

.... PRESIDENT JOHN MITCHELL'S STATEMENT

Philadelphia, Sept. 28.—President Mitchell of the united mine workers tonight gave out the following statement:

"The recent utterances of Mr. Baer, spokesman of the anthracite coal trust, Mr. Hewitt and other interested persons disclose a well-defined purpose to confuse and cloud the real causes which resulted in the coal strike and an attempt to divert attention from the actual issues involved. However, misleading as are their utterances, it is a relief to know that they now admit that the public has rights and interests which cannot be ignored with impunity, and, inasmuch as the public must be the final arbiter of the coal strike, it is imperative that it shall not be deceived by statements which are at variance with the facts.

"With the purpose of correcting some of the false impressions and misrepresentations contained in the statements of the gentlemen referred to, I issue this letter.

"It is not my intention to point out the innumerable instances in which Mr. Baer has erred in statements and allegation. His unsupported assertions that certain things are true cannot be accepted as final or conclusive, particularly in view of the fact that unquestioned authorities can be cited to prove him to be in error.

"Mr. Baer states that 'the wages paid in the anthracite coal regions are, compared with the wages paid in like employment, fair and just.' By 'like employment' Mr. Baer must refer to bituminous coal mining. I am willing and prepared to demonstrate that wages in the bituminous coal fields are from 20 to 40 per cent higher than those paid for similar classes of work in the anthracite fields.

"The fact is that the minimum wage received by any class of adult mine workers in the soft coal mines is 26 1-4 cents an hour, while the minimum wage paid to boys is 12 1-2 cents an hour; in the anthracite coal mines men performing precisely the same labor receive from 13 to 20 cents an hour, while boys are paid as low as 5 cents an hour and rarely receive to exceed 8 cents an hour. The bituminous miner works a maximum of eight hours a day, which is two hours less than men in the anthracite field are required to work; moreover, the anthracite mine worker labors under the further disadvantage of being more liable to be killed or injured, the casualties being 50 per cent greater in the anthracite than in the bituminous mines.

"There are other statements of Mr. Baer which are equally incorrect; among these is his assertion that 'the miners only worked from four to six hours a day,' and his further assertion that 'the lowest scale of wages was 85 cents for boy slate pickers.' If Mr. Baer desires I shall gladly furnish him with the names and addresses of thousands of slate pickers each of whom received much less than 85 cents a day, and I shall be willing to have the returns verified by the companies' pay rolls.

"The next misstatement of Mr. Baer to which I shall give notice is that which claims that 'for some mysterious reason' the miners restricted the output of the mines. Mr. Baer claims that 'in this manner the product of the collieries has been reduced about 12 1-2 per cent, and that in the case of the Reading company it amounted to more than 1,000,000 tons.' This is vitally important, if true; but it is not true. The fact is that, instead of a loss of 1,000,000 tons, there was an increase in the year 1901, from the mines operated by the Reading company, of 838,243 tons, and a total increase from all

the anthracite mines of 9,000,000 tons (see report of Pennsylvania state bureau of mines).

"The output of coal in 1901 was far in excess of that of any other year in the history of coal mining, and even a paper so avowedly and bitterly hostile to the mine workers' union as the Engineering and Mining Journal admits that 'virtually the only restriction on output was a shortage of cars.' 'This shortage,' the Journal continues, 'soon became marked' and 'by the end of November the Reading collieries and those of some other companies were mining on short time' (issue of Jan. 4, 1902).

"Although his statement does not admit of any such construction, it is still possible that Mr. Baer refers to the per capita output, but even here he errs. A careful calculation of per capita output from the Pennsylvania state bureau of mines shows that, despite Mr. Baer's assertion that the miners worked only from four to six hours a day, despite the assertion that the men restricted the output, the per capita production in 1901, the year complained of, was greater than the per capita output for any single one of the thirty-one years of which we have record, from 1870 to 1900.

"In attempting to account for the increased tonnage the operators point to the installation of labor-saving machinery, which reduces the proportion of men and boys employed by the day. If we disregard all mine workers whose labor might be saved by such appliances and take simply the output per certificated and employed miner, we find that the production per miner was 1,271 tons in 1897, 1,284 tons in 1898, 1,383 tons in 1899, 1,391 tons in 1900, while in the year 1901 it was 1,585 tons.

"I refer Mr. Baer to the annual reports of the Pennsylvania state bureau of mines and ask if these figures do not refute the statement that organization in the coal mines is inimical in good workmanship.

"Since the very inception of this strike the aims, objects and ideals of the united mine workers of America have been willfully distorted by a small army of critics. We have been unjustly maligned and our motives and purposes maliciously impugned. We therefore take this opportunity to repeat specifically that we do not seek to interfere with the management of the coal properties or with the proper discipline of the working force, but we do demand:

"1. An increase in wages for men employed on piece work.

"2. A reduction in the hours of labor for men employed by the day.

"3. Payment for a legal ton of coal.

"4. That the coal we mine shall be honestly weighed and correctly recorded, and

"5. We favor incorporating in the form of an agreement the wages that shall be paid and the conditions of employment that shall obtain for a specific period.

"As to the reasonableness of these demands we have proposed to submit to and abide the award of an impartial board of arbitration.

