

# Mitchell on Coal Strike

Wilkesbarre, Pa., June 22. — John Mitchell, president of the United Mine Workers of America, today issued the following statement. It is a reply to the letters of coal presidents declining to accede to the demands of the miners, which were issued about ten days ago:

"If the contest now in progress in the anthracite coal regions of Pennsylvania effected only the welfare of the railroad and mining corporations on the one hand, and the coal miners on the other, the public would have no vital interests at stake, and would consequently be less concerned than it is now in the continuance, the extension or the termination of the conflict; but inasmuch as there is a third and important interest involved which, although in no wise responsible for the present strike, is, nevertheless, an innocent victim thereof, it is but fair and proper that the general public should be fully and accurately informed upon the merits of the question now in controversy.

"If it shall be asked why we have waited until the close of the sixth week of the strike to issue a statement of this nature, sufficient answer may be found in the fact that we have hesitated to utter any word or to take any position that would impede or embarrass easy reconciliation with the coal operators. Every delay and precaution, every conceivable conciliatory effort that honorable and conservative men could take to avert a rupture, and every means that thought could suggest to bring the matter in dispute to arbitration was resorted to by the union, both before the strike order was issued and since it went into effect, but without avail; the coal magnates refused to all our overtures with the exception that there was nothing to arbitrate. This statement on our part is equivalent to saying that the coal mine workers have made unreasonable demands and have struck without real or sufficient cause. To this let plain, unvarnished figures reply.

## GRIEVANCES OF WORKERS.

"For more than twenty-five years the anthracite coal mine workers of Pennsylvania have chafed and groaned under the most intolerable and inhuman conditions of employment imaginable. Their average annual earnings have been less than those of any other class of workmen in the United States, notwithstanding the fact that their work is more hazardous and the cost of living greater than in any other important American industry. The total number of persons employed in and around the anthracite coal mines is 147,500; they are employed never to exceed 100 hours in any one year, and they receive compensation for their services at an average of \$1.42 for a ten-hour work day. It will thus be noted that they earn annually less than \$300. Such pay may supply a living for a man with some classes of European labor, but who will say that it is sufficient to support American citizens, or enable parents to educate and properly maintain their families? "True it is that a ten per cent. increase in wages was granted by the coal operators as a strike concession two years ago, but it is also true that a large portion of this ten per cent. was paid back to the companies to buy the suppression of an old powder grievance. Moreover, according to reliable commercial agencies, the cost of living has increased, particularly in the purchase of food, from 20 to 40 per cent., so that the purchasing power of a miner's earnings is less now than before the strike of 1900.

## CHARGE IS MISLEADING.

"The presidents of the various coal-carrying railroads have given public utterance to a statement that during the year 1901 the productive capacity of the coal mines was deteriorated an average of 12 1/2 per cent.; in other words, the United Mine Workers' Union is charged with encouraging poor workmanship. An examination of the reports on coal production, compiled by the United States government, discloses the fact that the allegations of the railroad presidents are misleading and untrue, as the following figures will demonstrate: "From 1890 to 1900, inclusive, the mines were in active operation an average of 182 days per year, and for each person employed there were produced 563.58 tons of coal per year; for each day the mines were in operation 2.16 tons were produced per employee; while in the year 1901, when the operators so bitterly complain, the mines were in operation 184 1/2 days, and there were produced 475.45 tons for each person employed, or for each day the mines were in operation 2.56 tons were produced per employee, thus showing conclusively that instead of a deterioration there was a decided improvement in the productive capacity of

the men after they became thoroughly organized. Can the unprejudiced reflect upon these facts and conclude that the anthracite miner is not a better workman than he was before the 10 per cent. concession in wages two years ago?

"The railroad presidents contend that they cannot increase wages without making a corresponding increase in the selling price of their product to the consumer, and have accused the mine workers of suggesting a position that would impose a hardship upon the public by increasing the market price of coal 10 cents a ton, the amount that would have been required to meet all demands made by the miners. However, their solicitude for the public weal has not deterred them from advancing the market price of their coal more than \$1 per ton since the strike was inaugurated without giving any part of the increase to the mine workers. In substantiation of our claim that the coal companies can afford to pay increased wages to the mine workers without increasing the cost of coal to the consumer, we submit the following extract of the government report showing the selling value of the coal loaded on cars at the mines for the eleven years beginning with 1890 and ending with 1900, as compared with 1901.

