Noranda Miners' Strike: 22 November 1946 – 09 February 1947 = 80 Days

Players

Company: Noranda Mines Limited
President: James Y. Murdoch
Vice President and General Manager: Harry L. Roscoe
Assistant General Manager: Richard Valentine Porritt

Union: International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (C.I.O.)
Union President: James Russell
Union Secretary-Treasurer: George Harris
Union International Representative Spokesman: Joe Rankin, in Sudbury
Union International Representative Spokesman: Léo Behie, in Timmins/Kirkland Lake
District Co-Ordinator: Thomas F. McGuire
International Organizer: Oliver Bretton
Noranda Union Local 688 President: Albert Lafrance (son of Philadelphe and Léa Chrétien)
Noranda Union Local 688 Bargaining Committee: Victor Peterson, Charlie Long and Rosaire Lafrance (Pinel dit Lafrance, no relation to Albert (Daragon dit) Lafrance)
Noranda Union Local 688 Secretary: Mrs. Jean Porier
Sudbury Union Representative: Harvey Landon Ladd
International Board Representative of District No. 8 and Member of the Ontario Legislature for Sudbury: Robert H. Carlin
President of Local 520, United Electrical Workers Union (C.I.O.): James D. Felker,
Representative of the United Steelworkers of America and President of the Toronto Labour Council: Murray Cotterill

Government Representatives
Premier of Quebec: Maurice Duplessis
Finance Minister: James Lorimer Ilsley
Mines and Resources Minister: James Allison Glen
President of the Western Quebec Mine Managers Association: Jack P. Millenbach
Canadian Minister of Labour: Humphrey Mitchell
Quebec Minister of Labour: Antonio Barrette
President of the Canadian Congress of Labour: Aaron Roland Mosher
Canadian Congress of Labour secretary-treasurer: Pat Conroy
Canadian Congress of Labour Representative for Montreal: Louis Roy
Labour-Progressive Member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario: Joseph B. Salsberg
Federal Deputy Labour Minister: Arthur MacNamara
Acting Chief of the Conciliation Service: John S. McCullagh
Senior Conciliation Officer for the Province of Quebec: Raoul Trépanier of Montreal
Union des Electeurs' Member of Parliament for Pontiac, Quebec: Réal Caouette
Chief Industrial Relations Officer: M. M. MacLean
Local Quebec Legislature: David Côté

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East Coast
National Employment Service, East Coast: George Charron
Manager of the National Employment Service in Cape Breton: T. L. Connolly

Police
Quebec Provincial Police: Captain Norbert Labbé
Quebec Provincial Police: Lieutenant Jacques Beaudoin
Quebec Provincial Police: Lieutenant Vianney Seguin
Chief of the Noranda Police Department: Joseph Hector Leblanc

Rouyn
Rouyn Mayor: Paul Cuddihy
Manager of the Rouyn National Employment Service Office: G. J. Primeau

Miscellaneous
Crown Attorney: Sam A. Caldbick
Timmins Mayor: J. Emile Brunette

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Glossary

Union security refers to agreements between a labour union and an employer that require employees to support the union, typically by joining it or paying fees, as a condition of employment. These agreements aim to ensure that all workers contribute to the costs of collective bargaining and prevent "free riding" by non-union members.

A **voluntary, revocable checkoff** in unions allows employees to authorize their employer to deduct union dues from their paychecks, but they can revoke this authorization within a specified timeframe, typically outlined in the authorization agreement. The revocation process and timing can vary based on the union's policies and applicable laws.

The **Rand Formula** is a legal principle that requires all workers in a unionized workplace to pay union dues, regardless of their membership status, while a **closed shop** requires all employees to be union members as a condition of employment. The Rand Formula serves as a compromise, allowing non-members to benefit from union negotiations without mandatory membership.

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The first announcement of a possible strike by Local 688, International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (C.I.O.) was on 11 November 1946.[1] The union was demanding a pay increase of 16-cents-an-hour retroactive to 08 February, when the previous agreement expired.[2] The company had offered an increase of 10-cents-an-hour, not retroactive.[3] The union also wanted a five cents differential pay for shift workers.[4] Secondary demands were being made by the union[5], including a voluntary union checkoff plan that was rejected by the company.[6] The union and the company were deadlocked.[7]

Ballots for a strike vote were cast at the Noranda Mines on 19 November.[8] Union officials claimed almost 100 percent worker membership, and union organizers began to sign up men for the picket lines.[9] The question put to the miners was: *"Are you prepared to strike to enforce your demands from Noranda Mines Limited?"*[10]

The union employees at Noranda Mines Limited voted in favour of a strike. A total of 522 of Noranda Mine's 1,147 employees voted[11], of these, 496 were yes, 21 were no and 5 ballots were spoiled.[12] Harry L. Roscoe, vice president and general manager of Noranda Mines, said the 10-cent offer from the company was the limit it would go.[13] No date for a walkout was set.[14]

Two membership meetings took place on the same night, after the vote,[15] one at 7 o'clock and one at midnight, to allow all shift workers an opportunity to voice their opinions.[16] The purpose of the meetings was to determine if the union should ask the mine's management to resume contract negotiations or proceed with the strike vote by its members.[17] As a result of the meetings, the union advised Noranda Mines Limited that the 7 a.m. shift Friday, 22 November 1946, would not report for work.[18] The district co-ordinator, Thomas F. McGuire, stated in a subsequent press release that further shifts would also be absent.[19] To prevent damage to the mine's equipment, the union gave the company advance notice before the Friday deadline.[20] On the night of the vote, Mr. McGuire was on a two-day trip to Kirkland Lake, Ontario, where he lived.[21]

Amid rumours that in the event of a strike, the mines would close for a six-month period, the company president, James Y. Murdoch, affirmed the company would make every effort to keep operations going and would offer work to all who wanted to work, with proper protection.[22] Mr. Murdoch expressed that the voters represented only 55 percent of those eligible to belong to the bargaining unit, a number he placed at almost 1,000, and only 52 percent of the eligibles voted in favour of strike action.[23] He said employees at Noranda Mines Limited, including white-collar workers and foremen, totalled about 1,175.[24] He further stated that the bargaining unit does not cover all company personnel, with 204 staff and foremen excluded yet profoundly impacted by the strike's possibility.[25] The head office for Noranda Mines was in Toronto.[26]

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The union's press release claimed 597 members among the 1,147 employees[27] and reported only about 600 were eligible to vote.[28] As preparations for picket lines were finalized, the union's negotiating committee informed management of their availability for meetings before or after 7 a.m. Friday, to negotiate a settlement.[29] The press release confirmed that Noranda Mines Limited, which managed the water supply pumping station for the twin towns, was informed by the union that steps would be taken to maintain water service in Noranda and Rouyn.[30]

Mr. Murdoch predicted a showdown. The Province of Quebec was asked to provide police protection so the mines could stay open, as the union vote demonstrated a substantial number of men wished to work.[31] The provincial police reinforcements from Montreal were stationed in the company's employment office outside the fence perimeter and were housed in a bunkhouse that the company had recently finished.[32] Mr. Murdoch pointed to *"communist infiltration"* and stated the voter turnout was only 55 percent of eligible voters.[33] Mr. Murdoch further predicted, *"The intention of the company to keep the mines open and the avowed strike by the workers may make for one of the most troublesome strikes Canada has seen lately. It is highly reminiscent of the Stelco strike in Hamilton recently ended."*[34]

The 18,000 people living in the prosperous twin towns of Noranda and Rouyn experienced rising tension as the strike's zero hour drew near.[35] Anticipating a big Christmas sales season, merchants who had filled their shops hastily cancelled existing orders.[36]

Picket lines were formed nine hours before 7 a.m. Friday morning, 22 November 1946, and blocked the entrance to the huge gold and copper Noranda Mines.[37] The latest negotiations by the company offered the 10-cent wage raise to be implemented on 01 November 1946, but the checkoff for union dues was again rejected.[38]

Albert Lafrance, president of the union Local, said that, *"We are prepared for a long, long strike if need be."*[39] *"We have money in the treasury and besides, we have the support of the people of the twin towns (Noranda and Rouyn)"* and *"a truck had been going the rounds all day picking up donations from various merchants."*[40] According to Mr. Lafrance, the management and union negotiating committee last met last Thursday night, and he didn't know of any other meetings planned.[41]

In a released statement, Joe Rankin, the union's spokesman, voiced his belief in a positive strike outcome, claiming *"we're good for six months or longer if necessary and we're going to win this strike for union security and higher wages."*[42]

On the evening of Sunday, 24 November, a gentle, northern breeze was showering oversized snowflakes on the pickets.[43] Joe Rankin, union spokesman, made his third patrol by night

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since the strike began.[44] Speaking to a reporter from the Toronto Star, Mr. Rankin stated, *"This is a picket line at the gates of a company which pays the lowest wages of any metal mine in the Dominion of Canada."*[45] The picket captains had set up about six tents, each with a stovepipe protruding from its roof, and Mr. Rankin paused at one of them.[46] He glanced at the two refinery stacks, both over 400 feet high and continued, *"A couple of days ago, I heard that the men were so satisfied with conditions here that they would never let the plant close down. But I can't see a wisp of smoke from either stack, can you?"*[47]

Robert H. Carlin, M.P.P. from the Nickel Belt area who had just arrived by train, declared, *"You should see the smoke in the smelter at Copper Cliff."*[48]

Mr. Rankin and Mr. Carlin were both representatives of the union.[49] The two men's words summarized the dispute of the Noranda strike, that left more than a thousand men without work.[50] The Noranda strikers could not comprehend why they should earn 16 cents less per hour for performing the same duties as their counterparts in Sudbury's mining and smelting operations.[51]

Despite Noranda's ability to increase copper prices, their best offer still fell 6-cents-per-hour short of the Sudbury scale for the average miner.[52]

Mr. Rankin conceded that his views might appear prejudiced, as he strongly supported miners' rights to establish their chosen unions, engage in collective bargaining, and participate in strikes when they felt they were not being treated fairly.[53] *"We have a great many captains of industry in Canada," said Mr. Rankin, "and one of them happens to be a Toronto lawyer. The company of which he is president has been so considerate of the men who work for his shareholders it has offered voluntarily and out of the magnanimity of its heart only one pay increase to its employees. That was for the grand sum of two cents an hour, and the only reason it lavished two cents an hour more upon its employees was that it wished to put into effect a hospital plan. It was drawn to Mr. Murdoch's attention that the men could not support that plan unless he gave them a pittance more in their pay. And so, the company sanctioned the increase. It was the only increase that it has sanctioned voluntarily since it began 19 years ago."*[54]

