

The Indianapolis Times

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COAL MINE CHAOS

THE strike of coal miners in western Pennsylvania for union recognition at a time when President Roosevelt is trying to unite employers and workers for a concerted assault on depression turns attention forcibly to that unhappy industry.

Differences between mine owners and workers are perennial, and so deep-rooted that their peaceful settlement apparently is impossible. The present strike is much like many others that have preceded it. There is trouble over picketing and the presence of strikebreakers; the militia has been sent into the coal fields to keep order; there have been outbreaks of violence.

And while this is going on at the mines, further evidence of the chaos in the industry is furnished by the preparation of half a dozen or more fair trade codes by different groups of operators for submission to NRA. The operators have been unable to agree on principles for general application to the industry.

Distress in the coal mining industry began before the depression became general. The number of miners employed has steadily decreased, partly because use of substitutes has reduced the demand for coal, and partly through introduction of machinery and improved methods.

The American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers recently estimated that in nine years 56,500 miners had been replaced by machines. 75,000 by improved methods, and that 149,500 had been thrown out of work by decreased demand. Miners in 1930 numbered 620,000.

Government figures showed working miners last spring were getting an average of 46 cents an hour for twenty-four hours a week, making their earnings \$11 a week. Employment was a third less than in 1929, but pay rolls were three-fourths less. Suffering was acute and widespread.

What to do with this large body of workers who can not find places in their own industry and can not be absorbed by other industries is a national problem. Congress had in mind the coal mining situation more than any other when it authorized expenditure of \$25,000,000 to provide subsistence farms for displaced workers.

Similarly the lot of operators has not been a happy one during the period in which demand for coal has been steadily shrinking. All factors combined have produced a problem that may require more federal intervention than has yet been attempted. The stabilization of an essential industry is necessary for economic reasons, and conditions among miners cry out for attention.

WHAT OF THIS MAN?

WHAT does the New Deal mean for the man who has passed the 50-year mark, or even the man of 45 years?

Despite the multiplicity of problems that confronts those seeking national recovery, the worker who is "too old" for the high speed pace of the present day should not join the ranks of the forgotten men.

In Ft. Wayne a canvass has been started to obtain 50,000 signatures favoring modification of a state law which it is claimed bars men more than 45 from industrial jobs. Leaders declare that insurance regulations keep older miners out of factories.

In this connection, it is interesting to study the story of a man who walked into The Times office today. He is a man of fair education, gained in the lower grades of public school and through reading since he left the classroom.

He's 56 now, with his wife as his only dependent.

"I went to work when I was 12," he says. "I've worked with machines ever since. I know the insides and the outsides of machines like a scholar knows a book."

"I worked eighteen years for one of the city's biggest industries. Then I was employed at another large factory, in a superintendents' job for a time.

"Then came the depression and the bar because of my age. For two years I've had no job. I've tried selling candy and other things, but I'm not much of a talker. So I'm out and I stay out."

He declares that at every place he has applied they won't hire a man even over 40. "No one is wanted who has a touch of gray in his hair," says this luckless worker.

"I am in the prime of life and no one has a right to deprive me of the right to work," he concluded.

What can be done for this man? What can be done for the thousands like him?

In many trades, most of them, in fact, men over 40 or even over 50 are at the peak of their ability, far more competent than workers who have nothing to recommend them but their youth. It is to these men that those guiding the New Deal should give serious thought. They have the right to work and to live and to be valuable members of the community.

LANDMARK ON WAY OUT

REMOVAL of a landmark from the Mile Square seems assured as the city zoning board meets this afternoon to consider a petition for razing the Denison hotel at Indianapolis and Ohio streets.

For sixty-three years the old hotel has held its place on the downtown corner and for as many years it has been known throughout state and nation as one of the city's famous hosteries.

It is a shame that the building must be sacrificed by its owner, Norman A. Perry, because of present business conditions and not because the city is progressing to such extent that an antiquated downtown hotel is ready for replacement by a modern structure.

The building has lived its life. It has been

the victim of fame and disaster. In its day some of the greatest national figures, and many others not so important, spent their days and nights there in the convivial atmosphere that is so well remembered by residents of Indianapolis.

The Denison, in its heyday, was the center of many social functions. The bar was a great haven.

Not only did social functions establish the hotel's prominence, but many strategic political moves were laid in its rooms.

So much for its fame. Disaster, in the form of fire, struck it several times during its career.

A parking lot may be established there. To Indianapolis this custom of downtown parking places on prominent corners seems odd. To Detroit, in the period of boom, razoring of old buildings and establishment of parking places was a regular procedure.

But, perhaps with the old structure removed, and a new deal in the making, another building, as pretentious as the old in days gone by, will be erected to maintain the city's skyline.

STITCH, STITCH

"Stitch, stitch, stitch,
In poverty, woe, and dirt—"

A CENTURY has passed since "The Song of the Shirt" started England into realization of the brutal conditions under which clothing was manufactured. Americans who think of it all, at the present time, probably have a vague idea that much has been done to better conditions in this country.

The United States department of labor has completed a study of the shirt industry in nine of the principal manufacturing states.

It reports that half of the 20,000 workers studied receive less than \$7.40 for a week. In Delaware the median for workers was \$5.50 a week; in Maryland, \$5.60, in Pennsylvania, \$6.10.

Shirt making has been shifting from large cities to small towns to get cheaper labor, the survey showed, and also, apparently, to escape regulation of hours, wages and working conditions. Some of the shirtmakers—almost all of them women—were working 57½ hours a week.

