

# TENSE SITUATION IN WAR IN WEST VIRGINIA COAL FIELDS

## Coming of Senate Investigating Committee, Which Begins Work on Tuesday, Causes Temporary Truce in Mine Troubles—Miners Are Restless and Mountains Are Still Filled With Arms—I. W. W. Men Busy

CHARLESTON, W. Va., June 7.—The approaching investigation of conditions in the West Virginia mining regions, with particular reference to the recently ended strike along Cabin and Paint and indeed throughout the State, has created a tense situation. The fact that a Senate committee, with practically unlimited powers is coming here to delve into the causes and conduct of a struggle that lasted for a year has had a distinct effect upon the situation, the tenor of which was not made known by the announcement that the miners and their employers had come to an agreement.

A sinister calmness prevails. Operators, miners, mine guards and even the volatile labor agitators have paused for a moment to consider the contest in its larger aspects, and this truce has given the thoughtful an opportunity to contemplate with what satisfaction they may the question as to whether or not there is to be laid upon this Commonwealth the stigma of having tolerated a denial of the fundamental and inalienable rights of its citizens.

There is no doubt that the investigation of the Senate committee will be directed to this point. The constitutional guarantee of a republican form of government is of more import than any question of union recognition or wage scale. The miners were dissatisfied with the general scheme of things at the mines. They disliked the company stores, they fretted under the supervision of the mine guards, they wanted more wages, they wanted recognition of their union, but more than anything else they flamed to bitter rage at the clean rifles and machine guns along the hills, at the accursed "bull pen" where they were imprisoned and the farcical procedure of a court of amateur soldiers who sat in judgment upon them while the ordinary civil courts were open.

**Might Was Right.**  
When matters came to such a pass there was no longer any question of industrial right or wrong. When free men were being tried by court-martial might was right and liberty was dying. Weariness of continual wrangling, anxious that its splendid resources might be unfolded in a time when prosperity was in the hand of the republic, the State of West Virginia lapsed in vigilance and seemed to condone what wisdom said must never be.

Like a shock came a motion on the floor of the United States Senate to inquire into these things. Senator John W. Kern pointed out to his colleagues the menace that lay in a continuance of such circumstances, the indignity of permitting them to pass unchallenged. West Virginia's representatives in the Senate were asked to resign the imputation. They rushed to the defence of their State and its right to regulate its own affairs. Finally, the committee was appointed to investigate the conditions.

The question rises above the interested persons in West Virginia. It is a question of the Government guarantee of liberty under the Constitution. The rights have been provided in West Virginia grounds upon which we may well consider whether we should enact legislation to draw about the executive and judicial officers of the States some regular definition of the circumstances under which suspension of the rights of the citizen under the Constitution may be effected.

**Protection for Citizen.**  
"It may become the duty of the Congress to define and to delegate to the Department of Justice and the executive branch of the Government the right to make investigation as to the weakest citizen may be protected by the strong arm of the general Government. In the enjoyment of his fundamental rights, the rights handed down to him and to us from the Magna Carta, which must be guaranteed now and forever to every citizen of the United States wherever he may find himself."

The Senate passed a resolution for an investigation of the general situation in the bituminous coal region of West Virginia. Some hint of just what has been going on may be gained from the wording of the resolution. It provides:

1. For an investigation as to whether or not peonage exists in the coal fields.  
2. Whether or not the postal facilities have been interfered with, and if so, by whom.  
3. Whether or not the immigration laws have been violated, and whether or not there has been discrimination

against the district in the administration of these laws.  
4. To investigate and report all facts and circumstances relating to the charge that citizens of the United States have been arrested, tried and convicted contrary to or in violation of the laws of the United States.  
5. To investigate commercial conditions with a view to discovering possible infractions of the Sherman anti-trust law.  
6. To investigate and report whether or not firearms have been imported into the disaffected district for the purpose of excluding the products of said coal fields from competitive markets.  
7. To investigate the causes leading up to the alleged conditions.

ing mountains. They lived in tents or shacks of poorer construction than their former homes. Men, women, children and domestic animals were huddled together, and the kind of life that is born of idleness, poverty and a not too nice discrimination as to the fundamentals of morality was the result. Seventy-five per cent. of these people are Anglo-Saxons, but the others, negroes, Italians and Slavs of various tribes, were a haven of unwholesome kind in a home-lose community.