Mr. Carlin admitted that there had been a wage boost *"way back"* when the price of gold went up suddenly about $10 an ounce, and so the gold producers gave their men a break.[55] He continued, *"No, you really couldn't call that a voluntary wage boost on Noranda's part. It fell in line with the parade just to keep a good face. Perhaps it might do so now. At least it might go as far as to follow the Sudbury pattern."*[56]

As Mr. Carlin entered a picket captain's tent, he brushed the snow off his head and fumbled through a vest pocket, producing a schedule of the wage rates, comparing Noranda Mines

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Limited with the International Nickel Company in Sudbury.[57] *"We have a union in Sudbury and Inco respects our contract. The average miner in Sudbury gets 91 cents an hour, but the Noranda man must be satisfied with 75. A motorman in Sudbury is paid 95 cents and here he gets 69. The mechanic here must do with 68 cents. In Sudbury he draws $1.10. Then the Sudbury miner receives a differential of three cents an hour more if he starts on the afternoon shift and five cents an hour more for doing the graveyard. There is no differential here."*[58]

By this time, Albert Lafrance, president of union Local 688, had nudged his way into the tent and joined in the discussion.[59] *"The reason why some men go on strike a month before Christmas, is that they're ready to give up a bit of turkey to gain a point that they haven't been allowed to get for the past 20 Christmases. If the Government hadn't ordered a 10-cent increase in our pay during the war to take care of the higher cost of living, we would still be getting about 62 cents an hour. Remember, for 19 years the company only gave us two cents voluntarily. Of course, this company now offers to pay us 10 cents more, but that was not voluntary, they had a strike on their hands when they made that one. So, we say: 'After 20 years we think we should have 16 cents an hour more and some union security.' Then the company comes right out and tells us: 'Ten cents is all you get and never as long as the sun shines will we permit the union to have as much as a voluntary revocable checkoff.'"*



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The company broadcast on the Noranda radio that paychecks for the first half of November (1st-15th) would be available on the afternoon of 25 November, the fourth day of the strike.[60] The men were allowed to cross the picket lines to accomplish this.[61] Further meetings between the company officials and union representatives were not apparent.[62] Mines in the area formerly sending ore to Noranda Custom Smelter and Concentrators established alternative arrangements at a loss to the company.[63]

Toronto's company president, James Y. Murdoch, confirmed that mining operations would proceed[64] but the union's spokesman asserted that there was no ongoing production,[65] even though the mine's primary 400-foot smokestack[66] let out a faint trail of smoke.[67] The fires in the boilers were kept burning by shift bosses and other maintenance workers.[68] To avert serious consequences from the smelter fires going out, roughly 100 men were granted passage through the picket line.[69] Provincial police, together with the union officials, developed a list of authorized personnel who could enter the plant and issued the necessary passes for crossing picket lines,[70] which now comprised about 30 men.[71]

District Co-ordinator Thomas F. McGuire left for Kirkland Lake to negotiate a new contract with Upper Canada Mines Limited.[72] On the evening of 26 November, Harry L. Roscoe, vice-president and general manager of Noranda Mines Limited, left by train for the company's head office in Toronto.[73]



Photo credit: The Toronto Star, Wednesday, 11 November 1946, page 3

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Vice President and General Manager Harry L. Roscoe stated on 28 November that the company would meet with striking workers' representatives whenever they had *"something further they want to have discussed."*[74] As the strike's initial week wound down, Local 688 President Albert Lafrance commented, *"Everything is solid on the picket line."*[75] Outside the mine's main gate, a double picket line secured a 50-foot (15-metre) perimeter.[76] As the thermometer dropped to 12 degrees below zero Fahrenheit (-25°C), picketers were offered hot coffee, sandwiches, and doughnuts in nearby tents.[77]

President James Y. Murdoch stated in Toronto that all operations have ceased and the company's smelter was functioning at under half of its capacity.[78] He refuted the union's accusation that the company hired strike-breakers and refused to bargain.[79] Mr. Murdoch also said that the company opposed the union principal demands as unreasonable and disagreed with a reported union statement that the company might grant the 16-cent increase but would oppose the checkoff.[80] *"Neither I nor my board of directors believe in the principle of a checkoff of union dues. We are not opposed to unions but are opposed in all types of the checkoff, including the voluntary checkoff."*[81]

It was estimated by Mr. Murdoch that between 800 and 900 men, mainly underground workers, were on strike among the 1,175 employed mine and smelter workers.[82] He said, *"There are hundreds of men still inside the plant, but there is no mining going on. Any underground workers still in are working in the smelter."*[83] Commenting on the calm atmosphere at the Noranda strike, he remarked that *"the union is acting very decently."*[84]

The only shipment to leave the property was a small number of pyrite cars loaded before the strike took effect.[85] The union consented to the removal because pyrite is flammable.[86] Unable to exit the mine property, the car containing copper was parked on a siding.[87] During the day, Local 688 got a cheque for $300 from the British Columbia Local of the union and another load of groceries was received from the merchants of the twin towns of Noranda and Rouyn.[88]

Joseph B. Salsberg, Labour Progressive member of the legislature, spoke at a rally in Kirkland Lake that was sponsored by Local 240 of the same union as the strikers in Noranda. Mr. Salsberg forecasted that the strike at Noranda Mines Limited would become *"an opening wedge for miners everywhere"*.[89] A 16-cent hourly wage increase for the striking Noranda miners would make it straightforward for gold mine workers elsewhere to achieve the same outcome.[90]

Mediation services for the strike were offered by the Federal Labour Department on 01 December.[91] It was suggested by the department to the Quebec Minister of Labour, Antonio Barrette, that a conference be held in Ottawa with the parties in dispute.[92] Mr. Barrette

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declined to meet the Federal Minister of Labour, *"as the strike is entirely in the realm of the Federal legislation and all I could do would be to offer suggestions which would have no bearing on the case. When a group of consumers cease purchasing, it is in most cases because of unemployment resulting from strikes. And when a dispute occurs between labour and management in a basic industry, this dispute which has originated purely as a personal matter between the two, soon becomes an economic crisis the first sufferers of which are the storekeepers, because of their inability to either buy or sell."*[93] Almost 1,000 employees who live in the twin towns had lost their jobs because of the strike.[94]

Support for the Noranda strike came from other union locals. Local 200 of the United Automobile Workers (C.I.O.) at the Ford of Canada plant in Windsor, Ontario, donated $500 to the Noranda Mine strike fund at the beginning of December 1946.[95] During the British Columbia district convention in early December, William Longridge, Calgary's International Miners' Union representative for Alberta, asserted that labour would confront a significantly more aggressive and hostile challenge from management in the year ahead.[96] The convention unanimously endorsed the striking Noranda miners, both morally and financially, and approved a $500 donation to their strike fund.[97] According to a report from Noranda, 85 percent of the men are striking amid temperatures of 32 degrees below zero Fahrenheit (-36°C).[98]

Despite the sub-zero temperatures, picketers marched resolutely on the strike's eleventh day, 03 December.[99] A thin stream of smoke continued to emerge from the tall smelter chimney, wafting through the wintry atmosphere above the communities of Noranda and Rouyn.[100] The skeleton maintenance crew kept the smelter furnaces burning, but production remained halted.[101]

In a radio broadcast addressing the strike on the twelfth day, company vice president and general manager Mr. Roscoe indicated that increased operating costs could substantially shorten the lifespan of mining towns in northwest Quebec.[102] Mr. Roscoe stated that the 10-cents-an-hour wage increase and other concessions from the company would amount to an extra $450,000 cost to the company.[103] Gold mining accounted for over half of Noranda's revenue, but the price of gold was fixed and did not rise to match growing operational expenses.[104] Mr. Roscoe elaborated that mining company profits stemmed from varied ores, with some yielding minimal profits; therefore, if expenses increased, mining profits in northwest Quebec could vanish.[105] He described the company's offer to Local 688 International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (C.I.O.) as *"sound, fair and reasonable,"* noting it would increase the average employee's salary by $250 annually and would increase the average wage in the mine to 84-cents-an-hour, which he said was *"a pretty respectable figure in Canada"*.[106]

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At the invitation of Mr. Arthur MacNamara, the Federal Deputy Labour Minister, bargaining representatives of the company and the union finally met in Ottawa for the first time since the start of the thirteen-day-old strike, with hopes of an early settlement.[107] Representing the Government along with Mr. MacNamara was John S. McCullagh, Acting Chief of the Conciliation Service, and Raoul Trépanier of Montreal, Senior Conciliation Officer for the Province of Quebec.[108] The mine was represented at the conference by Richard Valentine Porritt, Assistant General Manager, (who in the early days of the strike, was pushed around by the strikers causing him to fall to the ground[109]) and the union by Thomas F. McGuire, District Co-ordinator of the union; Oliver Bretton, International Organizer.[110] Three men from the striking union Local 688 also attended: Vic Peterson, Charlie Long and Rosaire Lafrance (who was no relation to the union president, Albert Lafrance).[111]

Authorities predicted that a Federal Government mediator's intervention would stop the strike from continuing over Christmas.[112] No one could estimate how long the conference might last. It was stated that the talks were carried on in an amicable atmosphere, but no other information was shared outside the closed doors.[113] On Friday, 06 December, after two sittings, the conference was adjourned, and it was announced talks would be resumed the next day, on Saturday,[114] however, no settlement was reached.

