Loc. cit.

⁴⁶"Nanaimo Journal 1855-1857," September 24, October 1, 2, 1855, Ms, PABC; Robinson to Douglas September, 1855 A.11/75 fo. 788, HBCA/PAM.

⁴⁷Douglas to Smith July 24, 1855 A.11/75 fo. 667, HBCA/PAM.

⁴⁸"Nanaimo Journal 1855-1857," September 11, 17, 22, 1856, Ms, PABC.

⁴⁹Marx, Capital, I, p.1021.

⁵⁰Thid, pp.695-696.

⁵¹Robinson to Douglas April 11, 1855 A.11/75 fo. 592, HBCA/PAM.

⁵²Robinson to Douglas December 20, 1856 A.11/76 fo. 445-446, HBCA/PAM.

⁵³James Audain, From Coal Mine to Castle, the Story of the Dunsmuirs of Vancouver Island (New York: Pageant Press, 1955), pp. 24-25; Gallacher, "Men, Money, Machines," p. 216 n. 36; Gallacher, "Robert Dunsmuir," Dictionary of Canadian Biography, XI, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), p. 291.

⁵⁴Harold Griffin, British Columbia: The People's Early Story (Vancouver: Tribune Publishing Company, 1958), pp. 45-46; Paul A. Phillips, No Power Greater, A Century of Labour in British Columbia (Vancouver: British Columbia Federation of Labour and the Boag Foundation, 1967) p. 3; Stanley B. Ryerson, Unequal Union, Roots of the Crisis in the Canadas, 1815-1873, Second Ed. (Toronto: Progress Books, 1973), pp. 400-401.

⁵⁵Gallacher, "Men, Money, Machines," p. 215.

⁵⁶See above, p. 61 n. 96.

⁵⁷Douglas to Barclay August 11, 1854 A.11/75 fo. 265, HBCA/PAM.

⁵⁸"Nanaimo Journal 1855-1857," September 18, 1855, Ts, PABC.

⁵⁹Douglas to Barclay August 11, 1854 Loc. cit.

⁶⁰"Nanaimo Journal 1855-1857," October 12, 1855, Ts, PABC.

⁶¹Ibid, September 11, 1855.

⁶²Ibid, September 18, 1855.

⁶³Ibid, November 23, 1855.

⁶⁴Douglas to Stuart October 5, 1855 A.11/75 fo. 810;
Douglas to Smith November 5, 1855 A.11/75 fo. 805-806,
HBCA/PAM.

⁶⁵Robinson to Douglas December 11, 1855 A.11/75 fo.
877, HBCA/PAM; "Nanaimo Journal 1855-1857," January 22, 1856,
Ts, PABC.

⁶⁶"Nanaimo Journal 1855-1857," March 8, 1856, Ts, PABC;
Douglas to Stuart June 18, 1857, "Fort Victoria
Correspondence Outwards," Ms, PABC.

⁶⁷Robinson to Douglas February 29, 1856 A.11/76 fo. 84,
HBCA/PAM; Mark Bate, "Reminiscences," Nanaimo Free Press,
March 23, 1907.

⁶⁸"Nanaimo Journal 1855-1857," October 5, 8, 16, 1856,
Ts, PABC.

⁶⁹Robinson to Douglas December 20, 1856 A.11/76 fo.
445-446, HBCA/PAM.

⁷⁰"Nanaimo Journal 1855-1857," April 22, 1856, Ts, PABC;
Robinson to Douglas April 26, 1856 A.11/76 fo. 150, HBCA/PAM.

⁷¹Douglas to Stuart April 1, 1857, "Fort Victoria
Correspondence Outward," Ms, PABC.

⁷²Marx, Capital I, p.1020.

⁷³Douglas to Smith December 19, 1856 A.11/76 fo. 388,
HBCA/PAM.

⁷⁴Douglas to Stuart March 18, 1857, "Fort Victoria
Correspondence Outward," Ms, PABC.

⁷⁵Douglas to Stuart March 28, 1857, "Fort Victoria
Correspondence Outward," Ms, PABC.

⁷⁶Douglas to Smith January 20, 1858 A.11/76 fo. 919,
HBCA/PAM.

⁷⁷Douglas to Robinson March 29, 1858 A.11/76 fo. 1045, HBCA/PAM.

⁷⁸Douglas to Smith June 18, 1858 A.11/76 fo. 1139; Robinson to Douglas June 25, 1858 A.11/76 fo. 1171; Douglas to Smith July 8, 1858 A.11/76 fo. 1181; Douglas to Smith July 26, 1858 A.11/76 fo. 1225; Douglas to Fraser October 6, 1858 A.11/76 fo. 1306, HBCA/PAM.

⁷⁹Douglas to Fraser December 11, 1858 A.11/76 fo. 1412, HBCA/PAM.

⁸⁰McKay to Douglas September 9, 1852, "Nanaimo Correspondence 1852-1853," Ts, PABC.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid, September 16, 1852.

⁸³Douglas to Barclay October 11, 1852 A.11/73 fo. 591, HBCA/PAM.

⁸⁴Rolf Knight, Indians at Work, an Informal History of Native Indian Labour in British Columbia 1858-1930 (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1978), pp.78-100.

