

The Coal Strike

The coal strike brings the nation face to face with a very serious problem. The situation in the industrial world is more unsatisfactory than it has been before since our nation was born. Taking the world over, the industrial situation is more critical than at any time since the beginning of the Christian era. What is the trouble? Why is it that there is increasing class-consciousness—that is, thinking in terms of class instead of terms that include the whole population, among the members of the two great groups known as the capitalist group and the labor group? Why is it that the members of these two groups more than ever before look forward with a vague dread to what they regard as an inevitable conflict?

Why is it that the big employers are trying to crush organizations among employees and why do the employees feel more than ever before that their only hope lies in an organization strong enough to dictate terms to employers?

The main trouble is lack of the spirit of brotherhood. Capital and labor are drifting more and more apart and in this growing antagonism the world confronts a real danger. Nothing but the spirit of brotherhood can furnish a permanent remedy—a spirit of brotherhood that will make each member of these two groups recognize that he is kin to each member of the other group. Sympathy is the world's great need and sympathy is the outgrowth of a feeling of kinship, brother with brother.

But permanent remedies require time; emergencies require immediate action. When a child, because of carelessness, breaks its arm the bones must be set at once. Lessons in caution can be given after recovery. So, today, an immediate remedy must be found for the strike that suspends one of the chief industries of the country.

About six hundred thousand mine workers are out of employment; the employers call it a strike, the mine workers call it a lockout. But whether strike or lockout it affects the entire nation. If the number of stockholders in all the mines that are shut down is added to the number of employees who have quit work, the total number directly interested on both sides could hardly exceed a million if it reaches that number. Counting five to a family we would have a total of five millions directly interested pecuniarily in the strike or lockout, whichever it may be. In other words, ninety-five per cent of the people suffer while five per cent fight out their differences. The inconvenience suffered by the ninety-five per cent will depend upon the length of the strike. If, as we are told, the country has only fifty-one days' coal supply on hand it will take less than two months to make us a fuelless nation.

As the coal supply diminishes feeling will increase, food supplies will give out among the miners and they will, like others, suffer from lack of fuel. We cannot in times of industrial peace calculate the exigencies of industrial war any more than we can foresee at the beginning of a war between nations what may develop during its progress.

Is it not strange that an intelligent nation like this should be helpless in such an emergency? Why have we not prepared for such a contingency? Why have we no means to prevent strikes and lockouts? There are three reasons; first, the big employers think they can control the situation with an army.

The shut-down is not so serious to them as to the employees; money can go longer than labor without eating. Because capitalists can suspend employment till the employees are out of food, they have the advantage in the game of freeze-out. Society believes in obedience to law and the employers capitalize the law-abiding sentiment of the country and use it as an asset.

The labor leaders rely upon organization. Knowing that without organization labor would have been brought into a condition of involuntary servitude, they very naturally overestimate the sufficiency of organization in dealing with industrial questions. They are rightfully opposed to compulsory arbitration and they are over-suspicious of compulsory investigation for fear the arbitration idea may creep in.

The general public, not being directly interested on either side and being divided in its sympathy between employer and employee, has failed to insist upon its right to protection from the inconveniences that follow either lockout or strike. It takes some great emergency to secure any important reform. Someone has said that the American people sleep till the eleventh hour but that when they are aroused they can

do more in the next hour than any other people can do in the whole day. The eleventh hour has come; it is time to wake up.

Neither capitalism backed by an army nor a class government in the control of labor is suited to our institutions. A "government of the people, by the people, and for the people" is neither a government by capitalists, nor by labor, nor by farmers, nor by merchants, nor by any other class; it is a government in which each individual has an equal voice and in which a majority shall rule on each question that arises.

Fortunately, no one class has a majority and, therefore, no one class can govern this country. All classes ought to join together, each individual acting according to his judgment and his conscience. All ought to unite in securing legislation which will, so far as possible, prevent lockouts or strikes by furnishing a substitute.

The treaty plan, embodied in the treaties between this country and three-fourths of the world and now endorsed by practically the entire civilized world, would be just as useful in preventing conflict between the classes in this country as in preventing war between nations.

The issues that produce strikes and lockouts are not private issues—they involve the entire public. While the relations between capital and labor rest on the first instance on agreements between the two classes, yet, in a larger sense, capital and labor have invited the public to participate when they offer to furnish to the public so important a necessity as fuel and depend on the public for the money that pays both employers and employees. Surely the public has a right to inquire the cause of a dispute before it consents to do without the article of merchandise furnished by those engaged in the dispute.

A permanent tribunal so made up as to represent both sides, with additional members for each investigation furnished by the two sides, would protect all who have a right to be protected. Investigation would bring the facts before the people and public sympathy could then be intelligently given to the side whose cause was just. A reservation of the right of independent action at the conclusion of the investigation would entirely eliminate the idea of compulsory arbitration.