"There could be no grosser perversion of truth than the assertion of the operators that the mine workers' union is a lawless organization. During the last twenty weeks the whole power of the union has been exerted to preserve the peace among a voluntarily idle population of three-quarters of a million, and it is a tribute to the activity of our officers and the loyalty and self-restraint of our members that we have been more successful in allaying violence than the coal and iron police in inciting it.

"Despite all our precautions we regret that occasional violence has resulted, but it would be as logical to charge any one of the religious, social or political organizations or even the United States government with being an unlawful organization because some of its adherents transgress the law as it is to charge the united mine workers of America with being an unlawful organization because some of its members violate the law. The officers of the union are as severe as the operators in their earnest condemnation of any and every act of violence on the part of a striker, and no attempt has been made or will be made to condone any offense of this sort.

"The public should be made aware, however, that the operators and a certain section of the press are by no means discriminating in the fixing of responsibility, and that crimes of violence are laid at the doors of strikers when the imported guardians of law and order, the armed coal and iron police, are clearly and unmistakably at fault; and I challenge the operators or their friends to point to one single utterance on their part in disapproval of the lawless actions of their hired guards.

"Some time ago the Bellevue washery at Scranton was destroyed by lightning; a reward was offered by the coal companies for the arrest and conviction of the person who set fire to the washery. This is an example of the manner in which the strikers are maligned.

"Mr. Baer assumes that the pumpmen, engineers and firemen were called out so that 'the mines would be destroyed, and with their destruction 140,000 men with their wives and children dependent upon their labors would be deprived of work for a long time.' The truth is that the strike of the pumpmen, engineers and firemen was called in their own interest absolutely, and by their own request; it was for the purpose of removing grievances against which they alone complained and against which some of them had inaugurated an independent, although unsuccessful, strike more than one year ago.

"The fact that several weeks elapsed between the strike of the miners and the independent strike of the pumpmen, engineers and firemen, and the further fact that the operators were given twelve days' official notice that the pumpmen, engineers and firemen would strike unless granted an eight-hour work day, should convince Mr. Baer that the strike of these men did not originate in any desire on the part of the mine workers to deprive themselves of the source of their own livelihood. If the mine workers had sought the destruction of the mining properties they would have ordered the strike of the steam men without giving the companies any notice at all.

"Similar accusations against the mine workers are made in a public utterance by Mr. Hewitt, in which that gentleman reveals his real feeling toward organized labor. I do not refer to his expressed fear that I shall become a 'dictator,' in control of votes enough to decide the next presidential election, or to his assertion that in this contest the allied coal presidents are fighting the battle of independent labor against the aggressions of the united mine workers in order that the individual workman may be employed upon terms satisfactory to himself.

"As an influential director of one of the coal roads Mr. Hewitt is undoubtedly aware that the companies are fighting to compel the workmen to accept employment under conditions satisfactory to the coal trust, and that the preservation of men's indi-

vidual rights is simply a cloak under which they seek to destroy organization among their employes.

"He is undoubtedly in a position to know that membership in an organization was frowned upon by the mine managers, and that specific instructions were issued from the general offices of the coal companies notifying some classes of workmen that they must either sever their connection with the union or surrender their positions. In fact, many of the local strikes which occurred in 1901 were in protest against the action of the companies which discriminated against and discharged union workmen because of their affiliation with the organization.

"In this strike it has been claimed by enemies of the union and believed by Mr. Hewitt, although acknowledging himself a recognized friend of trade organizations, that men were prevented from going to work through fear of bodily harm, and it was confidently predicted that the moment the militia came the strike would resolve itself into a stampede.

"The militia has been in Shenandoah for more than eight weeks, and still, for lack of mine workers, not a pound of coal has been produced in that vicinity. The militia is now stationed in the Panther Creek Valley in Wilkesbarre and in Scranton, and yet its presence has not been followed by the desertion of a single miner who laid down his tools on the 12th day of May. On the contrary, many men brought here to take the places of the strikers have joined the ranks of the strikers since the arrival of the militia, and there is not the remotest possibility of the mines being successfully operated until an honorable and equitable settlement of the strike has been made.

"Reverting to the demands of the miners for increased wages and improved environment, Mr. Baer claims that he cannot possibly pay an increase in wages that would amount to 10 or 15 cents a ton to the miners, but he and the allied presidents admit that they can afford to sacrifice, temporarily, a large market and lose millions of dollars rather than pay this increase; nevertheless, without advancing the miners' wages 1 cent the operators did raise the market price last year from 30 to 50 cents a ton, and at the present time Mr. Baer and his fellow presidents are forcing the public to pay from \$6 to \$10 excess upon a ton in order to save this same public 10 or 15 cents.

"Mr. Baer states that 40 per cent of the coal produced is sold in the market below the cost of mining, but he fails to say that the larger portion of this 40 per cent is made up of grades of coal for which the miners received no compensation whatever. Indeed, up to a few years ago, or before the installation of washeries, the miners were docked for loading this very coal which brings small prices now in the market; and according to Mr. Baer's process of reasoning the miners would receive less wages for the larger grades because they mine the small sizes gratuitously.

"I shall not enter elaborately into the question of cost, but shall merely say that Mr. Baer's statements are utterly misleading. The rise in wages in 1900 was more than counterbalanced by an increase in the cost of living, which left the miners worse off than before. Mr. Baer claims that this advance of 10 per cent which was paid the miners in 1900 cost the companies more than 10 cents a ton; but this is at least problematical. In March, 1902, the Engineering and Mining Journal (see issue of March 29),