⁸⁵"Nanaimo Journal 1855-1857," August 1, 1855, Ts, PABC.

⁸⁶Mark Bate, "Reminiscences," Nanaimo Fress Press February 16, 1907.

⁸⁷Robinson to Douglas January 23, 1858 A.11/76 fo. 976, HBCA/PAM.

⁸⁸Bate, Loc. cit.

⁸⁹Knight, Op. cit., p.137; Richard C. Mayne, Four Years in British Columbia and Vancouver's Island (London: John Murray, 1862), p.153.

⁹⁰Douglas to Smith August 20, 1855, "Fort Victoria Correspondence Outward 1850-1858," Ms, PABC.

⁹¹Robinson to Douglas October 17, 1855 A.11/75 fo. 807, HBCA/PAM.

⁹²Robinson to Douglas December 20, 1856 A.11/76 fo. 446, HBCA/PAM.

⁹³"Nanaimo Journal 1855-1857," December 15, 1856, Ms, PABC.

⁹⁴Douglas to Stuart August 22, 1857, "Fort Victoria Correspondence Outward," Ms, PABC.

⁹⁵Douglas to Stuart October 18, 1857, "Fort Victoria Correspondence Outward," Ms, PABC.

⁹⁶Robinson to Douglas January 23, 1858 A.11/76 fo. 976, HBCA/PAM.

⁹⁷Douglas to Robinson March 29, 1858 A.11/76 fo. 1045, HBCA/PAM.

⁹⁸Anon, "The Coal Fields of the North Pacific," Van Nostrand's Engineering Magazine, II(1869), p.479.

⁹⁹The British Colonist April 27, May 3, 8, 13, 17, 24, 27, June 4, 15, 18, 24, and July 1, 1867.

¹⁰⁰Gallacher, Op. cit., p.206.

¹⁰¹Douglas to Smith January 20, 1858 A.11/76 fo. 909, HBCA/PAM.

¹⁰²Karl Polanyi, The Great Transformation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p.137.

¹⁰³Douglas to Smith July 24, 1855 A.11/75 fo. 700, HBCA/PAM.

¹⁰⁴Robinson to Douglas May 23, 1857 A.11/76 fo. 612-613, HBCA/PAM.

CHAPTER IV: The End of an Era, 1858-1862.

The period 1858 to 1862 was a decisive one in the history of coal mining on Vancouver Island. No decision was probably more important than the one taken by the Colonial Office in London to create the separate colony of British Columbia and to appoint James Douglas as its first Governor. Douglas' decision to accept the appointment was not as quick in coming as some would have liked. Douglas' indecision was precipitated by the Colonial Office's requirement that he sever all ties with the Hudson's Bay Company including any pension he might be entitled to. While the situation was ultimately resolved to Douglas' satisfaction, the immediate result was less than satisfactory for the Company. The managerial stagnation that gripped the Company's affairs on Vancouver Island in 1858 is revealed in a series of letters between Henry Hulse Berens, the newly elected Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, and Alexander Grant Dallas, a share holder and member of the administrative Committee. These letters in a locked letter book are marked "Private & Confidential", and lack the stiff formality of most of the Company's correspondence; they are also exceedingly frank in their commentary. Furthermore, one letter in particular, gives us some insight into Victorian management's view of its own authority.

I can quite understand that Mr. Douglas is too full of his appointment to the Governorship of the new colony to pay much attention to the details of our trade. We have been under some difficulty as neither here nor at the Colonial Office, do we know whether he has accepted the post; but as we have little doubt he will have done so, and to save time, I send now an official letter to you, enclosing a Commission, which gives you despotic powers.¹

Dallas had already made known his views on the state of the Company's affairs on Vancouver Island. He was particularly disturbed by the situation at the Nanaimo coal mines.

At Nanaimo we are doing little. The small steamers burn wood, and few large ones go near the place. The property though no doubt valuable, is not immediately productive. Captain Stewart [sic], the Superintendent is a slave to drink, and we have no one to take his place. Mr. Robinson seems to be much taken up with private trading, and is looked on with suspicion. Mr. Cameron, or whoever fills his position, ought, as I have before stated, reside at the mines.²

Berens evidently concurred with Dallas and instructed him to "establish radical reform in our coal business."³ Dallas was eager to act but first he had to find replacements for the existing personnel. The gold rush had made the availability of labour in general more plentiful, but there was still not an abundance of technically educated management. It was not until August of 1859 that he was able to even locate someone who could replace Robinson as manager, and it was a further two months before he could report that he had actually hired someone.⁴

On October 21, 1859 Dallas reported that he had hired

Charles S. Nichol, an engineer who had been working as a land surveyor at Port Douglas in the Fraser Valley. He also reported that the Cameron connection had been "severed" and the man who had in fact been actually keeping the books for the Nanaimo establishment, James Farquhar, was being kept on but would now reside at Nanaimo. Stuart had been fired and Robinson had in accordance with his contract requested his passage home to England on the next Company ship to call at Victoria.⁵

The problems at Nanaimo ran deeper however than just drunken supervisors and disinterested general managers. Dallas perceived that part of the problem lay in the fact that the miners did not own their own homes, and lacking property they therefore had no vested interest in Nanaimo. Moreover, dispensing with the existing arrangement would rid the Company of a considerable expense and afford it an opportunity to solve some other problems.

