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PALMER'S MEN TO INVESTIGATE BIG COAL DEAL

\$210,000 Profit Exposed by 'The New York Herald' May Be Prosecuted.

OPERATORS TO MEET

Wentz Calls Conference in Cleveland Next Tuesday to Fight High Prices.

TO AID GOVERNMENT

Bituminous Men Agree to Reconsider Plan Offered by Attorney-General.

Special Despatch to THE NEW YORK HERALD.
New York Herald Bureau,
Washington, D. C., Oct. 19.

The Department of Justice is to make an immediate investigation of the \$210,000 coal deal revealed in THE NEW YORK HERALD this morning, according to Assistant Attorney-General Mitchell, in charge of coal cases. It was indicated that action under the profiteering provision of the Lever act would be taken if the facts warranted such a course.

After a conference to-day with Attorney-General Palmer, Col. D. B. Wentz, president of the National Coal Association, called a meeting of the bituminous coal operators throughout the country for next Tuesday at Cleveland to consider high coal prices and the communication of the Attorney-General.

The association issued the following statement:

"The Attorney-General's communication urging action looking to lower prices reached Col. Wentz last week in New York, where he attended a meeting of the board of directors of the National Coal Association. Owing to restrictions in the charter of the National Coal Association preventing it from taking any attitude related to price fixing, the association directors could take no action.

"So as to have the matters acted upon, all of the 7,000 soft coal operators of the country have been asked to attend the Cleveland conference. The following telegram was sent out to-day by J. D. A. Morrow, vice-president of the National Coal Association, to associations of operators and individual operators in all bituminous fields:

"Col. D. B. Wentz, president of the National Coal Association, has received a request from Attorney-General Palmer that the bituminous coal operators take action in their meeting at Cleveland, Tuesday, to effect a reduction in the present high prices of bituminous coal wherever such prices exist. The Attorney-General has assured Col. Wentz that action to reduce high prices for bituminous coal and to eliminate profiteering as construed under the Lever act, if taken without infringing certain limitations which he will communicate to Col. Wentz and the necessary discussion thereon by the bituminous coal operators attending the meeting, will not be in violation of the Sherman act or any other law. Col. Wentz has promised to place the Attorney-General's communication before the meeting for such action as the bituminous coal operators present desire to take. Please advise your members and all producers of bituminous coal in your territory of this fact and ask them to attend the meeting prepared to act on the communication of the Attorney-General."

The National Coal Association board of directors in New York last week went on record in a resolution condemning improper practices in the distribution of bituminous coal.

BRITISH STRIKE WON'T AFFECT COAL HERE

300,000,000 Tons Sold for Export Called Undeliverable.

That the British coal strike will have virtually no effect upon the local bituminous coal situation was the consensus of leading representatives of coal export agencies and wholesale dealers. They declared that all the coal that could possibly be shipped abroad had been gone out of the country regularly for several months and that millions of tons of unfilled orders are now being filled by American coal exporters as rapidly as the fuel can be obtained and loaded at tide-water.

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As coal loading facilities at all ports already are taxed to capacity, it was pointed out, it would be a physical impossibility to export more coal to European countries no matter how acute the demand might become. The export demand, officials of the Wholesale Coal Trade Association said, is six or seven times greater than can be filled, and the British strike cannot materially alter the situation here.

"There are more than 300,000,000 tons of coal sold for export that never will be delivered," said D. X. Thompson, manager of the Imperial Coal Export Corporation. "These orders have been taken by agents who know our exporting facilities will not permit shipment of more than 80,000,000 tons abroad in a year." Mr. Thompson expressed the opinion that the strike of the British miners would not be of long duration.

In the face of the British strike prices eased somewhat yesterday. Local wholesalers attributed that fact to a slight betterment in transportation facilities and an advance in production.

U. S. COAL \$55 A TON IN FRANCE

Shippers Here Make Big Sums After Paying \$22 to \$30 to Transport

Special Despatch to THE NEW YORK HERALD.
CHICAGO, Oct. 19.—The Government Coal Committee investigating profiteering in Chicago reported to-day that thousands of tons of Indiana and Illinois bituminous coal were being shipped to France, where it was sold to the consumers at \$55 a ton. The cost of transporting the coal to France, according to the committee's report, averages from \$22 to \$30 a ton.

Two hundred and fifty thousand tons of Illinois and Indiana coal were received in Chicago in the last three days. Charles Clyde, District-Attorney, announced to-night that he would ask the authorities at Washington to place an embargo on the shipping of Illinois and Indiana coal until Chicago's coal shortage had been relieved.

BRITISH STRIKE NOW IN CRITICAL STAGE

Continued from First Page.

ating the labor leaders) are speaking on behalf of more than a million other men whom they do not absolutely control, and experience sometimes do not carry out the words of their chosen representatives.

"The same applies to the mine owners. I fully admit there may be truth in the miners' charge that the mine owners are working only the least profitable seams under the present control (by the Government), saving the profitable seams until their own time comes, hence holding down the output; but it is an increased output that the nation wants, must have and is prepared to pay for it, both to the miners and the mine owners. It will consider no scheme for increased remuneration unless it is based on an increased output from the mines."

Takes Up Brace's Proposals.

