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Hard Times - Hard Ball
The Cape Breton Colliery League 1936-1939

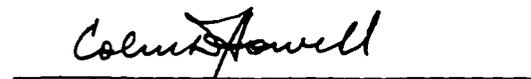
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INTRODUCTION

During the 1930's there was a massive decline in monetary values, the shrinking of demand and therefore of production and unemployment on a scale never before experienced in Canada.¹ The Depression had a great effect on workers and their unions, despite actions taken by governments to supply relief and to improve health and living conditions while eliminating suffering. The Maritime Provinces were particularly devastated by harsh economic conditions and the provincial governments were slow to adapt social programs to improve the economic conditions of the populace. The provinces were among the last to adopt any social programs such as old age pensions and mothers' allowances and they were on record as opposing unemployment insurance. All levels of government attempted to avoid responsibility for relief.²

With limited economic resources, the Maritime Provinces could not participate effectively in the federal government relief programs which required matching grants. Economic hardships led to reduced tax revenues and larger portions of the tax were required to service the debt.³ Restraint was

¹John A. Garraty, "Unemployment During the Great Depression," Labour History vol. 17, no. 1, (Spring, 1976), 133-159.

²E. R. Forbes, "Cutting the Pie Into Smaller Pieces, Matching Grants and Relief in the Maritime Provinces During the 1930s," Acadiensis, XVVII, 1 (Autumn, 1987), 34-55.

³David Frank and Don Macgillivray, eds., George MacEachern: An Autobiography (Sydney: University College of Cape Breton Press, 1987), 41-61.

necessary. There was a welfare crisis in the 1930s as declines in production led to lost jobs. Unemployment was high in the forest industry and among mill workers. In the coal fields of Nova Scotia DOSCO was limiting production. The price paid for fish was declining.⁴ In the Maritime Provinces, there were not enough finances to implement old-age pensions and when they were implemented they paid less than other Canadian Provinces. Eligibility rules for the Old Age Pension benefits were tightened. Unemployment insurance was not affordable. With government relief so limited in the Maritimes, people were more dependent on support from relatives and volunteer agencies.

With underemployment and unemployment, something was needed to fill the hours that had been devoted to work.⁵ During the Depression there was an excess of leisure time and sports sustained morale under stressful conditions. In the industrial area of Cape Breton hard times would give way to hard ball. Baseball would become a symbol of community and regional identity, a contributor to civic loyalty in the small

⁴E. R. Forbes, "The 1930s: Depression and Retrenchment," E. R. Forbes and D. A. Muise eds., The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 272-305.

⁵Steven M. Gelber, "A Job You Can't Lose: Work and Hobbies in the Great Depression," Journal of Social History 24, 4, (Summer, 1991), 741-766.

and medium-sized towns and cities of the Maritimes.⁶ During times of extreme hardship the Cape Breton Colliery League gave the people of Cape Breton a focus, an escape, an area removed from everyday concerns. The communities projected strong relationships, a strength of identity, solidarity and a great love of sports. The communities of industrial Cape Breton banded together and worked to ensure the success of their league notwithstanding their social, political or economic conditions. The Colliery League crossed lines of class, politics and religion. It was a community run organization with members from all classes developing and supporting their individual teams. The people of these communities showed a collective will and a strong sense of solidarity and identity in their support of their baseball teams. But, was the solidarity as inclusive as it seemed? This thesis will examine the role of sport in the construction of community identity.

The thesis is arranged into parts or chapters and begins by tracing a brief history of baseball on Cape Breton Island including previous attempts at professionalizing the sport. We will examine the love of the game by the people and the methods they used to obtain tickets to the games.

Chapter I explores the positive and negative conceptual complexities of community and the role of sport in it.

⁶Colin D. Howell, Northern Sandlots A Social History of Maritime Baseball (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 74-97.

Communities consist of more than land and location and include the social aspects, such as pride and solidarity, needed to develop strong communities . One source used to develop community definition is the work of A.P. Cohen in his work The Symbolic Construction of Community.⁷ M.I.A. Bulmer has an excellent examination of mining communities showing how solidarity and pride is developed in these occupational communities which rely on a single industry for survival.⁸ Solidarity is high in these groups as the workers share a common occupation, and a common reference group. Their work activities and interests are carried into their non-work lives. Sport is often seen as one method of bringing people together and developing a strong community. Robert F. Wheeler has stated that sport can nurture camaraderie, competitiveness and pride. It may promote internal cohesion and develop group solidarity.⁹

Occupational communities have a negative impact on some members of society. Community solidarity can mask a number of inequalities. Communities can harbour a dark side where some members are exploited or excluded by others. Occupational communities exclude women from a number of activities and they

⁷A. P. Cohen, The Symbolic Construction of Community (London: Ellis Howard Ltd. and Taviston Publications Ltd., 1975), 11-38.

⁸M.I.A. Bulmer, "Sociological Models of the Mining Community," Sociological Review, 23(1), (1978), 61-91.

⁹Robert F. Wheeler, "Organized Sport and Organized Labour. The Workers' Sport Movement," Journal of Contemporary History, vol. 13 (1971), 191-207.

are kept in a supporting role performing household tasks, having their main social contact with other women. An excellent examination of the role of women within occupational communities is found in It's A Working Man's Town,¹⁰ written by Thomas Dunk who also examines the place of sport and racism in these communities. To obtain a national view of women in the community and their place in sport, we shall use the works of Anne Hall¹¹, Helen Lenskyj¹² and Bruce Kidd. Kidd devotes a chapter of his book The Struggle For Canadian Sport, to the place women have in the national sport's picture.¹³ This chapter will examine community both from a positive and negative perspective showing the influence of sport on community, the special case of occupational communities and where women and minorities fit in both sport and community.

Chapter II will examine the development of community in the industrial area of Cape Breton using the works of numerous Maritime historians such as Ian McKay.¹⁴ The communities of Cape Breton were very strongly based on a common past, with

¹⁰Thomas Dunk, It's A Working Man's Town (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1991), 65-132.

¹¹Anne Hall and others, Sport In Canadian Society (Toronto: McLelland & Stewart Inc., 1981).

¹²Helen Lenskyj, Out of Bounds, Women, Sport and Sexuality (Toronto: Women's Press, 1986).

¹³Bruce Kidd, The Struggle for Canadian Sport (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

¹⁴Ian McKay, "The Realm of Uncertainty: The Experience of Work in the Cumberland Coal Mines, 1873-1927," Acadiensis 16,1 (Autumn, 1986), 3-57.

inherited loyalties and traditions. Their strength was nurtured by a common workplace and constant struggles with the coal companies to obtain a decent standard of living. We shall see that the local people who owed their living to the wages of the miners were supportive, which led to strong community. During the 1920s solidarity was developed through a strong sense of union radicalism. However, during the 1930s cracks began to show in the solidarity of the labour movement as the United Mine Workers were challenged by the Amalgamated Mine Workers of Nova Scotia.

Chapter III follows the 1936 baseball season as the Colliery League moves from the ranks of amateur play to those of professional play. It is necessary to understand the importance of the 1936 season as events which occurred during this season would lead to professional baseball in 1937. Much of the baseball information for this chapter and others is found by examining the Sydney Post Record and The Sporting News for the appropriate period. We shall observe the effort necessary to run a baseball team, including the procurement of players and the constant struggle to raise the necessary funds. This chapter will present the reasons why the Colliery League wished to import players and its struggles to improve the calibre of play.

Chapter IV initiates the reasons for the move to professional baseball by the teams of the Colliery League. Included will be figures showing the popularity of the League

with the fans. The chapter will deal with the violent action of the fans and players during the four year history of the Colliery League as a semi-professional and professional circuit. We will examine the ideals on which President, Judge A. D. Campbell, wished the League to be perceived. He desired players of high moral standards who would pass on strong moral messages to the children of Cape Breton.

Monetary problems were a constant dilemma of the teams of the Colliery League and Chapter V will deal with the lack of funds and methods the community took to deal with this problem. Running a ballclub in the low minors was a difficult prospect and the Colliery League required the support of a large section of the population to survive. This chapter will also examine the role of women, blacks and natives in relation to the Colliery League. In his book Northern Sandlots, Colin D. Howell has devoted a chapter "Gendered Baselines: The Tour of the Chicago Blackstockings," to the role of women in Maritime baseball showing not only positive aspects but how these women were excluded from the game of baseball.¹⁵ His chapter, "The 'Others': Race, Ethnicity, and Community Baseball," examines the exclusion of blacks and native people from white community baseball.¹⁶

The last chapter brings a close to the Colliery League as the beginning of the Second World War would prevent the

¹⁵Howell, Northern Sandlots, 74-97.

¹⁶Ibid., 171-196.

importation of American players due to travel restrictions. We shall examine some of the positive aspects of the League as it brought various classes of people together to run the teams. The League provided the community with a break from the monotony of work and a topic of discussion for after the games and during the off season. My argument is that the League added to the sense of community found in the towns of industrial Cape Breton by bringing people together in a common love of the game of baseball. Through the game of baseball people in the industrial communities came together to work for the success of their respective teams and the League. Baseball gave the hardworking people of industrial Cape Breton a break from the monotony of everyday work and the topic of conversation for the whole year.

BASEBALL AND PLODDERS

Sport can play an important part in the development and maintenance of community. The Island of Cape Breton has a long history of involvement with sport in general and baseball in particular. Prior to examining the role baseball and community played in the development of island communities, we shall outline a short history of baseball on Cape Breton Island.

Baseball was being played in Cape Breton prior to 1900. The popularity of the game increased following the organization of the Dominion Coal Company and the opening of the Steel Works in Sydney and Sydney Mines. The game was

being played in Glace Bay, Dominion and Reserve and was very popular in New Aberdeen and Bridgeport.¹ By 1905 teams in Sydney, Sydney Mines, Reserve Mines and Glace Bay were importing players.² The League was to continue until 1907 with Glace Bay importing the majority of players from Fredericton and the Reserve players from Saint John.³ Some American players were imported with Glace Bay obtaining "Sad" Sam Jones⁴ who in 1914 would pitch with Cleveland of the American League followed by stints with Boston, New York, St. Louis Browns, Washington and Chicago. Jones retired in 1925 with a record of 229 wins and 217 losses.⁵

The next attempt at professional baseball in Cape Breton occurred during the years 1913-1914. Interest was such in Sydney that a new park was built at Victoria Park. Sydney imported six players from the United States plus Gee Ahearn of Halifax, a newspaperman, later mayor of Halifax. Clarie Demont, employed by the Sydney Record, led the League in stolen bases. DeMont was later elected to the Nova Scotia Sports Hall of Fame for his track and wrestling ability.

¹A.X.MacDonald, R.P. Campbell, eds., The Digest vol. 1 (Sydney, Commercial Printers Ltd., 1938), 1.

²Howell, Northern Sandlots, 133.

³The Digest, 4.

⁴John Thorn and Peter Palmer eds., Total Baseball (New York: Warner Books, 1989), 1769.

⁵Ronald H. McIntyre, The Colliers Tattletale (Antigonish: Formac Publishing Co. Ltd., 1980), 160.

Other teams in the League were Glace Bay, Dominion and New Waterford, but the League disbanded in 1914 when practically the whole Glace Bay team enlisted in the armed forces.⁶ The editor of the Sydney Record wrote in 1905 that professional baseball would encourage idle habits among the working class. They were already busy with sports, picnics, excursions and holidays which took people away from the workplace.⁷ The Dominion Coal Company hoped to discourage attendance at games which often reached 800. These games started before five o'clock and were disrupting work because the miners finished work early to attend the games. The miners would not switch the games to Sunday because of religious objections.⁸

By 1925 teams from the Hub, Table Head, Sterling, Dominion, Reserve and New Waterford were competing in a league using local players. Caledonia, Reserve, New Waterford, Sydney and the Glace Bay Pontiacs with some imports formed a new league in 1927. Teams from Springhill, Westville and Halifax plus some teams from the United States visited Cape Breton and helped improve the level of play by providing a higher calibre of competition. In 1933 Dominion joined the

⁶Newspaper clipping (no publisher or date known) from the collection of R. C. DeMont son of Claire DeMont.

⁷Colin D. Howell, "Baseball, Class and Community in the Maritime Provinces" Histoire Sociale - Social History, vol. XXII, no. 44 (November - December, 1989), 281.

⁸William Humber, "Toiling in the Maritime Minors. Cape Breton's Coal Mining League" Dugout, II, I, (April/May, 1994), 7.

League followed by Sydney Mines in 1935. At this time, it was decided to permit three import players for each team.³ Along with teams in the Colliery League, Sydney, Glace Bay, North Sydney, Sydney Mines, Reserve, Dominion and New Waterford had intermediate, junior and juvenile teams. The small rural mining town of Inverness had registered an intermediate and junior team with the Nova Scotia Amateur Baseball Association (N.S.A.B.A.). Midget baseball was played in a number of schools. Softball was popular and there were five ladies' teams operating in the district.

Children in Cape Breton, like so many children in North America, dreamed of playing baseball. A large number of open spaces facilitated play for these children as long as something resembling a bat and ball were available. Boys who were small, fast and agile could perform against larger opponents with an excellent chance of success. The popularity of sport in the culture of Cape Breton encouraged boys to play baseball.

Ed Gillis played baseball as a child growing up in New Waterford.

I was playing over in this field a lot. There was an old fellow not far from where we lived and he had a big farm there and about five or six cows ... at night he'd put them in the field where we were playing ball ... There was all little bumps all over the field and we had about two baseballs, and they were taped balls, they put tape on them, black tape, hard ... And everyone was playing ball ... we were

³The Digest, 5.

there, barefoot you know, and here we are in the field and the cows are there all night and those big plodders, you know, they're fresh and we're sliding into second and sliding into third and boom and you'd hit one of them and I was barefoot, oh man, oh man. We'd get up and just laugh, you know. There was in short centre field a brook. It was ...two and a half to three feet deep. A lot of guys would hit fly balls which would go directly over that brook. You know what you've got to do ... you want that ball. So you get to the edge of that brook and jump in feet first, up to your knees and you're catching the ball right in the middle of the brook, oh boy, oh boy. I'll tell you, people don't realize you know, that was a big help.

I was so young and small. I loved ball. I played it hard. When it rained we'd go out on some of the back streets that were paved and we'd have infield workout on the nice pavement. Oh gee, you'd play ball all night.¹⁰

Eddie Gillis began playing organized baseball at the age of fifteen in the New Waterford Town League, an adult league of six teams. In 1935 Gillis was recruited by "Doc" White to play for the New Waterford Dodgers of the Colliery League, a team he remained with until 1937. With the outbreak of World War II, Gillis joined the Canadian Army where he was playing coach of the Army Defence League team from 1942 to 1944. The League consisted of the Army, the Air Force, the Navy and the Halifax Shipyards.

In 1946, Gillis played in the Nova Scotia Central League with the Kentville Wildcats. While with Kentville in 1947, Gillis played in the powerful Halifax and District League. He retired in 1948. Gillis accepted a position teaching physical

¹⁰Interview with Ed Gillis, New Minas, N. S., 14 November 1991.

education in the Kentville school system. During the summers he coached junior and senior teams throughout Nova Scotia and Cape Breton and conducted baseball clinics for children. Through a chance meeting with Jeff Jones, chief scout in the Eastern United States and Canada for the Milwaukee Braves, Gillis became a scout for the Braves. When Jones left the Braves for the St. Louis Cardinals, Gillis went with him.¹¹ The highlight of his coaching career occurred in 1985 when he coached the Kentville Cardinals to the National Amateur Baseball Championship, the first time a Nova Scotia team won this honour.¹² In Nova Scotia, Eddie Gillis is known as "Mr. Baseball", a title richly deserved.

Children were not the only people obsessed with the game of baseball. Adults in Industrial Cape Breton spent a great deal of time watching and discussing baseball. Max Cullen, a player with the Sydney Mines Ramblers, talks of this interest.

Oh the people talked nothing but baseball. They would come into my shop (barber shop) on Beech Street and talk baseball. Everywhere in town, that's what they talked about.

On games in the afternoon, the miners would go to the games and forget about work. The pit would not work. To get money for the game they went to the company store and got boots on the check-off. Then they went uptown to sell the boots. They paid for the game and gave the rest (of the money) to their wives

¹¹Burton Russell and Stan Cameron, eds., Nova Scotia Sports Personalities (Kentville: Burton Russell, 1975), 63-9.

¹²Interview with Ed Gillis, 14 November 1991.

for bingo.¹³

Sport, particularly baseball, was of great importance to the citizens, young and old of Cape Breton.

The Colliery League in 1935 decided to import three players per team. New Waterford obtained two pitchers and a catcher; Caledonia, two pitchers; Sydney, three players from Saint John. The Sydney Mines Ramblers imported catcher Nelson Deveau who later would catch for the Liverpool Larrupers, winners of four straight Maritime championships beginning in 1938. This seemingly minor move of importing three players per team would have far reaching consequences to the playing of amateur baseball in Cape Breton.

¹³Interview with Max Cullen, Sydney Mines, N. S., 16 November 1991.

CHAPTER I
A SEARCH FOR COMMUNITY

To say the Colliery League was community-driven requires a definition of community which is not easily obtained. George A. Hillery found ninety-four definitions of community in his research.¹ Included in these definitions was community consisting of persons in social interaction within a given geographic area. Community consists of three categories: group solidarity, geographic area and a combination of the two called socio-geographic.²

Communities are based on fixed and bounded territory, social relations within a territory and a shared identity. They are constantly moving concepts consisting of political and social issues. The acts of individuals may be constrained by the action or lack of action of others.³

Community requires a locality, a local society and a process of local collective actions. The substance of community is social interaction and this interaction occurs in a number of ways.⁴ People must live together and interact on

¹George A. Hillery Jr., "Definitions of Community: Areas of Agreement," Rural Sociology 20 (1955), 111.

²Ibid., 111.

³Louise Fortmann and Emery Roe, "On Really Existing Communities - Organic or Otherwise," Telos (Spring, 1995), 140-144.

⁴K.P. Wilkinson, The Community in America (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 13.

matters of common units. Community requires a place where people can meet their daily needs and requires open communication between people and a level of tolerance.⁵ Community development occurs through community action.

For communities to survive there must be self-maintenance and self-development; people must help people and there must be a defense against outside demands and incursion. Although all outside demands are not harmful, some such as the external control of the resources, economy and the media may affect community in a negative manner.⁶

Community requires a sense of solidarity; common interests and aims, class and kinship. Through group membership, a sense of significance is developed, and with a sense of significance comes a feeling of solidarity. The sense of solidarity and significance grows through beliefs, values and attitudes.⁷

Community is strengthened by the conviction that people are drawn together by a common origin. Kinship draws on the past to show a common origin and establish identity in the present. Community is a process of both inclusion and exclusion. Differences among those within a community are often mutual or obscured while differences between other

⁵Ibid., 73-75.

⁶Ibid., 146.

⁷David B. Clark, "The Concept of Community: A Re-examination," Sociological Review 33 (1973), 408-9.

communities are loudly affirmed. This pattern of polarization between communities and homogenization within them can be fortified by appeals to the past that represent a cultural distinction as original and essential differences.⁹

Community may be in the mind of the beholder. The importance of community is in people's experience. For community refers to an entity, a reality invested with all the sentiment attached to kinship, friendship, neighbouring rivalry, familiarity, jealousy as they inform the social process of everyday life.⁹ Boundaries between communities in some instances may be more like each other than they are different.

A community can be built on its belief in its difference from other places. This difference provides an essential reason for the maintenance of its distinct culture.¹⁰ A community is built on a sense of place and locality. The greater similarities among people, the more firmly they express and value their differences from others. Groups become aware of their identity when they engage with others and a great value is placed on distinctiveness and difference. One becomes aware of its distinctiveness and behaviour when

⁹James Brow, "Notes on Community Hegemony and the Uses of the Past," Anthropological Quarterly 63(i) (1990), 1-5.

⁹Cohen, Symbolic Construction, 8.

¹⁰A.P. Cohen, "The Anthropology of Proximate Cultures: The Newfoundland School and Scotland," Scottish Journal of Sociology 4, 2 (May, 1980), 214.

compared to others.¹¹

It is necessary for members of a community to have something in common with each other. There must be something to distinguish them in a significant way from members of other groups. Boundaries are used to mark the beginning and the end of a community, define the identity of the community and its place of social interaction.¹² These community boundaries are largely constructed by people interacting with each other.

Community symbols may stand for or represent something other than what they appear to represent. The people who employ the symbols of community supply their meaning. Others may use the same symbols but apply different meanings. Sharing a symbol does not mean that it will have the same meaning. Community supplies people with a sense of belonging. This is the most fundamental and substantial experience of social life outside the home. It is through community that people acquire culture and the symbols that are necessary to be social. These symbols of community can be fit to the circumstance of the individual.¹³

The shape of a community is taken from the identity of its members. Each piece of a community is a part of the whole. Certain people are credited with certain attributes.

¹¹Anthony P. Cohen, "Belonging: the experience of culture," Belonging: Identity and Social Organisation in British Cultures (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), 4.

¹²Cohen, Symbolic Construction, 12.

¹³Ibid., 19-21.

There is a certain amount of competition for these attributes, an example being leadership. Community identity is a point of reference for the building and placing of identity within a community and the evaluation of performance. Members of a community are distinct and individual. The basis of association may be kinship, neighbouring or work related. A persons identity may show his connection to the community and how he reacts with other members. Identity shows not only the distinctiveness of an individual but his ability to integrate.¹⁴ The identity of an individual is not of his own making but is bestowed by the community. By being part of a community it is possible to have a feeling of solidarity and a shared identity, a sense of belonging is developed.

Although community has many positive aspects, a downside can be found.¹⁵ In a community, a common set of values and norms are accepted and to be a member of the community these values must be accepted. Sacred symbols are either concrete objects or abstract ideas that represent strongly held community values.¹⁶ These symbols are not commonplace and must be treated by all with reverence and respect. The problem

¹⁴A.P. Cohen, "The Same but Different: The Allocation of Identity in Whalsay, Shetland," Sociological Review XXX1 (1978), 449-69.

¹⁵Jay J. Coakley, "Sport in Society: An Inspiration or An Opiate?," Sport In Contemporary Society. An Anthology, ed. D. S. Eitzen (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 27-45.

¹⁶C. B. Flora and Cornelia Butler, Rural Communities Legacy and Change (Boulder: Western Press, 1992), 67.

with sacred symbols arises when the values in these symbols do not represent the truth. Violation of a sacred symbol may result in the community joining together against those who have violated the symbol.

For example, in a study of rural communities in Greece women are viewed as symbols in the manner in which they represent their various households. Women may appear subordinate to men, as they keep their daily lives separate from those of the men. Males preserve a public appearance of authority and women are in charge of the domestic realm. Women are responsible for the integrity of the family and the maintenance of its boundaries.¹⁷ Women are the maintainers of harmony in the home while men maintain the outward appearance of power. Men and women have their positions in the community and retain authority over their respective spheres.¹⁸

When the solidarity of a community is strong, members differentiate between those who are in the group and those who are outside it.¹⁹ Conflict can result as symbols and beliefs come into play. Solidarity may result in the community uniting against the outside threats. It is easy to define problems as being externally caused, for the community takes great risks in identifying a problem as being internal.

¹⁷Jill Dubisch, " 'Foreign Chickens' and other outsiders: gender and community in Greece," American Ethnologist 20(2) (1993), 279.

¹⁸Ibid., 274.

¹⁹Flora, Rural Communities, 69.

Solidarity is dependent on the absence of clearly defined distinctions within the community, this makes members of the community equal in theory if not in reality. This sense of solidarity has both a positive and negative side. On the positive side groups can be supportive, stable and friendly. The downside of group solidarity is prejudice, intolerance and rejection.²⁰ A group with a low level of solidarity may result in problems being ignored. Individual group members may be reluctant to step forward and assume leadership positions. This results in problems being ignored because problem solving does not emerge from the community.