At this point, the Federal Government of Canada tabled a plan to the Cabinet for the Dominion Treasury to fund the relocation of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia's unemployed men to areas in western and central Canada facing labour shortages.[115] Figures from Cape Breton showed there were about 30 men for every job on hand there, second in Canada only to New Glasgow, Nova Scotia.[116] The unemployed figure stood at 3,500 men, predominantly in Sydney, Glace Bay, and adjacent coal mining regions, however, no men mining coal would be taken under this plan.[117] Most unemployed men in Cape Breton were veterans of the Second Great War, estimated at between 2,000 and 2,200[118], who joined the military after high school and had never held jobs in private life.[119] Married men accounted for approximately half of the total unemployed population,[120] but it was unclear if married men with families would be included.[121]

The unemployed would be moved to the hard-rock mines in Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba and Yellowknife, NWT, and to lumbering and electrical power development industries in Ontario and Quebec.[122] Survey data indicated a need for 10,000 additional men in the lumber industry, 8,000 of whom were needed for winter work in the Ontario woods.[123] Mines in the north, dealing with gold and base metals, claimed they could boost production if labour was available.[124]

The initiative was exclusively for unemployed men; participation was voluntary and would not involve union workers from coal mines or steel plants.[125] It was common knowledge

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among potential employers that mining firms would provide living quarters for the men upon their arrival.[126]

The federal plan had been a closely guarded secret and took all provincial labour departments by surprise when announced on the evening of 06 December 1946, even in Nova Scotia![127] The two-week-old strike by the gold and copper miners in Noranda held up further action.[128] The Cabinet conveyed that they believed the Government would be perceived as a strike-breaker if they imported labour during an ongoing walkout.[129]

An eight-man delegation from Val d'Or, Quebec, conferred with Finance Minister James Lorimer Ilsley and the Mines and Resources Minister, James Allison Glen, to urge special tax treatment for Quebec gold mines and miners.[130] To fund the increase in wartime expenditure, Mr. Ilsley spearheaded a move that drastically reduced the minimum income for tax liability, thereby shifting income tax from a *"class tax"* affecting the wealthiest Canadians to a nationwide tax.[131]

The delegation stated that high taxation, the Canadian dollar matching the American dollar, and a labour deficit meant the Quebec mines could not increase wages without operating at a deficit.[132] The steel, newsprint, and motor car sectors were permitted to cover increased costs for materials and labour, but this was not the case for the gold mining sector.[133] Before the war, Canadian miners were among the highest earners, and now there was a 50 percent increase in the cost of living.[134] Because the price of gold was fixed, the mines could not raise wages.[135]

According to the delegation, the miner laboured harder than the lumberman but was afforded few tax advantages.[136] Higher taxes discouraged skilled workers from seeking employment in the mines.[137]

Lumbering was viewed as a seasonal job, so it received different tax treatment than mining.[138] *"A single man in the lumber industry receiving $30 a month and board, paid only $2.40 in income tax. A miner making the same amount without board had to pay $4.10 in income tax. A married man in the lumber industry who received $50 a month with board, paid $1.68 in tax. A miner in the same salary bracket and receiving no board, paid $6.35."*[139] The delegation stated that mine closures would lead to job losses, and would end colonization in the district.[140] In winter, the colonists mined, and in summer, they harvested produce that was easily sold.[141]

Negotiations between the company, Noranda Mines Limited, and the union continued in Toronto with the official representatives and a Government mediator sitting in. In addition, Mr. Pat Conroy, Secretary-Treasurer of the Canadian Congress of Labour, joined in the talks.[142] On the fifteenth day of the Noranda miners' strike, 09 December, it was reported

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they had nearly reached an agreement on wages, but the matter of union dues checkoff remained unresolved; the gap between the wages could be bridged, but the union dues checkoff could not.[143]

Following a pattern in the mining industry across Canada, a 10-cent-an-hour raise for hourly employees was offered by the Ontario gold mines in Kirkland Lake, Timmins, and mines in North-Western Quebec on Tuesday, 10 December.[144] This increase meant a miner's average yearly income would be around $2,500,[145] with some workers at $3,000[146], the highest level in history.[147]

Lamaque Mines in Northern Quebec was the first to announce the increase, then McIntyre Porcupine Mines near Timmins and Kirkland Lake District Mines at noon.[148] The possibility of Noranda Mines granting the increase to the striking miners was unclear.[149] A key reason for the rise was to draw more men into mining - higher production from mines can result in reduced overhead.[150]

The McIntyre Porcupine Mine announced a retroactive increase, effective 01 December 1946, which would impact 1,250 workers.[151] Timmins mine officials stated that the Porcupine camp had over 7,000 miners employed.[152] With federal wage controls removed, the hourly basic pay went up from 75 cents to 85 cents,[153] helping workers who struggled with rising living costs.[154] The miners were to receive the increase in their Christmas cheques.[155] A spokesman for the Kirkland Lake Mines said it was noted that there was an urgent need to synchronize mine wages with the increases granted by general industry, however, it was hopefully anticipated that the Government would do something for the mines to offset the serious effects of this increase upon the industry.[156]

Mine managers in Quebec were reluctant to discuss the 10-cents-an-hour raise.[157] Mr. Jack P. Millenbach, president of the Western Quebec Mine Managers Association, in Malartic, Quebec, expressed the view that individual mines should decide whether to approve or reject wage increases according to their own financial capabilities.[158] Mine executives in Western Quebec largely felt that without Government aid, mines would struggle to remain profitable after a wage increase.[159]

In Kirkland Lake, Thomas F. McGuire, the district co-ordinator of the union, criticized the announcement of the wage increase, stating it was *"contrary to the true spirit of collective bargaining."*[160] Mr. McGuire stated the 10-cent wage increase resulted from the Noranda strike, and the announcement was a dismissal aimed at undermining the union.[161]

Union Local 688 believed negotiations for an hourly 16-cent boost must continue after they had already rejected the 10-cent offer at the onset.[162] Mr. McGuire also noted that, excluding Kirkland Lake and Timmins' Hollinger mine, management did not inform most

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union bargaining committees about the impending 10-cent pay hike.[163]

Canadian authorities found themselves at a loss for solutions to support marginal gold mines, particularly those that couldn't achieve profitability at the prevailing gold price of $35 an ounce.[164] A mine that is not profitable will not benefit from tax relief.[165] More miners were needed, and the Labour Department had already tabled plans to relocate unemployed individuals from Cape Breton.[166] Numerous mines in Northern Ontario and Quebec were functioning at just over half their potential because of the labour shortage.[167] Overhead costs were nearly identical for full and half production, and reaching full capacity would ease the situation.[168] The Government wanted to keep the mines producing wealth from low-grade ores, otherwise the ore would become useless rock.[169]

Mr. McGuire said two membership meetings of Local 688 rejected the company offer of a 10-cent hourly wage increase retroactive to 01 November 1946, and a Christmas bonus of a 7-cent increase for the period between 16 May and 01 November.[170]

In Timmins, Hollinger Consolidated Gold Mines Ltd., discussed the proposed 10-cent hourly wage increase and their present contract with their Local 241 union officials of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (C.I.O.).[171] A Kirkland Lake mines spokesperson indicated that without federal compensation for wage increases, mines in Kirkland Lake and nearby Larder Lake faced a substantially reduced operational lifespan.[172] *"The mines will be forced to exhaust their present ore reserves in order to operate with any measure of economy. The gold mining industry is in a vastly different position than other industries. When we raise wages, we cannot raise the price of our product."*[173]

A conference was held in Timmins on the weekend of 22 December 1946.[174] Around 35,000 miners were represented by the twenty-four delegates who came from union locals in district No. 8.[175] *"The conference was unanimous in stating an all-out fight will be waged for a general increase of 16-cents-an-hour, shift differential, vacations with pay, statutory holidays with pay and union security."*[176]A potential rupture between the union and gold mining firms in Northern Ontario and North-Western Quebec was anticipated.[177]

The union press stated: *"The mine operators have shown their hand by inaugurating a 10-cent wage increase. This is not enough to take care of the highly increased cost of living as it affects the mine workers and their families. We are determined, therefore, that this all-out fight will be the immediate aim of all our workers and it will be continued without let-up until the workers have the wages, working conditions and security that is their just and democratic right."*[178] Robert H. Carlin, International Board Representative of District No. 8 said, *"We are going to win the Noranda strike."*[179] It was agreed at the conference that the Noranda miners would receive complete financial and moral backing until their strike

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concluded successfully, with Local 241, in Timmins, having contributed $1,000 to the strike fund.[180] The strike was now entering its second month.

District Co-ordinator Mr. McGuire emphasized that the question of union security was one of the main issues which led to deadlock in negotiations between the company and the union.[181]

At the Toronto meetings involving the company, union, and Federal Government, Mr. McCullagh, representing the Federal Labour Department, proposed a vote at the Noranda Mine. This vote would determine whether the bargaining unit members wanted some kind of union security.[182] In the event of a vote favouring union security, an arbitrator would then decide its specific structure.[183] The union committee offered to accept this proposal, and the company rejected it.[184] Mr. McCullagh also put forward the idea of a joint agreement for the Minister of Labour to send a commissioner to Noranda, to keep the strike negotiations going there.[185] Again, the union committee accepted the proposal, and the company rejected it. [186]

The first round of conferences held in Ottawa and Toronto over three weeks saw minimal advancement.[187] The Federal Labour Department would try again to settle the dispute between the striking Noranda miners and their company.[188]

On 11 December 1946, a membership meeting was held in Kirkland Lake.[189] It was decided that five of every ten cents in wage increases recently granted to gold mine employees in the Kirkland Lake district would be used to strengthen the strike fund for workers at the Noranda Mines.[190] James Russell, president of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (C.I.O.) stated that the membership unanimously supported this measure, believing the wage hike was intended to undermine organized labour efforts.[191] The meeting concluded with a decision to seek an additional six-cents-an-hour raise.[192] Noranda was being used by the union as a benchmark for mining industry wages.[193]

On Saturday, 14 December 1946, a scuffle broke out between picketers and provincial police during a brief incident as the company tried to move coal cars into the plant.[194] Two carloads from the Rouyn railway yards were hauled by the company's electric engine, which then tried to move the coal onto its own tracks[195] after being refused by a union crew to cross the picket line set up by the union.[196]

Also on 14 December, the sum of $600 was voluntarily donated by miners in the Kirkland Lake district for the Noranda strike fund. An organized canvass was also started, and an additional $300 was sent to Noranda.[197] Residents were asked by union officials to donate used toys to be distributed to strikers' children for Christmas.[198]

On 16 December 1946, in response to a request from the Canadian Congress of Labour for

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donations to support the children of striking Noranda miners, Windsor Labour Council members contributed to a Christmas cheer fund from their own pockets.[199] The letter reported that the number of children of the strikers was close to 1,500.[200] The council, as a whole, approved an extra $10 donation from the treasury on top of the collection.[201]

Léo Behie, organizer of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (C.I.O.) in Timmins, announced on 18 December 1946, that 2,200 union members at the Hollinger Gold Mine were donating their 10-cents-an-hour wage increase to the strike fund at Noranda.[202] This was in recognition of the strikers at Noranda fighting their battle for union security and a 16-cent increase.[203]

Those with pickets continued to shiver on duty outside the gates of Noranda Mines Limited.[204] A union spokesperson stated the strikers agreed to accept the company's Christmas offering of two chickens for their holiday meals.[205]

Mayor Paul Cuddihy of Rouyn offered his help to settle the month-old strike, announcing in a broadcast that he would strive to end it with the least possible delay.[206] He stated that with the town council's consent, he had communicated with Ottawa and could now *"form an opinion"* on the dispute's merits.[207]

