

# Roosevelt and the Coal Trust

William Randolph Hearst Submits proof of  
The existence of a Criminal Coal Trust and  
Asks why the Delay in Prosecuting It.

An interesting letter was recently written by W. R. Hearst to President Roosevelt. More than three months ago Mr. Hearst addressed a letter to the president notifying Mr. Roosevelt that he, Mr. Hearst, had asked Attorney General Knox for permission to furnish him with conclusive proofs of the existence of a coal trust. Mr. Hearst says that he submitted the proofs to the United States district attorney of the southern district of New York and that these proofs demonstrated "under the hands and seals of the corporations constituting the trust that a combination of the coal-carrying railroads absolutely controls the country's supply of anthracite and fixes its price to the consumer."

Mr. Hearst reminds the president that the law officer of his administration has been and is remiss in his duty in not proceeding against trusts. He appeals to the president to command his attorney general to proceed against the coal trust both civilly and criminally or explain to the people of the United States his reasons for not doing so if reasons suitable for public avowal he has. The president is further reminded that the people have a right to expect action against the trusts in general and the coal trust in particular.

Mr. Hearst reminds the president that the coal trust continues to exist and continues to plunder because the laws are not enforced and he concludes that the attorney general is responsible to the president and that if the president shall uphold him in his refusal to act against the coal trust, the president will be responsible to the American people.

Mr. Roosevelt will find it difficult to avoid this question much longer. It is significant that when Mr. Knox delivered his famous speech at Pittsburg he did not undertake to explain to the people why he did not enforce the criminal clause of the existing law and although democratic newspapers all over the country called upon republican organs to explain the administration's failure to invoke the criminal indictment no republican editor has undertaken to provide an explanation.

Mr. Hearst's letter is as follows:

To Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States—Sir: On October 4, more than three months ago, I had the honor of addressing a letter to you, informing you that I had petitioned your attorney general for permission to furnish him with conclusive proofs of the existence of a coal trust.

At the request of your attorney general, I submitted my proofs to General Burnett, United States district attorney for the southern district of New York.

Those proofs demonstrate, over the hands and seals of the corporations constituting the trust, that a combination of coal-carrying railroads absolutely controls the country's supply of anthracite and fixes its price to the consumer.

In the judgment of lawyers whose professional competency is quite as undisputed as that of your attorney general, those proofs if presented in court would suffice to dissolve the coal trust and subject its members to the civil and criminal penalties provided by law.

Continuously since the submission of those proofs the coal trust has robbed the people, extorting famine prices for coal, a prime necessity of industrial and domestic life, yet no action has been taken against this trust by your attorney general for the enforcement of the laws and the relief of the public.

So remarkable has been the lethargy of your attorney general in the face of a condition of things which reaches the gravity of a widespread public calamity that in both houses of congress a resolution has been introduced calling upon him to disclose the evidence submitted by me through my attorneys in October last.

These proofs aside, sir, neither you nor any other well informed citizen can doubt the exist-

ence of the coal trust, nor be ignorant of the organized brigandage which it has practiced and is practicing.

You have but to consult the final report of the industrial commission to learn that the eight lines of railroad comprising the trust own nine-tenths of the anthracite deposits and mine three-quarters of the yearly product. From the same report you can ascertain that in order to crush out competition these railroads have charged extortionate freight rates. Compared with the charge per ton of bituminous coal the rate for carrying anthracite is so high that, in the language of Industrial Commissioner Phillips, the excess charge "is greater every year than the interest on our national debt," and is "made possible by the railroad monopoly, now euphoniously called 'community of interests.'"

The fact that the coal trust exists is notorious, and its character is universally understood.

A former attorney general of the United States, Richard Olney, on October 11 last, in a public address at Boston, said that the members of the trust are the "most unblushing and persistent of law breakers," and he thus specified:

"For years they have defied the law of Pennsylvania, which forbids common carriers engaging in the business of mining.

"For years they have discriminated between customers in the freight charges on their railroads, in violation of the interstate commerce law.

"For years they have unlawfully monopolized interstate commerce, in violation of the Sherman anti-trust law."

Senator Spooner of Wisconsin, a member of your own party, high in your confidence, in last Monday's debate on the Jones resolution directing the attorney general to transmit to the senate the evidence presented to him by me proving that a conspiracy in restraint of interstate trade exists, said:

"I have been of the opinion that probably there is such a conspiracy." And he added that "if there be such a conspiracy it is one that should be prosecuted as one absolutely wicked in its character and far-reaching in its deleterious effects. . . . If one does exist it is a very merciless one, violating the laws of the United States and most harmful in every way."