To protect community image, negative news may be ignored and emphasize only positive community actions. Communities will hide different views found in their areas to present a unified view of their community to the outside world.²¹ Ideas which come from outside the community may not be accepted. Community consists of both physical and mental properties and may mean different things to different people. We will examine the relationship of sport to community observing how sport may benefit communities and how it may have a negative impact.

SPORT AND COMMUNITY

Although sport can have no bearing on place and locality, it can be of benefit in building the mental aspects

²⁰Ibid., 72.

²¹Ibid., 75.

of community. Sports' teams are often regarded as representations of the community. The teams carry the community name and represent the town. Teams and athletes are seen by some members of the community as an extension of the community. Sports bring people together as spectators discuss the event before, during and after the event. These conversations and socializing help to build community spirit and strengthen bonds between groups of people. The talk can bring people together in an emotional rapport.²² Sport may be a unifying force for community.

Sports are used to build strong positive identification with locality and regions. Through sports strong positive identification is generated through the development of communal spirit and a collective identification. Team sports are more strongly linked to place than those in which individuals participate against each other. In team sports, the home team appears to have an advantage over the visiting team. This home team advantage may be explained by the presence of moral support from spectators.²³

Sports can build a sense of rivalry between towns and in time this rivalry may lead to a stronger sense of community.

²²Gregory P. Stone, "Sport as a Community Representation," Handbook of Social Science of Sport, ed., Gunther H. Sage (Champaign, IL: Stipes Publishing Co. 1981), 222.

²³John Bale, "The Place of 'Place' in Cultural Studies of Sports," Progress In Human Geography 12, 4 (December, 1988), 507-524.

Sports' teams may have a strong following of fans who will add to the sense of rivalry. As sports continue in a community, the size of crowds may be seen as a show of community support and solidarity.²⁴

Team sports offer more than exercise, for to be part of a team is to have friends to share a sense of loyalty and struggle together and represent your community. With the playing of sports comes emotional rewards, for they are shared values and objectives. The playing of sports can help to develop a strong sense of place by providing a place to belong and something common among participants.²⁵ Sports is about making friends, building communities and sharing experiences. There may be hostility to rivals but there is also the deep sense of solidarity and identity that comes from fierce loyalties.²⁶

Lowly white collar merchants, grocers, small shopkeepers, clerks and bookkeepers laboured through long hours in stores, offices, banks and courthouses trying to keep pace with their paperwork generated by expanding business. These solitary workers naturally sought relief from their work, flocking to ballfields during early morning hours, after work or on

²⁴George B. Kirsch, The Creation of American Team Sports (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 10.

²⁵Richard Holt, Sport and the British. A Modern History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 154-168.

²⁶Ibid., 347.

Saturday afternoons.²⁷ Baseball was used to bring some excitement to a drab and dreary existence. Sport, in this instance baseball, was used to build feelings of community, camaraderie, belonging, friendship and companionship. Sports were used as a means of instigating conversation. Once feelings were established within the group of individuals, it became easier to include the group as a whole.²⁸

Sports can nurture camaraderie, competitiveness and pride. It may promote internal cohesion. Athletic activities are embraced in an upbeat manner. People will come together when cohesion is vital.²⁹ Another factor in the attraction of sport was the feeling of community or group solidarity it offered. It provided the basis for collective participation and helped supply social and cultural needs. Sports provided a potential escape from the monotony of work.³⁰

Symbols such as sports teams are symbolic markers of the community which distinguish it from other communities. Symbols of community are mental; they provide people with the means to make meaning of situations. In doing so, they

²⁷Kirsch, The Creation of ... Sports, 7.

²⁸Christopher L. Stevenson and John E. Nixon, "A Conceptual Scheme of the Social Functions of Sport," Sport Sociology - Contemporary Themes, eds., Andrew Yiannakis et al. (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hurst Publishing Co., 1976), 26.

²⁹Samuel O. Regalado, "Sport and Community In Japanese Yamato Colony," Journal of Sports History: vol 19, no. 2 (Summer 1992), 130-134.

³⁰Wheeler, "Organized Sport", 193.

provide them with the means to express the particular meanings which the community has for them. Members of a community recognize important differences among themselves but they also suppose themselves to be more like each other than like members of other communities. Symbols of a community, although shared symbols, may differ from member to member. This different interpretation of symbols, even shared, makes symbols effective, for part of their meaning is imprecise and subjective.³¹

Sport provides the sense of identification with a larger community of supporters of teams. Community is as much a state of mind as it is a physical entity. Any definition of community must include ideas of belonging, integration and solidarity. To belong to a community implies that one feels a part of something that one shares with others, a feeling of common identity, consciousness and emotional involvement. Sport is one important mechanism in creating just such feeling among members of a community. Sports' teams not only identify the cities where they play but are also a source of people's identification with and pride in their city.³²

Enthusiasm generated by sport is a unifying agent for the community; it is a cohesive force that also offers escape from reality. It provides an opportunity for the creation of

³¹Ibid., 193.

³²David A. Karp and William C. Yoels, "Sports and Urban Life," Journal of Sport and Social Issues 14, 2 (Fall, 1990), 90.

feelings of community, belonging and camaraderie. Sport tends to lessen the social distances between people and adds to the development of strong community feelings.³³

Baseball has been used in North America to develop community. Baseball caught on not merely as a game but as a means for expressing localities and loyalties in competition with rural towns or neighbourhoods. These games were more than casual, leisure time activities in the daily lives of these communities because victory meant innumerable personal encounters bragging rights.³⁴ Baseball helped in community development in that it taught lessons about discipline, the meaning and place of rules in human conduct, patterns of response to authority, the importance of commitment to excellence, the value of competition, the balance between individual achievement and group expectations and the relationship between efficiency and excellence. Baseball creates a common bond among spectators, regardless of ethnicity, education or occupation. Baseball was a force in integrating a population ordinarily divided by wealth, occupation, ancestry and language.³⁵ Baseball was then an

³³John R. Mitrano and Robbin E. Smith, "The Socioemotional Functions of Sport and the Maintenance of Community: Hurricane Hugo and Horse Racing in St. Croix," Arena Review 14, 1 (May, 1990), 53-54.

³⁴Gerald A. Brandmeyer and Luella K. Alexander, "Some Sociological Clues to Baseball as a National Pastime," Sport Sociology, Yiannakis et al. eds., 35.

³⁵Karp and Yoels, Sport and Urban Life, 84-85.

institution of society, an extended representative of the community. Winning was the important civic question.³⁶

Jay J. Coakley has defined the positive or functionalist approach and the negative or conflict theory in an article titled "Sport in Society: An Inspiration or An Opiate?"³⁷ A short review of the article will provide us with a vehicle to examine both the positive and negative impact baseball had on the Cape Breton community.

On the positive side sport may satisfy the four basic needs of the social system. Sport may provide both pattern maintenance and tension management. Sport provides a learning experience that reinforces and extends the learning that occurs in other settings such as the family, school and church. Through sport people learn ways to make them contributing members of society and this applies to spectators as well as those who are active participants. They learn the importance of rules, hard work, efficient organization and a well-defined authority structure. Sport may be used as an outlet for aggression management.

Sport may play a part in integration of society as it brings people together and provides them with feelings of group unity, a sense of social integration, a source of personal identity. Sports leads to co-operative action.

³⁶Duane A. Smith, "Baseball Champions of Colorado: The Leadville Blues of 1882," Journal of Sports History, 4, 1 (1977), 51.

³⁷Coakley, "Sport in Society," 27-45.

Another positive aspect associated with sport is goal attainment. In sport, success is emphasized with great importance placed on won-lost records.

Sport is a sphere of activities in which physical skills are developed and perfected. Sports may be used to maintain physical well-being at all levels. Through sports, children learn valuable lessons and adults have an opportunity to release the tensions generated by job and other events in their lives. Sports give people a topic of conversation with both friends and strangers.

The functionalist approach emphasizes only the positive aspects of sport. It states that sport has existed for a long time so it must be valuable as it still exists. However, sport may create frustrations and tensions, destroy motivation and disrupt social integration. Sport may divert group attention from crucial personal and social issues. With the functionalist approach the needs of the individual must be the same as the whole. If these desires are different, the system does not work. Sport may benefit some members of society more than others. With this approach, the rule of sport in generating conflict and maintaining a structure in which at least some relationships are based on exploitation and control.

The negative or conflict theory is based on a changing set of relationships characterized by differences of interest and held together by force, coercion and subtle manipulation.

Sport in a capitalist society is a major form of entertainment and a primary context for the consumption of material goods.

Sport may cause alienation as it focuses on time and output rather than on the individual. The standard rules and rigid structure destroy spontaneity, freedom and inventiveness characteristics in play. The commercial side of sport reduces athletics to material commodities, generating financial profits for non-participants.

Sport may be a method to develop social control. An overdeveloped interest in sport may result in an awareness of social problems and interfere with attempts to solve these problems. Sport is a topic of discussion not only during games but after and during the off-season.

Sport teaches success through hard work. Those who succeed are admired, while failures are viewed as being lazy and useless. Sport reinforces the life of the spectators as they remain observers rather than participants.

Sport may be seen as a product to be consumed. Advertising is used to convince people of the necessity to buy sporting goods. Health and athletic clubs are becoming an industry.

Sport is linked with warfare and strong militaristic orientations. It may lead to unquestioning allegiances to political beliefs and an irrational willingness to defend those beliefs. Sport divides the sexes and perpetuates a distorted definition of masculinity and femininity.

Masculinity is defined in terms of physical strength and emotional insensitivity.

There are weaknesses to the conflict theory. The rule of capitalism is overemphasized; other factors must be taken into account. Sport existed prior to the Industrial Revolution, so capitalism may be a strong influence but not the only factor. Sports may not cause alienation but can be expressive and creative. Other than being an opiate, sport may attract people who are committed to the status quo. All sport involvement is not the result of capitalists or governments.

A MAN'S WORLD

Mining communities for various reasons form a special type of community which has a great degree of dependence on its employer.³⁸ This high degree of specialization of primary extraction industry means that it supplies one product or none at all. The common interests in the mining industry leads to close-knit ties between the workers and a stratified system of community life develops. Capital and labour are mutually opposed with the employer and employee in conflict, the mine workers displaying solidarity against the owners.

The skills required by miners are not easily transferable to other industries. Mines are owned by absentee owners making labour problem-solving difficult. The owners have no link to the community other than profit. When mines close,

³⁸Bulmer, "Sociological Models," 61-91.

miners must move and this requires the severing of all ties which the miner has built up in his community. In these single industry communities this comes to assume great importance. These mining communities feel a sense of apartness from the worker society and they become even more dependent on their own resources.

A mining environment constitutes a source of tension and discontent for several reasons. The nature of the work and its danger, the economics of the industry and internal communication problem all contribute to and generate such feelings. Work is difficult and arduous, depends on unpredictable natural conditions and the close co-operation of groups of work-mates and requires great physical exertion. Mining is a particularly dangerous industry in which to work and accidents and even death underground are within the experience of most miners. Because of the work conditions in mines, miners have a degree of autonomous control in their work place.

The tension of the mining industry lends to a development of labour solidarity. Miners must co-operate in their place of work and those workers who do not co-operate are alienated. The hardships must be shared for the good of all. Further to the solidarity of the work place, friendship carries over to non-work activity.

There are several conditions present which suggest the development of an occupational community. There is solidarity

among relatively autonomous groups requiring a high degree of involvement. Shiftwork is present to strengthen the after work social relations and work is a consuming topic of conversation. In an occupation community the members see themselves in terms of their occupational roles. The members of the occupational community share a reference group. Work activities and interests are carried into their non-work lives.

In an occupational community man's activity is found outside the home. The activities of women are centred on the home, providing for a husband and children. A woman's function is to run the house and bring up the children. Main social contacts will be with other women, kinfolk and women neighbours. Women are excluded from all but the domestic role. Exclusion of women from the world of men is stronger in the working class.³⁹

In an occupational community sport, drinking and religious enthusiasm provide a means of finding communal sociability and of trying to forget mine work.⁴⁰ There is a deep emotional and intellectual commitment on the part of fans and participants. The fortunes of teams and players are followed and sport is used both as a spectator and a

³⁹Thomas Dunk, It's A Working Man's Town (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1991), 99.

⁴⁰Bulmer, "Sociological Models," 86.

participant.⁴¹ Frustrations can be relieved through the playing and watching of sports. Sport offers people a chance to play a role, to participate; people can express approval or disapproval. Sport is one very important social aspect of an industrial community. It is used to develop friendship and common interest.

Thomas Dunk in his book It's A Working Man's Town⁴² devotes considerable time to examining the role of gender and identifies the exclusion of women from games along with their supporting roles at home plus the methods used by males to exert control over their wives and girlfriends. Furthermore Dunk deals with the place of race and ethnicity in relationship to sport. Sports during the 1930s appear to be a masculine domain. Anne Hall voices the perspective that sports were masculine in nature, a training ground for those qualities of physical artistry and strength, courage and stamina, integrity and loyalty that gave men their claim to the greatest share of the social surplus.⁴³ Sports would give men the physical attributes they require to gain their natural place in society, teaching life skills necessary to control day to day activities. Sport was used to build a strong character - the strong character needed to build leadership. Team sports were more important in the development of

⁴¹Dunk, Working Man's Town, 104.

⁴²Ibid., 65-132.

⁴³Hall, Sport In Canadian Society, 63.

character than individual sport.⁴⁴ Team sports were fundamental in the building of a strong masculine character. By playing team sports men learned to use the ability to get along in a group, to have the team mean more than the individual. One team game to help males learn group strengths and prove their masculinity was baseball. The baseball diamond was a testing ground for manhood.⁴⁵ The game of baseball taught young boys to become men by learning the rules of team play and putting the general good against individual goals.⁴⁶

Sport did not have the same character building, strength giving aspects when used in the description of games thought suitable for women. Sports for women was a feminine idea; it should develop grace and beauty, mutual sharing and intimacy in the domestic sphere.⁴⁷ A woman's place in society was to reproduce; all her energy must be conserved for reproduction and a role as a mother. Women had a moral duty to preserve their vital energy for childbearing and to cultivate personality traits suited to the wife and mother role.⁴⁸

The mass media portrayed women's athletic competence as

⁴⁴Kidd, The Struggle, 26.

⁴⁵Jean Barman, "Sport and the Development of Character," Sports in Canada, Morris Mott, ed. (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1989), 239.

⁴⁶Howell, Sandlots, 97.

⁴⁷Hall, Sport In Canadian Society, 65.

⁴⁸Lenskyj, Out of Bounds, 18.

unfeminine and unattractive to men while within the sport system formal rules and restrictions excluded girls and women from the full range of physical activities.⁴⁹ Females were denied facilities and opportunities to participate in sports; their attempts were ridiculed when they attempted to participate in vigorous activity.⁵⁰ Certain activities have a long tradition of segregation or a 'male-only' participation. Sports and sporting activity among middle class women were blamed for some women not reproducing and being mothers. Medical activities and practices reflect and reinforce the axiom that motherhood is the destiny of all women and that women must be fertile at all times.⁵¹ Athletics could promote excessive muscular development, contribute to difficult childbirth and inferior offspring. But there was a double standard at play in this attitude. The medical class said nothing about the hazardous working class conditions on the general health of working class women. These women had no time, energy or financial resources at the end of the working day.

It is the viewpoint of Helen Lenskyj that males were seen to be physically superior to all females or had innate leanings towards competitive team sports while women were

⁴⁹Ibid., 11.

⁵⁰Kidd, The Struggle, 26.

⁵¹Lenskyj, Out of Bounds, 140.

content with individual recreational pursuits.⁵² There was an assumption that success in sport was incompatible with femininity and heterosexuality. Masculine sports would make female athletes unfeminine or these women would be accused of being masculine or worse, lesbian. Muscles, strength, strain, sweat and dirt were offensive when used to describe women participating in sport.⁵³ Sports' teams were for men while fitness activities were for women.

Special rules were developed to reduce the stress many feared may be caused to women playing sports. Sports were to be segregated by sex, with women playing in a less vigorous fashion than boys. Women must prepare for motherhood.⁵⁴ But women did play games. More permissive dress codes allowed women athletes to discard bulky dresses and bloomers for shorts and shirts, greatly increasing their mobility and their enjoyment of games.⁵⁵ Sports was a means of developing feminine beauty and grace. For boys the goal was to develop physical and mental endurance and control over their bodies. Girls do not need to compete, to fight, to achieve, or to excel because such behaviour lies in the male domain.⁵⁶ There

⁵²Ibid., 70.

⁵³Ibid., 78.

⁵⁴Kidd, The Struggle, 99.

⁵⁵Ibid., 101.

⁵⁶Helen Lenskyj, "Femininity First: Sport and Physical Education For Ontario Girls, 1890-1930," Morris Mott, ed., Sports In Canada, (Mississauga: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1989), 197.

were certain features of acceptable sport and activities they could perform gracefully, without sweating and were dominated by women with leisure time.⁵⁷ There would be no body contact, no long distance movement or playing over a long period of time.

Community requires a territory and locality. For community to develop, there must be social interaction, solidarity, common interest and shared identity among other necessities. Sport can help by building community and strengthening the bonds between people. Sport builds strong positive identification, belonging, friendship and camaraderie.

Having defined community and the relationship sport can have with community we shall examine how the Cape Breton Colliery League related to the people of industrial Cape Breton. Did this Colliery League add to the strength of the community? Did it strengthen the communities or cause problems for the towns? How were women, black and native people treated? Where did the players come from and what did they feel towards the people of Cape Breton?

⁵⁷Ibid., 188.

CHAPTER II
TROOPS, UNIONS AND THE RED MENACE

During the period 1784-1820, coal deposits were moved on a small scale by the colonial government or through lease by private individuals. In 1826 the General Mining Association began mining mainly at Sydney Mines. By 1873 there were eight coal companies operating in Cape Breton. In 1894 the Dominion Coal Company was granted exclusive rights to the province's coal resources for ninety-nine years. In 1900 the company began to produce steel in Sydney.

Sydney Mines was incorporated as a town in 1890 followed by Sydney and North Sydney in 1895. Sydney was elevated to the status of a city in 1904. The towns of Glace Bay, Dominion and New Waterford were incorporated in 1901, 1906 and 1913 respectively.

The mining communities of Cape Breton have a strong sense of tradition and culture built over the length of their existence. They feature a network of inherited loyalties, established social institutions and widely shared popular traditions. Three examples of the community are the ethnic ties which had a strong appeal, the church remained one of the most prominent social institutions and the oral tradition of

¹Paul McEwan, Miners and Steelworkers. Labour in Cape Breton, (Toronto: Samuel Stevens Hakkert & Company, 1976), 4-8.

song and story was a common feature of social life.² The population of the mining communities was drawn from Europe and the coal towns of Britain but with the expansion of the industry native born Scots of Cape Breton along with miners recruited from the farms and fishing communities of Eastern Nova Scotia and Newfoundland soon came to outnumber the imported labourers. The skill level of the imported miners guaranteed their rise in the company.³

Many of the Scots in rural Cape Breton came from the same area of Scotland and had a strong sense and commonality of experience. When their farms could no longer support their families, they moved to the coal fields. They soon comprised the overwhelming majority of the population and continued to be in touch with their roots.⁴ A Scottish Catholic Society was formed to preserve Scottish culture and became a strong influence in the towns. In the 1920s there were twelve churches in Glace Bay, six in New Waterford and five in Sydney Mines and these churches had a powerful influence on the populace. The clergy was active in benefit societies and the temperance organizations and their help established the first

²David Frank, "Traditions and Culture in the Cape Breton Mining Community in the Early Twentieth Century, Cape Breton at 200 ed. Kenneth Donovan (Sydney, NS: University College of Cape Breton, 1985), 204.

³Del Muise, "The Making of An Industrial Community: Cape Breton Coal Towns 1867-1900," Cape Breton Historical Essays eds. Don Macgillivray and Brian Tennyson (Sydney, NS: University College of Cape Breton Press, 1980), 76-84.

⁴Ibid., 82.

hospitals in the area. In spite of their charitable works, the general population of miners and workers viewed the clergy as members of the elite. During the 1920s the clergy stressed conservative themes and denounced the labour leaders. A small number of clergy did support labour including J.J. Tompkins, a vice-president at Saint Francis Xavier University, who attempted to implement progressive policy with educational clubs and a labour college. In spite of these attempts at labour support, many of the miners had lost faith in the church.⁵ Industrial Cape Breton was the only area east of Montreal to engage in protracted industrial unrest and to support alternative political representation. For Nova Scotia, the mining communities represent a deviance that is most striking given the basic conservative political and social system of the province.

Not to be forgotten in the development of community in industrial Cape Breton was the constant conflict with the coal companies. This conflict led to a united front and a high level of worker solidarity. The coal companies had great influence on the lives of the towns for they dominated the local labour market along with owning the company stores and company houses.⁶

Troops were sent to the Cape Breton coal fields in 1876,

⁵Frank, "Traditions and Culture," 210.

⁶David Frank, "Company Town/Labour Town: Local Government in the Cape Breton Coal Towns, 1917-1926," Histoire Sociale-Social History, XIV, 27 (Mar-May 1981), 177.

1882, 1904 and 1909. These troops merely antagonized the working class, a prime recruiting area for the military.⁷ After World War I the miners had high expectations but the coal industry was on the edge of collapse. The rapid expansion of the coal industry ended with the war and was now in decline. The Nova Scotia coal industry had two major weaknesses: its distance from markets and the wastability of the market. In this climate of economic uncertainty the miners and the British Empire Steel Corporation wanted to change the terms on which labour was bought and sold in the coal industry. Wages were sixty percent of production costs; a reduction in wages would lead to an increase in the margin of profit.⁸ In the early 1900s the Provincial Workman's Association united workers in the coalfields throughout Nova Scotia. The power in the P.W.A. was held by district sub-councils and workers were rarely discouraged from going on strike. Decentralization aided local militants who in many cases sympathized with socialism⁹ but by 1908 District 26 United Mine Workers of America represented 12,000 mines in

⁷Don Macgillivray, "Military Aid to the Civil Power: The Cape Breton Experience in the 1920s," Acadiensis, III, 2 (Spring, 1974), 49.

⁸David Frank, "Class Conflict in the Coal Industry Cape Breton 1922," Essays In Canadian Working Class History, eds. Gregory S. Kealey and Peter Warrion (Toronto: MacLelland & Stewart, 1976), 162.

⁹Michael Earle, "The Coalminers and Their 'Red' Unions: The Amalgamated Mine Workers of Nova Scotia, 1932-1936," Labour/Le Travail 22 (Fall 1988), 100.

Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. These workers demanded substantial improvements in their standard of living and a growing interest in improving social conditions. Consumer prices were rising and the employment conditions were unsteady. Better housing and sanitary living conditions were required along with better working conditions in the mines. The end of the war saw labour unrest grow in the mining district along with a spirit of independence and cohesion among the population.¹⁰

In the years at the end of the First World War residents of the coal towns challenged the power of the coal company. The Amalgamated Mine Workers of Nova Scotia won union recognition, wage increases and an eight hour day. Labour candidates achieved unprecedented success in the coal towns, winning control of town councils which in the past had been dominated by company officials. The councils began to distinguish between the interests of the community and the company.¹¹ In 1918 James Ling of New Waterford became Cape Breton's first labour mayor and was elected five times. By 1919 there were seven miners on the Glace Bay town council; in Sydney Mines and on County Council labour candidates won limited control of town council. In 1923 Dan William Morrison was elected mayor of Glace Bay and was also District President of United Mine Workers for fourteen years. The councils began

¹⁰Frank, "Class Conflict," 165.

¹¹Frank, "Company Town," 179.

to show their working class influence. They objected to evictions from company houses, protested high coal prices, requested free coal for families on the poor list and took up the grievances of retired and injured workers. In Sydney Mines and Glace Bay, council was successful in raising company taxes.