A pay increase, initially proposed by Noranda Mines Limited to all employees but rejected by the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers, was to be given to non-striking staff with their semi-monthly pay envelopes on 24 December 1946, according to a company announcement the day before.[208] The company said that salaried staff and those hourly rated employees such as foremen who are outside the C.I.O.'s union bargaining unit would receive the increase which worked out to ten-cents-an-hour retroactive to 01 November 1946, with seven cents of it further retroactive to cover the period 16 May to 31 October 1946.[209]

With the strike in its fifth week, the picket lines were silent, and it appeared neither side agreed to Mayor Paul Cuddihy's offer to mediate,[210] however, in a letter to the Northern Daily News of Kirkland Lake, the Mayor stated that the union had accepted his offer.[211]

The Union des Electeurs' Member of Parliament for Pontiac, Quebec, Réal Caouette, stated on 30 December 1946, that his party supports the Noranda Mines Limited employees' request for a 16-cent hourly wage hike and pledged to do the utmost in their power to affect a settlement of the strike at that figure.[212] Mr. Caouette reported that following discussions with Noranda Mines Vice President Harry L. Roscoe, the mine general manager was holding firm on his 10-cent-an-hour proposal and would likely deny the union checkoff.[213] The Pontiac M.P. stated that his party also rejects the principle of the union checkoff.[214] A telegram from the Union des Electeurs party, authorized by the Pontiac M.P., was sent to

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Canadian Minister of Labour Mr. Humphrey Mitchell, proposing a vote for striking workers.[215] The telegram read in part to please arrange for an officer to proceed with the strike vote as it was urgent to determine if the majority supports checkoff.[216]

The strike at Canada's largest copper producer reached the end of its sixth week on 03 January 1947 with no sign of a settlement.[217] Wearing parkas, picketers remained outside the mine and smelter during the holidays, even as the temperature dropped to a severe -35 degrees Fahrenheit (-37°C) on New Year's Eve![218] Tents with wood stoves were erected close to the picket lines and the men were rotated regularly, allowing them breaks for hot food, drinks, and to warm up by the fire.[219] Union officials confirmed that some mines in Timmins, having been granted the 10-cent hourly wage boost, regularly contributed this sum to the Noranda strikers with every paycheck.[220] On the payday before Christmas, the Noranda company paid its non-union staff and maintenance workers the 10-cent raise they had offered the strikers.[221]

Numerous workers sought unemployment benefits since the beginning of the strike.[222] The Rouyn Unemployment Insurance Company stated on 06 January that striking Noranda Mines employees, and those affected by the strike, would not receive federal unemployment benefits if they stood to gain financially from the strike's outcome through increased wages.[223] Payment for contract coal workers at the mine was based on the tonnage of coal unloaded, not an hourly rate.[224] Because they would not profit from the strike and had no connection to it, their claim was approved.[225] According to G. J. Primeau, the office manager, the benefit decision mirrors those made in other locations with work stoppages and affects both unionized and non-unionized workers equally.[226] The mine had 1,000 men out of work, with 500 of them being non-union.[227]

On 09 January, Léo Behie, organizer for the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (C.I.O.) in Kirkland Lake, announced that union officials representing about 35,000 miners in Ontario, Quebec, and Manitoba would convene for an emergency meeting in Kirkland Lake.[228] The meeting's purpose remained undisclosed, though its connection to the Noranda Mines strike was presumed.[229]

A press statement on 16 January stated one issue dealt with at a meeting of 20 mine union officials from Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec locals was the question of relocating striking Noranda miners to other areas.[230] The meeting was under the chairmanship of Robert H. Carlin. member of the Ontario legislature for Sudbury and a board member of the International Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers Union (C.I.O.). G. J. Primeau, manager of the Rouyn's National Employment Service office, said no external mining sites had asked for Noranda employees.[231] Despite many strikers working part-time jobs locally, no union miners had been documented taking jobs at area mining companies.[232]

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A proposal was made by the Noranda and Rouyn Chambers of Commerce to the Dominion of Labour on 17 January, suggesting that striking Noranda miners vote federally in a secret ballot on whether to accept the company's offer of a 10-cent hourly wage hike.[233] In a full-page local newspaper ad, Noranda Mines Limited indicated favour for the vote and alleged that 80% of the striking workforce would accept the 10-cent deal.[234] While Union Local 688 remained officially silent on the proposed vote, one official confided that he viewed it as a *"waste of time"*.[235]

On the East Coast, George Charron of the National Employment Service announced on 18 January that 100 apprentice miners involved in the first labour shift from Nova Scotia to the Porcupine district were x-rayed for lung trouble and would arrive in Northern Ontario the following week.[236]

After the first meeting in December 1946 fell through, the Federal Department of Labour arranged a second three-way conference between the Government, the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers and Noranda Mines Limited, to propose a new formula for a possible settlement of the strike.[237] Officials in attendance at the meeting on 20 January included Deputy Labour Minister Arthur MacNamara and M. M. MacLean, Chief Industrial Relations Officer.[238] A proposal in December from the Noranda and Rouyn chambers of commerce was rejected by the Labour Department.

On 22 January, negotiations broke off after the second day because neither the employers' nor the employees' representatives could agree on any point.[239] During the two-day discussions, the company indicated it was prepared to go higher than its last wage increase offer, if the union would withdraw its demands for the checkoff.[240] The union made some concessions from its original demands but refused to withdraw its demand for union checkoff.[241]

The union proposed:
1) "It would allow the checkoff and other issues such as a night-shift premium to be determined by a vote of its Noranda membership, and
2) It would either negotiate these issues or leave them to an independent commissioner appointed by the Government, with the strikers going back to work in the meantime."[242]

The company rejected both proposals, wanting the checkoff (union security) demand to be withdrawn entirely.[243] A representative of the union said the miners were determined to stay on the picket line until the strike was won.[244]

Canadian Congress of Labour Secretary-Treasurer Pat Conroy announced the union security issue would be presented to the Government, requesting legislation to mandate its inclusion in all labour contracts.[245] The Congress urged Canadian labour as a whole to

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"rally to the support" of the Noranda strikers.[246] Labour officials later stated their hope to organize a new conference between the company and the union.[247]

A few hours after negotiations broke off on 22 January, the copper and gold mines of Canada rejoiced with the Dominion Government's announcement to increase the ceiling on the base metals copper, lead and zinc, although some mines would have preferred the ceiling to have been removed completely.[248] The new price for copper was still about three-and-a-half cents lower than the current world price, but it would still benefit the mines, especially the marginal mining properties.[249] Consequently, what was once considered waste rock would now be profitable ore, leading to considerable advantages for mines like Noranda that produce copper and gold.[250] It was noted that the price of copper was bound to rise due to mines withholding supply, which worsened the shortage.[251] Pat Conroy, Secretary-Treasurer of the Canadian Congress of Labour, declared the price increase, *"A very nice New Year's present from the Government to the employers, particularly Noranda."*[252] Shareholders in the Noranda copper mine would gain over $5,000,000 annually from the five-cent increase in copper's price.[253] However, the president of Noranda Mines Limited, Mr. Murdock, stated that the five-cent-a-pound increase in domestic copper would do little more than cover the 10-cent-an-hour wage boost already offered to the union.[254]

Half a dozen tear gas cartridges were fired by the provincial police about 7 a.m. on 23 January 1947, after an expanded picket line forcefully blocked maintenance and office staff from entering, or the night staff from leaving the strike-affected Noranda Mines Limited facility.[255] Eyewitnesses reported some shoving and scuffling.[256]

The union spokesman indicated that roughly 400 pickets showed up at the mine at 6 a.m., in contrast to the 30 to 40 who had been working since the strike began nine weeks ago.[257] It was believed that the escalation was a result of suspended talks aimed at resolving the strike.[258] The company's last proposal was a 10-cent hourly raise, with seven cents backdated to last May; however, they still rejected the checkoff of union dues.[259]

Joe Rankin of Sudbury, union spokesman, said the fighting commenced about 6:30 a.m. in 32 degrees below zero Fahrenheit (-36°C) weather when about 25 Quebec police tried to force a path through the picket line.[260] Grappling ensued as the men defended the picket line against police, with some officers falling on the slick snow.[261] Mr. Rankin said, *"The constables used their clubs pretty freely and also the tear gas cartridges, five of which were discharged from four guns. One of the picket captains warned the police about a group of children standing on the sidewalk about 10 yards from the picket line. He told the police of the danger of gassing the children, but they ignored him and fired. One of the pickets had his trouser leg torn off by an exploding pellet."*[262]

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One of the tear gas pellets, Mayor Cuddihy reported, went off in the air and landed back on the constables.[263] The Mayor said, *"I sent five police officers from Rouyn after provincial police said 1,000 men were on the picket lines. When my men turned up, they found only about 300. After the Noranda Police force withdrew to leave us to do the fighting, I recalled my men also."*[264]

Although no one was seriously injured in the confrontation, pickets reported that two of their members needed medical attention for head and nose injuries sustained from police batons.[265] The United Electrical Workers' Union sent a protest to Premier Maurice Duplessis regarding the Quebec Provincial Police's use of tear gas during the Noranda Mine strike.[266] The telegram, signed by George Harris, Secretary-Treasurer of the union, charged that the police action against the Noranda strikers *"turns the clock back to the Hungry Thirties… when union smashing by use of tear gas, police and violence was general among industrialists to suppress wages and prolong unemployment"*.[267] Police action was described as an attempt to break the strike and *"obviously designed to aid J. Y. Murdock increase profits through forcing miners to accept low wages"*.[268]

The Hamilton Labour Council (C.I.O.) backed the Noranda Mine strikers on 23 January, promising Leonard Kelly, a strike representative, financial aid from member unions.[269] The labour group also passed a motion that directs the executive to collaborate with the Trades and Labour Council executive to plan a large-scale demonstration protesting the elimination of price controls.[270]

In other news, it was announced by T. L. Connolly, manager of the National Employment Service in Cape Breton, that 200 workers would leave his district for employment in the Kirkland Lake, Timmins, Rouyn and Val d'Or areas.[271] However, the Montreal regional board denied the Rouyn National Employment Service's request to issue clearance orders for Nova Scotian miners seeking work in the Noranda and Rouyn mines.[272]

Arthur MacNamara, the Deputy Labour Minister, stated on 24 January that the appointment of a mediator for the nine-week-old strike was still being considered.[273] According to Mayor Paul Cuddihy, the municipal council of the North-Western Quebec mining town had expressed to Canadian Minister of Labour Mr. Humphrey Mitchell that the strike's resolution rested on the company providing the requested 16-cent hourly pay raise, retroactive to February 1946.[274]