Besides owning the houses the coal operators owned the stores where the miners bought food and clothes and the implements of labor. They paid well for these things, officials of the mine company admitted frankly that the stores



Miners Homes Leased from Mine Owners

But very soon the miners armed themselves. They were poor men, they had been idle for some time, their poverty was proclaimed in every newspaper that sympathized with the strike. And yet these inpecunious miners had money to buy arms and ammunition. They stacked their camps with them. They filled hidden caches in the mountains with ball, cartridge and dynamite. Some of the rifles were such as the United States Government alone is supposed to have at its disposal.

The question as to where the miners got money to buy these things, whence came the intelligence and influence that showed itself behind every conspiracy of arms, naturally arose. The United Mine Workers supplied funds to the strikers, but those funds were expended mostly for food. "Mother" Jones, who admits she advised "the boys" to arm themselves, offers no explanation as to where the money came from. The Senatorial committee is going to try to find out whether or not the rivals of West Virginia operators did not find it to their purpose to help a little in this way.

**Reason for Martial Law.**  
Finally the investigation will turn upon the causes leading up to the conditions that induced the Governor of the State to declare martial law over a district of 145 square miles, the conditions in which armed men confronted each other in deadly battle and in which attempts were made to dynamite railroad trains. Martial law still lingers along Paint and Cabin creeks in the persons of a few militiamen, but even they will be removed before the Senate committee of their condition without considerable prompting from the outside and from those to whose interest it was to make matters difficult for rivals who were rapidly gaining in strength.

Shortly after the strike began the mine owners increased the number of mine guards and armed them with machine guns and rifles. They have never sought to evade the responsibility for this. They did it because they felt their property was in danger and because a gun has an undeniable force in argument when the other fellow has none.

**Complaint of Overwork.**  
The miners complain that they are obliged to dig and load 3,000 or more pounds to the ton because the coal is weighed by the car instead of by the ton. The operators seem inclined to grant everything except recognition of the union. Agitators have been unable to penetrate into the region because of the mine guards, who are there in full force, but some 40 per cent. of the miners are Socialists and the union propaganda appeals to them strongly. The mine guard system is being used as a lever to arouse the miners and those who know what happened in the Kanawha district expect to see trouble before long.

At the present time the agitators have succeeded in getting about 1,000 men to strike. They and their families are living in tents, as did the strikers in Kanawha county. The strike started when a few men were discharged for assisting the formation of a union and then, after the unions were formed, others went out in sympathy. The fact that there are now some sixty unions indicates that a general strike may not be far in the future.

Everything apparently now hinges on the results of the investigation. The committee is not restricted as to its meeting places. It is empowered to sit either during the sessions of Congress or in recess, and it may summon witnesses and compel the attendance of recalcitrants. It is also empowered to punish those who are recalcitrant. The investigators, who compose a sub-committee of the Senate Committee on Education and Labor, are Senator Swanson of Virginia, chairman; Senator Shields of Tennessee and Senator Martine of New Jersey, who are Democrats; and Senator Borah of Idaho and Senator Kenyon of Ohio, who are Republicans. They will arrive here at noon on Tuesday and will commence work that afternoon.

**I. W. W. Workers Busy.**  
The United Mine Workers are in favor of Gov. Hatfield because of their efforts to keep the miners at work and their confidence in him. A committee of Socialists, composed of Victor Berger, Eugene V. Debs and Adolph Germer, who recently visited the coal district, declared they were satisfied that the Governor is handling a difficult situation in a fair and human way. Since their departure I. W. W. agitators have been working among the men, assisted at great length and with much display of type, at least by the

**Miners Saved Money.**  
The investigation will take cognizance of the charge that the troubles in Kanawha county were fomented by coal operators in other States. The West Virginia operators worked so well their system of saving money at the head of the mine that they were able to transport their coal a great distance and still compete with their rivals in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois and Indiana. No very great amount of bituminous coal is used in West Virginia, which is not a manufacturing State. It has to be marketed elsewhere, and when trouble came to the operators after many years of peace it was easy to conclude that the ignorant miners had not suddenly grasped the meanness of their condition without considerable prompting from the outside and from those to whose interest it was to make matters difficult for rivals who were rapidly gaining in strength.

