

## TO STOP COAL WARS.

WASHINGTON CONNOR WRITES OF THE SITUATION.

Let Capital and Labor Unite—Miners, Operators and Railroads Should Fix Prices and Wages and Make a Lasting Agreement.

During the past two years there has been severe competition in the bituminous coal trade, resulting in a reduction in the price of coal to a point where there was but little profit for the railroads which carried it, the mine owners and operators who produced it or for the miners whose wages were dependent upon the price received for coal. These three large interests have alike suffered from a warfare which has been both foolish and needless.

Last March the Ohio railroads and operators took the initiative toward bringing about a settlement of the difficulty by the formation of an alliance between the operators and the coal carriers for the purpose of securing better results for all parties in interest, to establish uniform rates on the railroads, secure stability of prices for the coal and through these means prevent any further reduction in the pay of the miners and ultimately to increase their wages as the price of coal was advanced.

The Ohio Coal association, which was formed last March, is well organized for this work and secures unity of action in the Ohio district. That its formation was a wise step cannot be questioned. The railroads for over a year, owing to the fierce competition which existed, had been cutting prices from 20 to 40 per cent below schedule rates. This organization has succeeded in restoring rates to the established schedule and by so doing will add from 20 to 40 per cent to the net revenue of the roads which belong to it on all the coal they carry.

An obstacle to keeping up the miners' wages has recently been encountered by the action of the Pennsylvania and West Virginia operators, who have been persistent in trying to drive the pay of miners to the lowest possible point.

When the great strike of 1894 was settled, an agreement was made that the miners should receive 60 cents per ton in Ohio and 69 cents per ton in Pennsylvania. The Ohio operators have faithfully lived up to their agreement and paid 60 cents throughout the year, notwithstanding that during that time they knew the Pittsburg district had violated its agreement and was underselling Ohio in the market, which it was able to do on account of paying lower wages to the miners.

There has been established for years a differential of 9 cents per ton between the Ohio and Pittsburg districts in the price paid the miner. This is the result of a difference in the size of screens used in the two districts. If both districts used the same sized screens, the wages for miners would be the same, but so long as this is not the case the differential must be maintained.

The Pittsburg operators having been successful in reducing the pay of a large number of their miners during the year 1894, owing to the great number of unemployed, are this year opposed to a restoration to the prices agreed upon in 1894. The result is that, while the Ohio operators are in favor of either continuing the wages of last year or even advancing to higher prices, they are unable to carry out their wishes, but must establish a rate per ton which will be 9 cents less than that paid in the Pittsburg district, the 9 cents being the differential which I have referred to.

There are times when capital justly complains that it has not been fairly treated by labor. There can be no such complaint made by the Pittsburg operators. In this instance it is labor that has been made to suffer through the short sighted selfishness of a few individuals and corporations.

In 1892 West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Ohio worked under an interstate agreement. Miners were then receiving in Ohio 79 cents per ton and in Pennsylvania 79 cents per ton. The railroads obtained satisfactory rates for the transportation of coal, and the operators and mine owners made more money than they have any time since. The results of this agreement and combination were so beneficial and satisfactory to all interests that it is impossible to find a reason why the same policy should not have been carried out in the following years.

The present situation could be greatly improved by extending an interstate organization so that it would include the Illinois and Indiana districts. Such a combination should not be looked upon as a trust, as it would in no sense be one and would not be formed to advance prices, but only to maintain uniform prices in the various districts.

There would be just as much sense in some of the street railways of New York cutting down their fares to 3 cents for the purpose of taking business away from other lines as there is in the cutting of the price at which coal is sold or reducing the wages paid to the miners. With the street railways it would simply result in forcing the other lines to make a similar reduction. The effect on the coal trade. The managers of the street railways have intel-

ligence enough to see that a profitable business can be done only by the maintenance of the 5 cent fare. Some of the coal operators have not yet developed that amount of intelligence.

Secret rebates and commissions and even signed contracts cutting agreed upon prices, such contracts being given under a pledge of secrecy, have been responsible for the low prices for bituminous coal for the past two years.

When competition of this kind is once started, it does not stop until it approaches the point of actual cost of production, and this is generally followed by an attempt to reduce wages so that the competition may be carried still further.

It seems to me that there is no business in this country where the remedy is so plain as in the bituminous trade. It is possible for capital and labor to unite in such a manner that both will receive their fair share of the results. There is no question that the yearly conflict is injurious to all concerned, and there is likewise no question that these yearly conflicts can be avoided.

It rests with the conservative and intelligent men in the ranks of labor and among the operators and railroad managers to bring about an organization which will prevent any trouble in the future. Such an organization should embrace West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. The Interstate association should fix the miners' wages for the miners in the various districts. It should also establish the price for coal and the rates for carrying. Then in each district there should be a local organization, like that of the Ohio Coal association, to take charge of questions which belong to that district alone, such as the making of sales and contracts and receiving the proceeds. This power should be added to that which is already possessed by the Ohio association.

