

# The Commoner.

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## President Roosevelt Must Act

The president was fully justified in calling a conference of the mine owners and strikers at the White house. The situation was serious and the executive well and forcibly presented the people's side in his statement, which was as follows:

"I wish to call your attention to the fact that there are three parties affected by the situation in the anthracite trade—the operators, the miners and the general public. I speak for neither the operators nor the miners, but for the general public. The questions at issue which led to the situation affect immediately the parties concerned—the operators and the miners—but the situation itself vitally affects the public. As long as there seemed to be reasonable hope that these matters could be adjusted between the parties, it did not seem proper for me to intervene in any way. I disclaim any right or duty to interfere in this way upon legal grounds or upon any official relation that I bear to the situation; but the urgency and the terrible nature of the catastrophe impending over a large portion of our people in the shape of a winter fuel famine impel me, after much anxious thought, to believe that my duty requires me to use whatever influence I personally can to bring to an end a situation which has become literally intolerable.

"I wish to emphasize the character of the situation and to say that its gravity is such that I am constrained urgently to insist that each one of you realize the heavy burden of responsibility upon him. We are upon the threshold of winter, with an already existing coal famine, the future terrors of which we can hardly yet appreciate. The evil possibilities are so far reaching, so appalling, that it seems to me that you are not only justified in sinking, but required to sink, for the time being any tenacity as to your respective claims in the matter at issue between you. In my judgment, the situation imperatively requires that you meet upon the common plane of the necessities of the public. With all the earnestness there is in me I ask that there be an immediate resumption of operations in the coal mines in some such way as will without a day's unnecessary delay meet the crying needs of the people.

"I do not invite a discussion of your respective claims and positions. I appeal to your patriotism, to the spirit that sinks personal considerations and makes individual sacrifices for the general good."

The president deserves and should receive commendation for his effort to save the people from the horrors of a fuel famine, but what will he do now? The miners offer to arbitrate, but the only proposition made by the coal barons is that the president shall send down United States soldiers to protect them while they work the mines with such non-union men as they can find.

Having recognized and described the seriousness of the situation the president must proceed and use all the means in his power to settle the strike and bring about a resumption of work. He cannot stop now without disappointing the hopes which he raised by calling a conference. What can he do? The republican platform presents no plan. Will he have the statesmanship to devise a plan? If not, will he have the moral courage to adopt democratic measures which have already received the indorsement of more than six millions of people?

If, as is alleged, the mine owners have entered

into an agreement to fix prices and production in violation of the anti-trust law, let him enforce the law—not merely the injunction part, but the criminal part also. If present laws are not sufficient, let him call congress together and enact new laws. The emergency is sufficient to justify it. If he does not want to interfere with the canvass of those members who are candidates for re-election he can issue the call at once and have congress convene immediately after the election, but if he wants to get the best service he will have them act before the election so that their own political interests as well as the public welfare will compel them to act promptly.

If he will issue the call and in the call name specific and effective measures to be considered it is more than probable that the strikers would agree to go back to work at the old wages pending action by congress. The situation would thus be relieved and the danger of a fuel famine removed.

There are five measures which he should recommend to congress:

First—A law establishing a national board of arbitration consisting of three or five members to consider and report on all controversies between corporations engaged in interstate commerce and their employes. The Kansas City platform demands an arbitration law and if the democrats had won, the miners' appeal for arbitration would not be futile as it is now. The law should compel the board to act whenever either party to the controversy demanded it and the president should be empowered to add to the board two temporary members, one to be recommended by each side in the case to be considered.

Second—A law abolishing government by injunction. This is another remedy suggested by the Kansas City platform. The mine owners want to use government by injunction to coerce their employes. Let the president answer their demand by recommending a law which will give the accused a trial by jury where the contempt is committed outside of the court room. Such a bill passed the senate a few years ago before the corporations were aware of it, but since the republicans regained control the measure has been smothered in committee. Why deny to a striking coal miner the constitutional right guaranteed to the meanest criminal in the land?

Third—A law that will discriminate between the natural man created by the Almighty and the corporate giant created by legislation. Let the natural man of one state do business in every other state if he chooses, but whenever any state creates a corporation large enough to monopolize an industry, let that corporation be shut up in the state of its origin; let it be denied the use of the mails, the railroads and the telegraph lines and it can be destroyed. This is the Kansas City platform remedy for the trusts and it is the only remedy proposed.

Fourth—A law taking the tariff off of coal. It has been generally supposed that anthracite coal was on the free list, but most of the anthracite which comes into competition with our anthracite

is of so low a grade that it is taxed under our tariff laws.

Fifth—A law which will prevent railroads engaged in interstate commerce from operating coal mines except for the purpose of supplying fuel for their own engines. No railroad can fix rates on coal with fairness and impartiality if it is engaged in competition with mine owners who have no railroads.

All these measures, except the last one, are advocated in the Kansas City platform, and the last is in harmony with the general principles laid down in that platform. If the president knows of any better measures, let him suggest them; if he does not, he should be broad enough to adopt the measures suggested by his political opponents.

Of course, the president understands that his political future depends largely upon the stand he takes in this great contest between greed and human rights, but if he is a brave man he will take the people's side and risk the hostility of organized wealth. He hears the call of duty, he has put "his hand to the plow," and he cannot turn back without forfeiting the confidence of hundreds of thousands who, in spite of his record of inactivity and his ambiguous speeches, still believe him to be in sympathy with the tolling masses.

### Shaw's Treasury Policy.

In 1888 the republican party denounced the democratic policy of loaning the government money without interest to "pet banks." Today the republican party is loaning more government money without interest to "pet banks" than was loaned at the time when the platform of 1888 was written. In fact, the present secretary of the treasury has gone far beyond any previous secretary in responding to the wishes and advancing the interest of "pet banks." The partiality shown by the treasury department toward the Rockefeller bank in New York is already well known; a letter written to the secretary of the treasury by one of the officials of that bank demanded favors on the ground that the bank had assisted the republican party in the campaign.

But the recent rulings of Secretary Shaw go beyond anything that has heretofore been known. It is gross favoritism to let the banks have government money for nothing in order that they may loan it out to their customers at the usual rate of interest. The fact that they give bonds for security has nothing to do with it, because they draw interest on the bonds at the same time that they draw interest on the government money which they are permitted to loan out. Heretofore the government deposit has been considered like any other deposit, and the banks in reserve cities have been compelled to keep 25 per cent of it on hand as in the case of other money. But New York banks had loaned out so much money on the watered stock of the trusts that they were not prepared for any shrinkage in their deposits, and the government at once went to their aid, and by an order of the secretary relieved them from