In one Pennsylvania establishment, 30 per cent of the workers were under 16 years of age. In the shirt industry, as in coats and suits and men's clothing, a great number of contracting establishments are found where the work is farmed out and responsibility for labor is avoided. Wages averaged \$6.40 in contracting plants as compared with \$7.60 in manufacturing plants.

The national recovery administration can put an end to these conditions.

FREIGHT TRAIN NUISANCE

HUNDREDS of motorists in Indianapolis, principally those who must drive to their homes on the west side of the city, are wondering what has happened to the city ordinance against trains blocking crossings.

In the last few years, and especially in the last few weeks, since the freight business again has picked up, there apparently is no effort made to control the traffic-train situation.

A few drives to the western part of the city which would require crossing the tracks at Belmont and Holmes avenues, convinces most motorists that the freights have the situation well in hand.

The motorist halts his auto. Then, as the cars on the tracks are switched back and forth, he finally turns off the motor. The line of autos, by that time, has increased to more than a dozen.

Apparently the track is going to be cleared. But, about the time one expects to be able to drive on, another cut of freight cars comes rolling along.

Not many days ago one motorist had his windshield smashed when the gate dropped suddenly at one crossing, caught him approaching the tracks.

By the watch, some of these freight-autos last twelve or fifteen minutes. Blowing of auto horns serves only to irritate quicker motorists who wait patiently, and arouses the ire of the switchmen.

While all this is going on, the driver of the auto, his wife and children sit in the car that, by now, is surrounded by billows of smoke. They listen to squealing cattle being side-tracked and hear the heavy thump of the steel wheels. All in all, it becomes a most unpleasant outdoor pastime on a summer evening.

But, checking back, it appears that the city ordinance on the question really is not lost. It just isn't heeded. Offhand, there is no recollection of the prosecution of any railroad company for blocking street crossings these last few years.

The city ordinance reads:

"Any person in charge of any locomotive, motor car, car or train of cars on any steam or electric railroad, who shall leave or permit to be left, such locomotive, motor car, car or train of cars standing so as to obstruct any street or sidewalk for any greater length of time than three minutes, or occupy the same in switching or for other purposes while such train is moving, longer than the time above specified, shall, on conviction, be fined in any sum not exceeding \$100."

That's the law. Why isn't it enforced?

Probably, after fire apparatus on an ambulance is held up at a crossing and there is pressure brought to bear, the matter will be solved. Or, perhaps, some ordinary citizen may have the nerve to come to the front for his rights.

THE BLUE EAGLE HOME

THE American housewife, because she buys most of the goods sold at retail, can in a large part, make or break the administration's recovery program. If the housewife does not buy those products and from those stores displaying the Blue Eagle, the work of the national recovery administration will be meaningless. Additional costs of farm products and industrial wages must be passed on to the same housewife who has been asked to co-operate. She deserves protection from undue price increases. The administration intends that she shall have it.

She is willing to pay more if it goes to farmers and labor, but not to profiteers. The enlightened merchants and manufacturers realize that it is to their own interests to prevent profiteering. It is only the unscrupulous minority that has to be thwarted.

Instead of waiting until abuses create scandals that would threaten the whole recovery program, the administration has set up machinery to prevent profiteering. The office

of the consumers counsel of the agricultural adjustment administration is prepared to supply weekly quotations on warranted price increases for food and textile commodities which go into the household budget.

Mayors in more than 5,000 cities have been asked to organize nonpartisan consumers' committees to prevent price abuses.

If the consumers' counsel can supply these committees with adequate information, the American housewife intelligently can challenge unfair price increases.

FOR INDUSTRIAL PEACE

A SUPREME court for business is needed during the war against depression. That, in effect, is what the President has in his new super-board of mediation.

Its job is twofold. It will settle strikes in the period before individual codes are completed. It will arbitrate differences under the codes. In the sense that an interpretation of a law or code often becomes a virtual law-making process, this new board will have much more power than the usual arbitration board in a labor dispute. General Hugh Johnson, recovery administrator, predicts that the arbitration board will be kept very busy.

But that does not mean the country is threatened by general industrial warfare. The coal and steel industries where workers have been terrorized recently, are exceptions. Those particular Mellon and Morgan companies have long anti-labor records. It is neither fair nor accurate to judge industry as a whole by its worst elements.

Industry as a whole has been remarkably alert, intelligent and patriotic in co-operating with the national recovery administration. So has labor.

The fact that the employers' advisory board of NRA and the labor advisory board agreed unanimously on the personnel for the new board of mediation is typical of the spirit of teamwork between capital and labor.

The motive is not so much a sentimental hands-across-class-barriers emotion as it is hard, cold reasoning that the alternative of recovery is disaster for all.

If this co-operative spirit continues on the part of industry and labor, the work of the mediation board in settling strikes and lockouts should not be heavy. But there probably will be a vast field for this board in preventing friction by clarifying codes and recommending modifications where injustices exist.

Mere existence of such a tribunal to hear their case is one of the greatest boons which could be bestowed upon workers in anti-union plants where the boss is a kind of combined Mussolini-Hitler, from whom hitherto there has been no appeal.

Judged by its personnel, the new board merits public confidence, just as it has been received enthusiastically by President Roosevelt. Senator Robert Wagner of New York, as neutral chairman, is a happy selection.

Government is perplexed over the ownership of a million reindeer in Alaska. That makes it official that there isn't any Santa Claus.

They're going to tear down all the fences on public lands. Secretary Ickes announces.

Probably use unemployed congressmen to rebuild 'em.

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