Then the Premier took up Mr. Brace's proposals for an unconditional two shillings a shift increase in pay. He said: "Our friend calls this a small matter. It is keeping more than a million men idle. It means ten shillings a week increase. I have asked if this increase were granted and the output of the mines not increased after a week's adjustment of the pay system, would the miners consent to give it up? The answer came from Frank Hodges:

"The miners demand the increase on their merits and without regard to the output."

"Again I ask this same question to-night, and I do not hear an answer from across the way. Why? Because when this increase, irrespective of the output, is once granted and then asked to be withdrawn, the burden of forcing the strike, with the country lulled, will upon the miners and not upon the Government, as it is now.

"If any scheme by which the miners can get two shillings, or even three shillings, upon an increased output is submitted, I will accept it, but there is no use beginning with an increase independent of the output, because every experience has taught us that every increase has been followed by a decrease in output."

"The miners—I won't say all of them, but some miners—will not work a full week when under an increased wage, they get enough within two or three days to live on for a week."

Bitterness Depreciated.

Sir Robert Horn, president of the Board of Trade, opened the strike controversy with a long statement dealing with the negotiations between the Government and the coal miners' leaders and proceedings. He said that it was hoped that all traces of bitterness would be kept out of the controversy. He declared that a Government which met all demands for wages increases was one other than a dishonest Government, since obviously it was not protecting public interests, and the public has a right to be heard as to how the workers.

He said it had been noticed that after every wage increase there had followed a decrease in the output, and he expressed the opinion it would be better to give the workers some kind of an incentive to greater endeavor.

Sir Robert declared that if the Government settled strikes by always meeting the demands of the strikers, the Government would be always settling strikes; that the Government would be failing to do its duty unless it gave only when it was justified in giving. He said he deprecated all "fight-to-a-finish" talk, and that it was not a question of armed camps, or in war.

"We have come through great trials together," he said. "This strike is liable to grow and do more harm to the country than the great war did, but in the end we must stand or fall together."

Sir Robert drew a gloomy picture of the results if the strike were to be continued. He said, with each day throwing 10,000 out of employment. Trade, under these conditions, would be gradually strangled. He called attention to the depreciation of British credit abroad as a result only of the threatened strike, which amounted in the case of imports from America since he said, to nearly \$500,000 monthly.

Quick Action Urged.

Sir Robert was answered by William Brace, a Labor member and president of the South Wales Miners' Federation, who emphasized the necessity for quick action. He declared that the miners now were on a holiday and would be friendly for a few days, but he solemnly warned the Commons of what might happen if it became a fight to a finish.

He said the so-called datum line (monthly production upon which a wage increase would be based) proposal put the output figure too high; that the miners did not trust the proposed tribunal because they questioned the faith of the Government to carry out faithfully the tribunal's findings. He asserted that these two issues were dead and that some new scheme of settlement must be found. He argued that the miners thought it unfair to base wages on output without giving them control of the mines. At this point he said:

"Now, if we had nationalization of the mines—"

He was interrupted by an outburst of "Ohs!" and "Ahs!" as though many members recognized that this was at the bottom of the whole thing.

Mr. Brace declared that the amount of the output of the mines depended more on the owners than on the miners, and that there was a general fear against overproduction.

Mr. Brace inspired hope when he said he believed there would be an opportunity for settlement.

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COAL GRAFT VICTIMS SLOW TO PROSECUTE

Justice Delayed by Fear of Confronting Offenders and Giving Facts to Courts.

SHORTAGE IS DENIED

Expert Says Bituminous Supply Is Sufficient if Allowed to Flow Freely.

New instances of graft, profiteering or other violations of the Lever law in connection with various departments of the coal trade and the coal carrying railroads are coming almost daily to the ears of local representatives of the Federal Department of Justice.

REDS DEFEAT WRANGLER WITH HEAVY LOSSES

Soviets Again on Offensive After Victory.

By the Associated Press.

LESTOPOLE, Oct. 17 (delayed).—The efforts of Gen. Erazm Wrangel to take the Kakhovka bridgehead in South Russia, northeast of the Crimea, have resulted in failure, with heavy losses to his forces in killed and wounded and in material captured by the Bolsheviks.

Gen. Wrangel's troops have been thrown back into the Taurida area, behind the Dnieper, which they still control. Leon Trotsky, the Russian Soviet War Minister, is said to be personally directing the Dnieper campaign from Odessa.

Gen. Wrangel's offensive at first was successful. His troops forced the bridgehead's first defenses by bayonet charges, but the Soviet forces rallied on Thursday last and drove out the Wrangel troops, who are retreating in disorder behind borders on confusion and are abandoning tanks and cannon.

Soviet forces have assumed the offensive on both fronts.

LONDON, Oct. 18.—The Soviet Government's Moscow wireless report says: Heavy cavalry and infantry divisions attacked the Bolshevik northwest of Nikolop on October 14 and drove the Bolshevik cavalry back for some distance, but a counter-attack defeated Gen. Wrangel's forces, which retired in a panic. The Soviet troops took large quantities of booty and entirely destroyed the Smoleensk and Alexaleff infantry regiments of the south Russian army. Gen. Babineff, commander of the Kuban division, is reported to have been killed, and it is said Gen. Barbovitch, commander of a cavalry corps, was severely wounded.

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