My purpose is to sell to the miners or others, their houses, with suitable portions of ground, & to encourage a population from whence we can always obtain labour as required. At present we provide houses fuel etc. for our people, & whether sick, absent, or on strike, they still obtain these advantages for their families, including medical attendance & medicines. By making them pay for everything they require, with the exception of medical attendance, but not medicines, we shall be better able to calculate what each ton of coal costs us.⁶

Society was therefore to be constructed along lines dictated by the ideology of a cost-accountant. Dallas' parsimonious plans knew no social boundaries. He abolished the officers mess at both Victoria and Nanaimo and substituted salary increases for the previously provided free food and service. By so doing, he estimated that the Company would save between £1200 and £1500.⁷ Anything other than cash payment was deemed onerous. He reported to the Company's secretary in the Spring of 1860,

I am commencing to sell town & suburban lots, with the view of attracting settlers, & rendering us independent of the onus of providing houses for the miners or of finding them in anything but their pay, & that only when working.⁸

While the Company chose to address what it perceived to be problems in certain areas it chose to ignore others that cropped up elsewhere. Both approaches had adverse consequences.

In June of 1860 John Work, the Chief Factor at Victoria reported to the Company secretary in London,

Mr. Nicols operations at Nanaimo are clogged for the present by a strike for higher pay amongst part of the miners. One of the wharves at Nanaimo has fallen down but without loss of life or property further than of the structure itself.⁹

It is not unreasonable to assume that some of the miners realized that a good deal of the cost of their own subsistence was being shifted from the Company on to

their shoulders without similar compensation as that which it so generously had given its officers when the Company dissolved their mess. In a manner consistent with an already established pattern of behaviour the miners attempted to lever more money out of the Company by disrupting production by means of a strike. Unfortunately there is no evidence as to how this dispute was resolved. It is doubtful if the Company gave in. Only part of the work force participated in the strike, and this may account for the apparent lack of success by the strikers. Moreover, the Company had lowered its price of coal to as low as four dollars a ton in order to generate some demand in the San Francisco market and hopefully even the Panamanian one.¹⁰ Just when full production resumed is unclear. As Work's report demonstrates, there were other obstacles to shipping large amounts of coal at Nanaimo no matter how great the demand became.

When demand for coal had first fallen off back in 1856, Douglas' reaction had been to maintain production but not to expand the coal works in any way. He gave strict instructions that any new workings must pay for themselves. This program of austerity had an adverse effect on the mechanical infrastructure that had been developed by George Robinson. Indeed, the situation had deteriorated to the point that when Admiral Mayne visited

Nanaimo to take on a load of coal in September of 1859 he remarked:

The appliances for delivering the coal, for instance, were so faulty that a ship had to lie there often for three or four weeks before she could take in a load.¹¹

Under the new regime of Alexander Grant Dallas and C.S. Nichol the situation deteriorated even further. Even with the price of coal having risen to between six and seven dollars a ton, demand outstripped supply and ships were forced to wait as long as two months for a load by February of 1861.¹² Company officials refused to make any further capital investments in the enterprise and expand the necessary facilities. This sorry state of affairs, which was to carry on for nearly two years, had been precipitated by the Company's decision to sell the coal mines.

Nichol, who had joined the operation at Nanaimo in October of 1859, had prepared a report that he submitted to Dallas in the late Spring of 1860. Nichol's report called for a substantial infusion of capital in order to bring the mines up to their maximum potential of production. Furthermore, owing to the stiff competition on the Pacific coast, Nichol determined that the Company could not rightly expect to see a return on its investment in the near future. Dallas passed the report on to the

Governor and Committee in London, counselling them to put the mines up for sale.¹³ Dallas followed this up in September of 1860 with another letter in which he elaborated further on his reasons for advising the sale of the mines.

The probability of dear labour for many years to come, leaves little hope of a profitable working of the mines. In California & Oregon the rates of wages have not fallen, as in Australia. The two former regulate the rate here, which is higher & likely to continue so, as there is no other source whence we can draw our supply of labour. It is quite beyond the reach of a labouring man without, far less with his family, to reach this distant shore from Europe.¹⁴

The decision having been made to sell the mines, all that remained was to determine the price and find a buyer.

The Company determined that it had "cost" £46,080 up to June 1, 1860 to develop the Nanaimo coal works.¹⁵ It sold the coal mining operation to a consortium headed by Charles Nichol's brother James for £25,000 cash and a £15,000 mortgage.¹⁶ Negotiations and financing of the sale delayed the actual physical transfer and closing of the sale until December of 1862.¹⁷ Company officials claimed that they never made any money on the coal mining operations, and on the surface the £6,080 difference between what they received for the mines and their "cost" would seem to bear them out. There are however reasons to doubt the accuracy of their claim.