## COMPARISONS OF COST.

"The average home value of all coal mined and sold during this period was \$1.48 per ton, while a press bulletin recently issued by Charles D. Walcott, director of the United States geological survey, says that for the year 1901 the increase in the value of the anthracite product received at the mines showed a gain of \$27,746,169, or more than 31 per cent. over that of 1900.

"The average price for the marketed anthracite coal, that is, the product shipped to market or sold to local trade, was \$1.87, the highest figure obtained since 1888. "In other words, while, according to President Oliphant, 13 cents per ton represents the operators' increased cost of production in 1901, 39 cents per ton, as compared with 1900, represents the increased value of the product to the operators. In view of the fact that this enormous increase in the selling price of coal has been extorted from the consumer by the coal trust, can anyone say that the demands of the miners for a small portion of the increased wealth their labor has produced are unreasonable or unwarranted?"

"The statement says that further evidence of the ability of the coal mine owners to pay increased wages is shown in the statement of John Markle, managing partner of the G. B. Markle Coal Company, an independent firm operating three mines in the Lehigh region, made in a suit before the supreme court of Pennsylvania. Mr. Markle is quoted as saying that the company, in the five years from 1890 to 1894, made profits of over \$1,000,000, and the statement says that the government report shows that home value of coal produced by the anthracite companies during that time was \$1.51 a ton.

"If the G. B. Markle Coal Company could make a profit of over \$1,000,000 in five years, when the selling price of their coal at the mines was \$1.51," continues the statement, "does it not seem reasonable to suppose that the larger companies—whose cost of production is necessarily less—could make a sufficient profit in 1901, when the home value of their coal was \$1.87 per ton, to enable them, without detriment to their business, to pay the anthracite mine workers the small pittance asked for by them?"

## OTHERS ARE QUOTED.

"The statement then quotes President Truesdell, of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Hudson, who, in his annual report to the directors of his company, said that the year 1901 would pass into history as one of the most satisfactory to the anthracite coal interests of the country ever known, and adds the Commercial and Financial Chronicle's comment on the report of President Oliphant of the Delaware & Hudson, as follows: "The average of anthracite selling prices for 1901 must have been 30 to 40 cents higher than in 1900 and the profits of the coal mining operations of the Delaware & Hudson in 1901 were \$1,407,307."

"The statement ridicules as absurd the offer of President Baer, the recognized spokesman of the coal trust, to submit the books of the coal departments to prove that wages could not be increased, and says: "Eighty-five or 90 per cent. of all coal produced in the anthracite regions is from mines owned and operated by the various coal-carrying railroads; the freight charges for delivering a ton of anthracite coal are three times as great as those of other roads for hauling a ton of bitu-

minous coal one mile, and, as a consequence, the coal department, which is actually earning enormous profits on a legitimate business, may and does appear to be losing money, for the reason that their railroad departments consume the profits of the coal departments by charging the coal departments exorbitant freight rates. Thus they rob Peter to pay Paul. It cannot be said, in extenuation, that there is any pecuniary necessity for this triple charge on hard coal, for all other kinds of freight—very much more troublesome to handle and perishable—are carried at a far lower rate."

In this connection the statement calls attention to the fact that a ton of coal, as the consumer understands it, is not a ton of coal as the miner is paid for it; that is to say, that the ton of coal sold to the customer weighs 2,240 pounds, while, when the miner is being paid for his labor, he is required to produce and load from 2,740 to 2,790 pounds for a ton, against which flagrant injustice the anthracite mine workers so vigorously and justly protest.

The excess weight is required to compensate them for impurities and refuse matter that is loaded with the coal and cannot be marketed. "If their statement is true," says the statement, "why is it necessary to continue a system of docking, by which at times they arbitrarily deduct from a miner's earnings from 10 to 15 per cent. of the total, as a penalty for loading impurities for which they have already penalized him in excess weight?"

"It must be obvious to every intelligent observer that the coal companies derive a considerable income from the continuance of this system of measuring the earnings of their employees, as they thus receive a large amount of marketable coal for which they return no compensation to the miners. The miners have asked that the coal they produce shall be honestly weighed and correctly accorded.