The nature of class conflict in the coal towns tended to unite most members of the community around the interests of the working class population. Most local businesses were small and they could not leave the towns. Most of their capital was committed and they had extended credit to the miners. When the miners were without work and could not pay their bills, hostility was vented by small merchants towards the coal company. While having the support of the workers and small business, town councils challenged the coal company on various civic issues and in times of crisis actually took the miners' side.¹²

Working class unity was built by the physical conditions of working in a mine with hard work and danger. The miners had control over their work and work place due to isolation. With the Coal Miners Regulation Act miners had the right to appoint two men to inspect the mine. The miners had the right to propose changes to the Mines Department. There were elected check weighmen who guaranteed the miners' interests at the scales. The weighmen were paid by the miners through

¹²Ibid., 192.

deductions from earnings, and were elected annually, often being injured or a worked blacklisted by the company.

A Pit Committee, three men elected by the union members at each colliery, represented the men at inquiries into accidents and the constitution of United Mine Workers District 26 provided the committees conduct regular inspections of the mines. The most important function of the Pit Committee was to adjust disputes and grievances as they arose in the course of the day or as they were presented at union meetings. The Pit Committee negotiated directly with the mine's manager.¹³

During January of 1922 the British Empire Steel Corporation reduced the miners' wages by thirty-five percent. The miners proposed to strike and on August 16, Roy Wolvin, B.E.S.C.O. President, requested military intervention because the walk-out would include maintenance men who were required to keep the mines from flooding. D.W. Morrison, Mayor of Glace Bay and a Labour member of the Legislative Assembly refused the request but County Court Judge Duncan Finlayson requisitioned troops under the militia Act. The two arguments presented for the use of troops were the strike included maintenance men and the mines would not be protected. There was fear of the radical union led by J.B. McLachlan and "Red" Dan Livingstone; the coal company feared a revolution. Wolvin

¹³David Frank, "Contested Terrain Workers Control in the Cape Breton Mines in the 1920s, " On the Job: Confronting the Labor Process In Canada, eds. Craig Herron and Robert Storey (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986), 106.

wanted twenty-five hundred troops and naval forces.¹⁴ During this time the miners displayed a high degree of discipline and determination. The strike was settled by August 26 and the miners felt settlement was brought about by use of force. The miners and their families were hungry and it appeared the Federal and Provincial Governments favoured B.E.S.C.O. The military heightened the tensions; the strength of the union leadership ensured discipline and there were no arrests.

During June 1923 B.E.S.C.O. refused a wage increase, decreased the hours of work and refused to recognize a steelworkers' union. The steelworkers went on strike on June 30 and once again Judge Finlayson requisitioned troops. The steelworkers had a weak organization and on the first evening a confrontation broke out between strikers and representatives of the company. Troops fired over the heads of the crowd and the strikers threw rocks. The next day Mounted Police charged a crowd of people in Whitney Pier. Some of the recipients of the police charge were women and children returning from church.¹⁵ Eighty-five hundred miners walked out in support of the steel workers along with sympathy strikers in Pictou and in the coalfields of Alberta. On July 29 the miners returned to work followed by the steelworkers on July 31. The steelworkers had no effective union organization and discipline. It is possible the troops increased violence

¹⁴Macgillivray, Military Aid, 50.

¹⁵Ibid., 56.

because it was after the arrival of the troops that the miners joined the strike.

During the autumn and winter of 1924-25 the economy was sluggish for the Island's steel and coal industries with direct and dire consequences for the workers and their families. Employment in the mines was sparse and those who were working were only managing one or two shifts a week. The situation was made worse when B.E.S.C.O. terminated all credit at its company stores. Faced with little work and less food the miners reluctantly went on strike in March. By April 1, many families were dependent on donations from across the country merely to stay alive. The Federal Government refused to intervene. On June 11, 1925 a clash between miners and B.E.S.C.O. police at New Waterford resulted in the shooting death of one miner and the serious wounding of another. Five miners were hospitalized along with thirty policemen. Again Judge Finlayson requisitioned troops and violence followed this action. There was raiding, looting and burning throughout the month of June. Many company stores were looted and several burned to the ground.¹⁶ The troops were used for intimidation but they intensified the feeling of the miners who showed organization and solidarity. The military gave the radicals in the union a strong platform. The troops increased the anger and despair felt by the workers towards the Island and Provincial Governments.

¹⁶Ibid., 63-64.

A DECLINE IN RADICALISM

During the 1920s many prominent radicals were expelled from the U.M.W.A. including J. B. McLachlan, perhaps the most popular of the left-wing mine worker radicals.¹⁷ The right wing under the leadership of John L. Lewis had gained control of the International. These moves to expel left-leaning labour leaders was not forgotten in Cape Breton.

The most effective ideological opposition to left-wing politics came from the Antigonish Movement which spread to Cape Breton in the 1930s to counteract the spread of communism. It combined adult education with the building of credit unions and consumer co-operatives.¹⁸ The movement was founded by Father James Tompkins in conjunction with the Extension Department of Saint Frances Xavier University. The movement grew under the direction of Father Moses Coady.

In 1930, study clubs began appearing in the mining towns of Cape Breton and they would serve as a great antidote to the extreme radicalism that was prevalent in the area.¹⁹ The Antigonish Movement worked the middle ground between the excessive individualism of the right and the mass approach of

¹⁷Earle, "The Coalminers," 111.

¹⁸Ibid., 105.

¹⁹Ibid., 157.

the left.²⁰ It was an option for those who rejected a purely political approach to social and economic problems.

The local parish priest would organize a meeting of twelve members, both men and women. They would choose a clearly defined goal - formation of a credit union, a co-operative store or a marketing co-operative, any project that would result in economic action. The Extension Department would provide books, pamphlets and leaflets on the topic being studied and once a year a volunteer leader would be invited to take a short course at the university.²¹

All the clubs in the area met monthly to compare progress, identify problems and formulate a plan of action. Women were members of the clubs and served as extension workers. The co-operative movement was seen as crucial in stemming population emigration particularly if economic reconstruction could improve the quality and amenities of homes in rural areas.²²

In 1931 DOSCO was to close mines and lowering wages and were inflexible in these demands. The miners could not strike for they would get no support from the United Mine Workers of America and their president Lewis. To combat the company and Lewis, the miners at Phalen Wall, Reserve, Glace Bay Mechanics

²⁰Jim Lotz, "The Historical and Social Setting of the Antigonish Movement," Nova Scotia Historical Quarterly (1975), 103.

²¹Ernest Stabler, Founders, Innovations in Education 1830-1980 (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1986), 157-167.

²²Earle, The Coalminers, 118.

Victory and 1B locals voted to break with U.M.W. forming the Amalgamated Mine Workers of Nova Scotia honouring the name of the union in existence in 1917-1919.

The new union had a strong leadership at the local level. All elected leaders were working miners who had records of opposing the U.M.W.A. They controlled the rank and file miners and were very militant. The U.M.W. had a strong tendency towards decentralization and local autonomy and used their strength to build a strong militant base. The weakness of the new union was the difficulty in developing united action and a consistent policy. They were also weak financially with no check-off in place for union dues. The leaders of A.M.W. were under the influence of communist ideas and a leading handful were party members.²³

By 1936 there was a need for unity between the two rival unions. On April 26, 1936 the A.M.W. voted itself out of existence and the miners returned to the U.M.W.²⁴ In August, 1938 the United Mine Workers affiliated with the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, a move supported by both the right and left wings of the union.²⁵

The trade union movement in Cape Breton portrayed a

²³Ibid., 118.

²⁴David Frank and John Manley, "The Sad March to the Right J. B. McLachlan's Resignation from the Communist Party of Canada, 1936" Labour/Le Travail (Fall, 1982), 118.

²⁵M. Earle and H. Gamberg, "The United Mine Workers and the Coming of the C.C.F. to Cape Breton," Acadiensis XIX, 1 (Fall 1989), 3.

strong sense of independence and self-determination. The miners in Cape Breton had a strong sentiment for independence from outside control so much so that the Amalgamated Mine Workers never affiliated with the Workers Unity League. A desire for decentralization, autonomy of the locals from the district organization was accomplished by breaking from the United Mine Workers of America. The Amalgamated Mine Workers disagreed with the direction of Nova Scotia Affairs by the United Mine Workers international executive.²⁶ When John L. Lewis, President of United Mine Workers of America deposed J. B. McLachlan and the 1923 District 26 executive many of the miners felt this a great injustice and reason to form their own union. In 1932 the Amalgamated Mine Workers of Nova Scotia was founded. It passed control of affairs to the rank and file members and therefore would be much more militant. One of the new union's first acts was to abolish check off dues; dues would be paid but not by automatic deductions.²⁷ This policy failed badly because the miners did not have the money to pay dues; they were too poor.

United Mine Workers had their own strengths in the battle with the new union. They had a contract with the coal company; check off of union dues, company officials would only negotiate with the United Mine Workers concerning grievances, disputes or future contracts. The Amalgamated Mine Workers

²⁶Earle, The Coalminers, 101-102.

²⁷Ibid., 120.

could not achieve their goals. The militant action to win concessions on wages split the union movement weakening the miners' position in relation to the company, a situation which may have contributed to low wages. The living standards of the miners was not advanced²⁸ and in 1936 the Amalgamated Mine Workers Union returned to the United Mine Workers. Although the union attempt failed, the miners showed strength and pride in their drive for local autonomy.

EXCLUSION BY GENDER

The towns of Cape Breton presented some opportunities for women to earn wages as domestic servants, teachers, clerks, nurses, office workers and telephone operators. But the most common form of women's work was household labour, women worked in the home dependent on the income of male wage-earners.²⁹ When women did work, wages were at a subsistence level ignoring the possibility that women had dependents, or needed to save for sickness or old age. It was difficult for women to obtain higher minimum wage rates as these rates were set in consultation with employers and then presented to labour.³⁰ Women worked to meet the material needs of their families or

²⁸Ibid., 134.

²⁹David Frank, "The Miner's Financier: Women in the Cape Breton Coal Towns 1919," Atlantis, VIII (Spring 1983), 137.

³⁰Margaret E. McCallum, "Keeping Women In Their Place: The Minimum Wage In Canada 1910-25," Labour/Le Travail, 17 (Spring 1986), 10.

by the absence or impoverishment of the male provider.³¹ These women were not working for self-fulfilment but survival.

The job of the wives in the coal towns was not an easy task. The combination of low wages and idle times increased the importance of careful budget management for the family. Although each family had different arrangements for domestic work, the responsibility for budget management fell most often on the women.³² During hard times women were predominant in relief lines. Many times the provisions were not sufficient to feed the entire family. To supplement, women raised chickens as a source of eggs and meats while some raised pigs and cows as well.

During times of strikes, working class women were helping to enforce solidarity and provide for their families. Women would ridicule soldiers at every opportunity. They organized support activities, participated in crowd actions and stretched the dole to meet their family needs. Women played an important role in crowd activities and the domestic labour of women constituted a hidden form of strike support.³³ During the strike actions the division of labour seemed to be built on gender roles. The men performed the work of breaking in to the store while the women waited outside to select whatever

³¹Margaret Hobbs, "Equality and Difference: Feminism and the Defence of Women Workers During the Great Depression," Labour/Le Travail, 32 (Fall 1993), 202.

³²Frank, "Contested Terrain," 30.

³³Penfold, "Have You No Manhood?", 23.

goods were needed in their households. Working class women were excellent propaganda tools, being coupled with children and portrayed as passive victims of injustice either at the hands of an uncaring company and an impotent government or of a misguided communist labour leader. Women expressed their commitment to the working class through letters and statements to the press.³⁴

By the 1930s the possibility of being exclusively in a self-fulfilling domestic sphere had become increasingly remote. Nevertheless, Nova Scotia women strove at enormous psychological cost to maintain their place in the home.³⁵ As the region became increasingly more marginal to the North American industrial heartland it fell behind in opportunities and social services adding to the increasing pressures on women as they attempted to provide for their families.

During this period of difficult economic times a number of women joined the Amalgamated Mine Workers Women's Auxiliary. The auxiliary was a communist movement which concentrated on the problems of women as wives and mothers, making demands such as free school books, and the elimination of military cadet corps in schools. They became involved in the relief issues trying to improve the conditions among the

³⁴Ibid., 40.

³⁵Margaret Conrad, Toni Laidlaw, and Donna Smyth, No Place Like Home, (Halifax, N.S.: Formac Publishing Company Limited, 1988), 302.

working class.³⁶ Working class women were hired for low wages; middle class women enjoyed access to professions, teaching, nursing or other social service occupations, part of women's accepted sphere.

In the coal fields of Cape Breton boys were employed in the mines and at a young age began to learn the trade of mining and the political and social position of miners in the mine and in the community. A boy was defined by provincial legislation as anyone under 18 who had yet to attain the position of coal cutter or miner. Boys were engaged in a variety of occupations within the mines but by 1923 legislation virtually excluded boys from the province's coal mines.³⁷

There were numerous reasons to employ boys in a coal mine. Their small size made them ideally suited for various tasks and by using boys, the wage levels could be kept low. Boys looked after horses in the mine and if the space was too small for the horse, boys would move coal manually. Another task was the opening of doors for ventilation. The doors, along with channelling air through the mines allowed the passage of drivers, horses and material from area to area. Boys began with jobs on the surface before working underground and received sixty to seventy percent of a man's pay. These

³⁶Earle, "The Coalminers," 103.

³⁷Robert McIntosh, "The Boys in the Nova Scotia Coal Mines: 1873-1923," Acadiensis XVI, 1 (Spring, 1987), 35.

wages were contributed to the family income, for the miner and his sons were the family breadwinners. The boys from their earliest experiences were moulded to manhood and an occupational identity by their families and their work activities.³⁸ Entering the mine meant initiation into the world of manhood. The boys, incorporating their functional indispensability had been educated by the mine, not only in the art of survival but in collective unity and discipline.³⁹ The boys were both militant and effective. They developed instinctive solidarity and independence. Although working at an early age, the boys were not above having recreational strikes, which occurred when the lure of a circus or a ballgame became too strong to resist.⁴⁰ Boys were socialized into manhood as they moved through the hierarchy of jobs underground. They acquired gender traits of courage and stoicism in the face of constant danger and a sense of independence derived from being a tradesman. The boys obtained not only a work related education but initiation rites as well, as they were often the butt of practical jokes and targets of tobacco-chewing miners. The key to this process was going up through the ranks supervised by kin, as many a boy was brought into the mine as a helper for his father. The physical conditions of the mine led to a feeling

³⁸Ian MacKay, "The Experience of Work," 24.

³⁹Ibid., 28.

⁴⁰MacIntosh, The Boys in the Nova Scotia Coal Mines, 43.

of co-operation and common interests with fellow miners.⁴¹

EXCLUSION BY RACE

The period between the wars saw black men concentrated in increasingly specialized corners of the economy as waiters, janitors, barbers and labourers. Black women were employed as domestic servants, laundresses and waitresses. The elite of the men became railway waiters and porters.

Blacks relied upon mutual co-operation within their own families and communities for economic survival and upon black institutions and cultural activities for their social lives. The church played a most significant role in the lives of blacks as it lent a sense of dignity and sanctification. With the difficult economic times many blacks left for Montreal or Toronto.⁴²

Black and native communities were socially and economically marginal. They were confronted by both overt and covert discrimination. Segregated schools, shortage of funds and teachers meant that black children could rarely be certain of their education.⁴³ The Mic Mac and Blacks were regularly

⁴¹Steven Penfold, "Have You No Manhood In You? Gender and Class in the Cape Breton Coal Towns, 1920-1926," Acadiensis XXIII, 2 (Spring 1994), 24-25.

⁴²James W. StG. Walker, "Black History in the Maritimes: Major Themes and Teaching Strategies," in Teaching Maritime Studies, ed. P. A. Buckner (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1986), 99-100.

⁴³John G. Reid, Six Crucial Decades (Fredericton, N.B., Nimbus Publishing Ltd., 1987), 178-179.

denied entrance to hotels, restaurants and other public places until the late 1960s.⁴⁴

Blacks had co-existed with whites in a province clearly dominated politically and culturally by the whites. The blacks made up only a small part of the population and lived largely in isolated urban and urban fringe areas. They existed in separate communities, churches and schools. In the work place blacks were usually dependent upon and subordinate to whites. Black businesses were small, the land insufficient to avoid dependence, there were no black co-operatives and they worked as reserve labour.⁴⁵

During the early 1930s the majority of native people in Nova Scotia lived on one of the provinces' thirty-eight reserves⁴⁶ in a state of isolation. The goal of the Federal Government was to assimilate the native people with whites, causing a loss of native culture.⁴⁷ The government felt by moving the natives from small reserves to a few large reserves the process of assimilation would be accomplished.

⁴⁴Daniel N. Paul, We Were Not the Savages (Halifax, N.S.: Nimbus Publishing company, 1993), 264.

⁴⁵Donald Clairmont and Fred Wien, "Blacks and Whites: The Nova Scotia Race Relations Experience," in Banked Fires: The Ethnics of Nova Scotia, ed. Douglas F. Cambell (Port Credit, Ont.: The Scribblers Press, 1978), 142-158.

⁴⁶Harold Franklin McGee Jr., "The Mic Mac Indians: The Earliest Migrants," in Banked Fires: The Ethnics of Nova Scotia, ed. Douglas F. Cambell (Port Credit, Ont.: The Scribblers Press, 1978), 29.

⁴⁷John G. Reid, Six Crucial Decades, 178-179.

Through common language, culture, work conditions and backgrounds, the coal communities of Cape Breton were developed. Labour strife and the development of strong trade unions were instrumental in producing a strong sense of brotherhood and solidarity. A further addition to the growth of community was the love of sport and in particular baseball. During the years 1936-1939 as important as sport was in the pride of the community, baseball played the most important role.

The towns of industrial Cape Breton had developed strong communities based on a common background of tradition and culture. The people of the industrial area for the most part had a common language, religion (both Roman Catholic and Protestant) and many worked in the mines or steel mills; those who did not work in these areas depended on the workers for their livelihood. Through conflict with the coal companies, a strong sense of solidarity had been developed as the miners battled federal troops, provincial police and squads of strike breakers hired by the coal company.

There is a downside to the strong communities found in the coal towns. While many of the miners were left-leaning in their political beliefs, the churches of the area were anti-labour and conservative. This did not help the labour movement as it attempted to improve the working and living conditions of the workers. There were internal differences within the labour movement as the miners in many cases

disagreed with the policies of the United Mine Workers of America. The degree of difference over union policies caused a deep division in the mine workers united front.

On the homefront women were seen as support for their husbands; their job was to stay at home and support the family. Blacks and native people were at worst segregated and at best ignored by the rest of the population.

CHAPTER III
THE GREAT BISSONETTE

Baseball played in the Cape Breton Colliery League provided many exciting moments for its fans. Players both local and imported played exciting, fast paced games guaranteed to keep the level of interest in the game of baseball at a fever pitch. But the League contributed more than just enjoyment to the communities of industrial Cape Breton. Baseball was a source of community cohesion. The League assisted in the definition of community boundaries and served as a sacred community symbol. In Cape Breton, baseball was a metaphor for class antagonism as the Colliery League rebelled against the dictatorial powers of the Nova Scotia Amateur Baseball Association. The Colliery League provided an escape from the day to day problems of life by not only playing exciting baseball but adding to the already strong sense of community found in the League towns.

The summer of 1935 was a successful time for the Cape Breton Colliery League although not without difficulties. The clubs were community teams organized solely to provide sport for their respective towns. It was difficult for the teams to finish the season out of debt with attendance at the games barely covering the operating expenses of the club including transportation, upkeep of the field, officials in charge of

the games, balls and other baseball gear.¹

The League consisted of the Glace Bay team which was sponsored by the Caledonia Club which fielded the Maritime and Eastern rugby football champions and hoped for further success with their baseball endeavours. The team would use the clubhouse and field belonging to the rugby club. Their aim was to encourage the development of younger baseball players and bring a championship to town. Also present were the 1935 champion Dominion Hawks, Reserve and New Waterford. The Whitney Pier team was reorganized and would use players from Sydney.

The Sydney Mines Ramblers gained entry to the League in 1935. In previous seasons, baseball in Sydney Mines consisted of a three team church league with Roman Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian teams represented. As time progressed the league became more concerned with religion than playing baseball and some players including Max Cullen who had played in the senior league with the Pier team suggested entry to the Colliery League. Applying for entry in 1934 they were rebuffed in their efforts but succeeded in gaining entry to the league in 1935.² The team would spend over \$1,000.00 on improvements to the Brown Street Field assisted in their efforts by the Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Company.³

¹Sydney Post Record, 23 April 1935.

²Interview with Max Cullen, 16 November 1991.

³Sydney Post Record, 7 April 1935.

The Dominion Hawks opened a new ballpark during 1935 with over 2,000 fans in attendance. There was a six foot fence and a four tier grandstand behind home plate with another grandstand down the third base line. There was a sign over the entrance gate which read "Hawks Baseball Park, 1911-1935". The first game of the 1935 season saw the Dominion team wearing new uniforms while the visiting New Waterford team had uniforms previously worn by the Brooklyn Dodgers, grey with red trim and numbers on the back.⁴

New Waterford won the 1935 regular schedule followed by Dominion and the Sydney team. In the first round of the play-offs Dominion defeated Sydney and faced the New Waterford Dodgers, losers of only one game during the regular twenty game schedule, in the finals. The finals were an upset as Dominion won the right to face the Springhill Fencebusters. The teams split the two games in Dominion but the Hawks won the next two games in Springhill to advance to the Nova Scotia finals against the powerful Yarmouth Gateways. The Gateways defeated the Hawks in straight games with the scores of 14-0, 8-1 and 9-4. The Dominion team was no match for the Gateways who were undefeated in their march to the Nova Scotia title.

As the 1936 season approached the Cape Breton clubs attempted to find ways to compete on a more level playing field with the mainland teams. One method of improving the level of play was to import players, particularly American

⁴Ibid., 3 June 1935.

players who many fans felt had greater skills than local players. By importing players the Cape Breton teams would risk the wrath of the Nova Scotia Amateur Baseball Association and the Maritime Provinces Branch of the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada. If importing players was to be the chosen method of play, where would the players come from and how would they be obtained? Would the players in fact improve play and would they be accepted by the local fans? And finally what action would the governing sports bodies take against the Cape Breton teams? The teams of the Cape Breton Colliery Baseball League were not pleased with their performance against the top mainland baseball clubs and the treatment these clubs appeared to be getting from the amateur sports associations. The 1936 season would show the direction the teams would take to improve the baseball being played on Cape Breton Island. Baseball was an institution of society, an extended representative of the community. Winning was the important civic question. No longer was losing to be tolerated.⁵

No longer would the League or its players be amateur. Amateur players were expected to play the game for the sake of the game; to play by the rules was more important than winning, demonstrating unending courage, perseverance, fair play and honesty. Sport was an avocation, not a vocation,

⁵Duane A. Smith, "Baseball Champions of Colorado: The Leadville Blues of 1882," Journal of Sports History, vol. 4, (1977), 51.

stressing individual responsibility and honour.⁶ Anyone who earned his living through sport or who benefitted financially from sport was not an amateur. A player could not be given a paid job, a playing bonus or an outright payment to play sport. The defenders of amateur play believed money in sports led to violence, ungentlemanly conduct and unethical practices. Sports must not have open competition or play for money. Professionalism would result in very strong teams which many local players could not make, lessening their ability to perform. The importation of players would produce champions but sports would no longer be a game for all. The defenders of amateur sport see a sporting world for all not just a talented few. Sports nurtured the manly qualities of robustness, mental vigour, determination, discipline, fair play and integrity. Success went to those who possessed these virtues.⁷ When an athlete accepted money these attributes became secondary to attaining monetary success.

However, if a town's reputation was on the line then its team had to have the best players. That eventually meant freeing players from their other jobs to enable them to practice, encouraging them to develop specialized skills and "importing" better players from outside the community.⁸ As interest in sport grew it was necessary to gain an edge on the

⁶Hall and others, Sport In Canadian Society, 58.