None of the Nanaimo account books which have survived are complete enough to allow an accurate estimate of the cost incurred by the Company in developing the Nanaimo coal works. Many of the expenditures that the Company charged to the Nanaimo accounts would have been, by today's standards, operating expenses and therefore would not be used in any attempted calculation of return on invested capital. Indeed they would not be part of the book value of the establishment. Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that the accounting records of the Colony of Vancouver Island and the Hudson's Bay Company coal mining operations were at one point indistinguishable and who paid for what cannot be determined.¹⁸ What is certain is that the Hudson's Bay Company never sold a ton of coal for less than the cost of the labour that it took to produce it. The lowest price quoted for the sale of Nanaimo coal was four dollars a ton. At an exchange rate of four shillings two pence to the dollar, that would translate into sixteen shillings eight pence per ton.¹⁹ The most that the Company ever paid was to Robert Dunsmuir as a sub-contractor which was nine shillings six pence. That leaves seven shillings two pence gross profit and no overhead expenses to be deducted.²⁰ Even an examination of the cost of raising coal by its own employees reveals

that the Company was certainly profitable. In 1858 Douglas determined that it was costing the Company eight shillings six pence a ton to raise coal at the Number 3 shaft and six shillings ten pence a ton at the Parkhead mine. Again, this would allow for wide profit margins with which to absorb any further overhead expenses that might be incurred.²¹

Regardless of their current profitability, the new regime of Berens in London and Dallas in Victoria were not optimistic about the future. In one of his earliest communiques on the subject of the coal mines Berens had remarked: "Generally, we ought to make hay while the sun shines, for there is no doubt that we shall in time be exposed to so much competition that our profits will be but small."²² By February of 1861 this concern had reached a heightened level of urgency in both men's minds. Berens replied to Dallas,

With regards to the sale of Nanaimo I am of the same opinion: - if a really fair price is to be obtained I would rather sell than incur the risk of working the mines.²³

This sense of urgency no doubt contributed to renewed attempts by management to further reduce its cost of production at the expense of its employees.

In October of 1861 a strike broke out at Nanaimo when the Company attempted to impose fines on the miners for sending up "dirty" coal, ie. coal with clay in it. The strike lasted five days. The men ultimately returned to work the poorer for the experience, as the Company imposed a

three pence a ton wage reduction in place of the fines. If nothing else this event allows us to see how large the works had grown. The Victoria newspaper account reported that, "The men on strike number fully one hundred."²⁴

By the time that the Hudson's Bay Company finally gave up control of the mines at Nanaimo in December, 1862 the adult male population was 238.²⁵ How many of these men were directly employed in the mine is impossible to determine, but to date there had been little else for them to do. Along with the increase in population came certain elements of the bourgeoisie.

Mine manager C.S. Nichol was now joined by stipendiary magistrate, W.H. Franklyn, a Methodist minister, Ebenezer Robson, and an Episcopalian minister, Mr. R.L. Lowe, all of whom arrived in 1860. Together with the established Company elite of James Farquhar, book-keeper, and Dr. Alfred Benson, Company physician, they formed "society" at Nanaimo. This coterie was reinforced by their wives, fiancées and the occasional Royal Navy officer who had come to coal his ship. Accounts of their dinner parties, picnics, boating trips and other fêtes can be found in the pages of Ebenezer Robson's diary. The coal miners are noticeable by their absence from these functions.²⁶ A "Literary Institute and Society" was formed that immediately failed to attract the interest of the miners. They were evidently more interested in having a drink. Robson, no doubt a teetotaler, frequently becries the

sin of drunkenness in his diary entries.²⁷ Nanaimo, the frontier mining camp was giving way to Nanaimo, the frontier industrial town which included a society divided along the lines of bourgeoisie and proletariat.

Until the Hudson's Bay Company completed the transfer of its interests to the newly formed Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company at the end of 1862, the mining population of Nanaimo remained an impermanent, propertyless proletariat. Their residence was at the discretion of the Company. Due to the impending sale, the Company was not prepared to even grant the men a lease on the homes they had built with their own hands.²⁸ The power of being both landlord and employer was part of a pattern of exploitation and alienation that would continue to exist long after the Hudson's Bay Company had left the scene.

The relationship between the Hudson's Bay Company and its coal mining employees had changed substantially over the years since it had dispatched the first tiny band of intrepid Scots to Fort Rupert in 1848. Many of the positive as well as the negative elements of that early paternalism had been done away with. While the men were no longer tied to the Company for a fixed length of time by a written contract, the violation of which could result in corporal punishment, neither were they paid if they did not work, receive free food and shelter, nor could they expect a free passage back to Great Britain. In their place the Company

had substituted working and living conditions that more closely approximated a capitalist relationship. It had introduced a piece-rate wage scale, shift work, casual labour and a system of sub-contracting. Both the exigencies and the advantages of the frontier were gone. There was a sufficiently large population to provide all the labour the Company needed while at the same time the increased population offered alternatives to employment down the mines. The continuously increasing population was nevertheless more advantageous to the mine operators than it was to the miners. An abundance of men and a scarcity of work would allow the mining concerns to replace striking employees and maintain a continuity of production that had been denied the Hudson's Bay Company.