Outside Noranda Mines Limited, mass picketing continued, and a union spokesperson stated their intention to stop anyone from crossing the picket lines and to deny food to the maintenance workers within the plant.[275] Oliver Bretton, a union official, stated that only two men, required to run the pumps supplying water to Noranda and Rouyn, would be

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permitted to cross the picket lines.[276] He argued that the 15 to 20 other men currently in the plant were not needed.[277] Entry was now denied to maintenance and office staff who had previously been admitted to the plant with union-valid passes and the company notified them not to report to work until advised.[278] Patrols of strikers, in groups of six, wandered about the streets of Noranda also telling company workers they met not to go to the gate because they would not be permitted entry.[279] Sixteen provincial police officers were on site to ensure safety.[280]

The men inside the plant received coffee and sandwiches from provincial police twice that day, once in the morning and once in the evening.[281] There was no trouble the first time, but in the evening three pickets clung to the truck taking the food and were dragged a short distance before they dropped off, uninjured.[282]

Company officials restated that only 500 of the 1,000 employees were union members, and approximately 250 of them were actively striking,[283] while about 400 others had found work elsewhere.[284] The company believed that following the prior day's tear gas event, the union was orchestrating a *"power play"* to maintain striker morale.[285]

New sympathizers from neighbouring mining towns boosted the union's numbers over the past two days.[286] Three busloads arrived from Val d'Or, Malartic, and Cadillac, in Quebec, and Kirkland Lake, Sudbury and Timmins in Ontario.[287] Union official Oliver Bretton stated that approximately 400 reinforcements were anticipated, which could double the number of men on the picket line.[288] Their purpose in Noranda was twofold: to act as sympathizers and to be prepared for any potential reinforcements for the provincial police or unforeseen incidents.[289]

A commissioner, most likely a Quebec superior court judge, was expected to be appointed under the Industrial Disputes Inquiries Act to look into the gold-copper strike at Noranda, according to a report on Friday, 24 January.[290] That evening, an additional 50 provincial police officers arrived in Noranda.[291] The following day, Captain Norbert Labbé arrived from Montreal to resume command of the provincial police attachment, relieving Lieut. Vianney Seguin.[292]

Robert H. Carlin, Director of District 8 of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (C.I.O.) issued a statement on Saturday, 25 January, stating the strike would conclude only when the company decided *"to sit down at the round-table of collective bargaining with their employees, and in good faith, negotiate the issues in dispute - wages, shift premiums and union security."*[293] He argued that the strike wouldn't end by *"starving the workers into submission, tear gas, or the use of force."*[294] Mr. Harry L. Roscoe, the company's vice president and general manager, stated that the company had been in talks

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for a new agreement for the past 11 months, demonstrating their readiness to negotiate.[295]

According to Mr. Carlin, who was also the Ontario legislator for Sudbury and a C.C.F. member (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation), the district's miners and smeltermen would be called upon to strike, if necessary, in support of the Noranda walkout that had already lasted for three months.[296] District No. 8, with 20,000 members, included the majority of Quebec, Northern Ontario, and Manitoba's gold and base metal mines. However, Mr. Carlin was unavailable for comment on his statement's use of the term "district".[297] It was unclear if he was referring to the entire union district or only the district bordering on the northwest Quebec mining centre.[298] Mr. Carlin exclaimed, *"In the strike of 1934, the Noranda workers stood alone, just as the Kirkland Lake miners did in 1942. There will be no repetition of the 1934 strike when Noranda, with the aid and support of police, broke up the strike; nor shall there be another 1942 when the Kirkland Lake miners after three months on strike were forced to return-to-work without any of their demands met."*[299]

Also on 25 January, the Premier of Quebec, Maurice Duplessis, proclaimed that employers and employees must be treated with the same fairness, and the Quebec Government would not permit one class to dominate the other.[300] He reiterated, *"As for the so-called checkoff system, the deduction by employers of the union fees from wages, it is anti-democratic and contrary to freedom as understood in the Province of Quebec, that no company or employer should be forced to do what is the work of the union itself."* The Premier disagreed with the Noranda strikers' actions of blocking non-strikers from the mines, stating it was unacceptable.[301] He stated, *"Such a policy would be conducive to anarchy, a situation which will never be tolerated in Quebec."*[302]

The five gates of the strikebound property saw a trudging picket line endure a driving rain all Sunday, 26 January.[303] The union leaders confirmed their commitment to prevent anyone from accessing the extensive copper and gold mine after negotiations collapsed in Ottawa the week before.[304] No guidance was given by the company to its office employees about when they should resume work.[305]

It was understood that around 27 men, who entered the plant on Wednesday, 22 January, were trapped by the picket line and still inside the plant, performing watchman duties, keeping the smelter fire lit, and operating the pumps that provided water to the 20,000 residents of the connected towns of Noranda and Rouyn.[306] One of the rumours which failed to materialize was that pickets intended to force these maintenance workers out of the plant, bodily if necessary.[307]

It was suspected that food parcels were smuggled in at night, even though no food was brought in the *"front way"*.[308] A company representative stated the men were surviving on

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"manna from heaven", but a union spokesman provided a more striking account of their existence.[309] He asserted that he witnessed a toboggan being pulled across the frozen surface of Lake Tremoy at night.[310] Food parcels were unloaded from the toboggan, then thrown over a wire fence to a waiting truck inside the mine's property.[311] He added that a 17-year-old[312] picket on patrol duty on the frozen lake had been seized by four men about 9 o'clock[313], and held for two hours[314] at a Noranda boarding house.[315] The lake borders a good part of the three-mile fence which surrounds the mine property.[316] The union turned the case over to counsel to decide how and when charges would be laid.[317]

Tensions rose all around with the threat of a general strike of all miners.[318] The company and the union were reaching a showdown stage.[319] The steel-helmeted provincial police were equipped with tear gas, respirators, and long nightsticks.[320] Quebec Provincial Police were planning a full-scale operation to break the picket line and escort maintenance workers into the mine, which was anticipated to trigger a widespread sympathy strike that could halt operations at all Northern area mines.[321]

Many of the roughly 150 miners who staged a one-day sympathy walkout at the nearby Quemont Mine then proceeded to Noranda to spend the day on the picket line.[322] This was reported by union officials as the first of a series of such one-day walkouts in surrounding mines designed to provide extra pickets.[323] Miners journeyed to Noranda from as far as Sudbury, 250 miles (402 kilometres) distance, to strengthen the picket lines.[324]

At a meeting on Sunday, 26 January, the International Woodworkers of America, Local 1-406, located in Cranbrook, British Columbia, union members were in sympathy with the striking Noranda miners, and said they would support the strike *"with a day's wages if necessary"*.[325]

On Monday, 27 January, the Labour Department announced that Mr. Justice Oscar L. Boulanger of the Quebec Superior Court was appointed an Industrial Disputes Inquiry Commissioner to deal with the dispute between the Noranda Mines company and its employees, members of the Union.[326] The latest development in the 10-week-old strike was a petition circulated by the union requesting Government seizure and operation of the mine.[327] According to a union spokesperson, several thousand signatures were gathered in Noranda and Rouyn.[328]

Representatives from the union and the company met individually with provincial police officers on Monday, 27 January.[329] Their goal was to resolve disagreements regarding whether office and maintenance employees would be allowed to cross the picket line.[330]

The provincial police detachment, numbering 75-80 men, was commanded by Captain Norbert Labbé.[331] The Captain aimed to re-establish the policy of allowing office workers

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onto the mine property.[332] More than 1,000 people, women and children included, formed crowds along the streets facing the plant.[333] Loudspeakers blared out music and union announcements.[334]

There were conflicting reports on the results of the day's four meetings.[335] Joe Rankin, the union's International Representative, informed the crowd at the mine gate that an agreement was made allowing seven maintenance workers into the plant per shift, while office staff would still be barred.[336] Mine officials claimed that number would be useless.[337] Another report claimed that the union would allow 24 maintenance men to cross the picket line.[338] Mr. Roscoe, the vice president and general manager of Noranda Mines, dismissed this version.[339] He stated that the company's stance was to uphold the agreement made when the strike began on Friday, 22 November.[340] The provincial police captain, Norbert Labbé, stated that the union's demand for the selected maintenance workers to be foremen was denied by the police.[341] Police would arrange for needed workers to enter the plant, regardless of union threats.[342] Disappointment and dissatisfaction were voiced by Captain Norbert Labbé regarding the parties' responses to his attempts to resolve the most pressing issues.[343] The Captain stated that in the future, he would focus solely on police duties.[344] The captain reportedly felt that he was double-crossed by the company and the union representatives.[345]

Thomas F. McGuire, District Co-ordinator of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (C.I.O.) told the Canadian Press by telephone from Kirkland Lake that the mine owners had *"double-crossed the union"*.[346] Mr. McGuire said an agreement had been reached between the mine and union officials to allow 21 men and the mine manager entry to the property daily to do maintenance work.[347] In a later radio broadcast, he stated that company officials denied any agreement had been reached.[348]

On the evening of Monday, 27 January, two union meetings were held so that the men on the picket line could attend.[349] The strikers were addressed in both English and French.[350] The strike's central point became the union's push for a voluntary revocable checkoff system.[351]

Harvey L. Ladd, representing the union in Sudbury, accused the Noranda company, with the support of a *"cowardly Government"*, of trying to suppress wages in Quebec.[352] The company, he claimed, largely agreed to Noranda's demands during talks with an Ontario affiliate.[353] Mr. Ladd expressed it was a Government conciliation board which recommended the voluntary checkoff.[354] He stated, *"The president of Noranda, J. Y. Murdoch, signed on the dotted line to give one of his companies the checkoff in Southern Ontario. It was the same checkoff which he now states he will never give the miners of Northern Ontario."*[355] In Mr. Ladd's view, the Noranda struggle held a significance beyond a

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mere mining strike, suggesting its outcome would set a precedent for wage equality across Ontario and Quebec, or lead to discrimination against workers in one of the provinces.[356] There was a continuous hint at the meetings that a general strike might occur.[357]

According to Louis Roy, Montreal's representative for the Canadian Congress of Labour, the inherent dangers of underground mining limit a miner's career to 8-12 years[358], justifying their right to build up their life's savings during that time.[359] Mr. Roy asserts, *"The company does not say it cannot afford to pay. It is reeking with money."*[360]


PROVINCIALS GUARD GATEHOUSE

Photo credit: The Expositor Brantford, Wednesday, 29 January 1947, page 24.

