

Plain Words But True

Public satisfaction over the abandonment of the coal strike seems to have been premature in view of what is sure to happen as a result of the "get together" conference of miners and operators now in session at Washington, with Secretary of Labor Wilson as referee. Nothing is more certain than that the miners will be granted a big increase in wages and that the operators, already reaping huge profits, will be permitted by the government to recoup themselves in higher prices to the consumer. According to dispatches Dr. Garfield, who is solely responsible for the present situation and who hasn't the guts of a flea, has been summoned to Washington to "advise as to what portion of the increase the public should be called on to bear." and with such sympathetic intercession, there is no doubt as to what will happen. Another dollar a ton, perhaps more, will be added to the price of coal, and the public, helpless and unprotected, with congress sitting idly by at one end of the capitol and the Senate wind jamming over the League of Nations at the other, will have to pay. The gentlemen with no courage and no determination, whom the President has an unhappy faculty for gathering about him, will express their "gratification" over "the happy outcome" and the great scheme of plunder, clearly a frame up from the beginning, will go on unchecked and uncurbed. The devilish part of it is that the burden will fall, as usual, on those least able to bear it. Figures given by Middle West operators themselves in the McAllister investigations, show that coal is selling now at \$2.50 more on the ton than production cost justifies. The city of Paris gets its coal laid down at \$4.50 a ton, but the private consumer must pay \$7. Facts given by the miners in their attempt to justify the strike show that operators, in an endeavor to restrict production and maintain prices, kept the mines closed for practically a third of the time last summer. This is a more flagrant violation of the Lever act than the strike itself, which Attorney General Palmer so vigorously and so vociferously attacked, he knows that it is true, but it excites no official indignation on his part. Evidently he exhausted himself in his attack on the miners, and popular disgust and impatience grow apace. Coal enters largely into all production cost and with the increase in price the consumer will pay double toll in mounting living

costs. As has been said, it is the most outrageous and inexcusable conspiracy in extortion ever attempted in the United States and justifies the biting accusation that the administration, through the efforts of subordinates, and even congress itself, if not in sympathy with the profiteers who are pushing the nation toward a cataclysm, are at least indifferent to the bitter cry of a plundered people. So far, a Republican congress, busy playing partisan politics, and a Republican Senate engaged in the same game, seem blissfully ignorant of what is going on and are betraying an indifference almost monstrous toward the public interest. The agricultural population, its own products being hammered down, is bearing the chief part of the burden, yet, not a congressman or senator, Republican or Democrat, representing agricultural constituencies, has lifted a voice in protest. They are playing their usual game of passing the buck to a sick president, and public anger and disgust, piling up day by day, bids fair to vent itself in most vigorous fashion at next year's elections. The government must in the end brush aside the operators and take over the coal mines. Such a step is inevitable, and a start now might prove a salutary restraint upon the greed of the coal operators, whom Dr. Garfield turned loose to prey upon the nation. In the meantime why not have some man, say McAllister, who knows the coal situation as no man in the United States knows it, representative of the great farming populations, as fuel administrator. Others are fixing prices on the farmers' products, why not give him a voice in fixing the price on theirs? He is weary of university professors and halfbaked reformers, muck-rakers and parlor Socialists. Among them they have about played hell with the country. —Paris Mercury.

An Infant Industry

How the Ordnance Bureau of the War Department broke all speed records in the building of a young city and created probably the largest plant in the world to manufacture ammonium nitrate from the air, has been proving most interesting to Congressmen in Washington, who have been holding a sort of post mortem on war efforts trying to determine how big government undertakings created for defence, may be best turned into peace time industry. All the world knew of Hopewell, Virginia, as a city of 25,000 people, built by the Dupont's in 1914, to manufacture ex-

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plosives; but the lid of secrecy was so carefully calked that the building of another city equally large, at the instance of our own Government, attracted very little attention. Just how Germany "snooped" out so many things not intended for her to know about is hard to understand; but it is certain that the enemy was astounded when it found its own fine-spun plans for taking nitrogen from the air, completely surpassed by the United States, which it knew to be a novice game. The Germans stood paralyzed with fear as they confronted the Aladdin like methods of Uncle Sam in pouring soldiers in upon their frontier, while at Muscle Shoals, Alabama, a plant had suddenly sprung out of the earth capable of producing thirteen per cent of all the high explosives needed by the Allied armies on all the fronts in the expected drive of the following Spring.