⁷Ibid., 63.

⁸Kidd, The Struggle, 31.

competition and one way of getting an edge was the importation of players. The primary function of an amateur organization is not to entertain the public; professionals on the other hand must entertain the public to make a profit and stay in business. The payment received from amateur sports was leading an enjoyable, healthy life and enjoying the pleasures of competition, travel and fraternity with others. The Colliery League would make its decision in the amateur versus professional question and play for pay would win. They would no longer lose to the mainland teams.

Baseball began in early March with the Sydney team obtaining the services of three Boston players along with Murray Matheson and Felix Ferguson, two excellent local players.⁹ The Sydney Mines Ramblers' President Billy H. Gillis, a local barber, announced the signing of Roy Boles, St. Stephens as player manager along with two players from Maine. Max Cullen and the Snow brothers, Harry and Joe, would lead the local players. The Rambler team was assured of financial assistance from the miners of Princess Colliery and had been granted a check-off of monies.¹⁰

Interest was growing in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to form a Maritime baseball association in which professionals and amateurs would play together. Junior teams would be used as a farm system. The association would keep the strong teams

⁹Sydney Post Record, 4 March 1936.

¹⁰Ibid., 5 March 1936.

together; included would-be teams from Cape Breton, Pictou, Springhill and Yarmouth, plus the strong New Brunswick teams. The teams in the association would make their own rules and do away with the residence rule in which a player must live in a community prior to a certain date. The association would develop players by encouraging intermediate, junior and juvenile leagues where the players would be taught the finer points of the game by imported players.¹¹ This would improve the calibre of play, which in turn would lead to greater interest in the game of baseball.

While the talk of a Maritime association was of interest in Cape Breton, the Colliery League teams decided to import five players per team. Imports were defined as players who were not residents of Cape Breton prior to the beginning of the New year. Cape Breton players may leave one club for another.¹² The Cape Breton teams desired better ball and felt United States players were necessary for this end. The Colliery League teams would stand together on the issue of imported players. The teams of the League were of the opinion the amateur rules were fifty years out of date and were of benefit only to the rich.¹³

The Dominion Hawks had \$500.00 to start the 1936 season and announced Ralph Hall would manage the club. He had begun

¹¹Ibid., 13 March 1936.

¹²Ibid., 15 March 1936.

¹³Ibid., 20 April 1936.

playing ball in 1909 as a second baseman and catcher and had played in the last Cape Breton pro league in 1923.¹⁴

Support was growing in parts of Nova Scotia for the Cape Breton notion of imported players. Alex Muirhead manager of the Westville team, was in favour of organizing a Nova Scotia Baseball Association with the help of the Cape Breton teams. This would allow them control of baseball in Nova Scotia and they could change the rules to support their ideas of strong import laden teams.¹⁵ It was reported in the Sydney Post Record that 125 players were looking for jobs in the Colliery League, 40 of these offers were in Sydney alone.¹⁶

Along with obtaining players the clubs were organizing and raising funds for the coming season. In Glace Bay the whole town would back the team not just the Caledonia Athletic Club. The other towns in the League, Sydney Mines, Sydney and New Waterford were community driven; entire towns took part in organizing the teams with excellent results. In past years the Reserve teams had been run by the Reserve A.C. but in 1936 would become a community team, each ward in the community would be represented.¹⁷ The task of running a Colliery League team was too large a job for sport clubs and must be run with the support of the whole community. The New Waterford team

¹⁴Ibid., 23 March 1936.

¹⁵Ibid., 25 March 1936.

¹⁶Ibid., 25 March 1936.

¹⁷Ibid., 9 February 1936.

was operated by the Waterford Athletic Association which had formed committees to handle finance, business, field, team management, transportation and publicity.¹⁸

The Colliery League teams decided to import the best players available in Canada and the United States to insure the fans the best ball east of Montreal. Dominion, with a population of 3,000 had been league champions for the last three years, announced the signing of Clarence "Siki" Leadbetter of Springhill and Roy Maxwell, a local star. Maxwell had obtained a job as an intern at the Glace Bay General Hospital through the influence of the coal company. They also signed three American players and "Smokey" Joe Kelly the best local pitcher in the Colliery League.

In 1935 the New Waterford Dodgers were league champions winning nineteen straight games. They were to be managed in 1936 by Bill "Doc" White, the previous year's manager. In 1934 he had coached the Springhill Fencebusters. White began his major league career in 1901 with Philadelphia of the National League and in 1903 moved to the Chicago White Sox of the American League. He had a thirteen year career with a batting average of .216, with two home runs and seventy-five runs batted in.¹⁹ White was a multi-talented performer pitching a total of 427 games with a career record of 190 wins and 157 losses; a respectable winning percentage of .548. He

¹⁸Ibid., 18 February 1936.

¹⁹The Baseball Encyclopedia. 6th ed. 1512.

had an additional fourteen wins as a relief pitcher along with six losses and five saves. His career E.R.A. was a very impressive 2.32.²⁰ In 1906 Chicago played in the World Series with White appearing in three games. This was a cross town World Series with the White Sox playing the Cubs. The heavily favoured Cubs were defeated four games to two by the light hitting Cubs with White winning the deciding game.²¹

At a League meeting held on April 16, Judge A.D. Campbell of the Juvenile Court was the unanimous choice of the delegates for President of the Cape Breton Colliery League. Dick Carrigan of Reserve was the Vice-President and Neil MacDonald was the Secretary-Treasurer. Admission at the games was set at thirty five cents. In attendance at this meeting was H.A. McQuarrie and Secretary-Treasurer L.G. Ferguson of the Nova Scotia Amateur Baseball Association. The use of imported umpires was discussed but preference to locals was given by a vote of 6-5. D.H. McFarlane, a local sports writer was appointed official scorer with the power to select his own associates. The position of Commissioner with the power to handle all disputes and protests was offered to County Court Judge D. McArthur. However, prior commitments prevented the Judge from accepting the position.

The meeting decided all imports must be in Cape Breton

²⁰Ibid., 2117.

²¹Thomas G. Aylesworth, The World Series (Greenwich: Bison Books Corp., 1988), 12.

before May 5th with no roster changes permitted after this date. The schedule was drawn up with baseball being played five days a week, with each team playing three home and three away games every two weeks.

If the Colliery League persisted with their efforts to import five players per team they could not remain in the Nova Scotia Amateur Baseball Association and the Maritime Provinces Branch of the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada would not permit the imports. The Cape Breton League felt the amateur rules were obsolete and must be changed to meet modern problems. The public demanded a better quality of baseball and imports would improve the level of play and develop a greater interest in the game. Imports would help the Cape Breton club in their quest for a Maritime title. The Cape Breton clubs were not making money and relied on social functions and tag days to break even. The Reserve delegates stated they would have imports with or without the approval of the Nova Scotia Amateur Baseball Association. President Tom MacDonald of the governing body went as far as to threaten to use immigration laws to stop American imports from coming to Cape Breton.

Clyde Nunn of Sydney attacked President MacDonald, demanding to know how he could sanction the Cape Breton baseball teams while defending the 1935 Allen Cup Winners Halifax Wolverines "as professional an aggregation as this

province has ever seen".²² The Yarmouth Gateways were also discussed with their ability to have American players establish residence and then go home until the ball season. Veteran pitcher Copie LeBlanc pitched for the teams with the most money. The only Cape Breton club in favour of remaining amateur was Sydney who felt Cape Breton should not dictate to the rest of the province.

The clubs of the Colliery League were not happy with the input they had at the annual meeting of the Nova Scotia Amateur Baseball Association. The League was given one vote not a vote for each team. John A. McLean, a New Waterford resident, raised the point that there should be reclassification of ball clubs with the stronger teams like Cape Breton, Pictou, Springhill and Yarmouth to be rated as Class "A" with the weaker clubs like Halifax, Liverpool and Middleton to be rated as Class "B" clubs.

The Nova Scotia Amateur Baseball Association announced the Cape Breton clubs would have one vote per team at the annual meeting. However, they would lose their fight for imports. The Colliery League may form an independent Provincial Association with teams from Stellarton and Westville with other clubs invited to join. Another Cape Breton movement would see the league as a professional or semi-professional league. The main drawback to the idea of professional baseball was the desire of the local players to

²²Sydney Post Record, 6 April 1936.

participate in other sports and in the provincial baseball playoffs.²³ New Waterford wished to amend the May 1st residence rule but the Sydney team resisted this idea. College players were exempt from the residence rule if they had amateur cards. They would not be considered professional players by the Maritime Provinces Branch Amateur Athletic Union of Canada.

The Colliery League remained adamant in their stand on import players and invited President MacDonald to a meeting with the Cape Breton clubs. They desired an answer to two questions. Question 1: If the Cape Breton Colliery Baseball league clubs have all their imports in place before May 1st, will the Maritime Provinces Branch Amateur Athletic Union of Canada issue amateur cards for 1936 to players in the Colliery League if they can furnish transfer certificates and amateur cards from whence they came? Question 2: In the event of the Colliery League clubs not bringing in their imports until May 25th, will this bar the clubs from participation in the Nova Scotia playoff? The teams of Cape Breton required a yes or no answer to their questions. They required the N.S.A.B.A. to break with the M.P.B.A.A.U. of Canada and govern baseball in a common sense, decent manner with due considerations given to the players so they will get what they are entitled to; to the clubs so they have a chance to carry on without all the

²³Ibid., 10 April 1936.

problems that now persist.²⁴ With the importation of players the public would see better baseball and the teams could then compete with the strong mainland teams in Westville, Springhill and Yarmouth.

Thomas MacDonald of the N.S.A.B.A. held a meeting with the Cape Breton ball clubs in Sydney Mines on April 18, 1936.²⁵ There were to be no imported players; there were 125 clubs registered with the N.S.A.B.A. and if the majority favoured the Cape Breton club the rules could change. It was possible to pay a coach \$75.00 a week to teach the players in Cape Breton an improved brand of baseball but this idea had been tried in Springhill and New Waterford with no success. There would be no cards issued for imports. President MacDonald stated there would be only one set of rules and the Colliery League must obey. "Why don't you fellows come out from behind the door and play professional baseball. I'm sure you would not be thought the less of."²⁶

The Colliery League argued that Yarmouth and Springhill had paid players so the Colliery League should have the same courtesy. Import players could be used to coach young players. The officials of the Colliery League stressed that in other areas of Canada imports were used with no ill effects to the game.

²⁴Ibid., 14 April 1936.

²⁵Ibid., 19 April 1936.

²⁶Ibid., 19 April 1936.

President Campbell of the Colliery League stated that twelve hundred boys between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four had never earned a dollar because of the poor employment opportunities found in the industrial areas of Cape Breton. With the hard economic times on the island there was no work to be found. Import players would interest these boys in clean, wholesome sport and cut juvenile delinquency. "If young men coming here do this kind of uplifting work among our youth and are classed as professionals and our players also branded as professionals, then it is high time we broke with amateurism as we have it today."²⁷ President MacDonald was consistent and would not go against the constitution.

The stand of the N.S.A.B.A. was not stopping the Colliery League teams from signing players. Dominion signed "Whitey" Michaels of the touring team the Boston Royal Giants as a coach plus three players including Nova Scotia star "Siki" Leadbetter. Glace Bay announced the signing of four players. On a negative note the Reserve team was considering dropping out of the League due to costs and a lack of financial backing. Reserve reconsidered their position and decided to remain in the League. With money being a problem the Reserve team decided they would only require three imported players to compete during the 1936 season.²⁸ The League decided to use local umpires electing James Flemming of New Waterford as

²⁷Ibid., 19 April 1936.

²⁸Ibid., 27 April 1936.

Umpire-In-Chief with Stuart MacDonald of Glace Bay and Don McPherson of Sydney Mines as the other home plate umpires. The base umpires were Sam Melanson, Dominion; Allie McMullin and Dick Corrigan, Reserve and H. Rutherford, Sydney.

In early May the players began to arrive in Cape Breton mostly from the Eastern United States. Two of these players had major league careers; the first player's was very brief, while the latter would later have a longer major-league career. Charlie Small of Auburn, Maine was signed by the Sydney Mines Ramblers. In 1930 he had appeared in twenty-five games for the Boston Red Sox, hitting .222.²⁹ The New Waterford Dodgers signed eighteen year old infielder Len Merullo from Holy Cross College. He went on to play seven years in the major leagues with the Chicago Cubs. Merullo played in 139 games with a life time batting average of .240.³⁰ In 1945 the Chicago Cubs met the Detroit Tigers in the World Series losing four games to three.³¹ This was the last time the Cubs would appear in the Fall Classic. Merullo appeared in three games with no batting average.

All the action revolving around the Colliery League did not concern player signings and arguments with the N.S.A.B.A. The teams were beginning to improve their fields in anticipation of improved play and larger crowds. The Dominion

²⁹Baseball Encyclopedia. 1400.

³⁰Ibid., 1200.

³¹Aylesworth, The World Series, 92.

Hawks were building dugouts with concrete walls, floors and cold water taps. Both dugouts would be on the same side of the field with room between for a scorer's table. In Sydney, Victoria Park was not fit for play. If work did not begin immediately the club may be forced to withdraw from the league. The Sydney team paid a heavy fee for the use of the field and was of the opinion that the Parks Commission must make the field playable. On May 13 work did begin on the Sydney field³² with a large crew of workmen and machinery on site. Glace Bay was improving South Street Field by repairing the fence and the bleachers.

Sydney Mines announced the signing of Elliott Small, a graduate of Bates College and brother of Charlie along with George Foster a pitcher from Colby College, which won the State Collegiate title in 1931-1932. The Ramblers erected a new grandstand at Brown Street Park. The grandstand was built by Layton Lumber providing local employment. In New Waterford, local merchant Fred Gregor was to manage the team with the help of Hughie Dan MacLean, feed store owner and John Bisson, coal company official.³³

President Campbell would require umpires to control the games. There would be no arguments with the players; the league would fully back the umpires. The teams of the League would buy two sets of protectors, masks and shinguards for

³²Sydney Post Record, 13 May 1936.

³³Ibid., 18 May 1936.

umpires. The press would be issued passes with their names and the date. Reach and Spalding baseballs would be used in the games. The games must start on time and the managers must do their best to have the teams make a good impression for the fans. Whether the Colliery League would be affiliated with the N.S.A.B.A. or not, it would attempt to portray a professional appearance and it was hoped the teams would work together to this end, desiring the League to be the best east of Montreal. The import players would improve the level of play and hopefully this would generate more revenue.

League play commenced on May 5th with Dominion playing Glace Bay at Dominion. The Hawks held a parade prior to the opening game to generate interest. The Citizen's Band and both teams took part in the parade with Sam Melanson dropping a ball from an airplane to start the game. Local pitcher "Smokey" Joe Kelly pitched a three hitter as Dominion won 9-2. Games were being well attended by the fans. A game May 25 at Sydney Mines saw over two thousand fans with the Ramblers losing to the Reserve Miner Boys 4-2.³⁴ The fans at the games in Sydney Mines were coming from the surrounding areas - North Sydney, Florence and Little Bras d'Or.

On June 1 a game of interest was played between New Waterford and Reserve. Bill Mitchell pitched a two hitter with fourteen strikeouts over sixteen innings with the game ending in a 2-2 tie. It was the longest game in the history

³⁴Ibid., 26 May 1936.

of organized baseball in Cape Breton. "Specs" Waterman, the first pitcher to wear glasses in the Colliery League pitched for New Waterford. Young Dodger second baseman Eddie Gillis handled sixteen chances at second base without an error, adding three hits and scoring a run. Waterman, perhaps a decent pitcher, was not so quick to pay his bills. When leaving New Waterford later in the year with his mother who had spent the summer with him, it was necessary for the police to pursue him because he left a number of unpaid bills.³⁵

By June 1, the repairs to the park in Sydney were finished; the field was rolled and graded. The entrance gate and the ticket office were painted and flags flew at the entrance. The teams which were community managed, utilizing various appointed committees, had their fields in playing condition long before this date. By showing an effort of co-operation the community teams were accomplishing much on the condition of their fields. The Sydney team at the mercy of the Sydney Parks Commission had to wait a longer period of time before the field was fit for play.

C. MacQuarrie, a local Sydney Post Record writer, argued the prices for the games were too high. Two tickets and two gallons of gas to travel to the game would cost \$1.20. The price of a grandstand seat was an extra nickel at thirty five cents. With hard economic times in the industrial area ticket prices should be dropped. However, the ticket prices might

³⁵Ibid., 12 August 1936.

not be high enough to keep Sydney in the League. The team was paying the Parks Commission a very high percentage of fees and along with provincial tax was being left with only twenty percent of their gate.

During the early portion of June, 3,300 people paid to see three games in Sydney 2,700 of whom sat in the grandstand. The city received thirty percent of the gross gate and one hundred percent of the grandstand estimated at \$1,150. With a community run team controlling the field these revenues would revert to the team.³⁶

At a May 13 meeting in Amherst the issue of Maritime baseball clubs who wished to import players was addressed again. Maritime clubs, who desired to import five players who possessed amateur cards and were in good standing with the M.P.B.A.A.U. of Canada decided by a vote of nineteen to ten that American players must possess international permits and in all cases employers will have to provide official affidavits proving the imports are acquiring positions in their domiciles. There was a long struggle to have this motion passed and it was favoured by the Cape Breton clubs and the New Brunswick teams. The executive of the M.P.B.A.A.U. of Canada did not support the motion and stated players being paid would be suspended, along with those who played against them.³⁷

³⁶Ibid., 3 June 1936.

³⁷Ibid., 18 June 1936.

On June 22 the Colliery League received a letter from the M.P.B.A.A.U. of Canada signed by secretary C. D. Shipley stating that the teams would not be able to participate in the Nova Scotia amateur baseball playoffs. The conditions set forth were so severe that the clubs could not possibly meet them. The Colliery League considered the letter a joke and decided to go on their path to professionalism. The teams would be permitted six imported players and they must be in residence by July 1st. The meeting also decided to permit George "Whitey" Michaels to play, an issue which shall be dealt with later.³³ After the arguments of 1936 concerning professional versus amateur one might think the issue would not be considered again. But this was not the case.

After all the argument concerning professional versus amateur baseball during the 1936 season, one would reasonably expect an end to the issue. But during the 1939 season the same professional versus amateur arguments were again being fought in Cape Breton baseball circles. L.J. Doucet of New Waterford, a local sportswriter and James J. Costello, a miner of Sydney Mines, were attempting to bring semi-professional baseball to Cape Breton. Costello was named Cape Breton Commissioner and Doucet, Commissioner for Canada. The winning team on the Northside would play the winning team on the Southside for the right to take part in a national

³³Ibid., 13 May 1936.

championship to be played in Saint John, N.B. With this plan it was not necessary for the Cape Breton teams to play teams on the mainland which would greatly reduce transportation costs. The gate receipts would be divided equally between the playing teams and the national organization. In addition the team playing in the national tournament would be permitted to add three players.³⁹

The plan to begin playing semi-professional baseball in Cape Breton would institute a battle of words between L.J. Doucet and the unnamed writer of the Glace Bay column, "New and Views". The unnamed writer was not in favour of semi-professional baseball and used his column to point out the shortcomings of this type of play. In Cape Breton, besides the Colliery League, there was the Colliery Intermediate Baseball League whose teams included the 1938 Eddie Gillis coached Maritime Champions plus a small league on the Northside. With this much baseball there was no need for a semi-professional league. More baseball would result in the raiding of the intermediate teams and the importing of players resulting in a rise in player salaries.⁴⁰

This negative semi-professional column was quickly rebutted by L.J. Doucet. The sole purpose of the new baseball organization was to encourage and develop more and better baseball. They would not attempt to enforce amateur rules

³⁹Ibid., 28 February 1939.

⁴⁰Ibid., 13 April 1939.

which were impractical and easily circumvented by any teams who wished to strengthen their rosters by illegal means. Money was not used for officials to travel to meetings but was used for the development of the sport. The semi-professional organization was friendly with professional baseball and would develop better players through a higher level of play. This new league would not offer competition to the professional Colliery League, and anyone could play except those who had played professional baseball after June 1 or had been blacklisted by the National Association of Professional Baseball.⁴¹

"News and Views" answered Doucet the next day. This semi-professional organization could only hurt baseball on Cape Breton Island. The players would be taken from the intermediate league or players would be imported with the use of a small number of local players to fill the rosters. The author did not wish to revisit 1936 when the club continued increasing the number of imports and by the end of the season few local players remained. If the League was called semi-professional, American college players would play, draw high salaries and return home with their amateur status intact. The M.P.B.A.A.U. of Canada would not allow this type of play to happen and the players in the League would be suspended from all amateur sports.⁴²

⁴¹Ibid., 12 April 1939.

⁴²Ibid., 13 April 1939.

Again the baseball community of Cape Breton was arguing the merits of professional versus amateur ball. A number of members of the sporting public desired a league where the best amateur players could compete along with a number of paid imported players. On the other hand there was no such thing as semi-professional sport in Canada. Sport must be either amateur or professional, the two games do not mix. One cannot project if this semi-professional game would have gained a foothold in Cape Breton baseball at this time; the war in Europe made it impossible to organize and conduct this league after September of 1939.

The Glace Bay club signed Dave Barry from Holy Cross to catch. Holy Cross was a hotbed for baseball and had sent a number of players directly to the major leagues. The Glace Bay club wanted to give the fans the best baseball possible. The rush had begun to bring the best players to Cape Breton.

Playaers were obtained by various means. Both Max Cullen and Russell DeMont state players were recruited through word of mouth, people who knew people and a network of relations.⁴³ During the second half of the 19th century the Maritimes experienced out-migration strongly influenced by economics. The end of the American Civil War had cut the demand for Maritime products. Confederation in 1867 began the transfer of Maritime allegiance from Great Britain to central Canada. The persistent depression and economic shift which

⁴³Interviews with Max Cullen and Russell C. Demont.

characterized the years 1860-1900 in much of the Maritimes provided strong motives for out-migration. This out-migration cut across a wide variety of social and economic backgrounds including both sexes and all ages, religions and ethnicities. There was no problem with the crossing of the international boundary and language posed no difficulty, so many Maritimers moved to New England. In New England they could find work as fishermen, labourers, high blue and white collar jobs.⁴⁴ With many friends and relatives living in the Eastern United States, finding players for the Colliery League became easier.

During the Depression, jobs were scarce and baseball paid good wages. For American college players, it meant an opportunity to earn tuition money for the next year. The players were given the chance to see parts of the country which were unfamiliar to them. In the Colliery League the players were given tours of the coal mines and taken to various sites of interest. An advantage of a career in baseball was that the men who played from the time they were small boys regarded baseball as fun not work. Baseball was played for the sake of the game, money was not of driving importance. "Lefty" Bryant, a player with the great Kansas City Monarch black baseball team explains the game being fun not work.

Definitely, definitely, made more being a

⁴⁴Alan A. Brookes, "Outmigration from the Maritime Provinces, 1860-1900: Some Preliminary Considerations," Acadiensis 5,2 (Spring 1976), 26-55.

ballplayer because I consider myself what you would call a white collar job. You could go down to the oil field and work all day and get about fifty dollars. And I was making \$300.00 a month for fun. That's what it was. Baseball for me was fun.⁴⁵

Len Murello talks of why he enjoyed playing in the Cape Breton Colliery League. "We got forty dollars a week in American money, ten percent more than Canadian money so we got forty four dollars in American money." A year earlier, Murello had played in the Cape Cod League for ten dollars a week. New Waterford increased his salary by four hundred percent. "We couldn't spend money. Could save money for your schooling, send it home, whatever you did. Walk down town they greeted you like a best friend because you were a ball player and they loved it."⁴⁶ The players spoke well of their time in Cape Breton. Johnny Spartachino caught for the Dodgers in 1936 and later wrote from Ohio, "It sure is funny. The first day I arrived in New Waterford when I played there I didn't like it so much. But I can say this today. It sure was about the best place I ever played at and I wish I could take a trip up there some time."⁴⁷

The players brought pride to the community with each victory but defeat was not taken lightly. Local fans would

⁴⁵Janet Bruce, Kansas City Monarchs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 204.