When the Hudson's Bay Company had first entered the coal mining industry it applied the norms of the fur trade to the employer/employee relationship. The terms and conditions differed but little from what might be in a skilled labourer's contract at any of its forts. As the Company became increasingly aware that this form of relationship hindered its maximization of profit or surplus-value, it changed this relationship. It did not change the labour process or the means of production but rather it changed the means of exploitation. The piece-rate wage system was ideally suited to a company that had little or no management expertise in coal mining. "Since", as Marx

correctly pointed out, "the quality and intensity of the work are here controlled by the very form of the wage, superintendence of labour becomes to a great extent superfluous." He further commented:

On the one hand piece-wages make it easier for parasites to interpose themselves between the capitalist and the wage-labourer, thus giving rise to the "subletting of labour".

And he added:

Here the exploitation of the worker by capital takes place through the medium of the exploitation of one worker by another.²⁹

The relationship between the Company and the coal miners took its last unsteady steps towards the classical economists' idealized laissez-faire market place as the Company sought to rid itself of every obligation it had to the miners but the payment of their wages. Cash payment became the sole nexus between the Hudson's Bay Company and the coal miners.³⁰ The obligations and the restrictions of paternalism no longer suited the circumstances of the economy of Vancouver Island in 1862. New circumstances demanded new relations in the production of commodities, capitalist relations. The few remaining vestiges of paternalism, such as providing housing, were less of an obligation and more of a means of discipline in the new relationship. It is here, however, that we are able to identify the rudiments of industrial capitalism in the coal mines of Vancouver Island.

NOTES

- ¹Berens to Dallas October 22, 1858 A.7/2 fo. 185-186, HBCA/PAM.
- ²Dallas to Shepard September 1, 1858 A.7/2 fo. 176, HBCA/PAM.
- ³Berens to Dallas October 22, 1858 A.7/2 fo. 187, HBCA/PAM.
- ⁴Dallas to Fraser August 8, 1859 A.11/77 fo. 300;
Dallas to Fraser October 21, 1859 A.11/77 fo. 377, HBCA/PAM.
- ⁵Ibid; Ralston, Op. cit., p.54.
- ⁶Dallas to Fraser October 21, 1859 A.11/77 fo. 378, HBCA/PAM.
- ⁷Dallas to Fraser March 15, 1860 A.11/77 fo. 548-549;
Dallas to Fraser April 6, 1860 A.11/77 fo. 566, HBCA/PAM.
- ⁸Dallas to Fraser April 6, 1860 A.11/77 fo. 568, HBCA/PAM.
- ⁹Work to Fraser June 23, 1860 A.11/77 fo. 635; same letter also in B.226/b/20 fo. 146, HBCA/PAM.
- ¹⁰Dallas to Fraser October 21, 1859 A.11/77 fo. 378, HBCA/PAM.
- ¹¹Mayne, Op. cit., p.35.
- ¹²The British Colonist, February 28, 1861.
- ¹³Berens to Dallas June 8, 1860 A.7/3 fo.12, HBCA/PAM.
- ¹⁴Dallas to Fraser September 16, 1860 A.11/77 fo. 717, HBCA/PAM.
- ¹⁵Berens to Dallas October 5, 1860 A.7/3 fo. 43, HBCA/PAM.

¹⁶James Nicol to Thomas Fraser September 2, 1861 A.10/50 fo. 300; Berens to MacTavish October 18, 1861 A.7/3 fo. 75-76, HBCA/PAM; Rich, Hudson's Bay Company 1670-1870, II, p.778. (N.B. Nicol is spelt variously in Company records).

¹⁷MacTavish to Nicol November 23, 1862 B.226/b/22 fo. 407; Mactavish to Fraser December 17, 1862 B.226/b/22 fo. 327-328; Finlayson to Nicol December 24, 1862 B.226/b/22 fo. 418, HBCA/PAM.

¹⁸Barclay to Douglas June 17, 1853 A.6/30 fo. 217, HBCA/PAM.

¹⁹For the rate of exchange see Hudson's Bay Company, "Vancouver Island Colony Accounts," p.20, Ms, PABC.

²⁰Douglas to Stuart April 1, 1857, "Fort Victoria Correspondence Outward," Ms, PABC; Douglas to Smith December 19, 1856 A.11/76 fo. 388, HBCA/PAM.

²¹Douglas to Robinson March 29, 1858 A.11/76 fo. 1045, HBCA/PAM.

²²Berens to Dallas October 22, 1858 A.7/2 fo. 187, HBCA/PAM.

²³Berens to Dallas February 1, 1861 A.7/3 fo. 60, HBCA/PAM.

²⁴The British Colonist, October 4, 1861; October 10, 1861.

²⁵The British Colonist, January 23, 1863.

²⁶Ebenezer Robson, "Diary," April 26, May 12, July 8, 1861, Ms, PABC.

²⁷The British Colonist, January 23, 1863; Robson, "Diary," August 4, 1861, Ms, PABC.

²⁸MacTavish to Nicol February 14, 1862 B.226/b/22 fo. 255, HBCA/PAM.

²⁹Marx, Capital, I, p.695.