Ground was broken for a permanent plant building at Muscle Shoals on February 16, 1918, and on the twenty-sixth day of the following October, or eight months and eight days later, the wheels of manufacture started revolving in the production of ammonium nitrate. The great plant that was completed, and which stands today as a monument to American enterprise and brains, is fitted to become one of the great sources of fertilizers for the land of the United States. It is this feature of the problem as to what to do with the big plant that is appealing strongly to the Congressmen; and in their belief that it should be put in operation along these lines they are supported by every interest in the Agricultural Department of the Government that has long been looking for a solution of the farming question in the South, where fertilizers and industry are needed to complete the setting made Nature, and to turn vast idle acres into productive agricultural areas.

From explosives to fertilizers is not a very big jump in industrial expansion; and of course high explosives was the prompting reason for the Muscle Shoals project. When the United States entered the war it was providing the enemies of Germany with explosives, and with four million of our own men added to the fray it became necessary to get quick action for enormously increased production. The principal

raw material for explosives was nitrate of soda, and this had to be brought from Chile, four thousand miles away. Ship bottoms were so scarce that the Allied countries and the United States decided to sweeten themselves without sugar from Java, and that was only a thousand miles farther off than Chile. But nitrate of soda had to be brought in at any cost and at any sacrifice. And after it was brought here the necessary time had to elapse to permit treating it with sulphuric acid to produce nitrate acid, which is an essential of ammonium nitrate. The sulphuric acid supply was reaching its limit and new methods of "delivering the goods"—or explosives, were demanded. The coke ovens were doing their level best, all over the country, in producing ammonia, but even at that their capacity was only a quarter of the demand. The Ordnance Department came forward with the solution of the difficulty and it showed that cynamid, a commercial fertilizer, had for some years been successfully manufactured at Niagara Falls under a German process, which had been secured by Frank Sherman Washburn, head of the American Cynamid Company. Muscle Shoals was selected as the most available spot in the United States to put the war industry to work.

A Case for Sherlock

New York has a new death mystery that is setting the town by the ears and has since October 19. That's a long time for New York to retain interest in anybody's passing, especially one who was not of public note. Thus the conclusion naturally follows that this must be a real mystery. The police say it is an even private detective and newspaper reporters admit that they are "stumped." Here follow a few facts gleaned from the columns and columns that have been printed in New York and Brooklyn papers about the case:

John W. Lemke, known to his family and friends as "Jimmy," 21 year-old son of wealthy and indulgent parents, was found dead in one of the cabins of the family's motor yacht, moored in Flushing Bay, Brooklyn. The body was arrayed fully in a woman's garments, considerably soiled, the head was encased in an oilcloth bag, the feet

bound and the hands tied behind the back. Around the neck and apparently the cause of death was a two foot length of small rope drawn taut in a hangman's knot. There was no evidence of a struggle and no marks of violence on the body. Nothing on the boat was disarranged and money the young man was known to have had when he left home a few hours before was still in the pockets of his trousers, which lay neatly folded on a bunk in the cabin. His shirt was draped over the porthole, the only outside opening into the cabin.

That was October 19. The metropolitan police and private detectives hired by the Lemke family have worked on the case ever since. The police insist it is clearly a case of suicide, while the detectives and family stoutly maintain that "Jimmy" was killed.

Young Lemke, who was noted among his associates for his perfect health and sunny disposition, rode away from home shortly after noon on his motor cycle. He had received an increase in salary the day before and he appeared to be in the best of spirits and full of plans for the future. He told his family he was going to the yacht and that he would be back soon to take them motor car riding in celebration of his father's birthday. He stopped at a motor cycle shop and, while his gasoline tank was being filled and the machine adjusted, he joked as was his habit.

As the afternoon wore on and "Jimmy" did not return, his mother became worried. When he failed to appear for the evening meal she insisted on going to search for him. She was taken to the boat. She went aboard found the forward hatchway open and groped her way inside through the gathering dusk. She stumbled against something, and had the man who had rowed her from the landing strike a match. On the floor at her feet she saw what appeared to be the body of a woman lying face downward.

Without investigating further Mrs. Lemke went ashore and called her husband by telephone, telling him what she had found. Then she went home. Mr. Lemke reached the boat shortly afterward and discovered that the supposed dead woman was his son.

Mrs. H. H. Turner was in Hannibal Saturday on business.



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