⁴⁶Recording date 10 June 1991, "Cape Breton Colliery Baseball League," CBC Mainstreet, courtesy of Hal Higgins, CBC Sydney, N.S.

⁴⁷Sydney Post Record, 11 May 1939.

criticize players not performing to expectations and newspapers were quick to point out the players' weaknesses. Roy Boles of the Sydney Mines Ramblers, after his release was critical of the town's expectations concerning imported players. He felt too much pressure was put on imported players, they were not given the opportunity or the time to perform to the expected level. Imported players were expected to hit, play the outfield and pitch. However, only the exceptional athlete can perform all these skills to a high level. Harold Seymour in his excellent book Baseball: The People's Game quotes "Smokey" Joe Wood, a Hall of Fame player on the pressure of small town baseball:

The smaller the town the more important their ball club was. Boy, if you beat a bigger town, they'd practically hand you the key to the city. And if you lost a game by making an error in the ninth or something like that-well the best thing to do was just pack your grip and hit the road, 'cause they never let you forget it.⁴⁸

In the June 12, 1936 issue of the Sydney Post Record, L.J. Doucet wrote that the fans were too critical, expecting too much from the players and umpires. They were trying as best they could and the criticism must be fair.

With most of the attention focused on imported players, locals were performing at a high level. Layton Ferguson, a Dalhousie University student from Port Morien pitched a five

⁴⁸Harold Seymour, The People's Game (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 204.

hit game against New Waterford. The game was played in one hour and seven minutes. Ferguson pitched a masterful game giving up no bases on balls and striking out five. Glace Bay won 3-0. Other local players performing at a high level included Murray Matheson and Felix Ferguson of Sydney, Joe Snow and Francis MacKinnon of Sydney Mines. In New Waterford Eddie Gillis was performing exceptionally well.

The last place Sydney team tried to strengthen their roster by importing four players from the Boston area. The best known of the players was second baseman John Quinn who had played the last two years in the International League and for a time had been the property of the Boston Red Sox.⁴⁹ Glace Bay was signing imports including Fred Loftus, reputed to be the best amateur pitcher in New England. He had pitched for the Broadway Clowns, a travelling team that had played the Boston Royal Giants in Cape Breton a few years earlier.

As the summer progressed the teams continued to import and release players. President Campbell contacted the National Association of Professional Baseball Clubs. If the Colliery League registered as a Class "C" League they could use nine imports and set the salary limit at \$1,145 to \$1,200 a month. Local players were also welcome.⁵⁰

A League meeting of July 17 decided the Colliery League teams could import nine players. All were not in favour of

⁴⁹Sydney Post Record, 23 June 1936.

⁵⁰Ibid., 3 July 1936.

this import limit as it had been tried in an earlier professional league in Cape Breton and led to bankruptcy. Senior baseball, some feared, would die in Cape Breton and it would take years to return. One delegate at the League meeting stated "the sport is out of her now, it's cold blooded business now, big business at that."⁵¹ Although the calibre of baseball was higher, with import players, the local players who built the League would now watch from the sidelines.

On August 4 the Cape Breton Colliery League was officially suspended by the M.P.B.A.A.U. of Canada. The teams cannot compete with or against amateur clubs in good standing within the Maritimes. These suspensions were retroactive to July 1 and included President A.D. Campbell. The teams continued to release and sign players. The most impressive of the new players was Adolphia L. Bissonette of Winthrop, Maine. Bissonette was born in Maine to French-Canadian parents. In 1922 the French speaking first baseman played for Cap-de-la-Madelaine in the Quebec Provincial League.⁵² Del Bissonette had played for Baltimore and Albany of the International League in 1934 and Montreal of the same League in 1936 being released in July. It was reported he was sold by Baltimore to Albany for \$50,000. With Montreal, Bissonette batted .280

⁵¹Ibid., 6 July 1936.

⁵²William Brown, Baseball's Fabulous Montreal Royals (Montreal: Robert Davies Publishing, 1996), 39.

with twenty-four doubles and seven home runs.⁵³ Impressive numbers for the Colliery League but they paled when compared to the fact that Bissonette played for the Brooklyn Dodgers from 1928 to 1933. In 1928 Bissonette led the Dodgers with 25 home runs plus he drove in 100 runs and scored 80. His lifetime stats reveal a batting average of .305 with 65 home runs and 391 runs batted in: a decent career for a man who began playing in the major leagues at the age of twenty-nine.⁵⁴ During the 1945 season Bissonette managed the Boston Braves for sixty-one games winning twenty-five and losing thirty-six.⁵⁵

But all was not well with the Colliery League as the Reserve Miner Boys disbanded and left the League on July 30. The team released the import players and most of their locals. On two occasions players refused to run to first base, perhaps thinking they were too good for the League. This poor effort would not be tolerated by the executive of the Reserve team or its fans. The executive desired a one week extension to obtain new players. During the game of July 30, the Reserve team quit, committed nine errors and lost to Sydney 12-0. Import "Red" Curran was the only Reserve player to make an effort.⁵⁶ On the first day of Aug, Reserve withdrew from the

⁵³Ibid., 29 July 1936.

⁵⁴Baseball Encyclopedia, 724.

⁵⁵Ibid., 724.

⁵⁶Sydney Post Record, 31 July 1936.

League and their players became free agents.

To show the advanced level of play in Cape Breton it is only necessary to examine the success or lack thereof of Edgar "The Great" Cormier and his short career in the Colliery League. On the 21 of July, Cormier signed with the New Waterford Dodgers and on the 22nd he pitched against Del Bissonette and the Glace Bay Miners. He gave up twelve hits, seven walks and lost 13-5. On the 29 of July with only two hits in nineteen at bats, Cormier was released. A player considered by many fans to be one of the best in the Maritime Provinces lasted a grand total of five games in Cape Breton and was quickly gone.

As the Colliery League succeeded at professional baseball, other centres were considering joining the league. Halifax, Truro, New Glasgow, Springhill and Westville were considering playing professional baseball. With the main highway in Nova Scotia now paved the teams could travel easily from town to town. The main drawback was the need for larger rosters because of the extra games.⁵⁷

Tommy "Dummy" Jackson was playing excellent baseball with the Glace Bay team. His value to the team was so great that the management of the Caledonia Mine extended him a leave of absence. Two colliery players were giving back to the baseball community of Cape Breton. The Dominion Junior Hawks were coached by "Whitey" Michaels and Eddie Gillis was

⁵⁷ Ibid., 18 August 1936.

coaching the New Waterford Junior Cubs.⁵⁸ This was exactly the influence that President Campbell was looking for as he promoted professional ball.

As the push for a place in the League playoffs began, the teams attempted to improve their rosters. The Sydney Mines Ramblers contacted Copie LeBlanc and Nelson Deveau of the Yarmouth Gateways but neither player was interested in playing in Sydney Mines. There was great interest in the success of the Ramblers among the miners of Sydney Mines. On the 10 August, Princess Colliery failed to operate when insufficient employees reported for work. Those miners who reported for work had to return home because the missing miners were watching the ball games. This was the third shut down of the summer.⁵⁹ Twice in one week, the last occasion being 25 August, the night shift at Princess Colliery did not work and three hundred and fifty miners were sent home. Management was very displeased with this action and was considering punishing miners who were absent from work without a genuine excuse.⁶⁰

The Glace Bay Miners were very successful in their search for players. On August 12 the Miners signed Bill Hunnefield. He played for the Chicago White Sox beginning in 1926, until his release in 1930. In 1931 he played for three teams, the Cleveland Indians (21 games), the Boston Braves (11 games) and

⁵⁸ Ibid., 21 August 1936.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 11 August 1936.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 26 August 1936.

the New York Giants (64 games). In total, Hunnefield appeared in 511 major league games with 452 hits, 9 home runs, 144 runs batted in with a .272 batting average.⁶¹

Another addition was made to the Glace Bay pitching staff with the signing of Roy Moore from Toledo of the American Association. His signing with the Glace Bay team was the result of a friendship between Joe MacInnis and Joe MacIntosh, boyhood friends at Passchendale where they had played baseball and rugby together. MacInnis went to Detroit to work in the auto industry while MacIntosh became a local store owner. He was given credit for his work with the Eastern Canadian Rugby championship Caledonia team and became a sponsor of the baseball team. He asked his old friend MacInnis to find a pitcher for the team and the result was the signing of ex Toledo Mud Hen, Roy Moore for the Glace Bay team. In 1935 Moore had pitched for the House of David.⁶²

The playoffs were to be limited to the first four teams. The New Waterford Dodgers were against this structure as the fifth place team felt they should be involved. The Dodgers appealed to the League executive but their appeal was denied. The Dodgers would not play their remaining games, a move which cost the remaining teams a substantial amount of revenue in lost gates. The playoffs would see the first place team playing the fourth and the second meeting the third. Sydney

⁶¹Baseball Encyclopedia, 1042.

⁶²Sydney Post Record, 13 August 1936.

Mines would meet Sydney with Glace Bay playing Dominion.

The series between Glace Bay and Dominion was uneventful, with the Miners winning in three straight games. In the other series Sydney defeated Sydney Mines 3-0 in front of three thousand fans at Brown Street Park. The second game of the series was controversial. With Sydney leading 4-2 going to the top of the ninth, Sydney Mines scored nine runs to take a commanding 11-4 lead. In the bottom of the ninth, Sydney began to stall, hoping the game would be called because of darkness and the score would revert to the bottom of the eighth inning. However, umpire Johnny Lifford would not allow these tactics and awarded the game to Sydney Mines. The Sydney team protested the game to Commissioner Forbes demanding the game be declared no contest. The protest became irrelevant as Sydney defeated the Ramblers 4-2 and won the series. The final series pitting Glace Bay against Sydney was played without incident. The Miners were led by pitcher Layton Ferguson and first baseman Del Bissonette and won four games to two.

The winning Glace Bay team was honoured by the town of Glace Bay with a dinner at Smith House. This was followed by an auto parade to the Sydney railway station. The parade which went through downtown Sydney included over 200 decorated cars and a pipe band. In attendance was Mayor D.W. Morrison, Judge A.D. Campbell, E. MacK. Forbes and L.D. Currie, local Member of Parliament. In Sydney the team was honoured with a

banquet at the Diana Sweets with Mayor S.E. Muggah and H.J. Kelly, Vice-President of DOSCO in attendance. Tribute was paid to the players who in turn praised the city.⁶³

The year 1936 was certainly an eventful one for the Colliery League. Not pleased with their poor showings against the strong mainland teams a course of action was decided upon and the League progressed towards professionalism. If the N.S.A.B.A. and the M.P.B.A.A.U. of Canada would not change the rules to allow the teams to improve, they would go their own way. In communities where life and death struggles were waged in the depths of the coal mines and against the coal companies for a living wage, the idea of not accepting the edicts of sports' bodies was not of great consequence to the executive, players, or fans of the Cape Breton Colliery Baseball League.

The summer could be considered a success; large crowds came to watch an improved brand of baseball. On the negative side, the Reserve team withdrew from the League and the League ran up high debts. The teams could not continue to import and release players on a day to day basis. The answer to this roster problem was organized baseball and this was the direction in which the Colliery League would progress.

⁶³Ibid., 26 September 1936.

CHAPTER IV

OUT OF THE CLOSET - PROFESSIONALS AT LAST

There were numerous reasons why the Colliery League would leave the ranks of the amateur sporting world and play professional baseball. The high cost of signing and releasing players necessitated a drastic plan to ensure the exuberance of the teams in their signing of players would not lead to their downfall. This movement of players was extremely costly to the teams and to make a profit the costs must be kept at a workable limit. The vote by league teams was unanimous to affiliate with the National Association of Professional Baseball Clubs as a Class "D" league. With entrance to professional baseball roster and salary limits were set by the national organization which hopefully would save the Colliery League teams from themselves.

The minor leagues linked together a whole chain of clubs comprised of teams in all minor league classifications from "D" to "AA". Players would start young at the bottom and the best would move up through each level until the best reached the major leagues.¹ Membership in the National Association was of benefit to the players. Each team was required to put up two weeks payroll to protect the players in the event of bankruptcy. It assured the players that there was a secure

¹Harold Seymour, Baseball: The Golden Age, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 144.

financial foundation.² It also prevented teams from wild spending in a scramble to acquire a pennant by establishing a salary limit for each classification.³ A major problem that membership in the association would not solve was violence, fans against players, fans against umpires, players against umpires. This was an issue which requires examination.

The man chosen by organized baseball to lead the Colliery League into professional play was Joe Page. He had started his career with Windsor in the Ontario League in 1884. From Windsor he went to the Northern Michigan League, followed by time with Kalamazoo in the Tri-State League. In 1900 Page helped organize the Province of Quebec League and in 1910 helped form the New Brunswick-Maine loop. In 1918 he organized and was president of the Eastern Canadian League and four years later he organized the Ontario-Vermont League.

Page had a long, successful record in professional baseball and could preach its benefits. He stated:

"Independent baseball gets nowhere while organized ball brings the country advertising that is invaluable, it receives the support of the business public because of this and the league receives entry into baseball's Blue Book.

This baseball Blue Book is studied annually by many thousands who follow baseball throughout the year and as an entrant in this book your league will be closely watched. The Island cannot help but become known to

²Neil J. Sullivan, The Minors (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1990), 136.

³Ibid., 37.

thousands who otherwise never give it a thought.⁴

An example of this America-wide publicity was the use of the Howe News Bureau making box scores of the games available to nine hundred newspapers in Canada and the United States.

It was the high cost in salaries that resulted in affiliation with organized baseball. Conversations between President Campbell and William G. Bramham head of the National Association and Joe Carr promotional manager led to the entry to professional ball. The League had generated large crowds and interest but at times the level of play was not as good as it should have been. There were many imported players including Del Bissonette, Bill Hunnefield, "Snooks" Manderville, "Rube" Wilson and Roy Moore. These players were well paid, with Bissonette making \$100.00 a week and Moore and Hunnefield \$75.00 a week. Players were given bonuses for a high level of play.⁵ Although well-paid, some players did not try at all times and refused to play more than four games in seven days.

The five towns in the Colliery League had a combined population of about 110,000 but generated \$50,000 in revenue through the gate receipts. The great cost of importing and exporting players quickly ate up these funds. One club had a weekly salary of \$2,400 for the last three weeks of the

⁴Sporting News, 11 February 1937.

⁵Sporting News, 5 January 1937.

season. Amusement tax cost over \$9,000 and the telegraph bill for one month was close to \$300. It was estimated the United States players took home approximately \$40,000 but even with these high expenditures the team deficit was only about \$2,000.⁶

Managers with big league expertise would be secured and paid \$200 to \$300 per month. An entry fee to the National Association of \$30 with a fee of \$30 annually plus a bond of \$500 was used to generate two weeks salary for the players generating some security. The National Association did not take any monies from the regular season gates and only a small percentage from the playoffs. The umpires used in the league would be recommended by the Supervisor of Umpires to the National and American Leagues. The professional players would have records which were recognized through baseball. Local players with enough ability could play in the League but must have a signed professional contract.⁷ The League had a salary limit of \$1,000 for thirteen players and to succeed the teams must co-operate to keep this limit.

Late in January, the Colliery League made formal application to join the National Association of Professional Baseball Clubs. Pictou was not admitted to the League for the travel costs were too high and there was no economic advantage. On March 8, 1937 Reserve rejoined the League

⁶Ibid., 5 January 1937.

⁷Sydney Post Record, 18 January 1937.

sponsored by the Reserve Fire Brigade but would later withdraw.⁸

The League was beginning to accept applications from American umpires who, it was hoped, would end the fighting among umpires, fans and players. These umpires might have a better knowledge of baseball and be better able to control the games. The two umpires selected by the League were Douglas "Scotty" Robb and W.E. Claritz and they would arrive on June 3rd. They were to conduct a school for the base umpires and select those who would work in the League. Both umpires had come highly recommended by Bill Steward, one of the foremost umpires in the National League.⁹

The teams were preparing for the season, as they searched for managers for the upcoming season. Glace Bay was in contact with the New York Giants and the New York Yankees to help recommend a manager. They requested an affiliation with either Detroit or Philadelphia but the request was denied as both had their own Class "D" team in place.¹⁰

Bert Daniels was named to manage the Dominion Hawks, having played with the New York Yankees from 1910 to 1913 and finishing his career with Cincinnati of the National League in 1914. During his five year major league career he appeared in

⁸Ibid., 8 March 1937.

⁹Ibid., 24 May 1937.

¹⁰Ibid., 19 February 1937.

523 games with a .255 batting average.¹¹ Joe Page who had been in organized ball since 1884 signed to manage Sydney. "Rabbit" Maranville of the Boston Braves recommended Fred Maguire to manage the Glace Bay team. Maguire had played six years in the majors with the New York Giants, Chicago Cubs and the Boston Braves playing 618 games. He performed in the 1923 World Series with the Giants. Maguire had a career .257 batting average.¹² Del Bissonette would not return to Glace Bay as he had signed to be player-manager of Des Moines of the Western League. Herb Moran the choice to manage in New Waterford, was a seven year veteran with the Philadelphia Athletics, Boston Braves and the Brooklyn Dodgers. He appeared in the 1914 World Series with the Boston Braves.¹³ W.J. Buckley with many years of minor league experience would manage the Sydney Mines Ramblers. Buckley was an insurance man, a promoter and a former professional umpire. He was a founder of the Canadian-American League in 1939, was a league vice-president and would own the Waterloo franchise.¹⁴

The Canadian-American League had a unique method of dividing league funds. Visiting teams would receive \$60.00 a game plus 12 1/2 cents for every ticket sold over 400

¹¹Baseball Encyclopedia, 846.

¹²Ibid., 1147.

¹³Ibid., 1220.

¹⁴David Pietrusza, Baseball's Canadian-American League (Jefferson, N.C., McFarland and Company Inc., 1990), 5.

admissions. Teams were to receive \$30.00 to cover transportation costs to rained-out games.¹⁵ Before the season began, William Zitzman replaced Bert Daniels as the Dominion Hawks manager. Zitzman had played 406 games in the major leagues, the majority being with the Cincinnati Reds with a batting average of .267.¹⁶ Hank Hamilton was signed to replace Joe Page in Sydney.

As the Colliery League prepared to enter the world of professional baseball, an effort was made to buy all equipment from local merchants. In 1936 over \$4,000 was put into the local economy by the clubs to pay for equipment. Another attempt would be made to have the Provincial Government lower the amusement tax from five cents to three cents. Interest in the Colliery League was not restricted to Cape Breton Island. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation would broadcast the first two games throughout the Maritimes.¹⁷

The New Waterford team was improving their ballpark and would move the fences out ten feet. Expecting large crowds both the New Waterford and Sydney teams would increase seating. The Dominion Hawks had built a scoreboard, an exact duplicate of the one found in Yankee Stadium which had room for advertising, an additional source of revenue for the club. The Dominion team had a deficit over \$1,000 for the 1936

¹⁵Ibid., 8.

¹⁶Baseball Encyclopedia, 1222.

¹⁷Sydney Post Record, 8 May 1937.

season but with the full support of the local citizens felt sure of a successful season.¹⁸

In Sydney Mines a strong team was expected to compete. The team built a bat rail and a sunken receptacle behind home plate to hold baseballs for the umpires. A new press box was constructed and the Brown Street field was taking shape for its first professional game.

The opening game of the Colliery League was played on June 7 in Glace Bay with the home team defeating the Sydney Mines Ramblers 5-4. The game was attended by 5,000 fans while the attendance for the first five games was over 10,000.¹⁹

The League was still struggling with teams importing and releasing players. On June 14 the Sydney Mines Ramblers released three players and imported three more. The teams were going to have to depend on imported players. Local players "Diddy" Gouthro and Ray Sloan with Dominion and Layton Ferguson and "Dummy" Jackson were having problems competing with the strong imported players. As the season progressed and problems became evident, Judge Campbell sought an advanced classification from "D" to "C". He argued that the League was the only professional league in Canada and therefore its population area should be based on the size of the province. A jump in classification would boost the salary limit to

¹⁸Ibid., 22 May 1937.

¹⁹Sporting News, 17 June 1937.

\$1,400 and allow roster limits of sixteen players.²⁰ The team executives were having a difficult time obtaining capable players for a roster limit of \$1,000. The extra \$400 in funds for player salary to allow the importation of better players and raise the standard of play. Another difficulty facing the League was the bickering between umpires and players, situations which were not giving the league the professional look they desired. At the same time high batting averages by the hitters was reflecting the poor level of pitching.

CONFLICT OR COHESION

Judge W.G. Bramham of the National Association took action on the issue of the players' attacks on umpires. He ruled that players who abused umpires would be suspended for a period of sixty days which in Cape Breton meant the season.²¹ The New Waterford club officials would attempt to stop the rowdyism at their home games. The problem was being caused by children and a small portion of the adult fan base. It was decided the children would sit in a section where they would not be a nuisance to people. The fans were asked to watch their language and refrain from the use of profanity. If these rules were not followed the offending fans would be refunded their admission fee and asked to leave the park. Extra police would be hired to ensure the fans behaved. Some

²⁰Ibid., 17 June 1937.

²¹Sydney Post Record, 28 June 1937.

umpires had refused to work the games in New Waterford due to the umpire baiting. Judge Campbell agreed with the New Waterford executive and demanded the excessive language stop. He requested the R.C.M.P. reinforce the local police. A game played on July 18 saw Umpire Dave Clorety escorted from the field by the police. He called a game due to darkness with the Sydney Mines Ramblers winning 13-12 although the Dodgers staged a late rally.

July 25th saw five arrested during a game at Sydney Mines with New Waterford the visitors. Umpire Scotty Robb ejected Dodger manager Nick Morris and player Walleston from the game. Morris was fined twenty-five dollars, Walleston ten dollars. Any repetition would carry suspension. Sydney Mines' pitcher "Cowboy" Moulton was fined ten dollars for cursing the fans. Although the League did not look on these actions with any favour some did defend the actions of the fans. Chauncey MacQuarrie wrote in his sport's column Highlights and Sidelights in the Sydney Post Record "These arguments will be apparent as long as there is competitive sport in Cape Breton. An island fan who follows a team goes the limit and if he becomes more combative than usual in the excitement of a closely contested match he should not be censured too heavily."²² MacQuarrie defends the poor action of the fans in the heat of the moment and did not wish them censured. The umpires and players who were the objects of this poor conduct

²²Ibid., 26 July 1937.

were no doubt of a different opinion.

In New Waterford the fans continued to attack the umpires. The League considered lifting the franchise of the New Waterford team. Umpire Flemming was verbally and physically assaulted during a game played August 3rd requiring police protection until the crowd dispersed. Rocks were thrown at his car, breaking the front window. One man was charged with assault. With this type of fan action it would become difficult to obtain umpires to work the games in New Waterford. This last incident had caused umpire Jim Flemming to resign his position.

But once again the writers with the Sydney Post Record came to the defence of the New Waterford fans. L.J. Doucet wrote on August 5th that the New Waterford team was always getting bad decisions from the umpires.

They are absolutely disgraceful and uncalled for but yet that doesn't suggest prevention. Cape Breton baseball fans and particularly New Waterford followers take their sport seriously when given an opportunity they are no worse than the rest. They want a fair deal and evidently are satisfied to fight for it if necessary.

Doucet forgave the conduct of the fans and laid full blame on the umpires. He felt better umpiring was required; the poor umpiring was hurting the gate receipts.²³ Doucet may have arrived at this opinion by being a member of the executive of the New Waterford Dodgers Baseball team, a direct

²³Ibid., 5 August 1937.

conflict of interest.