³⁰The colourful phraseology of "cash nexus" is frequently and incorrectly attributed to Marx and Engels. They did use it in the Communist Manifesto but it really originates, as Engels acknowledged in "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific," with the gifted British reactionary Thomas Carlyle. Marx and Engels, Selected Works, p.38 & 402; Thomas Carlyle, "Chartism," English and Other Critical Essays, II (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1915), pp.205 & 208.

BIBLIOGRAPHYI Unpublished MaterialHudson's Bay Company Archives/Provincial Archives of
Manitoba

- London Correspondence Book Outwards - General Series A.5
 London Correspondence Book Outwards - H.B.C. Official A.6
 London Locked Private Letter Book A.7
 London Inward Correspondence- General A.10
 London Correspondence Inward from HBC Posts A.11
 Grand Journal A.15
 Fort Rupert Post Journal B.185/a/1
 Correspondence Inward - Fort Victoria B.226/c/1
 Ship's Logs - Colinda(Barque) 1853 C.1/242
 Ship's Logs - Princess Royal 1854-1855 C.1/975

Provincial Archives of British Columbia

- Blanshard, Richard. "Correspondence - Outward, 1849-1851",
 Ms, PABC.
- Douglas, James and McKay, J.W. "Nanaimo Correspondence
 1852-1853", Ts, PABC.
- Fort Victoria. "Correspondence on the Affairs of Vancouver
 Island Colony, May 16,1850 - November 6,1855", Ts,
 PABC.
- Fort Victoria. "Correspondence on the Affairs of Vancouver
 Island Colony, December 11,1855 - July 8,1859", Ts,
 PABC.
- Gough, Sadie. "Agreement between Edwin Gough and the
 Hudson's Bay Company, 1st May, 1854", Ms, PABC.
- Helmcken, J.S. "Magistrate's Court, Fort Rupert Diary,
 June 27 - August 20,1850", Ms, PABC.
- Hudson's Bay Company. "Fort Victoria Correspondence
 Outward December 21,1856 to January 25,1858", Ms,PABC

Hudson's Bay Company. "Agreement between Jean Chaulifoux and the Hudson's Bay Company April 1, 1855", Ms, PABC.

Muir, Andrew. "Private Diary", Ts, PABC.

Robson, Ebenezer. "Diary", Ms, PABC.

Stuart, Charles Edward (Captain). "Nanaimo Journal 1855-1857", Ts, PABC.

Theses and Dissertations

Gallacher, Daniel T. "Men, Money, Machines: Studies Comparing Colliery Operations and Factors of Production in British Columbia's Coal Industry to 1891." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1979.

Mackie, Richard. "Colonial Land, Indian Labour and Company Capital: The Economy of Vancouver Island, 1849-1858." Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Victoria, 1984.

Malcomson, John. "Resource Development and the State in Early British Columbia." Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1980.

Smith, Brian A. "A Social History of Early Nanaimo." Unpublished B.A. Essay, University of British Columbia, 1956.

II Published Material

Government Reports

Provincial Archives of British Columbia. Report.
Sessional Papers, V-99, Appendix VII, 1913.

Newspapers

The British Colonist (Victoria)

Nanaimo Free Press

Articles

Bate, Mark. "Address to the BCHA Pioneers Reunion May 9, 1924." BCHA Second Annual Report and Proceedings, (1924), 12-14.

- Boydston, Jeanne. "To Earn Her Daily Bread: Housework and Antebellum Working-Class Subsistence." Radical History Review, 35 (April, 1986), 7-25.
- "The Coal Fields of the North Pacific." Van Nostrand's Engineering Magazine, II (1869), 478-480.
- "Death of an Eminent Mining Engineer." Engineering, (December 27, 1895), 5.
- "First Nanaimo Church Blessed 95 Years Ago." The Torch, XX (April, 1960), 2.
- Goult, Barrie H.E. "First and Last Days of the Princess Royal." British Columbia Historical Quarterly, (January, 1939), 15-24.
- Hill, Stan. "From Brierly Hill to British Columbia." Blackcountryman, VII (Spring, 1974), 25-29.
- Lamb, W.K. "The Governorship of Richard Blanshard." British Columbia Historical Quarterly, XIV (January-April, 1950), 1-40.
- McKelvie, B.A. "Coal for the Warships." The Beaver Outfit 282 (June, 1951), 8-11.
- _____. "The Founding of Nanaimo." British Columbia Historical Quarterly, VIII (1944), 169-188.
- Rich, E.E. "The Fur Traders: Their Diet and Drugs." The Beaver, XXVII (Summer, 1976), 42-53.
- Saywell, J.T. "Labour and Socialism in British Columbia: A Survey of Historical Development Before 1903." British Columbia Historical Quarterly, XV (1951), 129-150.
- Sisters of St. Ann's Convent. "St. Ann's was Nanaimo's First School." The Torch, XXII (March, 1962), 2-3.
- Vickers, Randolph S. "George Robinson, Nanaimo Mine Agent." The Beaver, Outfit 315-2 (Autumn, 1984), 44-50.

