

The miners can fairly demand that they should receive for their labor, wages that will enable them to bring up their families in reasonable comfort and provide their children with such education as will make them good and useful citizens. If the present wages are insufficient to give labor reasonable cause for satisfaction, demand for increase is a natural consequence. It then remains to be determined whether the industry can stand the increase. There is no doubt that a few mines could be operated at a profit even if wages were much higher; but the answer to the general question is not so simple. We shall be disappointed if it is found that the industry cannot flourish while enabling the miner to earn a decent living.

WORKING HOURS IN NOVA SCOTIAN COLLIERIES.

Before the Royal Commission on Industrial Relations which completed its tour of Canada by a recent sitting in Sydney, C.B., the President of the United Mine Workers in Nova Scotia outlined to the Commission the decision of the miners to obtain a five days week with eight hours daily work, and announced that "ultimately they hoped to get a six hour day and a substantial increase in wages." This system the Local President of the U. M. W. of America thought "would act as a cure for unemployment as a large number of men not now at work would be absorbed."

We have every sympathy with the desire of miners to ameliorate their living and working conditions, but surely the responsible leaders of men do not believe their employment can be increased by decreasing working hours and increasing wages, or, in other words, by the process of adding to the cost of coal to the consumer? The reason for any lack of employment in Nova Scotian collieries at the present time lies in the high cost of coal production there, and the consequent limitation of the radius in which Nova Scotian coal can find a market. There is really no over-production of coal anywhere to-day. Over-riding everything, and only temporarily obscured by the unrepresentative conditions of the coal market that momentarily exist, is a world shortage of coal. The only place where there is no local shortage is North America, and probably nowhere in the world can coal be mined so cheaply and in such abundance to-day as in the United States.

The amount of employment available at Nova Scotian collieries is decided by the competitive prices of United States coal in Canadian markets. If Nova Scotian coal is now unsaleable at a profit in Montreal, how will much shorter hours and a substantial increase in wages provide additional employment?

Over eighty per cent of the coal now mined in Cape Breton comes from undersea areas. What would a six hour day mean in a submarine colliery? Possibly not

more than four hours work at the coal-face. How could coal be produced and sold at a profit from submarine collieries under such conditions?

Further, it should be noted, that coal lies at the base of our industrial structure, and that every manufacturing process and all transportation charges must bear the burden of increased coal-selling prices. It would be interesting to know just how much of the increased cost of living is directly and indirectly attributable to the increase in the price of coal to the consumer. We suspect the bulk of it is so attributable, and if the coal miner insists upon demanding preferential treatment in his work, and hours of work and wages which are out of proportion with those of his fellow-unionists it must inevitably result in lessened employment and increased living costs for everybody.

The maintenance of a gold standard of currency and coal production are very closely inter-related, so inter-related in fact that every increase in the cost of coal to the public is equivalent to a depreciation of the currency value, and it is perhaps time that we should stop talking of the high cost of living and should discuss the depreciation of the dollar. It may be demurred that coal is not any more basic than other essential commodities, such as wheat and food stuffs generally, and from the standpoint of physical existence that is correct. From the standpoint, however, of monetary values, there is nothing to-day that is so fundamental as coal selling-prices, and that is why the wages and hours of labor of coal miners are of greater importance and of wider effect than might be inferred from a comparison of the number of men engaged in coal mining with those engaged in all other industrial pursuits.

EXPLOSION OF BLACK POWDER IN THE BALTIMORE MINE OF THE DELAWARE & HUDSON AT WILKESBARRE.

The newspapers record the death of 83 men and the serious injury of 50 others by burning and violence through the explosion of seven kegs of black powder in the Baltimore Tunnel of the Delaware & Hudson at Wilkesbarre. The powder was being conveyed into the mine in the same trip that carried men to their work by means of an electric trolley road. The accident is, so far as we know, a unique one. Newspapers accounts of mine accident are not always to be wholly relied upon, but the combination of a workmen's train, a large quantity of black powder, and a bare overhead electric trolley-wire, is one that is not conceivable in a coal mine operated under the regulations of most civilized countries.

The use of black powder in a coal mine is in itself scarcely excusable, and it is surprising that the practice should still be permitted. The advantages of black powder, and it has some advantages, do not out-