Others had a different opinion on the cause of fan unrest at games. Many believed the consumption of alcohol was the cause of fan rowdyism. These fans who consumed excess alcohol were to be expelled from the park. The R.C.M.P. would attend all games to ensure the liquor laws were obeyed. Anyone with liquor was to be expelled from the park. President Campbell was of the opinion that only a small number of fans was creating the problem and a larger police presence would be of a great help.

To quote President Campbell: "There was much better discipline of players and the players as a general rule were more ambitious, cleaner living lot than the former players who played in Cape Breton in years gone by."²⁴ Campbell was placing the problem directly on the fans and not the players. He seemed to be defending his idea that the imported players should be of good character and set a strong example for the youth of Cape Breton. If the youth of Cape Breton admired these players of strong athletic ability and good character there was hope that sport would keep the youth from a life of poor choices.

President Campbell as a Judge of the Juvenile Court had a vested interest in the character and moral strength of the youth of Cape Breton. He was espousing a form of "muscular Christianity". Sport had the potential to form character if

²⁴Ibid., 1 January 1938.

the rules of a game were respected. There was then hope that the rules of the game of life would also be respected.²⁵ Sport could be used to build a strong Christian character; the positive sport could be useful in the development of leadership with the team sports and their dependence on group goals rather than individual skill playing a major role.²⁶ Team sports would build character and teach a respect for rules and laws.

During the season the Colliery League players visited sick children. They spoke to the children at the ballpark whenever possible and never refused an autograph. When playing exhibition games in Halifax the players gave balls to the children at the games. As one reverend gentleman remarked "You can apply a lot of religion to the game of baseball if you have the correct missionaries."²⁷

There was evidence of fan violence during the 1936 season. By the end of June of that year, it was apparent the League was having problems with umpires. President Campbell reduced the umpire crews to two umpire-in-chiefs and two assistants. The players must be better disciplined and stop abusing the umpires physically and verbally. Those players not showing the proper respect for the men in blue were to be

²⁵David Howell and Peter Lindsay, "Social Gospel and the Young Boy Problem," Morris Mott ed., Sports In Canada, 224.

²⁶Jean Barman, "Sport and the Development of Character," Morris Mott ed., Sports In Canada, 234-244.

²⁷Sydney Post Record, 20 September 1937.

ejected from games and fined.

Two excellent examples of umpires and players having heated discussions soon followed. On July 2, Sydney defeated Sydney Mines by a score of 4-3. The fans stormed the field when Umpire Sam Melanson ruled against a triple by MacKinnon of the Ramblers which drove in two runs. Ramblers' catcher Danny Ayotte was ejected from the game for arguing the call. Melanson was escorted from the field by local police and the R.C.M.P.

In New Waterford on July 3, two umpires were escorted from the field. Len Murello, who had made two errors in the game was baiting the umpires and the fans were only too eager to help him. It was the opinion of many fans that American players had a poor attitude and perceived themselves to be the only good players on the island. After being ejected from the game for pushing the umpire, Bond and Pagliucia restrained Murello while the umpire was rescued by the police. President Campbell was very upset with the rowdyism of the American players on the field. Campbell stated "he was going to stop it either by suspension or expulsion from the League of the offending players whose actions are not doing the League any good."²⁵ These players were to set a good example for the youth of Cape Breton but their actions on the field were far from clean cut or wholesome.

The umpiring situation became so bad that the League

²⁵Ibid., 25 June 1936.

fired umpire Hugh Beshore. On July 20th in Glace Bay he managed to upset both teams and the fans. Poor calls on balls and strikes caused managers Lewis of Glace Bay and Gallivan of Reserve to not let the game proceed until the umpire was replaced. Johnny Lafford, a professional boxer from New Brunswick, was recruited to finish the game in place of the incompetent Beshore who would umpire the bases. His calls on the bases were no better than his ability to call balls and strikes upsetting the Reserve team who had to be restrained by the R.C.M.P.²⁹

The fans and players continued their battle with the umpires during a game in Sydney Mines. Umpire-In-Chief Stewart MacDonald was assaulted on the field and later in his car resulting in police intervention. MacDonald was knocked down and kicked by the fans. While sitting in his car he was struck and his lip badly cut. MacDonald was very upset with the lack of police protection. His driver was attacked and was protected by Rambler players Roy Boles, Moore, Foster and Ayotte.

The mayor of Sydney Mines, Alex McCormack responded to the incident by swearing in special constables for games. At a League meeting delegates Doyle and Nunn of Sydney were very concerned with the incident, the third violent incident to occur during games at Sydney Mines. It was the position of the Sydney club delegates that the Ramblers were doing nothing

²⁹Ibid., 18 July 1936.

to improve conditions. If improvement was not seen at games teams would refuse to play in Sydney Mines. The constant assaulting of officials must stop and the Sydney Mines police must use the law to prevent further violence and more police presence at the games was required.

Mayor McCormack saw the incident as being caused by poor umpiring by MacDonald. The Sydney Mines position was that the League must obtain better umpires. Chief of Police Hall stated his officers protected the umpires and four times he called the R.C.M.P. for assistance but got no response. Clyde Nunn answered this position by blaming the problems on Small and Ayotte; the umpiring of MacDonald and Melanson was excellent.

Articles by Chauncey MacQuarrie a reporter with the Sydney Post Record, were highly critical of the situation in Sydney Mines. The executive of the Ramblers ball club responded by revoking the press pass of MacQuarrie. This action did not sit well with the League for the Post gave excellent coverage and it was not good business to fight with the source of this free publicity.³⁰

On May 10, the New Waterford fans attacked umpire Gordon McInnis of Glace Bay who was the base umpire. He made two calls that went against the New Waterford team. New Waterford club president James Johnston and manager Freddie Gregor tried to have him removed from the game but he would not go. With

³⁰Ibid., 20 July 1936.

the game tied in the ninth inning the fans attacked the helpless umpire who was rescued by Chief-of-Police Graham and other members of his police force along with the New Waterford and Dominion players. MacInnis was escorted to a waiting truck as the fans threw sticks and stones at the truck. The umpire's father was beaten while trying to rescue his son. The New Waterford police arrested five men and charged them.

During the 1938 season umpires were again being abused in the Colliery League. There were better umpires available but the cost made them prohibitive. The League had a number of players in their first year of professional baseball and they may have been able to abuse umpires during their amateur days. However, Judge Campbell was not going to tolerate his umpires being abused. It was also possible that the Cape Breton fans were expecting perfection for the forty cent admission price.³¹ Campbell tried to stop open gambling in the stands, which was accompanied by foul language in many cases. He charged the police to arrest any fans gambling and using foul language. The fans who lost their bets may be the ones who protested the loudest.³² On August 12, Campbell banned betting in the stands. The ballpark must have adequate police protection. If problems arose both home and visiting clubs along with the umpires were to leave the field. Neither players nor umpires

³¹Ibid, 25 June 1938.

³²Ibid., 12 August 1938.

were to be intimidated by the fans.

During the 1939 season the problems between players and umpires continued. "Moe" Kiley the Sydney outfielder had the distinction of being the first player to rate a fine in the 1939 season. He was fined five dollars for his actions at a game with the Glace Bay Miners. Kiley tested the patience of "Scotty" Robb by protesting a called strike too loudly and too long.³³ The use of distasteful language was becoming too common at the Colliery League games. President Campbell would try to curb this practice with fines.³⁴ This policy was not completely successful when examining the game between Sydney and Glace Bay. Phil Mooney the Sydney pitcher was fined and ordered out of the park for protesting too forcibly when Umpire Kenney gave a decision against the home team. Mooney also fought with the Glace Bay catcher Dave Berry in the eighth inning. Mooney was fined and suspended for five days.³⁵ There was a great deal of complaining about the umpires in the League but many players are not correct when describing plays. There was a great deal of baiting between the players and umpires which lead to explosive field situations.³⁶

What may have been the biggest fight between fans and players occurred on July 30, 1939 at New Waterford Dodger

³³Sporting News, 22 June 1939.

³⁴Sydney Post Record, 11 July 1939.

³⁵Sporting News, 10 August 1939.

³⁶Sydney Post Record, 16 August 1939.

Field. With the Dodgers leading seven to three in the seventh inning a full scale brawl broke out between the players and the fans. Al Smith the Sydney manager was injured during the mallee. Tensions had been building between the New Waterford fans and the Sydney players. The result was a full scale riot.³⁷ Umpire Charlie Whittle recommended the game be played to completion. A game report was sent to the four clubs in the League. Whittle reported that with one out in the seventh inning, manager Al Smith asked for protection from fans behind the players' bench. The Sydney players were being called abusive and improper names. At this time Umpire Whittle called two policemen to stay behind the Sydney bench and the officer removed one fan from the ballpark. While the Sydney players continued the game on the field, Pearlman and Joe Linsalata began fighting with the fans. This action resulted in the fans storming the field and the umpire called the game.³⁸ D.H. MacLean of New Waterford would not agree to replaying the remaining innings of the suspended game. There must be a full investigation and the League must not rely on the report of umpires Scotty Robb and Chuck Whittle.³⁹

Judge Campbell held a full investigation into the incident on August 9. Joe Linsalata testified under the Canada Witness and Evidence Act. The player admitted to Judge

³⁷ Ibid., 31 July 1939.

³⁸ Ibid., 3 August 1939.

³⁹ Ibid., 4 August 1939.

Campbell that he went into the stands, slapped a fan and threw punches. Linsalata did not remember jumping into the stands. He stated the fans were using abusive language towards the Sydney players during the game. Bernie Pearlman testified he had gone to the aid of Linsalata; he had heard the vile language and had asked the fans to stop due to the presence of children. The Sydney equipment manager Ed Turber agreed with the players. The Sydney players had been hit with pebbles during the game and mud had been thrown in the water bucket. He testified manager Al Smith complained to the umpire and went to the fans to protect his players. Smith was struck four or five times on the head. Judge Campbell awarded the game to the New Waterford team after six innings with the score seven to three. Joe Linsalata was fined twenty-five dollars for leaving the field and entering the stands.⁴⁰

Tate Bodio described the fight through the eyes of one of the players.

...he died about a year ago and that's Jerry "Moe" Kiley. Now Kiley had played up there three years. He did his first year in Glace Bay. He did the second year at New Waterford and he did the third year in Sydney. Whenever Jerry Kiley walked on the baseball diamond, you knew he was there. You knew he was there because he made himself present whether it be with his club, or whether it be with his bat or his face. But Jerry Kiley was there...the fellow with Sydney the second year I was there because of Kiley who was not rehired in 1939 by New Waterford. So we knew when we got to

⁴⁰Ibid., 8 August 1939.

Sydney we were in for a real hassle because Kiley would stir them up. Now I can recall one game, it was in New Waterford and for some reason or another I think kids were throwing pebbles at the Sydney ballplayers and of all the guys who would have been the first one that would have started anything it would have been Joe Linsalata. He (Robb) was the umpire at second at the time and he became a very famous umpire in the American League. ... Linsalata turns around and slaps the kid. What happened, the fans in the stands, I'll never forget as long as I live because I was scared, ripped the fencing off the restraining part of the stands and climbed onto the field. We almost had a full scale riot. Now that was with Sydney and I recall it because Kiley and I often joked about it later on how we almost blew the whole league by one simple riot.⁴¹

So it takes more than the fans to start riots. The players had a knack for inciting the fans to vent their wrath against the visiting teams.

One segment of the population is conspicuous by its absence - women, who did not play at this level of baseball, but an examination will be undertaken to see what, if any role, females had in the years of the Colliery League. We will also examine the roles of blacks, aboriginals and other ethnic groups to see if they were treated in the same manner by the League as they were in society in general.

Women did play a part in the Colliery League which was similar to their role in society. They gave support to the League by helping to raise funds, holding socials, card and

⁴¹Recording 10 June 1991 courtesy Hal Higgins, CBC Sydney.

bingo games. During the 1936 season it was reported that a large number of female fans were attending games at Brown Street Park in Sydney Mines and that the team would hold a Ladies' Day in the future.⁴² After the games the ladies of Sydney Mines held very popular socials at St. Mary's Hall for the players and fans.⁴³ The ladies would help the team raise funds by staging a benefit show and selling raffle tickets. Women were encouraged to come to the games to help improve the crowd behaviour.⁴⁴ But at Colliery League games it was reported that some lady fans were not acting in a ladylike manner and were attempting to strike umpires when their decisions were going against the home team.⁴⁵ But even so Glace Bay would hold a Ladies' Day when female fans would be admitted for a small price.⁴⁶

As earlier stated blacks were not readily accepted in white society in Nova Scotia and baseball was no different. Blacks did have a long history of playing baseball in Canada. There were black baseball teams in Ontario in the 1850s and teams in Halifax in the 1890s.⁴⁷ In Northern Sandlots, Colin Howell presents a short history of black baseball in the

⁴²Sydney Post Record, 22 June 1936.

⁴³Interview with Ed Gillis, 14 November 1991.

⁴⁴Neil J. Sullivan, The Minors, 55.

⁴⁵Sydney Post Record, 23 July 1937.

⁴⁶Ibid., 16 July 1937.

⁴⁷Humber, Diamonds, 142-144.

Maritimes. In 1894 a black championship was established and blacks played white teams after W.W.I. During the 1920s black teams competed in a community league in Truro. The New Glasgow Intermediate League 1932-1935 had a black team and black players played on white teams in the Pictou County League in 1932 and later on a New Glasgow senior club. During the 1930s, black touring teams played many games in the Maritimes and included Cape Breton in these tours. The Boston Royal Giants with "Whitey" Michaels toured Cape Breton in 1935. The players were well known to local fans and offered helpful advice to the local teams.⁴⁸ With the acceptance of the black touring teams and the large crowds which saw these exhibitions, it would have been hoped that Michaels would have been accepted as a player by the fans of the Colliery League.

The first game played by George "Whitey" Michaels was played in Sydney Mines and led to a very unpleasant incident although Michaels was not the first black to play in Cape Breton as a black had played in the Cape Breton League some years before this time.⁴⁹ A small, noisy minority of Sydney Mines fans objected to the Hawks playing Michaels in place of the injured Leadbetter. A fan went on the field and refused to leave until assured that Michaels would not play. According to Max Cullen "it was really only two guys drunk on cheap booze that caused the great part of the problem. Most

⁴⁸Colin Howell, Sandlots, 172-184.

⁴⁹Sydney Post Record, 24 August 1935.

considered it a very bad incident."⁵⁰ Although this may explain the incident on the field the fans in the stands continued to taunt Michaels and the police made no effort to remove the fan on the field. Michaels remained calm throughout the whole incident although he felt that "Maybe he wasn't going to just ...fit in anywhere."⁵¹

Lefty" Lumanski signed with the Dominion Hawks on July 10. In 1935 he played for Rochester of the International League and would be the first imported player of Jewish origin to play in Cape Breton. It was rumoured that Lumanski had his own source of income and played for the love of the game. Perhaps a reference to the stereotype that all Jewish people are wealthy. During the 1938 season Eddie "Chief" Rivers, a French-Indian player from Chepadet, Rhode Island played for the New Waterford Dodgers.⁵²

Del Bissonette, a French Canadian from Winthrop, Maine had ambitions of being a candidate in the Republican party primary in his native Maine. The Glace Bay player-manager would be a candidate in the fall election for State Legislature if successful in the primary. He would miss two games by going home. Later in the summer Bissonette announced that in 1939 he would manage Hartford of the Class "A" Eastern League. Bissonette would still use his ties with the Boston

⁵⁰Interview with Max Cullen, 16 November 1991..

⁵¹Colin Howell, Sandlots, 172.

⁵²Sydney Post Record, 27 May 1938.

Bees to have players and other favours extended to the Glace Bay team. During the summer of 1938 Bissonette was offered the job as manager of the Montreal Royals but refused showing his loyalty to the Glace Bay team. The hard hitting Bissonette was an excellent manager who was skilled in working with young players. He was a very colourful player who gave his all to the game.⁵³ It was said "It was worth the price of admission to watch him (Bissonette) strike out".⁵⁴

After fifteen games of the 1937 schedule a tight race was developing with three teams, Sydney, Sydney Mines and Glace Bay virtually tied for first place. Dominion was struggling to join the pack but New Waterford with a record of two wins and twelve losses found themselves hopelessly in last place. This record led to the dismissal of Herb Moran who was replaced on a temporary basis by utility infielder Peter Ballard on a temporary basis. Later, the Dodgers signed Mick Morris from Holy Cross to manage and play second base. New Waterford was being helped in their quest for players by the Brooklyn Dodgers and signed Art Upper from Toronto of the "AA" International League.⁵⁵ In Glace Bay news was received that Manager Fred Maguire had been hired by Bob Quinn, President of the Boston Bees as a scout.⁵⁶ Hard times were the order of the

⁵³Ibid, 20 June 1938.

⁵⁴Interview with Russell Demont, 26 May 1996.

⁵⁵Sydney Post Record, 22 September 1937.

⁵⁶Sporting News, 15 July 1937.

summer in Dominion. Starting the year with a poor team, attendance fell and when the team did show improvement the fans did not return. One proposal to help the Dominion team raise money was for the visiting club to receive twenty percent of the gate. Glace Bay would raise the admission fees to thirty-five cents to help generate more revenue.⁵⁷ On July 21st playing manager Bill Zitzmann asked for and was granted his release. Two players Crowell and Thierney jumped the team and were immediately suspended. On the same day the Glace Bay Mines released local player Layton Ferguson who was having trouble competing with the import laden teams.

The deadline for importing players was August 20 and the teams in the Colliery League were having a difficult time obtaining good pitching. Some of the local experts felt that many players in the League would not progress in professional baseball because of their age and ability. Paul Krichell a scout for the New York Yankees was watching the games and stated the Colliery League was no different than any other "D" league and he was interested in ten players in the League. In a case of the rich getting richer the Sydney Mines Ramblers, with the league's best attendance record, sold Ray Manarel to the Yankees for a sum in excess of \$3,000.⁵⁸

September 1 saw the schedule come to a close with Glace Bay posting the best regular season record. Sydney and Sydney

⁵⁷ Ibid., 22 July 1937.

⁵⁸ Sydney Post Record, 14 July 1937.

Mines tied for second place but the Ramblers won a coin toss for the right to host the third game in the best of three series. Ten percent of the profits of the third game would go to the New Waterford and Dominion clubs to help them defray their losses. Dominion finished seven games behind Glace Bay and New Waterford fifteen games back.⁵⁹

Guido Panciera of Sydney was the leading hitter with a .394 average, 80 hits and 48 runs batted in. Roy Ross, Glace Bay scored a League leading 44 runs while Chris Pickering of New Waterford had 8 home runs. Roy Moore of the Glace Bay team was the dominant pitcher with 14 wins and an E.R.A. of 1.33. Bill Jarvis was the strikeout leader at 114.⁶⁰

DEBT AND MORE DEBT

William Gillis, a local grocer, President of the Sydney Mines Ramblers and Art Higgins the Treasurer announced the team had lost nearly two thousand dollars during the season. Operating expenses, transportation bills and equipment were the major expenses along with the fifteen hundred dollar salary of manager Buckley.⁶¹ The only team to show a profit was the Sydney team. Inexperience in matters pertinent to running professional baseball clubs was costing the teams money. The revenue from playoff games was immediately cut by

⁵⁹Ibid., 19 August 1937.

⁶⁰The Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball, eds. Lloyd Johnson & Miles Wolff, 191.

⁶¹Ibid., 24 September 1937.

twenty-eight percent - fifteen percent went to the government as amusement tax, ten percent to eliminated teams and three percent to the National Association. The average cost of a game was one hundred and twenty-five dollars to pay for salaries of umpires, scorers, gate attendants and other officials. To this was added forty dollars to pay for baseballs.⁶²

The Colliery League would attempt to operate on a non-profit basis in 1938. The teams would distribute excess funds to charity to eliminate the payment of the provincial amusement tax. All the League teams had lost money in 1937 and paying of over five thousand dollars in amusement tax did not help balance the books. Sydney who paid over fifteen hundred dollars in tax felt the money would be better spent on playgrounds for children, fixing old locations and establishing new ones. It appeared that the New Waterford Dodgers might not return to the League, as they faced a deficit of about thirty-two hundred dollars; forty percent of which was spent transporting players to and from the United States and nine hundred dollars in provincial tax. Sydney had receipts of \$19,000 and was \$1,000 in arrears, Sydney Mines \$10,000 in receipts and \$1,000 in arrears. Dominion was \$1,500 in arrears. The League had gross receipts of \$60,000 but the inexperience in obtaining players was a great

⁶²Sporting News, 7 October 1937.

expense.⁶³

With mounting bills the Sydney Mines Ramblers would go to the community for support. The team would become a community owned team with five dollar memberships. If people had a problem and could not afford the five dollars, they could pay a smaller amount. Another fund raising idea proposed, consisted of a membership club with the dues to be stipulated later. Membership was to be unlimited and any contribution to erase the deficit would be credited to membership dues.⁶⁴ A public meeting was held in November with a large attendance. It was decided memberships would cost three dollars a share, making the team community owned.

The Colliery League had not found favour with all members of the community. The Dominion Coal Company complained that afternoon games were hurting production as miners went to ball games not to work. This absenteeism from work was a concern for local merchants. If the miners did not work they would not be paid. This in turn meant that there would be less money to spend at the local stores. One action the League could take to stop this practice was the installation of lights enabling night games to be played.

⁶³Sydney Post Record, 16 October 1937.

⁶⁴Ibid., 16 October 1937.

CHAPTER V
A BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL

As the year 1938 began the teams of the Colliery League were attempting to find ways of dealing with deficits, searching for ways to raise money. Players must be obtained and the executive of the League was hoping for a higher quality of play.

New Waterford began the year with a meeting on January 25 to discuss obtaining players for their contracts must be submitted by the first day of March. Players who did not have a signed contract would not be permitted to play and must have releases from their previous clubs before they could sign with a new club. The New Waterford team favoured the signing of young players as they tried harder than the seasoned veterans who were winding down their careers and just looking for a last payday. The executive of the Dodgers believed that young players were accepted by the fans because of their all out efforts. To make the obtaining of players a little easier the League had raised the salary limit to \$1,200.¹ One S.C. Atkinson of Boston, Mass. was showing an interest in buying the team with the intention of installing lights for night ball. If the team played at night, it might draw more fans, resulting in a profit.

In early April an offer was made by unnamed American

¹Sydney Post Record, 25 January 1938.

sports promoters to purchase the Dominion Hawks but the team was not for sale. All the teams in the Colliery League were owned by members of the local community and Dominion would remain locally owned, a part of the community.

In Dominion, Alex Burden the manager of No. 1B Colliery was elected President of the Dominion Hawks. He proposed a check-off be used at the mine so that interested fans could donate money to the team to help reduce the deficit. It was hoped the miners would donate ten cents a pay to help defray the costs of running the team. Businesses and clerks of Dominion would be solicited for weekly contributions and monster bingo games would raise funds on a weekly basis.²

Jack McAulay, a senior member of the firm of McAulay Bros. was elected president of the team. President of District 26 U.M.W.A. and Mayor of Glace Bay, Dan Willie Morrison was named honorary president. The manager's job would be offered to Del Bissonette who in 1937 managed Des Moines of the Western League³ and an attempt would be made to sign Dave Berry who was the team's starting catcher in 1936.

Fred Gregor, manager of the Majestic Theatre was the new President of the New Waterford Dodgers. At a league meeting held in Dominion, Gregor and his executive proposed a Co-operative Baseball Plan. The gate and grandstand receipts would be pooled and used to pay down the deficit that plagued

²Ibid., 26 January 1938.