Books and Pamphlets

- Audain, James. From Coal Mine to Castle, the Story of the Dunsmuirs of Vancouver Island. New York: Pageant Press, 1955.
- Bancroft, Hubert Howe. History of British Columbia, 1792-1887. Vol. XXXII of The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft. 39 Vols. San Francisco: The History Company, Publishers, 1887.
- Bennett, William. Builders of British Columbia. Vancouver: Broadway Printers, 1937.
- Benson, John. British Coalminers in the Nineteenth Century: A Social History. London: Gill and MacMillan, 1980.
- Bowsfield, Hartwell., ed. Fort Victoria Letters 1846-1851. With an introduction by Margaret A. Ormsby. Winnipeg: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1979.
- Braverman, Harry. Labor and Monopoly Capital The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974.
- Bullman, H.F. Coal Mining and the Coal Miner. London: Methuen & Co., 1920.
- Burnett, John. Plenty and Want A Social History of Diet in England from 1815 to the Present. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966.
- Carlyle, Thomas. English and Other Critical Essays. II, 2 Vols. London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1915.
- Coleman, Terry. The Railway Navvies. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968.
- The Daily Herald. Diamond Jubilee and Empire Day Celebration 1874-1934 Souvenir Programme. Nanaimo: The Daily Herald, 1934.
- Fisher, Robin. Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia 1774-1890. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977.
- Friesen, J. and Ralston, H.K. Historical Essays on British Columbia. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976.

- Galbraith, John S. The Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor 1821-1869. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957.
- Goldring, Philip. Papers on the Labour System of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1821-1890. Vol. I, Manuscript Report Number 362. Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1979.
- _____. Papers On the Labour System of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1821-1900. Vol. II, Manuscript Report Number 412. Ottawa: National Historical Parks and Sites Branch, 1980.
- Gough, Barry M. Gunboat Frontier, British Maritime Authority and Northwest Coast Indians 1846-1890. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984.
- Griffin, Harold. British Columbia: The People's Early Story. Vancouver: Tribune Publishing Company Limited, 1958.
- Harrison, Royden., ed. Independent Collier: The Coal Miner as Archetypal Proletarian Reconsidered. Hassocks: The Harvester Press Limited, 1978.
- Helmcken, John S. The Reminiscences of Doctor John Sebastian Helmcken. Edited by Dorothy Blakey Smith, introduction by W. Kay Lamb. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1975.
- Herberle, Rudolf. Social Movements. New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1951.
- Heron, Craig., and Storey, Robert., eds. On the Job, Confronting the Labour Process in Canada. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986.
- Himmelfarb, Gertrude. The Idea of Poverty England in the Early Industrial Age. New York: Vintage Books, 1983.
- Hobsbawm, E.J. The Age of Capital 1848-1875. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975.
- _____. Labouring Men Studies in the History of Labour. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964.
- Holbrook-Jones, Mike. Supremacy and Subordination, The Hierarchy of Work in the Early Labour Movement. London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1982.

- Houghton, Walter E. The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957.
- Howay, F.W. Historical. Vol. II of Scholefield, E.O.S., and Howay, F.W. British Columbia from the Earliest Times to the Present. 4 Vols. Vancouver: S.J. Clarke, 1914.
- Johnson, Patricia M. A Short History of Nanaimo. Nanaimo: City of Nanaimo British Columbia Centennial Committee, 1958.
- _____.; Parker, John G.; and Sedola, Gino A. Nanaimo Scenes from the Past. Nanaimo: Nanaimo & District Museum Society, 1966.
- _____. Welcome to Nanaimo. Nanaimo: Trendex Publications and Western Heritage for the City of Nanaimo, 1974.
- Jones, Gareth Stedman. Languages of Class, Studies in English Working Class History 1832-1982. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Knight, Rolf. Indians at Work, an Informal History of Native Indian Labour in British Columbia 1858-1930. Vancouver: New Star Books, 1978.
- Levine, David., ed. Proletarianization and Family Life. New York: Academic Press, 1984.
- MacDougall, Ian., ed. Essays in Scottish Labour History, A Tribute to W.H. Marwick. Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1978.
- Marx, Karl. Capital, A Critique of Political Economy. Vol. I Translated by Ben Fowkes, introduction by Ernest Mandel. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976.
- _____. Capital, A Critique of Political Economy. Vol. II Translated by David Fernbach, introduction by Ernest Mandel. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978.
- _____. Capital, A Critique of Political Economy. Vol. III Translated by David Fernbach, introduction by Ernest Mandel. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981.