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one, only one, each, and the only equality that Chicago is bound to admit. Pittsburgh has as many namesakes as Boston, eleven, but all of them combined haven't as much money as Pittsburgh, and the same might be said of Boston's namesakes in regard to brains, though far be it from me to say it. Washington heads the list in the number of namesakes, twenty-eight, but it is not the capital so much as it is the immortal George which carries in this case.

**Death of "Meagher of the Sword" a Fifty Year Mystery**  
Continued from First Page.  
them, and fought bravely with the rest of the regiment at Bull Run. His horse was shot under him. Returning to New York he began recruiting for the Irish Brigade with the permission of the authorities. The Sixty-ninth, Sixty-third and Eighty-eighth New York formed the first brigade he helped to raise. Indeed his oratory proved the greatest recruiting sergeant for the army. At least five regiments in Massachusetts, New York and Pennsylvania were added to the national forces through his powerful pleading. Here is a quotation of the flag that is worthy of long remembrance and frequent citation:  
"A national flag is the most sacred thing that a nation can possess. Libraries, museums, exchangers, tombs and statues of great men are inferior to it. It is the illuminated diploma of a nation's authority. It is the imperishable emblem of a country's history."  
"As I cast my eye the morning along Bunker Hill monument what did I see there? I saw the British troops evacuating the city of New York. I saw George Washington inaugurated as the first President of the United States. I saw the lofty brow and giant frame of Andrew Jackson. I saw the veterans of the Peninsula war reeling before the fire of Tennessee rifles in the swamps of Louisiana. I saw the lightning and heard the thunders of Lake Erie, when Perry commanded them to go forth and sweep the friend of the South and the enemy of the North from its waters,

But in Kanawha county these houses are owned by the mine owners, and a miner can't live in one unless he works for the owner. He pays a rent that enables the owner to make a profit and the rent money is taken out of his wages. When the miners in this district struck for their union and higher wages they were put out of these houses and they took to the surround-

ing mountains. They lived in tents or shacks of poorer construction than their former homes. Men, women, children and domestic animals were huddled together, and the kind of life that is born of idleness, poverty and a not too nice discrimination as to the fundamentals of morality was the result. Seventy-five per cent. of these people are Anglo-Saxons, but the others, negroes, Italians and Slavs of various tribes, were a haven of unwholesome kind in a home-lose community.

**Barred From Post Office.**  
The question whether or not the postal facilities were interfered with by arms from the complaint that frequently the post office was located in one of the company stores and that striking miners were warned away by the rifles of the mine guards or the militiamen.

The investigation of the immigration laws will undoubtedly bring out whether or not rival mine owners in other States have succeeded in keeping foreign labor out of the West Virginia district. Foreign labor generally means cheap labor and rivals in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois and Indiana are charged by the West Virginia owners with having secured such a hold on this labor as to compel higher wages to be paid in West Virginia than are paid in other States. Higher wages have been paid in West Virginia because the miners there are of a higher grade than they are in several other States.

Martial law was declared in the affected district three times during the progress of the strike. Arrests were made by the whole State. Men were tried by a military court and the sentences upheld by the civil courts. In the month of March nearly a hundred of these prisoners were tried. "Mother" Jones and forty-eight men were on trial at one time. She and others refused to submit to the court martial and appealed to the civil courts. The appeal

was denied and the jurisdiction of the court martial upheld.

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**Pat Out of Homes.**  
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**Strikers Tents at Holly Grove Paint Creek**  
It has been practiced. It debases the victim of it and opens the way for injustice.

The miners in this district are a shiftless lot. They work when they feel like it and their feelings are for the most part concentrated in their stomachs, but without they made good wages, at least on the books of the mine owners. Statistics in their case show nothing unless they take cognizance of the money that actually remained in the envelopes of the workers after the numerous drains upon them had been accounted. Even the unorthodox, dull witted average miner had an idea that he would be happier if he got his money first and then spent it as he liked.

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