³Sporting News, 5 January 1937.

all the League teams. Gate receipts would be given to the League executive who would ensure that all salaries and operating expenses were paid. If any money was left after all the expenses were met it would be divided equally among the teams.⁴

Gregor wanted changes made to the Lord's Day Alliance Act by the Provincial Government. Baseball, he reasoned, was a clean, wholesome game that could be enjoyed on a Sunday afternoon by adults while at the same time keeping children out of trouble. Sunday was really the only opportunity for a large percentage of men who worked day and afternoon shifts to attend the games.⁵

It was very difficult to run a ballclub in the low minors. The teams faced many expenses and must have good support and closely watch their receipts to break even. The cost of transportation was high, amounting to hundreds of dollars a year to bring players to Cape Breton. Baseballs cost \$300 a year, bats more than \$100 and there were other expenses including police, equipment and repairs, umpires, club employees, salaries of players and managers. To cover these expenses it was necessary to gross \$3500 a month; if the team only earns \$10,000 in a three month period, they lose money. It is necessary to draw in excess on 30,000 fans. For this to happen there must be a good team with a strong

⁴Sydney Post Record, 7 February 1938.

⁵Ibid., 7 March 1938.

population base of 25,000, good weather and a stable economy. Poor weather, problems in the mines or steel plant and the teams would lose money.⁶

Many American players were seeking positions in the Colliery League. Contracts were offered to umpires "Scotty" Robb, "Shorty" Farro and local Fred Lewis. Guido Panciera would return to Sydney as a player-manager while Nick Morris would again guide the New Waterford Dodgers bringing with him a team assembled in the Boston area.

The Sydney Mines Ramblers spent the winter working to reduce the deficit with card parties held to raise money. The team was using club rooms donated by Jack and Mendel Yazer, local merchants who had shown continued support for the team.⁷ Fred Loftus, a pitcher and utility player, would manage the Ramblers signing players in the Boston area and bringing them to Cape Breton. This movement of players was very expensive and the team appealed to the public for financial assistance.

The salary limit for the Colliery League teams was increased from \$1,000 to \$1,200 and the date for the sale, purchase or exchange of players would be changed from twelve days prior to the close of the season to thirty days. This move set the roster of the teams for a longer period of time prior to the playoffs enabling the fans to become more familiar with the players. Judge Campbell was again elected

⁶Sydney Post Record, 30 May 1938.

⁷Ibid., 28 February 1938.

President of the League with Arthur Petrie as Vice-President.

The League meeting dealt with the New Waterford request for a co-operative league on a point by point basis. The motion to give the visiting team thirty-five percent of the gate was defeated as was a motion to give the visiting team sixty dollars per game. However, President Campbell was given the authority to examine the books of the League teams at any time. This measure was taken to prevent teams from exceeding the salary limit in search of better players. It was decided to send President Campbell to Halifax to request the Government to discontinue the amusement tax. The tax was running into thousands of dollars a year and placing a great burden on the Cape Breton teams.

Local pride and self sufficiency was showing that it had a place in the Colliery League. The Howe News Bureau was used by all minor league teams to compile and publish statistics. In Cape Breton, this service would be replaced by Doug McFarlane, the League official scorer and his assistant Roy Duchemin and C. MacQuarrie.⁹

The Colliery League schedule consisted of 120 games beginning with a June 1 game in Sydney. Each team would play twenty-four games. The imported umpires Scotty Robb and Joe Humphries would be paid one hundred and fifty dollars a month. The Glace Bay club was signing players recommended by the Brooklyn Dodgers through the influence of manager Del

⁹Ibid., 4 April 1938.

Bissonette. Community support consisting of the Fire Department, Caledonia A.C. and the Glace Bay Baseball Club was working to improve the South Street Field.⁹ Bissonette turned down an offer to scout for the Boston Bees to play in Glace Bay. However, he did manage the Boston team in 1945 for sixty-one games posting a record of twenty-five wins and thirty-six losses.¹⁰

Thomas S. Johnstone, an official of the Indian Cove Coal Co. was elected President of the Sydney Mines Ramblers. The team would hold a two day bazaar the second week in May to raise money to defer costs. Work was proceeding on Brown Street Park and the team had installed a new scoreboard donated by the Imperial Tobacco Co. of Canada. The bond between miners, chewing tobacco and the tobacco company was obvious. The team had purchased a new loud speaker system to introduce the players. At the first Rambler practice, several hundred fans watched the players work out. The new players would be introduced to the public at a dance to be held at St. Mary's Hall. This season the club would have new uniforms. The team decided to have a parade prior to the first game with Mayor MacCormick to throw out the first ball.

The New Waterford Dodgers continued to attempt to strengthen their team with the signing of minor league veteran Fred Kennedy, a second baseman who would settle down the young

⁹Ibid., 12 April 1938.

¹⁰Baseball Encyclopedia, 618.

infield. The Dodgers played a number of exhibition games on the way to Cape Breton. They defeated the Calais Blue Sox of Maine 18-4. The Moncton Senior Amateur team was crushed 10-1 and 6-0 with very poor fan support for the home team. Their final game was against the very strong amateur Springhill Fencebusters who fell 13-0. The team gave every indication that hitting would not be a problem. The Springhill team featured famous Nova Scotia players Al Linkletter, "Buddy" Condy and Edgar "The Great" Cormier. Linkletter started the game pitching three and one half innings allowing eight hits while Cormier finished giving up five hits, five runs and four walks. The Seaman brothers of Liverpool played with the Dodgers after gaining permission from the N.S.A.B.A. The Springhill team could not hit Art Calhoun, on option from Toronto of the International League. He pitched seven innings, allowing no hits and no walks, striking out five."

When the team arrived in New Waterford, they were greeted with a dance at the Strand Hall attended by a large number of fans.

HITTERS AND PITCHERS

The level of hitting had been improving during the 1938 season. Some claimed that the ball was livelier but there is a more obvious reason for the harder hitting players. Most of the players in the Colliery League had professional

"Sydney Post Record, 30 May 1938.

experience; the teams were stronger and the players more experienced.

The Colliery League got into the publishing business with the magazine "Colliery League Digest", sixty pages of baseball information. It included messages from W.C. Bramham, President of the National Association of Professional Baseball, Judge A.D. Campbell, President of the Colliery League, mayors of the League towns, and H.J. Kelley, General Manager Dominion Steel and Coal. The pictures of the managers of the League teams were featured in the Digest. It included complete league schedules, plus sketches of players and umpires, space for scores of games and a section for autographs. If the amount of advertising in the "Colliery League Digest" is a mark of profit, then it was a successful venture.

Tommy Jackson, the last of the local players, retired from the game on July 4.¹² Jackson was an employee of Caledonia Colliery and was having difficult getting time off to play baseball. Jackson realizing his first responsibility was to his wife and family decided on a full time job, giving up the game of baseball. However, Tommy "Dummy" Jackson did not leave the game totally, as he became a member of the Glace Bay executive.

On the same day a meeting of League directors was held to decide the fate of the Dominion Hawks. It was becoming

¹²Sydney Post Record., 4 July 1938.

evident that the team may fold due to a lack of fan support and a mounting deficit plus bills of \$2,000 left from 1937.¹³ The Hawks were losing and the team was in last place with the majority of fans coming from other towns. With the team doing poorly at the gate, the Hawks must have a percentage of road gates to break even, but the other teams would not agree to this plan. There was a fear that if Dominion folded, the National Association would not accept a League with four teams. The loss of Dominion would require a shorter schedule and a change in the playoff format. In an effort to raise much needed funds, Ralph Bellrose and Lou Lowe were sold to Glace Bay for one hundred twenty-five dollars.

July 14 saw the Dominion Hawks leave the Colliery League as a result of poor financial support:¹⁴ a team with a forty year history of organized baseball. Two hundred and fifty fans met in Dominion to attempt to keep the team in the League. A collection was taken up and a committee named to search for new players. The directors of the Colliery League announced the withdrawal of the Hawks and began to draw up a new schedule for the rest of the season. The team representing the smallest community in the League could no longer pay their bills. The remaining four teams in the League would donate money to the Hawks in an effort to help them pay their bills. A new schedule was adopted for the

¹³Sydney Post Record., 3 July 1938.

¹⁴Sporting News, 14 July 1938.

League but the New Waterford delegates withdrew in protest.¹⁵ The schedule would consist of fifty games from July 25 to September 3. Ten thousand copies of the schedule would be printed and given free to fans at the next games played. New Waterford President Freddie Gregor was against the new schedule, two games had been added and Gregor felt this gave other teams an unfair advantage in the race for a playoff start.

While Dominion was having money problems the Sydney Mines Ramblers were making player changes. They had obtained fifty dollars by selling Doug Yeates to the Rome team of the Can-Am League, a team managed by Bill Buckley who last year guided the Ramblers. Money was also received from the New York Yankees to complete the transfer of Ray Manarel.

President Campbell was in the process of arranging a playoff series between the Colliery League and the Canadian-American League, a Class "C" League.¹⁶ Campbell and Rev. Father Harold J. Martin, President of the Class "C" League were attempting to put together a five game series between the League winners. There was little difference in the level of play between Class "C" and Class "D".

August 4, 1938 an All-Star Game was played with the proceeds going to Bernie Scanlon who was out for the remainder of the season due to illness. A team with players from Sydney

¹⁵Sydney Post Record, 23 July 1938.

¹⁶Sporting News, 4 August 1938.

Mines and Sydney defeated the team comprised of players from New Waterford and Glace Bay 4-0. The Sydney Post Record donated twenty-five dollars and the North Sydney Herald printed tickets at no charge. The four League umpires and the league scorers worked the games for free.¹⁷

On August 11, Merle Settlemyre pitched a twelve inning, no hit, no run game as Sydney defeated the Sydney Mines Ramblers 1-0. Only four Sydney Mines players reached base, two on errors, one on a walk and one hit by a pitched ball. In eight of the twelve innings the Ramblers went down in order as Settlemyre was aided by many outstanding plays in the field. Guido Panciera set a League record with twenty-five put-outs at first base.¹⁸ During the 1928 season Settlemyre had pitched for the Boston Red Sox winning no games and losing six, along with an E.R.A. of 5.47.¹⁹

As the regular season drew to a close, the race for the final playoff position in the standings was extremely close. The last scheduled game of the year between Sydney Mines and Sydney would be played with the winners advancing to the playoffs. Sydney Mines had protested a game played during the previous week against New Waterford but the protest was overturned. A scheduled game for the 2nd of September between the two teams was cancelled due to poor field conditions and

¹⁷Sydney Post Record, 5 August 1938.

¹⁸Ibid., 12 August 1938.

¹⁹Baseball Encyclopedia, 2030.

the game would not be replayed. New Waterford was in second place, one game behind Glace Bay. Sydney defeated Sydney Mines for third place and also tied New Waterford for second. The Dodgers wanted to play a sudden death game for second place but Judge J. Bramham, President of the National Association ruled against the game and declared Sydney the second place finishers. Both teams had finished with a percentage of .519 but when carried to five figures Sydney was .51923 and New Waterford .51851. According to Judge Bramham this was the closest finish in the history of minor league ball for a position in the standings.²⁰

Ralph Bellrose of Glace Bay was the leading hitter with a .328 average. Gerald Kiley scored the most runs, 41, and led the League in hits with 63. Lester Crabbe of Glace Bay had 41 R.B.I.s and 6 home runs. Merle Settlemire paced the League with 13 wins and the best E.R.A. while Roy Moore of Glace Bay struck out 107 batters.²¹

The Sydney Citians came close to breaking even because of a large increase in fans resulting from the closeness of teams in the standings. The adult attendance for the last eight games, seven in the playoffs, plus the last game with Sydney Mines saw a gross attendance of 12,476 with children estimated at 9,000. The adult attendance in dollars was over \$4,000. The calibre of baseball was excellent and the players were

²⁰Sydney Post Record, 5 September 1938.

²¹Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball, 194.

respected in the community.²² Glace Bay honoured their team with a banquet attended by the officers and members of the executive, the officials of the League and invited guests. The team was paraded from Glace Bay to the train station accompanied by hundreds of fans, and over two hundred cars and trucks with music provided by the Caledonia Pipe Band.

The Colliery League had 77,846 adult admissions paid during the 1938 season with a gross of \$45,000 to \$50,000. The official statistics of adult attendance was released by Frank Murphy the Board of Licence representative on Cape Breton Island. Glace Bay had 19,986 paid adult admissions, New Waterford 17,759, Sydney 21,628, Sydney Mines who did not compete in the playoffs 14,408, and Dominion during its nineteen games before the suspension of operations 4,083. There was no official check on children's attendance. The value of admissions after taxes were deducted was \$27,246.10 and the value of the government share set at five cents per admission was \$4,060.²³

In late September the Sydney Mines Ramblers could not give a financial statement because they had not received their share of the playoff gates from the other three teams. The movement of players was criticized by some fans but the team executive stated the moves were necessary to strengthen the club. The Ramblers were proud to announce that as far as

²²Sydney Post Record, 16 September 1938.

²³Ibid., 24 September 1938.

expenses were concerned they had broken even and were able to pay seven hundred dollars towards the deficit. The fee for membership in the club would be raised to two dollars with a drive for new members to begin immediately.²⁴ In New Waterford the team reported a deficit of \$2,747.07 including past debts. The losses for 1938 were only \$599.56 with the heaviest losses in July when the weather was poor and the mines were idle for long periods of time. The team was not pleased with the money made from the playoffs and would seek ways of raising funds.²⁵

²⁴Ibid., 20 September 1938.

²⁵Ibid., 22 October 1938.

CHAPTER VI

THE LAST GASP: BULLETS NOT BASEBALLS

As the political crisis in Europe worsened and the chance of war increased, the teams of the Colliery League prepared for the 1939 season. Managers were being signed to contracts and players were sought. Once again there would be arguments between the umpires, players and fans, teams would have trouble paying their bills and of greatest importance to the fans the calibre of play was high. The year 1939 had the classification go from "D" to "C" which led to better players coming to Cape Breton.

We have examined specific groups and interests as they reflect upon the Colliery League. We have the philosophy of professional versus amateur, the loss of a place to play for local players, violence during games by fans, players and umpires and the treatment of specific groups, women, blacks, aboriginals and others. It is now necessary to determine if the Colliery League added any positive aspects to the lives of the communities in which the teams existed.

The greatest winter need of the teams was the necessity to raise money to pay bills and prepare the finances for the upcoming season. New Waterford was holding weekly socials while the Northside club had skating parties, bingo and an ice carnival. The New Waterford team was in very difficult

financial straits and may have to withdraw from the League.¹ Even though the team was in the pennant race during 1938 the team had a poor year financially and required \$1,500 to continue. The community seemed to be disinterested in the fate of the team. The New Waterford Sports Club was in debt and unable to raise more funds.² The club would hold a tag day and solicit business for money to cover the team's expenses. A benefit concert would be held at the Strand Gym and a midnight show at the Majestic Theatre in an attempt to reduce the deficit. Unfortunately the tag day raised less than \$100.³

The Glace Bay Miners were making improvements to South Street Field through a combined effort of the team and the Caledonia A.C. The field would be grassed and it was hoped the gardeners in town would support this effort by helping to sod the field. The baseball field was to be moved away from the rugby field, levelled and a new nine foot fence built nine feet closer to home plate.⁴ The Glace Bay Professional team would pay rent at South Street Park but amateur teams could use the facility at no charge.⁵

New Waterford would sell 700 shares in the ballclub to

¹ Sydney Post Record, 15 March 1939.

² Ibid., 7 March 1939.

³ Ibid., 27 March 1939.

⁴ Ibid., 22 November 1939.

⁵ Ibid., 28 March 1939.

raise money and involve more people with the team. Although the team did not reach its quota, management was confident that the people of New Waterford would support the team and sufficient funds would be found. The various campaigns to raise funds would continue.⁶ The Dodgers moved in their fences ten feet and the extra space used for parking. Charlie Brucato the Dodger manager, was building his team around players from the Boston area. Brucato was only twenty-four years old but had played college baseball at Holy Cross, semi-professional baseball and "D" and "C" as a professional.⁷ Work was done at the ballpark by volunteers who had the time to help out. The New Waterford Board of Public Works was co-operating with the team by making some of their manpower available.

The Sydney Mines Ramblers would be managed in 1939 by Fred Loftus who was signing his players in the Boston area. Pitcher Herb Hammerstrom, the best pitcher in the League in 1938 was signed along with twenty year old Jimmie Cullinane. The Ramblers would have players with major league experience. Al Blanche from Somerville, Mass. had pitched for the Boston National League team in 1935 and 1936 but only played a total of 33.1 innings with a no win and one loss record.⁸ Bill Marshall would play shortstop for the Ramblers, having played

⁶ Ibid., 17 April 1939.

⁷ Ibid., 15 May 1939.

⁸ Baseball Encyclopedia, 1597.

in the American League with the Boston Red Sox in 1931 and the Cincinnati Red Legs in 1934. The Dorchester, Mass. native had little playing time in the majors with a total of only seven games and eight at bats.⁹ Also signed was twenty-four year old Connie Creedon a native of Danvers, Mass. In 1943 Creedon played five games with the Boston Bees with only five at bats.¹⁰

Douglas "Scotty" Robb would return to Cape Breton as the Umpire-In-Chief. It had been thought that Robb might not return because he required a leave of absence from his job. Arthur F. Kenney of Holyoke, Mass., who in 1938 umpired in the North Carolina State League, Charles E. Whittle, Philadelphia, Pa. who had umpired in the Mid-Atlantic League in 1936-1937 and the Eastern League in 1938, and Harry Potter of Reading, Mass. who had umpired in the Eastern Shore League would come to Cape Breton.¹¹

Teams in minor league baseball would exceed the salary limits in their pursuit of better teams. Therefore, in 1939 the salary limits would be strictly enforced by the National Association of Professional Baseball Clubs. Failure to follow the rules would result in a fine of \$500 along with a two year suspension for the president or other officials of a club guilty of falsifying a player's salary statement. The

⁹ Ibid., 1158.

¹⁰ Ibid., 832.

¹¹ Sydney Post Record, 3 April 1939.

offending team would be forced to release the highest paid player on the team.¹² The first victim of the strict enforcement of salary limits was Ralph Bellrose who was released by Glace Bay. Bellrose wanted more than the \$250 a month offered by manager Roy Moore and the team could not meet his demands.¹³

Judge Campbell was returned as the President of the Colliery League. The judge had special plans for the Centennial Year of Baseball. The League would present a special program for each month. One of his proposals was to have five hundred school children in each League town sing at a game during the month of June and Campbell hoped to increase the interest of baseball among children with this proposal.¹⁴

During the upcoming baseball season twelve Colliery League games would be broadcast, three games from each ballpark.¹⁵ The idea that a sporting event was occurring hundreds of miles away and that the listener was at the same time experiencing the event added to the importance of the game. The stream of vivid sports commentary provided endless possibilities for the listener to reconstruct the event. Novel entertainment was now instantaneously possible. Radio

¹² Ibid., 4 April 1939.

¹³ Ibid., 17 April 1939.

¹⁴ Ibid., 26 April 1939.

¹⁵ Ibid., 2 May 1939.

evoked vivid images in the mind's eye and was particularly adapted to the game of baseball.¹⁶

The monetary situation of the Colliery League teams necessitated borrowing money from the bank to start the season. The teams would pay off the deficits with fall and winter appeals to the public. The money was borrowed to start the season but there is no evidence that the money was paid back to the bank.¹⁷ The Colliery League would raise their classification from "D" to "C". The jump to Class "C" would result in a salary limit increase of six hundred dollars plus an additional two hundred and fifty dollars in bonds.¹⁸ The teams would increase the admission price by ten cents and it was hoped the increase would ensure financial stability. It was costing the teams more money to put a team on the field than they were bringing in at the gate. The Class "C" classification would perhaps bring more scouts from the major league teams and an increased opportunity to sell more players to the big leagues. A higher rating would bring better players to Cape Breton and the teams would work seek affiliation with major league teams. The road to financial stability for the teams of the Colliery League was affiliation

¹⁶R. Terry Furst, "Mass Media and the Transformation of Spectator Team Sports," Canadian Journal of Sport and Physical Education vol. 3, 2 (December, 1972), 33.

¹⁷ Interviews with Max Cullen and Russell C. Demont. Both men were sure that the Ramblers and Miners had obtained money from the banks but had no knowledge of the money being repaid.

¹⁸ Sydney Post Record, 3 February 1939.

with major league teams. During the 1939 season, thirty-two minor league teams belonged to the St. Louis Cardinals and they had working agreements with another eight clubs. Through this network the Cardinals controlled the playing lives of 600 players. The New York Yankees had a total of fifteen teams from Class "D" to Class "AA".¹⁹ St. Louis Cardinal executive Arthur Feltzner commented "There were twenty Class "D" Leagues in the United States in 1939 and the Cardinals had a team in each of them. One actually had to go out of the country to find a Class "D" League in organized baseball in which we weren't represented, that was the Canadian Colliery League."²⁰ Even with the increase of tickets to forty-five cents plus five cents tax, the teams could not control the lost revenue caused by fans watching games from outside the fence. Many fans stood outside the park and watched the games for no charge.²¹

The Colliery League attempted to make the attending of games easier for the fans. One idea was to issue monthly tickets good for eight consecutive games for three dollars and twenty five cents. The starting time of games would be changed to four o'clock to accommodate the fans. Clerks could more easily leave work to attend games from four to six than

¹⁹ Mike Blake, The Minor Leagues (New York: Lynwood Press, 1991), 41.

²⁰ William Humber, Cheering for the Home Team (Boston: Mills Press, 1993), 97.

²¹ Sydney Post Record, 16 May 1939.

five to seven as the stores were busy at six. The time change enabled out-of-town fans to return to their homes at an earlier hour. There was no need to start the games at five o'clock on Saturday as the miners were paid earlier in the day and the auxiliary department and machine shop were paid on Friday evening.²²

Judge A.D. Campbell spoke to the New Waterford Rotary Club addressing the issue of the unemployed and that those with spare time must have something to do with their idle moments or at least something constructive to occupy their minds.²³

The promoters who organized the Cape Breton Colliery League were dealing with this problem of idle time when they organized the league according to Judge Campbell. The fans were demanding a better brand of baseball, the teams and the fans required protection from players who did not try on each occasion and the players required protection from owners who refused to pay their salaries. To meet and control these problems the Colliery League was reorganized as part of the National Organization of Professional Baseball Clubs. The cost of professional baseball was very high but the public demanded this high level of play and they were prepared to pay for it. The League did have trouble staying within the salary limits. One method of circumventing the salary limit was to

²² Ibid., 27 May 1939.

²³ Ibid., 24 May 1939.

give players jobs which required very little if any effort, to supplement their incomes.²⁴

Judge Campbell explained that the people of the various towns of the Colliery League had a better understanding of the neighbouring townspeople and respect and confidence had replaced bitterness and mistrust. The sport of baseball was having a great effect on the youngsters and helping with their physical development. The price of admission to a Colliery League game was low and last summer 150 youth teams were registered in Cape Breton.²⁵

The Provincial government was not helping the League in their struggle to break even. When the League raised the price of admission to forty-five cents, it resulted in the Provincial Amusement Tax being increased by two and one half cents per admission. Sports in Cape Breton had helped the people forget their problems for a few moments by providing the fans with an escape. The Amusement Tax was meant to take profit from private individuals or firms making profits from sport or other forms of public entertainment. The teams of the Colliery League argued they were not in business to make a profit but to entertain people and break even financially.²⁶ By June 5 with attendance falling, the League returned the ticket price to thirty-five cents.

²⁴ Interview with Ed Gillis, 14 November 1991.

²⁵ Sydney Post Record, 24 May 1939.

²⁶ Ibid., 27 May 1939.

The Glace Bay Miners would use the opening game as an event. The game against Sydney would be opened with remarks by Judge A.D. Campbell followed by J.S. Woodsworth, Member of Parliament, Leader of the C.C.F. and D.W. Morrison, the Mayor of Glace Bay. The citizens band from Dominion No. 6 would provide music.²⁷

The weather during the month of June was poor and attendance was down. But on July 1, Al Smith pitched one of those rare games, a no-hitter. Smith had excellent team defence playing behind him with only one error committed by the Sydney team. The Glace Bay Miners had six base runners, five on walks. He struck out six batters and only two runners reached second base.