WITH STRIKE FEVER mounting since Thursday, Provincial Police can be seen at the Noranda company gatehouse, on guard in case of disorders.

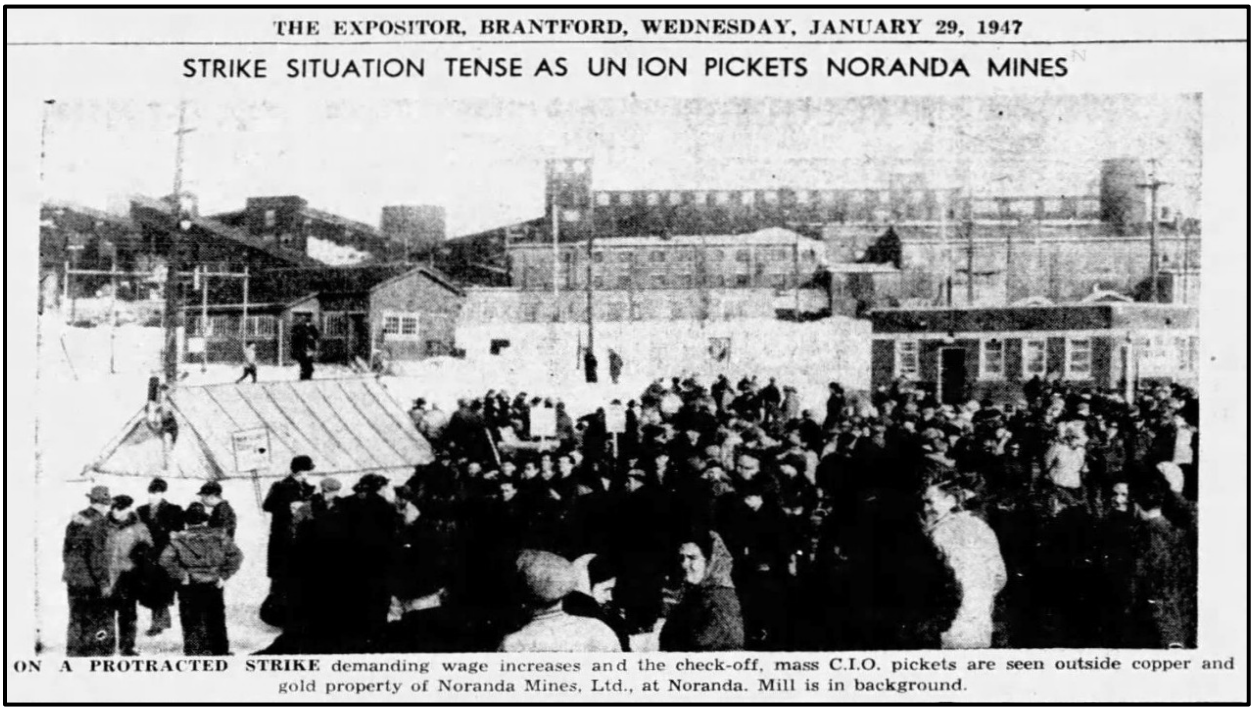
The strike was now in its third month.[361] Mayor Paul Cuddihy sent a telegram to the Federal Labour Department, stating his belief that strikebound Noranda Mines Limited effectively controls the Noranda Police Department.[362] He claimed Noranda Police, directing traffic near the Noranda Mines site, received orders from the company.[363] A statement released on Tuesday, 28 January by Chief Joseph Hector Leblanc of the Noranda Police Department argued he had *"never taken an order from Noranda Mines Limited. I take my orders only from the Noranda Town Council"*.[364] The Provincial Police stated that they would enforce the Riot Act and arrest out-of-town picketers if a resolution wasn't found.[365]

The conferences temporarily reduced the tension in the twin towns.[366] The Noranda Mine's gates were guarded by a significantly smaller number of picketers on Tuesday morning, 28 January.[367] Only about 50 pickets were on duty instead of 500 men.[368] The majority of the union organizers who had travelled from Sudbury, Montreal, and other distant locations had already left.[369] A section of the Senator Rouyn Mine participated in the morning picket line before resuming work at noon.[370] It looked like the threat of a general strike in the Porcupine camps had faded for the time being.[371] Police reduced the number of men in the gatehouse where tear

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gas and other equipment were stored, and a few pickets marched back and forth to the tune of recorded music from a soundtrack.[372]

On the evening of Tuesday, 28 January, James D. Felker, president of Local 520, United Electrical Workers' Union, (C.I.O.) announced that a telegram had been sent to Premier Maurice Duplessis of Quebec, *"As the elected representative of the people of Quebec your version of law and order seems to be interpreted only in the interests of big business. Your provocative attitude in the Noranda strike shows the world that fascism has roots in Canada. Quit trying to browbeat the miners. Your influence could be far better used to help miners win justice from profiteering mine owners"*.[373]



THE EXPOSITOR, BRANTFORD, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 1947

STRIKE SITUATION TENSE AS UN ION PICKETS NORANDA MINES

ON A PROTRACTED STRIKE demanding wage increases and the check-off, mass C.I.O. pickets are seen outside copper and gold property of Noranda Mines, Ltd., at Noranda. Mill is in background.

On Wednesday, 29 January, Joe Rankin, International Representative of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (C.I.O.) telephoned district co-ordinator, Thomas F. McGuire in Kirkland Lake to initiate a sympathy walkout of 22,000 miners in Northern Ontario and Quebec.[374]

Mr. Justice Oscar Boulanger, of the Superior Court in Quebec City and appointed by the Dominion Government, wired the union and the company proposing that the men return-to-work pending the inquiry, provided the company puts into effort its recent offer of a 10-cent wage boost.[375] Commissioner Boulanger also proposed Tuesday, 04 February as the date for the presentation of the respective cases to him.[376] The union, in a strongly worded response, urged him to accelerate his efforts and to listen to the union's presentation

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sooner.[377] They rejected his request to resume work because the company had *"violated an agreement on the number of maintenance men to be permitted"*. Police, checking over the names of the maintenance men the union would admit to the plant, claimed that a large number of them were categorized as foremen, and that the union was attempting to force this class to carry on the heavy work on the mine property.[378]

The company was silent on its reply to the commissioner but denied that any agreement had been made of the maintenance men problem and insisted that 163 men be passed through the picket lines, as was done before last Thursday when the strikers closed their ranks and barred the gates, thus imprisoning 27 men inside the smelter.[379] The company recommended holding the hearing in a neutral place, like Quebec or Montreal, and added that they might not be ready for the hearing on the given date.[380] The judge ruled he could not delay the hearing further and set the date for next Tuesday, 04 February.[381]

On Thursday, 30 January, pickets continued to march up and down in front of the big Noranda Mine in 20 below zero Fahrenheit weather (-29°C).[382] A temporary lull had developed in the strike situation pending the arrival of senior labour leaders[383] and Government Commissioner Oscar Boulanger, who was due to arrive on Monday, 03 February[384] Aaron R. Mosher, president of the Canadian Congress of Labour, announced in Ottawa last night that he had requested Murray Cotterill, representative of the United Steelworkers of America and president of the Toronto Labour Council, to go to Noranda *"for the purpose of observing the actions of the Quebec Provincial Police in this critical situation"*.[385]



Union ski patrol takes part in picket duty around the Northern Ontario mine property. Skiers patrol the lake side of the plant area. Left to right are: Nick Lazor, Alex Mucha, Claude Sundstrom and Earl Fenton.

Photo credit: The Globe and Mail, Toronto, Thursday, 30 January 1947, page 3.

Captain Labbé stated in a radio broadcast that the Quebec Provincial Police were prepared to guarantee safe conduct through picket lines to Noranda Mines office employees and such other employees as the company considered necessary for plant maintenance.[386] The union warned of *"trouble"* if an effort was made to force workers past the picket lines.[387]

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A delay was put in place for extending the strike to other mines in Northern Quebec and Ontario, pending the submission of their cases to Mr. Justice Boulanger by each party involved in the dispute.[388] A sympathy strike was overwhelmingly approved by voters in Kirkland Lake and Timmins, with Noranda receiving many carloads of strike supporters from that area as well as from Sudbury, adding to the 400 or 500 men who came into town from other mining towns in the district earlier in the week.[389]



Photo credit: The Globe and Mail, Toronto, Thursday, 30 January 1947, page 3.

Thomas F. McGuire, International Co-ordinator of the union, stated that such action *"violates a verbal agreement completed last week with the three parties."* He further stated that, *"If people are pushed through the picket lines tomorrow morning, there will be hell popping."*

Captain Labbé charged that a spokesman for the striking miners had threatened to *"blow up the Noranda plant"* and reiterated his promise to bring in maintenance men, despite union threats.[390]

A telegram of protest was sent by the Porcupine Committee of the Labour Progressive Party to Prime Minister Mackenzie King and Premier Maurice Duplessis of Quebec regarding the Quebec Provincial Police's use of tear gas on a Noranda picket line demonstration.[391]

Approximately 400 pickets were on the lines, and it was implied that this number would be considerably increased if the police threat was carried out.[392] If required, the union was

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reportedly poised to bring in extra picketers from Kirkland Lake, Timmins, Val d'Or, and Malartic.[393] The union *"will resist any intimidation on the part of the provincial police, and places full responsibility for anything that may happen on the provincial police and Noranda Mines"*.[394]

On Thursday, 30 January, Noranda Police Chief Joseph Hector Leblanc resigned.[395] He said it had no connection with the strike, that he *"merely wanted to go into business in his native New Brunswick"*.[396] The day before, he had arrived back in town from a holiday.[397]

The Social Credit-Union des Electeurs member for Pontiac, Réal Caouette, announced in Ottawa on Thursday, 30 January, that his party is firmly against any kind of checkoff, whether for labour unions or other uses.[398] *"We are in favour of the miners' demands for a 16-cent-an-hour wage increase and support this demand with all the strength of our organization. The men working underground are not getting wages conforming to the arduous work they are called on to do. Also, don't forget that the cost of living in Noranda is far higher than it is in Ottawa, Hull, Montreal, and Quebec. Further there is the cost of transportation. On the other hand, we feel we cannot support the C.I.O. demand for a checkoff at Noranda. To us, the checkoff is abhorrent as an infringement of personal liberty. We are against the checkoff for labour unions, for taxation, for any cause, however worthy it may seem. I know the labour leaders say the checkoff is necessary for union security. I flatly disagree. Unity of thought and purpose among the miners themselves is the only thing that will give them security."*[399] There was no uncertainty on Mr. Caouette's part regarding Noranda Mines' ability to afford the 16-cent hourly wage hike for the workers.[400] During a recent interview, he stated this directly to Harry L. Roscoe, the manager of Noranda Mines.[401] *"I suggested to him that he stop making contributions to party funds and apply that money to miners' wages."*[402]