- _____, and Engels, Frederick. The German Ideology.
Part One, with selections from parts two and three
and supplementary texts. Edited, with an
introduction by C.J. Arthur. New York: International
Publishers, 1970.
- _____, and _____. Selected Works in One Volume.
New York: International Publishers, 1968.
- Mayne, Richard C. Four Years in British Columbia and
Vancouver's Island. London: John Murray, 1862.
- Meszaros, Istvan., ed. Aspects of History and Class
Consciousness. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971.
- Moore, Barrington., Jr. Injustice The Social Basis of
Obedience and Revolt. White Plains: M.E. Sharpe
Inc., 1978.
- Norcross, E. Blanche., ed. The Company on the Coast.
Nanaimo: Nanaimo Historical Society, 1983.
- _____, ed. Nanaimo Retrospective, The First Century.
Nanaimo: Nanaimo Historical Society, 1979.
- Ormsby, Maragaret A. British Columbia: A History.
Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1958.
- Palmer, Bryan D. A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers
and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton Ontario, 1860-
1914. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press,
1979.
- Pethick, Derick. Victoria: The Fort. Vancouver: Mitchell
Press, 1968.
- Phillips, Paul A. No Power Greater: A Century of Labour
in British Columbia. Vancouver: British Columbia
Federation of Labour and the Boag Foundation, 1967.
- Polanyi, Karl. The Great Transformation. Boston: Beacon
Press, 1957.
- Reksten, Terry. More English Than the English. Victoria:
Orca Book Publishers, 1987.
- Rich, E.E. Hudson's Bay Company 1670-1870. Vol. II,
2 Vols., London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society,
1959.

- _____. , and Johnson, A.M., eds. Eden Colvile's Letters 1849-52. London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1956.
- Ryerson, Stanley B. Unequal Union, Roots of the Crisis in the Canadas, 1815-1873. 2nd ed. Toronto: Progress Books, 1973.
- Sage, Walter N. Sir James Douglas and British Columbia. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1930.
- Ste. Croix, G.E.M. de. The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World, from the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests. London: Gerald Duckworth & Company, 1981.
- Sale, T.D., and Smith Devina S. Nanaimo the Story of a City. Nanaimo: Nanaimo and District Museum Society, 1983.
- Scholefield, E.O.S., and Gosnell, R.E. A History of British Columbia. Vancouver: British Columbia Historical Association, 1913.
- Thompson, E.P. The Making of the English Working Class. Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1968.
- _____. The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978.
- Walbran, John T. British Columbia Coast Names 1592-1906. Vancouver: J.J. Douglas, 1977.
- Ward, W. Peter., and McDonald, Robert A.J., eds. British Columbia: Historical Readings. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd., 1981.
- Zimbalist, Andrew., ed. Case Studies On the Labor Process New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979.

Dictionaries

- Dictionary of Canadian Biography. Vol. XI, 12 Vols. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982.

APPENDIX I

To J. Douglas, Chief Factor

Hudson's Bay Company

We the undersigned in accordance with the statements made to us in Scotland, agreed to come out to this island to work coal at a stated salary of £50 per annum, and for every ton we put out, over and above 30 tons per month we were to receive 2/6 sterling, as per agreement, which on leaving Scotland we calculated on making every day, also, but for that inducement, we should never have left Scotland. but on arriving on this island we found no coal to work, thereby depriving us of the only inducement which brought us from our comfortable home to this comfortless place, but we have since we arrived here, been sinking for coal, not all connected with our agreements, but finally unless we get the same equivalent for sinking as it is stated in our agreements for working the coal, namely 2/6 per day, which we could have made with ease, from the statements made to us, from the time we have been on the island until we reach this coal, when we work to our agreements, as sinking is neither connected with coal digging as a branch, nor with labourers work, but stands by itself.

John Muir Jr. John Smith Michael Muir
 Archibald Muir Robert Muir
 John McGregor Andrew Muir

APPENDIX II

South Staffordshire Coal Miner's Strike Activity

	April 11, 1855	April 22, 1855	Sept. 11, 1855	Sept. 12, 1855	Sept. 24, 1855	Oct. 7, 1855	Nov. 5, 1855	Jan. 22, 1856	April 22, 1856	July 15, 1856	Sept. 11, 1856
Baker, George	D	R									
Baker, John	D	R	S	D	?					D	
Bevilockway, Joseph L.		D						R	F		
Biggs, John											
Bull, George			S	D	R						
Dunn, Daniel			S	D	R						
Ganner, Elijah											
Gough, Edwin											N
Harrison, William			S	D	R	D	M				N
Hawkes, Thomas											N
Incher, William			S	D	R	D	M				
Jones, Thomas		D	S	D	R		M	R		D	
Malpass, John					R						
Makin, John			S						T		
Miller, Matthew											N
Richardson, Richard	D	R									N
Richardson, John	D	R									N
Sage, Jesse	D	R									
Thompson, John		D			R				T		
Turner, Richard											N
Webb, Joseph			S	D	R					D	
York, Thomas	D	R	S	D	R		M	R		D	

D: Desert

N: Negotiate

R: Return

S: Strike

T: Transfer

M: Missing

VITA

Surname: Burrill Given Names: William John

Place of Birth: Montréal Date of Birth: July 20, 1947

Sir George Williams University 1967 to 1972

University of Victoria 1984 to 1987

B.A. (Honours) 1972 Sir George Williams University

Honours and Awards:

British Columbia Post-Secondary Scholarship, 1986/87

Publications:

PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENSE

I hereby grant the right to lend my thesis (the title of which is shown below) to users of the University of Victoria Library, and to make single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the Library of any other university, or similar institution, on its behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by me or a member of the University designated by me. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Title of thesis

Class Conflict and Colonialism: The Coal Miners of Vancouver Island During the Hudson's Bay Company Era, 1848-1862.

Author



WILLIAM JOHN BURRILL

September 21, 1987