

Why the Anthracite Strike?

By Benjamin Gitlow

ONE hundred and fifty thousand miners are out on strike in the anthracite industry. The strike started when their two-year agreement with the anthracite operators ended on September 1. The strike is mainly for the establishment of the check-off system and a 10 percent increase in wages for contract miners and one dollar per day increase for day laborers.

There are no evidences of a strike in the whole 160 miles of anthracite territory. The industrial war is as peaceful as are the idle mines with the smoke languidly rising out of the high chimneys and dying slowly out in the air. The mules are in the open, unshod, munching hay and enjoying the freedom of fresh air, sunshine and no work. The miners hang around the corners in the mining towns in groups, talking and evidently unconcerned about the fact that they are not working and not earning any wages. The capitalist newspapers call it a vacation. John L. Lewis, the president of the United Mine Workers of America, calls it a suspension. The operators call it a conspiracy to ruin the anthracite business.

Lewis Guards Bosses' Property.

When a strike takes place in the bituminous fields there follow violence, struggle, pickets, sheriffs, injunctions, arrests, militia, mass demonstrations. In the anthracite, there is nothing of the sort. The ten thousand maintenance men who handle the power houses, the boilers, the pumps and the drainages, and do all the work to keep the mines in good shape, are on the job. J. L. Lewis has agreed before the strike began that they should remain in order to take care of the property of the operators. These ten thousand men are not worried. For their part the strike could go on forever.

Are the miners in the anthracite different from the miners in the bituminous fields or are the operators unwilling to use the same methods that are used by the bituminous operators? "Why the Anthracite strike?" is a question the answer to which should be illuminating to all and especially to miners and members of the United Mine Workers of America.

Anthracite is hard coal. It is found and dug in the United States only in the anthracite field that lies in the state of Pennsylvania. It covers approximately 160 miles of territory from Scranton on the north to Shamokin on the south. In the 480 square miles of anthracite territory there are billions of tons of anthracite coal. It is estimated that there is under ground in the anthracite enough coal at the present rate of consumption to last at least two hundred years. About 70,000,000 gross tons (2,240 pounds to a ton) are sold every year. Seven large coal companies own and control between 75 and 80 percent of all the anthracite coal mined. These companies own about 90 per cent of the future supply of coal. The companies are owned by the railroads, or controlled by them. The railroads are owned and controlled

by the powerful financial interests of Wall Street. The gigantic anthracite coal industry is therefore a link in the chain of gigantic monopolies that have grown up in the United States. There are many independent mine operators. Most of the independent small operators are at the mercy of the railroads and the large land estates. They must ship their coal by the same railroads that are engaged in the coal mining business. They must pay royalties to the landed estates for every ton of coal mined because they do not own the land wherein the mine is situated but lease the privilege of digging coal from the large land estates that do own the land.

Morgan and Rockefeller Run Coal Mines.

That the Morgan and Rockefeller interests own the United States is proved by the anthracite coal mining industry. The Morgan group of banks in 1922 had directors on the boards of practically all the large anthracite coal companies and railroads. The First National Bank of New York in 1922 had five directors on the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad, two on the Lehigh Valley Railroad, two on the Wilkes-Barre Coal Company and one each on the boards of the Lehigh Valley Coal Company and the Lehigh Valley Coal Sales Company, the New York, Susquehanna & Western Railroad, the Erie Railroad, the Central Railroad of New Jersey and the Pennsylvania Coal Company. The grip of this Morgan Bank on the anthracite industry is quite complete.

The Rockefeller interests, however, are not left in the cold. The National City Bank of New York had connections with seven other large producing, transporting and distributing firms. The decision of the United States Supreme Court ordering the dissolution of monopolies in anthracite has been as effective as its decision against the Standard Oil Company. The anthracite industry is only another proof of the fact that industry in the United States is being concentrated and centralized mainly in the hands of two powerful financial groups, the Morgan and Rockefeller groups.

Huge Profits for Bosses—No Raise for Miners.

It is estimated that in 1922 the coal companies made a profit of \$1.48 per gross ton and \$1.32 per net ton. A fair profit, considered at the rate of 6 percent, would give a profit of 22 cents on the gross ton. This gives a profit to the coal mining companies of approximately 40½ percent. This profit does not include the profits of the railroads for hauling coal and the profits of the wholesale and retail distributors. The large wholesale distributors are part of the monopolistic chain of the anthracite industry.

It is difficult to get the figures showing the profit made by the railroads in hauling a ton of coal. To New York City the average freight charges, including lighterage charges per ton of coal, is \$2.95 per gross ton and \$2.63 per net ton. Some estimate that to haul a ton of soft coal over the same distance would cost only 85 cents. The independent com-

panies in particular complain about the high freight rates. The railroads interested in the coal mining industry have 70 per cent of the tonnage they haul made up of anthracite. These railroads have earned an average of 13 percent on their capital stock in 1919 and 16.12 percent in 1920. During the same years all the steam railroads in the country were earning six and one-third percent in 1919 and six and one-half percent in 1920. The railroads which represent only another branch of the anthracite monopoly are evidently making very handsome profits on each ton of coal hauled over their lines.

Now let us consider the handsome profits realized by the wholesalers and retailers. In 1922-23 the wholesalers and retailers together charged \$3.97 per ton extra as their charge for getting the coal to the consumer. The handsome profits realized by them are accounted for by this big charge. These figures are startling, and they prove to what an extent the workers are being robbed and exploited. In 1919 the wholesalers increased their profits from 25.5 percent to 66.6 percent in 1920. The retailers increased their profits from 16.1 percent in 1919 to 25.4 percent in 1920.