Lieutenant M. Jacques Beaudoin of the provincial police announced on Friday, 31 January, that the picket line at Noranda Mines was calm, with the strike now in its eleventh week.[403] Parka-clad pickets marched up and down in a driving snowstorm which swept in from the west and sent the temperature down to 15 degrees below zero Fahrenheit (-26°C).[404] An open-air meeting scheduled for the morning was cancelled because of weather conditions, but union officials said a public meeting would be held later in the day.[405] Mr. Murray Cotterill, representative of the United Steelworkers of America, was expected to arrive in Noranda today at the request of Aaron R. Mosher, president of the Canadian Congress of Labour, and the meeting was scheduled after his arrival.[406]

The temperature continued to plummet to 20 below zero Fahrenheit (-29°C).[407] As the strike marked its 70th day, all parties continued to avoid trouble until the arrival of Mr. Justice Oscar Boulanger.[408] The well-bundled and fur-hatted pickets quickened their steps while

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patrolling the ice-covered mine entrance.[409] Relief occurred more frequently, and they warmed themselves by the stove in the crowded tent pitched outside the gates.[410] Just a handful of the 75 provincial police were working; the rest were relaxing in their bunkhouse.[411] The plant's 27 office and maintenance personnel began their second week of imprisonment.[412] It was a local puzzle how and when they were fed, given that food was only once reported having been thrown over the fence at one specific, isolated location on Lake Tremoy.[413]

Hearings will commence on Tuesday, 04 February, at the Rouyn town hall, leased to the Justice Department for $4,000 annually, following Commissioner Boulanger's expected arrival on Monday.[414] Witnesses and documents could be subpoenaed by him, and representation by counsel was anticipated by both sides.[415] The possibility of a general Northland strike lessened after Sudbury's reports indicated that the local branch of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers was strongly unwilling to breach the no-strike clause in their contract with International Nickel.[416] Union leaders in Timmins and Kirkland Lake were prepared for action, as their members had already given their authorization for immediate steps if necessary.[417]

Noranda had consistently handled significant processing for nearby mines, with large amounts of ore and concentrate accumulating in those mines.[418] Mining activities were ongoing, yet the Noranda Mines Limited strike prevented any smelting from occurring.[419] Restarting idled furnaces will likely be required for the mill's ore backlog when operations resume.[420]

"Strangely enough, the strike has had little effect on the business of stockbrokers here. The boardrooms are crowded, and some striking miners were noticed among those on the 'Sherritt Gordon and God's Lake' bandwagons. Almost everyone in this area, from taxi drivers and waitresses to leading merchants and mine executives, plays the market, and the spirit of optimism and faith in the underground wealth of the north has suffered little from the prolonged strike."[421]

It all came down to the checkoff.[422] While the company and union weren't significantly different on wages, the company held firm against concessions on union security.[423]

Every day, two men go into the Noranda plant: one was the chief electrician and the other his assistant.[424] Without them, the towns of Noranda and Rouyn would be without water and power supply.[425] The electric and water systems for the twin towns were controlled by switches found inside the three-mile wire fence of the plant.[426]

Murray Cotterill of Toronto, Canadian Congress of Labour representative, arrived in Noranda and emphasized that the voluntary, revocable checkoff was the absolute

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minimum the union movement could accept in the way of union security.[427] Mr. Cotterill said in his address, *"The history of this dispute shows one thing very clearly: there has been no serious attempt to negotiate a settlement of this strike. Despite several union offers to amend their position in order to work out a suitable compromise, the company has remained adamant and has insisted upon its original pre-strike offers."*[428]

The company representatives, on the other hand, claim that their acceptance of the revocable checkoff would lead to a union demand next year for the *"Rand Formula"* and the following year for a *"closed shop"*.[429] The company stated that once the strike ended, it would take at least a month to get the smelter running at full capacity again.[430] Noranda mines 6,000 feet down for its resources, and the property has significantly declined since the strike began.[431]

A truck with supplies for the maintenance men trapped inside the plant reached the company gates at 3:20 a.m. on Saturday, 01 February.[432] Due to its weakened state in the early morning and after an argument, the truck was allowed to cross the picket line.[433] Albert Lafrance, president of the union Local 688, asserted that the truck was driven by a provincial policeman with two other constables riding in the cab, but Captain Norbert Labbé told a district newspaper that the truck was from Rouyn and was driven by a Rouyn man.[434] Captain Labbé said the truck contained three tons of food for the men and was still inside the mine compound.[435]

Murray Cotterill, the president of the Toronto Labour Council and a special observer for the Canadian Congress of Labour, made his return to Toronto on Saturday night, having spent two days observing the Noranda strike.[436]

On Sunday, 02 February, all Roman Catholic churches in Noranda, Rouyn, and surrounding areas, in both French and English services, announced they would offer special masses daily for the successful negotiations of the Noranda Mines strike talks.[437] Wages and trade in the twin towns had been severely impacted by the shutdown of their main industry.[438] Many merchants had their toughest January in many years, and stories of struggle were common among the families of the striking workers.[439]

The union stated that their bargaining committee, which participated in numerous negotiation sessions with the company starting when the old contract expired on 01 February 1946, would remain the same.[440] The group consisted of Rosaire Lafrance (no relation to Albert Lafrance), Charley Long, and Victor Peterson from Local 688, along with Joe Rankin and Oliver Bretton from the International Union.[441] While no official statement had been issued, Mr. Murdoch of Toronto was generally anticipated to head the company delegation.[442] Union leaders indicated that large-scale picketing would persist throughout

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the negotiations, and no shift in the union's stance should be anticipated, despite Judge Boulanger's initial request for the miners to resume work while negotiations concluded.[443]



Noranda Strike Parley in "The Dugout"—In their basement headquarters called "The Dugout," just outside the gates of the strike-bound Noranda plant, union picket captains confer on strike strategy.

Photo credit: The Globe and Mail, Toronto, Monday, 03 February 1947, page 7.

On 02 February, Local 200 of the United Automobile Workers (C.I.O.) voted to send $2,000 to aid members of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (C.I.O.) on strike in Noranda.[444] Then they passed the hat and collected another $175.[445]

John S. McCullagh, from the Federal Labour Department, arrived over the weekend to attend the hearings on behalf of the department.[446] James Y. Murdoch, President of Noranda Mines Limited, arrived by train on the morning of Monday, 03 February.[447] A delegation from the Rouyn Local of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (C.I.O.) was at the Noranda station to greet him, but the president disembarked and proceeded directly to the company's guest house from the Rouyn station.[448]

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Photo credit: Le petit journal, Montreal, dimanche 09 février 1947, page 8.

The Honourable Oscar Boulanger, a judge of the Superior Court, arriving at the Noranda train station. It is known that the Minister of Labour has appointed him as the investigating commissioner for the strike currently underway in that city. He is hearing the parties involved at the Rouyn Courthouse.

On the morning of Tuesday, 04 February, Mr. Justice Oscar Boulanger began the hearings in the Rouyn courtroom.[449] The courtroom was overflowing, with people filling the corridors of the Town Hall's second floor, as union and company bargaining committees commenced their discussions.[450] The judge, following his preliminary remarks, then ordered that the room be cleared of the 400[451] spectators,[452] in order for the discussion to be as free as possible.[453] Most of these spectators wore buttons indicating union membership or union sympathies.[454]

The judge will seek to reconcile the union's demands for a dues checkoff and an hourly wage increase of 16 cents with the company's offer of 10-cents-an-hour but no checkoff.[455]

The judge defined his purpose in coming as twofold. *"First, to try to effect a settlement between the contending parties. Secondly, if such a settlement cannot be reached, I am to get all the information possible and make the recommendations to the Federal Minister of Labour as I see fit."*[456] To achieve industrial peace in Noranda, the judge stated that both sides needed to compromise.[457] *"I am not here to judge what is right or wrong. I am completely independent and I have no mining stock of any kind. I am here only to be of service to you."*[458]

Representing the company were James Y. Murdoch, President; Harry L. Roscoe, Vice President and General Manager; and Richard V. Porrit, Assistant General Manager.[459] The seven union representatives present were Albert Lafrance, Local 688 President, Charley Long, Victor Peterson, Thomas F. McGuire, District Co-ordinator, Oliver Bretton, Joe Rankin and Mrs. Jean Porier, Local 688 Secretary.[460]

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In an effort to end the 75-day strike, Mr. Justice Boulanger oversaw two round-table sessions at the Rouyn Courthouse, with a third scheduled for Wednesday, 05 February.[461] Spokespeople for both the company and the union declined to comment.[462] The ongoing negotiations were seen as positive, particularly given that both the union and company had stated they wouldn't budge on union security.[463] *"We will never agree to the checkoff"* declared the company.[464] *"The voluntary revocable checkoff is the absolute minimum we can accept,"* stated the union.[465] Once this was resolved, it was believed that compromising on wages would be easy due to the narrow six-count gap.[466] John S. McCullagh of the Federal Department of Labour, who was assisting Commissioner Boulanger, said, "We discussed all angles and talked about everything under the sun." [467] David Côté, who represented the local Quebec Legislature, was barred from attending the conference.[468]

The respected judge was known in the area for his sharp intellect and good humour.[469] He sought to alleviate the ongoing suspicion and tension, aiming to cultivate a spirit of goodwill that could facilitate the resolution of what he considered a state of warfare.[470] He said, *"You can't make peace if you have war. I hope the war is finished now. I hope we can continue in an atmosphere of peace. This depends on the good humour, goodwill, good sense and good spirit of both parties."*[471]

The judge promised to call another public meeting to report whether a settlement had been reached. *"The public has the right to be informed."* [472] Following the public opening, proceedings occurred informally in the judge's chambers, as no legal counsel represented either side.[473]