Formerly there existed an interstate organization embracing Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, Indiana and Illinois, and the results were profitable to all interested—i. e., the railroads and their employees, the mine owners and their employees.

Today the chief opposition to reviving it seems to be the operators in Pennsylvania, who have openly declared themselves against any agreement either of the mine owners or organization of mine labor.

A good commencement to an interstate agreement is found among the operators of Ohio, who seem to be generally in favor of it, and who have made frequent efforts during the past year among the Pennsylvania operators to re-establish the interstate compact, because it gave the best returns to all concerned, including labor. It was with this in view that the Ohio operators faithfully carried out the 1894 agreement, and in the face of Pennsylvania having reduced its labor to the lowest point ever reached.

There should be no difficulty in arriving at an agreement with the national miners' organization as to what would be fair wages for the miners in the various districts. Then the agreement should provide a scale of wages for the miners which would advance and decline with the price of coal. I believe that such a scale is in existence today in Wales and has been found to work to the satisfaction of both the mine owner and the miner. The Reading railroad at one time worked under such a system and found it satisfactory.

In Wales an auditing of the sales takes place every 60 days, and the average price determines the price paid the miner. The books of the various associations should be open to the inspection of the representatives of the railways, the operators and the miners' organization, so that there could be no question as to whether the agreement was being faithfully carried out.

The Ohio operators deserve great credit for the stand they have always taken in favor of higher wages for the miners and also for the honorable manner in which they have lived up to the agreement they have made with the miners' organization. I wish I could say as much for the operators of the Pittsburg district.

It seems to me that the labor leaders in the miners' organization made a serious mistake in 1894 when they ordered a strike not only in the district which refused to pay the wages demanded, but also in districts where the operators were willing to concede what the miners asked, and where they had always received fair treatment. Had they at that time confined their strike to the districts which insisted upon low wages their expenses would have been much less, and they would have had a larger fund at their command by being able to draw more heavily upon the miners who would have been at work in the districts which were not opposed to the rate then demanded.

The rates which have always been recognized as being fair between the various states are to give the miners in Illinois, Indiana and Ohio the same pay, while Pennsylvania and West Virginia are on the same basis, which is 9 cents higher per ton than the three states first mentioned, it being estimated that on account of the different sized screens used a miner can earn in a day's work the same amount of wages in any of the states when this basis is maintained.—Washington E. Connor in New York World

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General Warner Says the Story is a Lie Circulated by the Goldberg Press.

General A. J. Warner, president of the Bimetallic league of the United States, and probably its most active representative, has arrived in town after an extended tour of the country in the interests of silver. He expresses himself as much encouraged by the outlook and as sanguine of the success of free coinage in next year's national contest.

In a long conversation with a representative of The Star, General Warner dwelt upon the different phases of the situation.

"It is claimed that silver is losing ground in this country," it was suggested by the reporter.

"I know it is," was the reply, "but you see that claim was made only by eastern newspapers. It is not true. I am just back from the sections where the fight for silver is being waged, and where in the end it will be won, and you may quote me as saying that the people are neither going over to the gold side of the question nor becoming indifferent to silver. The people indeed were never before so much interested in silver as they are at present. There may not be the excitement growing out of public meetings and conventions that existed in the spring, but there has been no abatement whatever of that interest which betokens an organized purpose, and upon which you may rely for good results at the polls."

"But do you observe any pronounced signs of disintegration in either of the two old parties on this silver question?"

"It is a little early for that," was the reply. "Men in bodies are slow to move, and this is especially true in politics. Old affiliations are very strong. But the real friends of silver—and I hold that they are in a substantial majority in this country—will have their eyes opened next year. Both of the old parties will be controlled by the gold men, and the nominations will be arranged so as to insure a gold executive if either wins. Then the duty of the friends of silver will be plain before them. They will have to unite and see that both of the old parties are defeated, and that a friend of silver and of the people is put in the White House. I think this will be done. In that day I expect to see silver men leave both the Democratic and Republican parties by brigades and ally themselves together in common cause against the tyranny of the money power."—Washington Star.

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They were believed to be true and had the same effect as if true and created a worldwide belief and fear that the world would be speedily deluged—flooded with gold and silver in quantities greater than could be consumed for monetary uses without a marked depreciation or fall in their purchasing power and a marked increase or rise in the selling price of all products and properties. This started a movement for a single metallic money standard throughout the world, which was adroitly managed so as to favor gold only.—Senator Cockrell.

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Cattle mark, down-cut dewlap in bracket. Range, upper Ruby valley, from lower upper canyon, including all tributaries.

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