You, Mr. President, can have no doubt of the existence of this conspiracy, but if there should chance to remain in your mind any such doubt, I suggest that you remove it by personally examining the evidence which I placed in possession of your attorney general in October

Sir, these men of the coal trust, enormously rich and politically influential as they may be, are criminals. They swell their great fortunes daily by deliberate law-breaking.

And while your attorney general has remained so strangely quiescent these opulent and politically influential criminals have adopted an old trust device for the double purpose of further plundering the public and laying the basis for a fraudulent defense against the evidence now in the hands of the attorney general should he begin proceedings against them. A pretended division between them and the so-called "independent" operators has been arranged, whereby these so-called "independents," who are utterly in the power of the trust, shall seem to compete with the trust, and so prepare the ground for a false contention that the trust is not a monopoly, but a legitimate business organization subject to competition. As the immediate result of this counterfeit rivalry the price of coal has been doubled.

As a citizen regardful of the public welfare, Mr. President, I respectfully represent to you that the law officer of your administration has been, and is, remiss in his duty in not proceeding against the coal trust on the evidence of its unlawful character supplied by me to him last year.

By that failure in duty he has encouraged the coal trust to take advantage of a situation largely of its own creation, not merely to persist in its customary pillage of the people, but to enormously increase the scale of its extortion.

The submission of evidence to your attorney general and my appeal to him to apply the law to the coal trust having up to this time resulted in no action on his part, I turn from him to you.

In your public speeches and messages, Mr.

President, you have often declared your conviction that the great combinations of capital commonly known as trusts should be subjected to the fullest publicity and brought within the regulating control of the law, to the end that the public, while profiting by the concentration of capital in business, may be protected against the incidental evil effects of that concentration.

I submit, sir, that there is no other combination of capital in the country more contemptuous of law than the coal trust. And I further submit that the most effective method of subjecting it to publicity is to bring it into court to answer for its illegal offences.

The attorney general of the United States is your servant. He must obey your command or give way to a successor who will do so.

I appeal to you, therefore, Mr. President, to command your attorney general to proceed against the coal trust, both civilly and criminally, on the evidence of its unlawful acts laid before him by me, or explain to the people of the United States his reasons for not doing so, if reasons suitable for public avowal he has.

The people of the United States, President Roosevelt, have a right to expect action from you against the trusts in general and the coal trust in particular. No conspicuous public man of your party has so vehemently as yourself expressed a desire to protect the public from spoliation at the hands of combinations of predatory capital. And you have well said that "words are good when backed up by deeds, and only so."

What better proof of your sincerity could you give, what better deed in support of your words could you do, than by moving at once upon this insolent lawbreaker and wholesale robber of the people, the coal trust?

As a citizen I have done my duty in supplying evidence for the attack to your attorney general. As a citizen I do my duty in turning from him to you when time has shown his invincible reluctance to act.

The coal trust continues to exist and continues to plunder because the laws are not enforced.

For that non-enforcement of the laws, Mr. President, your attorney general is responsible to you, and if you shall uphold him in his refusal to act against the coal trust you will be responsible to the American people. Respectfully,

WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST.

## A Limit to Patience.

The Chicago Record-Herald warns the "uncompromising protectionists" that "they are putting in the best work that is being done for the election of a democratic president and congress."

This republican paper says that Senator Aldrich and his associates are not as greatly concerned for the memory and reputation of Mr. Dingley as they are fearful lest there be a modification in the exorbitant tariff rates. It is charged by this republican paper that Senator Aldrich and his associates "have no use for reciprocity except as a campaign nostrum;" and this republican paper says that "it is certainly incumbent upon the republican party either to abandon reciprocity or to make good its promises."

The republican party has practically abandoned reciprocity, just as it has abandoned other causes to which it had committed itself prior to election day. The republican leaders have not been greatly disturbed by the warning that the people may hold them to account. They have grown bold by frequent successes at a time when they knew they did not deserve success and they imagine that popular protest can be quieted by a "let well enough alone" slogan in the future as it has been in the past. Yet there is a limit to all things. It may be that the near future will demonstrate that there is a limit to the patience of the people.