In Timmins on Wednesday, 05 February, Crown Attorney Sam A. Caldbick announced that the employees of Hollinger Consolidated Gold Mines, Ltd., voted against staging a strike in sympathy with the Noranda miners.[474] The Hollinger men cast their votes in a balloting organized after 22 employees requested and obtained the company's approval to conduct a secret ballot of the mine's 2,200[475] employees.[476] Balloting was set to begin at 1:00 p.m. and conclude at midnight on Tuesday, 04 February.[477] The boxes were locked by Mayor J. Emile Brunette before voting began, and he held onto the keys until Mr. Caldbick was ready to start the count.[478] In answer to the question, *"Do you want to go on strike in sympathy with Noranda strikers?"*[479], in a landslide of ballots[480],1,393 voted *"no"*; votes in favour numbered 249, and 30 ballots were spoiled.[481] Without being against the union, the miners of Noranda no longer supported the strike.[482] A union representative announced that the membership was directed to cast a *"no"* vote on the strike ballot.[483] This resembled actions taken at Stelco's Hamilton steel plant last summer, where the union guided employees' votes on a company-initiated ballot.[484]

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The question at Hollinger arose after the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (C.I.O.) held meetings in Northern mining communities regarding the possibility of a sympathy strike.[485]

The vote was entirely illegal, according to Léo Behie, International Representative of the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers union.[486] On the day following the vote, he said, *"Local 241 of the union is the only Local permitted to take such a vote, because they are certified agents for the miners here. We only just managed to hear of it being taken by chance. We were not asked for it. The company was trying to discredit the union by calling for such a vote. The company decided to hold the vote, and they obtained 22 signatures on the order authorizing it. It was done without the sanction of the union. Yesterday, as 2,200 came up from underground, they were cold-bloodly* [sic] *asked if they wanted to strike in sympathy to Noranda strikers. Naturally, no man wants to go on strike, and hence the vote. Many miners didn't even bother to exercise their franchise."*[487]

Léo Behie was also in the process of navigating a satisfactory agreement for five Porcupine district mines, including Hollinger Consolidated Gold Mines, McIntyre Porcupine Mines, Preston East Dome Mines,[488] Buffalo Ankerite Gold Mines and Delnite Mine. Local 241 of the C.I.O. had been negotiating for more than the 30 days required under the Act, and the union requested Government intervention.[489] The Porcupine district miners received a 10-cent raise increase the previous December but were negotiating for a 16-cent wage boost plus the union checkoff.[490]

Negotiations with Justice Boulanger continued on Thursday, 06 February.[491] The company's offer was a 12-cent hourly raise, provided the union abandons the checkoff.[492] Seven cents of the offer would have been retroactive to 16 May 1946 and the full 12-cent increase from November 1946.[493] The union overwhelmingly rejected this offer.[494] Justice Boulanger stated, *"I am very disappointed, and we will stay with the body as long as there is life in it."*[495] Discussions would continue the next day.[496]

There's no question that Justice Boulanger viewed the union's demanded dues checkoff as the primary obstacle to a settlement.[497] He gave no indication of what direction developments might take the following day, but said, *"We are taking lots of time. Many proposals are discussed thoroughly each day. We hope to be able to do something tomorrow."*[498] Justice Boulanger said *"the decision is very close"* after the fourth day of negotiations with Noranda Mines Limited and union representatives.[499] Neither the union, which held two membership meetings during the afternoon, nor the company officials would comment at the conclusion of the day's talks with Justice Boulanger.[500]

During this time, the Noranda Mine property faced what was likely the world's coldest

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picket line, with protesters marching in temperatures from 20 to 40 degrees below zero Fahrenheit (-29°C to -40°C).[501]

On the evening of Thursday, 06 February, Omer Daignault from Rouyn, was released from jail when bail was posted.[502] Earlier in the week, late Tuesday evening, 04 February, Omer was arrested in connection with an incident near the mine property.[503] Authorities claimed he was among those who vandalized a car driven by Noranda resident O. Hirtle on the Quemont Road, a back entrance to the Noranda Mine complex.[504] The Provincial Police reported that Hirtle swerved into the ditch after a truck passed him too closely.[505] The driver of the tow truck was persuaded by the group not to help when it arrived to pull him out.[506] Hirtle left to make a phone call, and when he came back, his car was smashed with slashed tires.[507] The commander of the 75 Provincial Police keeping watch over the strike, Captain Norbert Labbé, stated that further arrests were expected regarding the incident.[508] Daignault's trial was scheduled for next Tuesday.[509]

The next day, Friday, 07 February, the strike entered its 12th week.[510] The company ordered certain categories of non-union employees back to work this morning under the pass system, which a company spokesman said the union agreed to resume.[511]

Noranda Mines Limited made its final offer to the union on Friday.[512] The offer stood firm at 13-cents-an-hour increase, retroactive to 01 November 1946; 10-cents-an-hour increase, retroactive to 16 May 1946, no checkoff, no off-shift premium.[513] The union had asked for 2-cents-an-hour premium for off-shift work.[514] The company also offered the use of a desk for checking and collecting union dues, in lieu of the checkoff demanded.[515] The decision was now left to the union, and the union representatives were expected to report back at 3:00 p.m.[516] Mr. Murdoch cancelled plans to leave for Toronto at the last minute on Saturday.[517]

The union accepted the wage compromise offer but failed to win the dues checkoff.[518] Instead, facilities would be provided for union representatives to interview new employees as they undergo physical examinations at the plant dispensary.[519] The union would be permitted to install a desk in the medical office at the plant, located outside the mine gates, two half days each month in order that the union may collect dues.[520] Furthermore, the agreement proposed bringing back all employees within two weeks where practical and ensured no striker would face discrimination.[521] It also stated that provincial or federal laws related to union security would be included in its terms.[522]

Due to the agreement's retroactive clauses, workers would receive an average of $115 in back pay, and with the hourly wage boost, the average worker's yearly raise would be $360 higher.[523]

The Noranda settlement was anticipated to significantly impact wage and employment

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trends across the Northern mines.[524] Most gold mines raised wages by 10 cents after Noranda's offer before the strike, and it was anticipated that most operating mines would adopt the 13-cent rate.[525]



As Noranda Strike Ends

Officials of Noranda Mines Limited and union executives are seen above as an agreement is signed to end an 80-day-old strike at Canada's biggest copper-producing mine. In this photograph are seen R. V. Porritt, aassistant general manager of Noranda Mines, seated at the left, and T. F. McGuire, union district co-ordinator, as they sign terms of settlement. Standing are, left to right, James Y. Murdoch, K.C., Noranda president; H. L. Roscoe, vice-president and general manager, and Oliver Breton, union international representative. The strike ended in a compromise on wage demands and a union defeat on the dues checkoff issue.

Photo credit: North Bay Nugget, Wednesday, 12 February 1947, page 12.

Noranda Mines Limited's 1,147 employees were anticipating a return-to-work order today, following the 80-day strike.[526] On Sunday, 09 February at 11:45 p.m., an agreement to end the strike was signed in the living room of the guesthouse of Noranda Mines Limited[527], but the largest gold and copper producer in Canada had not yet set a date for resuming operations when the mine plant's sirens and whistles announced the strike's end at midnight, just fifteen minutes after the signing.[528] At midnight, with the siren's blast, the picket line, dressed in parkas and stationed at the mine gates from Friday, 22 November, received word their prolonged march was finally over.[529] Joe Rankin, the union's International Representative, personally went to the plant gate to inform the picketers.[530] The picketers headed home to their cozy hearths while a fierce blizzard raged through the twin mining settlements of Noranda and Rouyn.[531]

After the signing ceremony, James Y. Murdoch of Toronto, company president, shook hands with Thomas F. McGuire, District Co-ordinator of the International Union of Mine, Mill and

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Smelter Workers (C.I.O.) and Harry L. Roscoe, vice president and general manager of the mine declared, *"Now let's forget the past and get back to work."*[532] Mr. McGuire, representing a union of 597 of the plant's 1,147 employees, indicated that finalization of some agreement details was necessary before a return-to-work directive could be issued.[533]

The agreement came after a week of bargaining under Justice Oscar Boulanger of the Quebec Superior Court, who was appointed Industrial Disputes Inquiry Commissioner by the Dominion Department of Labour.[534] Justice Boulanger left Noranda during the day for Rivière du Loup to resume his duties on the bench.[535]


MR. JUSTICE BOULANGER

Photo credit: The Toronto Star, Monday, 10 February 1947, page 4.

Noranda, whose gold and copper production was nearly the same, agreed to pay a price three cents below International Nickel's base metal rate in Sudbury and three cents above what most gold mines pay.[536]

Harry L. Roscoe, in a broadcast address to the people of Noranda and Rouyn on the evening of Monday, 10 February, stated that every effort would be made to get Canada's largest producer of gold and copper into full production.[537] He announced, *"Opening of the mine again is a comparatively simple business. Within a very few days, every man who works in the mine can be back on the job. The smelter, of course, cannot operate until we have the ore to feed it, and the same applies to the concentrator."*[538] Mr. Roscoe also confirmed that no miner was going to find that the company held any grudge against him because he had been on the picket line or had engaged in other legitimate strike activity.[539]

Settlement of the Noranda strike was indeed welcomed news.[540] Remarkably, such a sensible agreement was only achieved after a lengthy strike that inflicted heavy financial losses on both the employees and the business.[541]

The strike ended without addressing the main demand (the checkoff), suggesting a shift back towards a pre-war balance in management-labour relations, which had favoured labour for seven years.[542] The settlement, though not a triumph for the union leadership,

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held significance that labour would understand.[543] It was about union security, and not wages.[544] Noranda Mines held their ground completely, ignoring the conciliation board's recommendation.[545] The extent of their agreement was to let a union official use the company's off-site medical office twice a month for collecting dues.[546] This clause was a common part of collective bargaining contracts in Southern Ontario in the past.[547] Nonetheless, the agreement included a provision that any subsequently enacted provincial or federal union security measure would be added to its terms.[548]

What did the hard-rock miners of Noranda win? What did they lose? They got a 13-cents-an-hour raise, 3 cents more than what they were offered before the strike.[549] The raise would give them about $360 more a year, and an extra $115 in retroactive pay.[550] But they lost $428,000 in wages.[551] It would take them at least four years to recover their losses from less than three months of being absent from work.[552] Their winning the checkoff might have justified the expense.[553] With the pay raise, Noranda's men will see their average pay rise to 85-cents-an-hour, and labourers to 68 cents-an hour.[554]

It was estimated that the cost of the wage increase to the company, based on 1,200 employees affected, would be in the neighbourhood of $432,000 per annum, or nearly $600,000 a year based on the 1,600 employees the company employs when adequate manpower is available.[555]

On the basis of 1946 production, Noranda may possibly receive $541,700 extra revenue with the increase in the domestic ceiling on copper from 11.5 to 16 cents a pound in January 1947.[556] Therefore, the wage hike nearly cancels out the revenue gain from selling approximately half of the company's domestic output.[557]

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