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Transcription of Interview with Thornton Henwood, Athol Rd., Springhill.

FATHER WASN't very interested in religion--mother was.

he went to Salvation Army a lot--they went to Salvation Army. 'They had their own band--a lovely band....'

mother turned to Salvation Army because of their concrete help in their work.

turned to the Baptist Church. 'I've seen them doing so much and helping so many things....'

strong supporter of the CCF--Jack Crummie. He went away, to New Zealand or Australia. ran on the CCF ticket. he was a well-liked man. 'Whatever I thought was going to help the labour out, I voted that way.'

'I'm not a capitalist...'

b. 1913, Springhill.

father worked in farming, lumbering, went from there to Strathcona and River Hebert--worked in coal mines there.

worked in those mines down there 12-15 years. then came to Springhill.

b. Lakeland.

he used to drive back and forth on the weekends. that time there was no cars. He used to board down in River Hebert. In the weekends, he used to drive back in a horse and wagon.

go back on Sunday night.

he came from down that way--down in Lakelands. He had a feeling for the mines. narrow seams down there--why did he prefer them?

They had the feeling. River Hebert miners wouldn't stay here. Looked up at the ceiling and say, if something falls from there, it would kill you.

"I'd far sooner have something fall from up there than be crawling around on my hands and knees all the time."

--Thornton Henwood also worked down in R.Hebert for a short while, ten or eleven months. I come down crawling down one night, come sliding down on his side, going down he got stuck. Had to reach up and slide down on his back. Too thin to slide down on his side. Slide down and his nose stuck on the ceiling of the mine. 'That's a little too thin.'

wet conditions--"Mines were wet, awful wet."

clothes would freeze on them before they got home, the mines were so wet, in the wintertime.

no wash-houses in these small mines.

race-horses. 32 miles from Springhill to R.Hebert.

there was another fellow who commuted from Springhill. he did the same thing, too.

his father did this during the first five or six years of Thornton's life.

raised his family on King Street.

company house there.

Company houses: 'When the company first built them, they were nice houses, but the company never looked after them.' kept deteriorating over the years. awful cold houses.

after he got married, he went into one. rent was awful cheap. \$4 a month about 1936, 1937.

had jacked the rent up, from \$4 to \$9.16 a month.

pretty cheap rent for these houses.

five stoves in one end of the house. it was some cold.

all those company houses were cold.

had company carpenters go around, painting the houses.

Rhodes-Curry built the houses under contract. co. sold the old houses to people that lived in them.

flat-roofed houses.

his father dug coal.

Thornton got to Grade Eight. There was eight of us in the family and I was the oldest. 'I thought myself I'd better get out and try and help them because m...'

Father did not want him to go into mining.

Thornton used to drive delivery team for local store in Springhill. \$6 a week he was getting.

first started 1930 in the mines.

He lied about his age. told the manager he was 18 when he was only 17.

man's wages were \$3.10, three days a week.

slacking off for summer.

--second paycheck he got deducted for "overpay"--\$1.05.

boy's wages were \$2.80. three shifts deducted down to \$2.80.

he was glad they found out because it straightened out the record.

town clerk got after him to pay poll taxes--he said he wasn't old enough. clerk said, "But you're drawing men's wages." No, I'm not. He wouldn't take his word for it--made him send to Halifax to get a birth certificate.

started out in Nos.6-7. 6-7 right close together. hired on in No.6

drove a tunnel through from No.6 to No.7--dug a tunnel through to No.7 seam.

you was hired by the mine manager--mine manager there had two mines, 6 and 7.

Alec Mackenzie was underground man ager at that mine.

second day in the mine, two men were killed. riding down in the rake--saw bodies coming up.

When he got home, his mother said, "Now, don't you think you'd better give up the mines?"

'People look at coal mining and say, things are just a little hole in the ground, but...it's surprising the things that go ~~in~~ and around the mines....'

in wintertime mines would work 6 days, in summer time could drop as low as 1 day a week in suumertime.

0-started out doing company work. when they found out he wasn't a man they kept him at "man's work" but cut his wages!

supposed to be in mines for a year before you got your certificate. in mine ten months--looking for a machine runner to cut the coal. I seen around the machine quite a bit while I was in the mines, so the manager got after me, to apply. kept hounding him--scared he'd get hurt without his miner's papers. stretching the law.

he went to get the mining papers for him. didn't have to pass an exam. there were two mining papers--first-class and second-class. Second-class allowed you go go digging coal, but you had to be with somebody else. Somebody with 1st class mining papers. You had to be in the mine an additional year before you got 1st class papers.

1st class papers required an oral examination.

then he got his overman's papers after that--15 years.

deputy overman or slope overman.

used to go help the janitor out after school, at the old Junction Rd. School.

20c a week for sweeping out the school--12 or 14 years old or so.

8 children in his father's family.

Doesn't think it was an unhappy childhood--baseball, softball, etc.

big strike was another thing that took his father out to R. Hebert.

1925-6 strike.

1925: 'I used to go with those--they used to lend cans, three-pound lard cans and five-pound lard cans, we used to go up to the Salvation Army, they used to have warm soup kitchens up there. And I remember...times were damn hard, and we used to go up there--two days a week or three days a week, we were getting soup up there, pea soup or something like that.'

'I say the Salvation Army done wonderful in this town.' They used to go out to the country to pick up relief food.

--father was indulgent but his mother was sharp. she was of Russian stock.

'I belonged to the AMW for awhile....' five or six months after he got married to his wife. m. 1934 or 1936 (must be at least 1934).

when they first got married, they used to live in the front room of the company house occupied by her mother. moved over behind the Elgin Street school.

the AMW came in. 'They did have quite a few members.' They had riots going on. 'The AMW had a lodge up overhead Bud Ritchie's hall, upstairs, some nights the UMW would come down and they'd be into a fight over there. Boy, the fellows come those long steps--the steps, about 40-45 steps on them, they'd come rolling down and get outside.'

--hard battles.

--Bob Stewart. Jim Columbine (left for England).

'Reason why I wanted to get out of the UMW was that the UMW was an affiliate of an American union and the AMW would be more of a Canadian union.'

Q. 'You don't think the AMW was a socialist outfit? A. Well, yes, it was, yeah. Yes it was, it was socialist. Although they tried to keep it under cover.'

Bob Stewart was from Cape Breton, he was railroaded out. Pettigrew kept suing the UMW for wages...

They sued the UMW for their back wages--and won.

'Boy, boy, boy, he was a contrary man. Holy smokes!'

Columbines all went back to England again.

Mary Percy Lowther--Mrs. Percy Lowther's daughter of Jim Columbine. now lives in Windsor.

Mrs. Charlotte lives with Mrs. Percy Lowther. two girls went back to England with their parents.

--important lead back to AMW.

Tim Buck in prison at Dorchester here. held meeting at the corner--up the corner there. quite a crowd of followers here--went to listen to them.

shots fired at Tim Buck. this meeting in Springhill was 1931 or 1932.

'People always say, 'Are you a communist' and I always say, 'Yeah, I'm a communist.' I'm not a capitalist because I got no money. A communist is...just a common man.

were pushed up against the wall, with no work...

how strong AMW and UMW? altogether about 1500-1600 men. 'I think there would be two or three hundred members.'

charges UMW monkeyed with the ballot papers, but he admits the evidence is pretty thin.

old man couldn't write his own name.

[ this guy is an overman but he still has a very strong labour consciousness. ]

made big mistake of going on 11 o'clock shift--can't sleep in the daytime.

11 a shift, in 1952. just towards the end.