"This recital of facts disposes of the operators' claim that they cannot afford to pay living wages for faithful and unceasing toil amid surroundings constantly fraught with the gravest danger."

The statement tells of the fatalities among miners, and says: "Eight times as many men and boys are killed and injured annually in the anthracite coal mines of Pennsylvania as were killed and wounded in the American ranks in the Spanish-American war in Cuba."

The statement says that, according to reports of various chiefs of police, there has been less infraction of laws and fewer arrests during the time of the strike than for a like period preceding it.

## CONTEST WILL CONTINUE.

Concluding, the statement says: "It is now apparent that the real purpose of the coal operators is to destroy organization among the workmen. If by any chance they should succeed in their design—which is not at all likely—another labor organization will spring from the ruins of the United Mine Workers of America, and the contest for living wages, for humane conditions of employment, for better education, for higher citizenship, will go on until the men who produce coal, the originators of motor power which drives the wheels of commerce and industry, the product that is so essential to the welfare of society, the mineral

which is the very foundation of our national prosperity, shall receive for their labor sufficient compensation to relieve them of the necessity of sending their boys and girls of tender years and frail physique to the mines and mills, there to destroy their youthful vigor in an effort to assist their underpaid parents to maintain their families.

"Conscious of the great responsibility resting upon us, apprehensive of the danger threatening our commercial supremacy should the coal miners of the entire United States become participants in this struggle, we repeat our proposal to arbitrate all questions in dispute, and if our premises are wrong, if our position is untenable, if our demands cannot be sustained by facts and figures, we will at once return to the mines, take up our tools and industry, and await the day when we shall have a more righteous cause to claim the approval of the American people."

## Fond of Lawsuits

As a race the English people must be very litigious, for judicial figures given out in a recent parliamentary return show that on the average, in 1900, one person in every twenty-five in England and Wales went to law during the year. These are, of course average figures, based on the fact that there were no less than 1,310,680 civil cases begun during that year. Think of it! One law case for every twenty-five inhabitants; including men, women and children, all classes and all ages. Dividing the residents into families and allowing five to the family, it means that there was one lawsuit during the year for each five families in the country. The London Express, in explaining these figures, declares that "the cantankerously litigious person and the tradesman who is unfortunate in the number of customers who will not pay their debts bring up the average." There are also some 1,357 appeals from old cases which go to swell the return for 1900. The Express also points out that this mania for going to law pervades almost every class of the country, and that this may be taken as the civilized man's way of settling disputes that the uncivilized man would have settled with a stone hatchet or a club. But so much litigation must have caused the expenditure of a great deal of money, which benefited no one except the solicitors or barristers. Too many cases are brought in this country merely for the sake of getting satisfaction, and we do not doubt that the same charge would be true of Great Britain, especially in the light of the figures which we have given.—Boston Herald.

## Not Idle Threat.

Everett, June 22. — Clarence J. Just, of South Seattle, attempted suicide this afternoon at Snoqualmie Falls, about 1 o'clock, by drinking the contents of a two-ounce bottle of chloroform in the presence of his wife and her mother. He was brought to the hospital here at 8 o'clock tonight, in an unconscious condition, but has since regained consciousness and is in a fair way to recover. Just, it seems, came to Snoqualmie yesterday, where his wife's family reside, and where she has been visiting, to take her back home to celebrate their baby's birthday, but instead of returning with him she declared her intention of joining the excursion of the Norwegian society of Everett, today, to Snoqualmie Falls.

Just accompanied her and her mother on the excursion. At Snoqualmie he produced a bottle and said it contained chloroform and he was going to take it. This, it seems, was an old game of his when things went wrong in the family and no attention was paid to him when he drank the poison. He talked to his wife and her mother several minutes and then started to walk away, when he fell unconscious. A physician in the party took charge of him and brought him to the hospital here. Just is 23 and his wife about 20.

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## \$50 Reward.

Stolen Sunday, June 8th, one male dog, very dark grey, white breast, light chops, light grey stripe running from point of nose up between eyes, front legs white, hind feet white, extreme tip of tail white, belly light color, always carries tail curled over back or left side, nose very small like a fox or coon. I will pay the above reward for any information that will lead to the arrest and conviction of the thief and recovery of dog.

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