In June, Fred Loftus of Concord, Mass. was released as the manager of the Sydney Mines Ramblers. There was dissatisfaction with the record of the team, three wins and eleven losses. He was replaced by ex-major leaguer Al Blanche.²⁸ This move was only temporary and Dave Berry became manager. Berry, a Holy Cross Graduate, had been the catcher for the Glace Bay Miners in 1936. At the same time the Ramblers released Con Creedon and two other players.²⁹ When the record of the team did not improve Dave Berry was released

²⁷Ibid., 27 May 1939.

²⁸Sporting News, 22 June 1939.

²⁹Ibid., 6 July 1939.

and replaced by shortstop Bill Marshall.³⁰ The poor play of the Ramblers was cutting down on attendance. The surprising fact of the Ramblers record was that they were first in fielding and second in hitting but last in the standings.³¹

Even with the drop in attendance and cash shortfall the Ramblers would not fold. The team would attempt to obtain fifty dollars from each of thirty merchants.³² A city's baseball team of ten could rally the citizens behind a common cause as nothing else short of a natural disaster could do.³³ For the Northside team to continue it would require the support of the local merchants and increased attendance of the fans at the games. It was a disappointment when only thirteen merchants contributed money to the team. It would be necessary for the team to be run as a business to succeed and plans were being made to incorporate the team and sell shares. Frank Heidle a local miner was named president with Harold Layton, owner of the local lumber yard chairman of the fund raising committee. R.J. MacDonald, L.L.B. of North Sydney who would handle all legal matters, explained how the club would be incorporated.³⁴ Clubs could be viewed as an important local

³⁰Ibid., 20 July 1939.

³¹Sydney Post Record, 17 July 1939.

³²Ibid., 4 August 1939.

³³Benjamin G. Rader, American Sports (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Inc., 1983), 11.

³⁴Sydney Post Record, 8 August 1939.

institution which represented the city in inter-urban competition and vividly reflected the progressive character of the community.³⁵ If the team and its place in the Colliery League was important to the town, enough shares would be sold to maintain the franchise.

THE COLLIERY LEAGUE AND COMMUNITY

Baseball was important to the fans of Sydney Mines and the other towns of the Colliery League. It brought people together and even though they may not all be at the ballgame they were at least aware that these things were happening and whether the team did well or did not do well.³⁶ The people of the towns discussed the games and it would be rare for most of the population not to be aware of the team's winning and losing and their prospects for the remainder of the season. The baseball teams brought people closer together in more ways than the games themselves and even those not interested in the game could be touched by the team. The teams had many social functions to raise money to pay their debts. Theatre parties, dances, socials, bingo games were all methods of raising money and for these events to be enjoyed participants did not have to be baseball fans.

³⁵ Steven A. Riess, The American Sporting Experience: A Historical Anthology of Sport in America (New York: Leisure Press, 1984), 274.

³⁶ Mark A. Grey, "Sports and Immigrant, Minority and Anglo Relations in Garden City (Kansas) High School," Sociology of Sport Journal, 9,3 (September, 1992), 262.

Sport has a way of being a unifying force for communities it represents, and this is at once a consequence of inter-community conflict it engenders and the intra-community network it establishes.³⁷ If the size of crowds at Colliery League games and the amount of interest shown by the public can be used as a gauge of unifying people, the League had a positive effect on the communities. We also saw many fans travelling to games in other towns, building links between the four teams of the Colliery League. Sport is a principal method of collective identification. Team sports are more strongly linked to their communities than those in which individuals participate against each other.³⁸ The Colliery League teams by drawing large crowds to their games and building up interest in the game of baseball, were also building up community solidarity and a sense of identity at least to the large number of people who followed the games. These teams could be viewed as an important local institution which represented the city in inter-urban competition and vividly reflected the character of the community.³⁹ At the same time that the Colliery League was building solidarity through baseball the ultra-conservative United Mine Workers of America was battling with the communist led Amalgamated Miners

³⁷Stone, "Sport as a Community Representation," 222.

³⁸John Bale, "The place of 'place' in cultural studies of sports," Human Geography 12,4 (December 1988), 514.

³⁹Riess, Steven A., The Baseball Magnates, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), 274.

Union of Nova Scotia driving a deep wedge through the trade union movement.

Sport appeal was the potential it had to provide an escape from everyday pressures.⁴⁰ It enabled miners and steelworkers who worked in very dangerous environments, when work was available, to escape from their everyday lives for a few moments of relaxation in the fresh air and sunshine. Clerks and shopkeepers who spent long hours in stores, offices and banks trying to keep pace with the paperwork generated by expanding business could use baseball to provide an escape from their daily chores.⁴¹ Through sport, these hard working people could share emotional rewards, and have shared values and objectives. Sport is about making friends, building communities and sharing experiences. There may be hostility to rivals but there is also the deep sense of solidarity and identity that comes from fierce loyalties.⁴²

Civic pride and identity are caught up with sports. There is an inextricable link between sport and peoples' images of their cities.⁴³ Baseball had caught on quickly not merely as a game but as a means of expressing local ties and loyalties in competition with rival towns or neighbourhoods. These games were more than a casual leisure time activity in

⁴⁰Robert F. Wheeler, "Organized Sport," 193.

⁴¹Kirsch, The Creation of ... Sports, " 7.

⁴²Holt, Sport and the British, 347.

⁴³Karp and Yoels, "Sport and Urban Life," 79.

the daily lives of these communities because victory meant innumerable personal encounters and bragging rights.⁴⁴ An examination of the amount of money spent on baseball during the professional days of the Colliery League reveals that these games were more than leisure activities. These teams would spend great amounts of money to defeat the other League teams and would become professional when they decided other Maritime teams had advantages over them, playing an amateur game.

Baseball may also have helped to bring all sections of the population closer together, with the exception perhaps of blacks and native people. Part of its democratizing motif is that baseball crests a common bond among spectators regardless of their class ethnicity, education or occupation. Baseball was a force in integrating a population ordinarily divided by wealth, occupation, ancestry and language.⁴⁵

An examination has shown the Colliery League to have fans and members of the League executive from all walks of life. Doctors, lawyers, mine executives, union officials, merchants, miners all played their part in the Colliery League effort. Unfortunately the Colliery League mirrored the society in which it existed. Women were kept in a supporting role and through an unwritten rule of the National Association, blacks

⁴⁴Steven M. Gelber, "Their Hands Are All Out Playing: Business and Amateur Baseball, 1845-1917," Journal of Sport History, 11, 1 (Spring, 1984), 14.

⁴⁵Karp and Yoels, "Sport and Urban Life," 85.

were not permitted to play during the professional days of the Cape Breton Colliery League.

At least one member of the Northside sporting community had an interest in the success of the Ramblers. Four leaf clovers were sent to each member of the Ramblers by a lady known as only "Madame X". When arriving at the Post Office Manager Bill Marshall received a parcel for the team which contained the good luck charms.⁴⁶ The four leaf clover was lucky for one player as Jim Cullinane was sold to Albany of the Class "A" Eastern League for over one thousand dollars.⁴⁷ To draw more fans the Ramblers would play the House of David. With lights being used at Brown Street Park for the first time, the Ramblers easily defeated the House of David team eight to one. The game was watched by over one thousand fans. This was the second game of the day for the Ramblers who earlier had defeated the Glace Bay Miners.⁴⁸

The League was still having financial problems as the teams struggled to break even. Money from the play-off gates would be divided among all four teams to help with the deficit. The fourth place team would get eight percent of the play-off gates. In the semi-finals the third place team would get forty-five percent of the gross while the second place team would get fifty-five percent of the gross. In the finals

⁴⁶Sydney Post Record, 24 July 1939.

⁴⁷Ibid., 14 August 1939.

⁴⁸Ibid., 15 August 1939.

the money would be divided sixty percent for the first place team and forty percent for the second place team.⁴⁹ Judge Campbell was attempting to get both Toronto and Montreal of the International league to affiliate with Colliery League teams for the next season. This affiliation would prove to be of a financial benefit but may not contribute to the calibre of play because the teams did not have enough players of high calibre.⁵⁰

The Sydney Mines Ramblers were out of the playoffs by mid-August but they put up some fine battles against the rest of the League. To cut costs the team was down to ten players, three infielders, two outfielders and four pitchers while manager Billy Marshall kept them playing hard. Three games against the Glace Bay Miners showed that the Ramblers were fighting to the end of the schedule. The Ramblers and the Miners played three games ending in ties. The first game was a ten inning 2-2 tie, the second 4-4 and the third 2-2 in ten innings. The teams had played three games in five days, a total of twenty-nine innings with each team scoring eight runs.⁵¹ But this was not the end of the string of tie games between the Miners and the Ramblers. The teams met on August 30 and again the result was a 2-2 tie. After thirty-eight consecutive innings each team had scored ten runs; the

⁴⁹Ibid, 16 August 1939.

⁵⁰Ibid., 26 August 1939.

⁵¹Ibid., 22 August 1939.

Ramblers with thirty-four hits and seven errors and Glace Bay with thirty seven hits and eight errors.⁵²

It was decided by a meeting of the League Executive to have the playoff games start at four o'clock. There were five tie games to be determined and it was decided they would be played if necessary in determining first or second place. The executive of the New Waterford Dodgers complained about the umpires in the League stating that in their opinion calls were always going against their team. President Campbell responded that all the clubs had complaints about the umpires and that the four umpires were not the best in the world but they had integrity and tried their best. The other three teams in the League did not support the New Waterford team but were in favour of the umpires.⁵³

As we have seen most players were content with spending the full season in the Colliery League and some like Del Bissonette had passed on the opportunity to move to a higher classification to remain in Cape Breton. Not all however, wished to stay for the full season. Late in August Less Crabbe, the home run hitting outfielder with the Glace Bay Miners jumped his contract and returned to Detroit. The executive of the miners would press to have Crabbe barred from organized baseball for life. They would notify Judge Bramham of the National Association and seek his approval of the

⁵²Ibid., 31 August 1939.

⁵³Ibid., 27 August 1939.

lifelong suspension. Crabbe and his father had been complaining of the manner in which the team had been transported from Detroit. Crabbe who was frequently fined one dollar for missing afternoon practice was not pleased with losing his money. Crabbe was aware of the policy of being fined one dollar for a missed practice and it had been in effect from the beginning of the season. It was not possible for the Miners to respect Crabbe's desire for a release because Johnny Abel and Garrett Brand were returning to college and could not be expected to stay in Glace Bay. Crabbe had been informed by team president MacAulay of the penalty he would face if he left the team. The team would attempt to obtain an extension from a Detroit company for two weeks to allow Crabbe to remain in Glace Bay. With the playoffs near the Glace Bay players were not happy with the actions taken by Crabbe and Manager Moore would use a pitcher in right field to replace the departed Crabbe.⁵⁴

On September 3, Herb Hammerstrom jumped the New Waterford ball club. He had been obtained from the Sydney Mines Ramblers on the ninth of August and had not been pitching well. Hammerstrom wished to return home stating his mother was ill but he would not produce the telegram to prove his statement.⁵⁵

The League executive abandoned the last week of the

⁵⁴Ibid., 29 August 1939.

⁵⁵Ibid., 4 September 1939.

Colliery League schedule and began the playoffs with Glace Bay meeting New Waterford. The League directors were unanimous in their decision to begin the best of three series. Britain was at war and attendance at future games would decline as a result of the unsettled local conditions. Another contributing factor was Victoria Park was being leased from the Department of National Defense and may soon be used for military training.⁵⁶

Judge A. D. Campbell was honoured by the National Association of Professional Baseball when he was named Chairman of the Board which would supervise the annual "Little World Series" between the two highest classified minor leagues, the International League and the American Association. The Board, along with Campbell, consisted of President Frank Shaughnessey of the International League and President George Trautman of the American Association. The Board would arrange all details of the series, rule on protests or disputes. All expenses incurred by President Campbell including transportation would be paid out of the receipts of the series.⁵⁷ This honour bestowed on Campbell would have enabled him to make many contacts to help improve the Colliery League had war not forced it to disband in 1940.

The 1939 regular schedule winners were the Sydney Citians with a record of thirty-six wins and twenty losses. They were

⁵⁶Ibid., 4 September 1939.

⁵⁷Ibid., 11 September 1939.

followed by New Waterford, Glace Bay and Sydney Mines. The semi-final playoff series was won by New Waterford as they defeated the Glace Bay Miners two games to one. The best of seven final was won in straight games by the Sydney team. Abe Abramowitz of Sydney won the batting title with an average of .325 and led in runs batted in with 42. Charles Brucato of New Waterford was the League leader in hits with 71 while his teammate Walter Brackaw and "Moe" Kiley of Sydney tied for the League lead in runs with forty. The early departing Less Crabbe hit nine home runs to lead the Colliery League in that department. The pitching honours went to Bernie Pearlman of Sydney who led the League with 103 strikeouts, an earned run average of 1.62 and tied with teammate Phil Mooney with eleven wins.⁵⁸

The 1939 season was not a profitable year financially for the teams of the Colliery League. Until late July the weather was wet, cold and unfit for baseball. The results of the poor climate were small crowds and large deficits. Adding to the problems as the shadow of war hung over the League were intermittent strikes at the collieries and fear of a general strike. The teams of Sydney and Glace Bay began the season with poor players and the cost of replacing them was high. With the nation at war during the playoffs, the gate receipts were a financial flop. The teams finished four thousand dollars in the red.

⁵⁸Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball, 196.

The Second World War would see the end of the professional Cape Breton Colliery League and baseball in Cape Breton would not return to this high level of excellence. But the League would not be forgotten. Chuck Whittle, an umpire from Philadelphia remembers:

I remember meeting with Judge Campbell and we came to the conclusion that the Colliery League would never operate again with the war upon us and American players sure to be restricted in their travel. I remember how sad it was seeing the players with tears in their eyes when they realized they wouldn't be returning. They hated to leave Cape Breton and even today when I run across players of the day they always speak in favourable terms of their day here.⁵⁹

⁵⁹Quoted in William Humber, "Toiling in the Maritime Minors," Dugout, (April 1994), 9.

CONCLUSIONS

The industrial area of Cape Breton had a strong sense of community developed over the life of its existence. As stated by A. P. Cohen, boundaries are required to mark the beginning and the end of the community, define its identity and mark its place in social interaction. A number of symbols were used as markers to distinguish it from other communities.¹ These communities had a strong sense of who and what they were. These towns featured inherited loyalties, established social institutions and widely shared popular traditions. With common British and Scottish backgrounds and the Church prominent in the life of the town, a strong community developed.

According to K. P. Wilkinson, for a community to grow strong it requires a process of collective action, common interests and social interaction. The daily needs of people must be met, and there should be justice and social action.² As the miners and steelworkers of Cape Breton battled with the coal companies, they took collective action by holding meetings, demonstrations and the most dramatic form of collective action, the strike. The common interest of the community was developed around social action against the coal companies who owned the labour market, the homes and the

¹Cohen, The Symbolic Construction, 11-38.

²K. P. Wilkinson, Community In America, 13.

stores. The battle was fought for improved wages, sanitary conditions, better homes and generally improved living conditions and social justice for the working class. These struggles built a sense of working class solidarity through common interests and social interaction.

The people of the mining communities had a sense of their place and locality. Although these towns may appear similar, the people who resided there were aware of the differences. People acknowledge their own identities and place a great degree of value on the distinctiveness and the difference.

As stated earlier, tight-knit communities may not treat all of its members in a similar and equal fashion. Women were excluded from many aspects of community life, had a very small market in which to find employment, and were expected to remain at home looking after their families. Blacks and native people were excluded from all but the most menial of tasks. They lived in areas removed from the centre of white society. The strong sense of solidarity found in the mining communities may have played a part in the communities rejecting ideas from outside the area. The people of the mining communities were of the opinion they were different from the remainder of the province. The problem of different political ideologies (symbolic) prevented the mine workers from presenting a totally united front against the coal company.

The Colliery League added positive aspects to the

communities in which they existed. As stated by Samuel O. Regalado, sport develops and builds camaraderie, competitiveness and pride. Sport promotes internal cohesion and keeps communities together.³ A feeling of community and group solidarity is developed and sport provides a means for workers to have a temporary escape from hard work conditions.⁴ These ideas were found in the relationship of the Colliery League to an essentially working class community.

We saw the miners of Princess Colliery helping the team by having a set amount of money taken from each cheque to ensure the financial success of the team. When the Dominion Hawks were in financial trouble in 1938 they attempted a similar scheme in the mines in their area but were not able to raise sufficient funds. However, the demise of the Hawks was caused by the small size of the population base of Dominion, not by the lack of generosity of their supporters. Showing the solidarity of the teams in the League, the remaining four donated money to the Hawks to help them pay their bills.

The cost of arranging the transportation of players from Central Canada and the Eastern United States was a major portion of the teams' budgets. Adding further costs to the already high budgets was the practice of importing players on Monday and releasing them on Friday, resulting in additional

³Regalado, "Sport and Community in Japanese Yamato Colony," 139.

⁴Wheeler, "Organized Sport," 193.

cost to transport the players to Cape Breton and almost immediately pay their way back home. An example of the community working together to help the team could be seen in Sydney Mines as many helped the Ramblers in their fund raising efforts. Local merchants Jack and Mendel Yazer loaned club rooms to the team to hold card and bingo games. The local movie house put on shows to raise funds. Some of the ladies of the community held socials to help the effort.

Mitrano and Smith have made the point that sport unifies communities and tends to lessen the social distance between people and adds to the development of strong community feeling.⁵ An examination of the executive of the Sydney Mines Ramblers proves this point. The executive consisted of Frank Heidle, a miner, Harold Layton, the owner of the local lumber yard, R. J. MacDonald, LLB and H. Martin, MD. Thomas Johnstone, the President of the Indian Cove Coal Company was the Ramblers' team president. Examining the home area of fans attending the Rambler games reveals the team was supported by fans not only from Sydney Mines but also North Sydney, Bras d'Or and Florence. Baseball was bringing the people of the Northside together as they attended games. The Ramblers were a community organized and run team. Assorted committees were established to perform numerous functions showing co-operation added to the smooth running of the team.

President Campbell desired the players of the Colliery

⁵Mitrano and Smith, "The Socioemotional Functions," 53.

League to be of high moral character. These players could be role models for the children of industrial Cape Breton teaching them the virtues of playing by the rules, respect for authority and the advantages of team play. The youth of the area, having problems finding employment might emulate the players and use hard work as a road to success. The Colliery League provided amusement to the unemployed population contributing an outlet for their daily problems.

The teams represented the communities where they existed. In 1937, American interests attempted to purchase the cash strapped Dominion Hawks, a purchase which would have eliminated the debt and allowed the Hawks to continue without money worries. However, the team remained community owned as the people of Dominion would not permit the sale of the team to outside interests. The teams of the Colliery League represented the towns in fierce competition and showed the progressive character of the towns. Throughout the League as fans travelled from town to town, people met and developed a better understanding of neighbouring townspeople and respect and confidence replaced bitterness and mistrust. People came together to discuss the games not only during the baseball season, but all year.

The players of the Colliery League were readily accepted by the fans. Wherever they went in the various towns, the people stopped them and discussed baseball. At the beginning of the season receptions introduced players to the community

and as the season ended banquets and parades honored the players for their season-long efforts. The players earned money to support their families, pay university costs, however they wished to spend their money . These players brought pride to their community in victory, but when their team lost, their stay in Cape Breton could be short. Baseball taught lessons about discipline, meanings of rules, pattern of response by authority, importance of excellence, difference between personal and group expectations, and common bonds regardless of ethnicity, education or background.

The members of the community learned the values and norms that would lead them to do what had to be done, ensuring the system remained in operation.⁶ Through baseball rules, respect for authority was taught. People learned certain criteria must be executed to keep the game running correctly. By playing or watching baseball, people acquired a means of relieving tension built up by daily activities. A method was provided allowing people to let off steam in a harmless fashion.

The system contained a variety of social mechanisms that brought people together and served as a catalyst, building social relationships needed for co-ordinated action.⁷ The games of the Colliery League attracted large crowds to not only watch, but to discuss the finer points of the game of

⁶Coakley, "Sport In Society," 28.

⁷Ibid., 28.

baseball. The building of teams, improvements to ballparks, organizing of schedules and the numerous tasks required to run a professional baseball league qualified as co-ordinated action, requiring a large degree of cohesion, solidarity and social integration.

The members of the community learned the value of goals within the programme and the socially approved conventions of achieving these goals.³ The goal of the teams of the Colliery League was to win as many games as possible under the rules set forth by organized baseball. There were salary limits to be adhered to and roster sizes were set. After a certain date in the schedule, players could not be added to the teams. The teams must adjust to these rules and do the best they could without going outside the parameters set forth.

During the history of the League 1936-1939, as both a semi-professional and professional league, violence at games was a major problem. As fans lost large bets on their favourite teams and fuelled by alcohol, they fought with the players and umpires while the players fought with the fans and umpires. The fans defended the reputation of their team and the honour of the home town by fighting with visiting fans. The umpires, seen as a source of authority, also felt the wrath of rabid, home-town fans. In Sydney Mines and New Waterford police were required to deal with the fans and a riot occurred during a game played in New Waterford during

³Ibid., 28.

1939. The teams had trouble staying within the salary guidelines which resulted in the teams in the League being in constant financial difficulty.

Similar to society in general, women played a minor role in the Colliery League. They supported the teams by holding various fund raising events and socials after games for the benefit of the fans and players. Women were not the only group of people who were excluded from playing in the League. During the 1936 season "Whitey" Michaels, a black player performed with the Dominion Hawks but not without some difficulties in being accepted. It took the executive members of the other teams a lengthy period of time before allowing Michaels permission to play. The fans in Sydney Mines would not allow Michaels to play. During the three years the Colliery League was a member of organized baseball there was an unwritten rule that prohibited blacks from performing and only one native person performed in the League. The League certainly divided the sexes and excluded blacks and native people.

Large numbers of fans attended Colliery League games and there is evidence of them discussing the game during the season and after. The local paper, Sydney Post Record, provided ample publicity and covered every move the teams made. On a number of occasions miners failed to report for work and management found it necessary to close the mines because of the lack of manpower. This cost the other miners

lost wages and the company profits. Perhaps the League was occupying too much of the fans' time which could be spent on more important matters.

The fans of the Cape Breton Colliery League may have placed too much emphasis on winning and too little on the satisfaction of competing at a high level of athletic prowess. Although the athlete may benefit from his performance, he forfeits control of his body.⁹ Sport left the fans and players with little time to become aware of social problems as all of their time was consumed by sport. In the towns of the Colliery League this was evidenced in people going to games instead of reporting to work.

President Campbell employed the players to exhibit how hard work induced success but this attitude may have been incorrect. In an area plagued with high unemployment, those not succeeding in life may have become passive observers rather than players. This contradicted President Campbell's belief that baseball would develop strong, healthy children.

Many local merchants and some national companies, Imperial Tobacco as an example, advertised on billboards and scoreboards at the local ballparks. Perhaps they were civic minded, wishing solely to aid the local team; however, advertising sold goods and services if even on a small scale. A disappointing influence conveyed by baseball was the violence at numerous games. The League blamed alcohol and

⁹Ibid., 35-40.

gambling for chaos at their games; but the strong allegiance to teams was enough to cause violence and unruly fan behaviour at Colliery League games.

Sport divided the sexes and perpetuated the difference between men and women. Females were relegated to supporting roles while males dominated by strength and mental makeup. Sport obscured the characteristics men and women had in common and kept men and women in their respective roles.

The Cape Breton Colliery League was beneficial to the communities of industrial Cape Breton. To run the League and insure the success of the member teams, collective action was necessary. Individual agendas gave way to common interests as the League struggled to succeed. Social interaction was provided as people gathered at games and functions sponsored by the individual teams. Solidarity developed as communities rallied around their respective teams, while the teams were symbols used to exhibit differences between competing towns. Therefore, the Cape Breton Colliery Baseball League added to the rich sense of community already found in industrial Cape Breton.

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