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TU ?ni I Kii ??LIFE AND DEATH The Pluck Me of the company store Employees of the Dominion Coal Company Store. Caledonia. The following is a composite story made from several different interviews. We talked with Danny "Dancer" MacDonald at his home in New Aberdeen. Archie MacIntyre, Billy Pittman, Thomas Daye and others talked with us at the Glace Bay Pensioners Union. And we talked with Gordon MacGregor at the Miners Museum, Billy Pittman: When the mines first opened around the 1800s, the companies decided to build stores that supplied groceries, meats, dry goods • most everything the em? ployees wanted. But the trouble with the stores was that when you were hired on you were given a check number, a brass check number • and you could get credit on that number at the store. And manys the man that when payday would come he wouldn't have any pay because his earnings would be taken up by the family in the store. Thomas Daye: I remember we used to call it a bobtail paysheet. Gordon MacGregor: I worked in the office, on the payroll. The clerks would bring over the deductions for the week. Say you used up 26 dollars worth. They'd sing out to me the check number and name and 26 dollars. You may have only made 26 • so they would take the whole works and you'd draw a bobtail. Nearly everybody drew money • but I knew week in, week out fellows who never drew a red cent. But you didn't have to deal in the company store. To my mother there was a kind of blight, in a way, for everybody to deal there. She had a fear of it. Lots of women did. Because once they got a grip on you • like this Buchanan fellow I told you about, standing there with his bobtail and saying, "They plucked me" • he had nowhere else to go. Cape Breton's Magazine/3