If this strike compels legislation which will prevent strikes or lockouts in the future it will be worth the inconvenience that it costs. It is to be hoped that the nation will profit by this experience and, by appropriate action, proclaim peace in the industrial world.

W. J. BRYAN.

"THE FREEDOM OF THE SEAS"

The doctrine of the "freedom of the seas" is gaining new importance as the rum runners lay claim to all the ocean outside of the three mile limit. It will not take long to dispose of this claim. Crime, exiled from land, cannot build a fortress on the waters. Whenever a rum-laden vessel leaves the three mile limit on an unlawful errand it raises the pirate flag and is under the protection of no law. No civilized nation will dare to lend its flag to whisky buccaneers. The rum-runner is a public enemy—an outlaw, and the vessel can be sunk and the liquor that it carries diluted with salt water until the intoxicating element reaches the maximum of one-half of one per cent.

Those who think that the world has turned over the seas to those engaged in the liquor traffic have another think coming. The new freedom of the seas is a mirage with alcohol taking the place of the imaginary stretches of water. It may be tempting to those to whom the United States has become a desert, but it is not real; those who pursue it will but aggravate their thirst with no opportunity to quench it.

W. J. BRYAN.

THE MIDDLEMEN'S PROFIT

On another page will be found a result of a survey made by the Department of Agriculture, covering the cost of retailing meat. The figures present an interesting study. For instance, while the wholesale price of meat decreased from 1919 to 1921 the cost of retailing meat increased. The middleman is the man who needs watching. An entirely new scale of profits has been adopted since pre-war days.

There ought to be a state commission in every state to supplement the work of the Federal commission, and there should be a municipal trade commission in every city to supplement the work of the state commission. Publicity is the beginning of relief. When we have a tribunal which can bring out the facts the people will have little difficulty in finding a cure.

The Ship Subsidy

The private shipping interests, having succeeded in driving the government out of the shipping business, now ask for a subsidy and the Republican leaders, committed to every sort of bounty, subsidy, and privilege, respond merrily to the appeal. This certainly ought to give the Democrats an issue upon which they can stand solidly against this new form of plunder. It will not be surprising if the agricultural bloc again gets into action and defeats the schemes of the Republican leaders. The Republican congressmen who are going before agricultural districts for re-election will be a little cautious about entering upon a line of expenditure which will be limited only by the capacity of the national purse.

Bounties once given can never be withdrawn with the consent of the industry aided; on the contrary, the larger the industry grows the greater will be the clamor for more. Experience has shown that an infant industry, protected by the Republicans, differs entirely from the child to which the industry is likened. A child will become ashamed to nurse and after awhile will wean itself, but no protected or subsidized industry was ever known to emerge from the state of infancy or consent to wean.

W. J. BRYAN.

THE SOLDIERS' BONUS

A soldiers' bonus bill passed the House; it is not expected to pass the Senate in its present form. It gave the Republican congressmen a chance to say that their party had redeemed its pledge to the soldiers. Nearly all the Democrats voted for it, not because they favored the plan adopted but because it was their only opportunity to vote for ANY kind of bonus bill and they preferred to vote for ANY bill rather than for NO bill at all. The minority of the Ways and Means Committee brought a stinging indictment against the Republican majority and showed how the money necessary could be raised by a tax upon excess profits and large incomes.

The bonus bill is an excellent illustration of a policy described in an oft repeated story. A retiring merchant in turning the business over to his son told him how to be popular without its costing anything. "If anyone comes around for a subscription for the building of a church," said the father, "subscribe liberally—that will make you popular with the members of the church; then fight the location and you will not have to pay the subscription."

Simple plan, isn't it? That is the difficulty with the bonus bill; everybody favors it but its supporters differ as to the method of raising the money necessary—they fight the location.

W. J. BRYAN.

THE TAIL STILL WIGGLING

Governor Edwards of New Jersey is back in the lime light again. He vetoed four dry enforcement laws passed by the New Jersey legislature. He objects to one of the laws declaring a place a nuisance "where the liquor law is HABITUALLY violated." He says that no property right or privilege seems to be safe against assault by those who think the enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment a panacea for all ills. Well, the serpent is dead, even though its tail may not have stopped wiggling.

Yes, anxious readers, it is true that the reservation to the Four Power Treaty adopted by a vote of NINETY to TWO is substantially the same reservation as made in each one of the Thirty Treaties protecting the nation's right to decide for itself questions of peace and war. When that reservation was added the Four Power Pact became almost identical with the Thirty Treaties. Of course, the Democrats could afford to endorse a proposition so much like the Bryan Treaties negotiated under President Wilson's administration.

A POOR ISSUE

Governor Cox quite naturally harks back to 1920 and wants to fight the League of Nations over again; but that would be suicidal. Would he insist on Article 10? If so, we would be defeated in advance; and suppose Article 10 was dropped? That would divide the Democratic party.

The fight will be made against Republican mistakes. There are plenty of them. Among the many the revenue bill is the worst.