Add to this the interest that goes to the bankers on bonds, mortgages, etc., and you add still more to the enormous profits made out of the industry.

In 1909, \$7,969,785 were extracted as royalties from anthracite mines. In 1919 the royalties jumped to \$11,405,158—an increase of 43.1 percent. The story of the Stephen Girard Estate that has its office in Pottsville should be food for much thought to every worker. In 1830 Stephen Girard purchased 30,000 acres of anthracite coal land at about \$6.00 per acre for a total of \$178,000. A. C. Dodson, testifying before the Senate Committee on January 24, 1919, stated that in the Locust Mountain lease (which comprises 390 acres of the original Girard purchase) there were ten million tons to be mined with the expectation of a mining profit of one dollar per ton. At that date the royalties averaged \$1.04 a ton. Eight million tons remained to be taken out at that rate. The figures are as follows:

390 acres at \$6.00 per acre.....	(\$2,340)
10,000,000 tons at \$1.00.....	\$10,000,000
8,000,000 tons at royalty of.....	8,320,000
2,000,000 tons already mined.....	660,000
	\$18,980,000

An investment of \$2,340 can return in its life time approximately \$18,980,000 or over eight hundred and ten thousand percent.

All the facts presented indicate that the anthracite coal industry is a very lucrative business. Bankruptcy is not staring it in the face. All the claims of the coal companies that an increase in wages will ruin the business unless it is accompanied by a corresponding increase in prices is nonsense. The anthracite business is an unexcelled business for big profits. It is no wonder that the Morgan and Rockefeller interests can induce the government to prevent for a long time the publication of the report of the United States Coal Commission wherein the facts herein stated are made known.

Lewis Strikes—to Raise Coal Prices!

When an industry of this kind, owned by monopolistic interests that are most aggressive in their opposition to striking workmen, rests idle while 158,000 men are out on strike, something must be involved. The Morgan and Rockefeller interests are not friends of labor. The victims of their wrath

and their bloody regime on the field of industrial warfare are many. One has only to consider the bitterness of the struggle of the miners in West Virginia against the same interests in comparison with the pacific calmness of the anthracite struggle, in order to ask what are the reasons for such an unusually peaceful strike in a basic industry of such wealth, power and arrogance?

John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers of America, in a speech on the anthracite strike before the convention of the American Federation of Labor, charged the anthracite operators with mulcting the public of over 15 million dollars by mixing the sizes of anthracite coal in a way to enable them to dispose of the small sizes at a handsome profit. Mr. Lewis, however, did not tell the whole story. Anthracite coal is divided into two classes, the big sizes and the small sizes. The big sizes are called domestic sizes and the small sizes are called steam sizes. The big sizes constitute about 75 percent of the total production. The demand of the market is mostly for the big sizes and the prices paid for them are much higher than for the small sizes. For many years there was no market whatsoever for the small sizes. Any one going to the anthracite district can see mountains of black dirt around the mines. These are the culm banks. Later it was discovered that by washing out this dirt the smaller sizes could be sold. It costs very little to wash out the small sizes from the culm banks. In addition, the coal companies have recently been stocking the smaller sizes, waiting for a favorable opportunity to unload them upon the market for favorable prices which would mean handsome profits that could otherwise not be realized. It is estimated (the coal companies have taken great care to prevent checking up on culm banks) that about twenty-five million tons of culm bank coal is on hand. Only during abnormal situations can the coal from the culm banks that has been lying around for years be disposed of at very handsome prices. During the war a lot of culm bank coal was sold. The temptation to realize, out of waste, profits that will mount into millions of dollars is too good to be left out of consideration.

Poorest Coal Goes to Miners.

The only way to unload this coal upon the market is to create an abnormal situation. Raise the bugaboo of a scarcity and the job is done. Millions of dollars will then be mulcted from the workers who will be freezing because the inferior grade coal, having been washed by the rains and baked by the sun for years, does not possess the heating and burning qualities of freshly mined domestic-size coal. In addition no one will complain if you adulterate the good coal with a large percentage of culm bank rubbish. The buyer will be satisfied just as long as he is able to get coal. Then prices can be raised by the distributors and the public can be gouged. How to create the abnormal situation is not difficult. All one has to do is to get a strike called in such a manner that the mine properties will not suffer and everything will proceed according to plans.

When President Lewis talks about a shortage of coal he should not forget that the coal pockets, in addition to the enormous stocks of culm bank coal, were filled with domestic sizes at the railroad loading yards before the strike was called. Besides, the wholesale distributors, who are a link in the anthracite monopoly, had stored their bins and pockets with coal to capacity. The anthracite coal strike is a con-

spiracy between the officials and the coal operators. It will benefit only the coal interests. The strike will not benefit the miners out on strike. It will cause untold hardships to the workers in the eastern states that depend upon anthracite coal. The anthracite strike is the logical outcome of the policy of class collaboration.

Classes Cooperate—Workers Give, Bosses Take.

John L. Lewis is a firm advocate of the policy of class collaboration. John L. Lewis does not recognize the nature of the class struggle. He pretends to be firmly convinced that the interests of the workers are compatible with the interests of the bosses and that a friendly partnership is not only possible between them, but a goal for the labor movement in the United States to attain. In the bituminous fields, the John L. Lewis policy has resulted in cultivating the growth of the non-union fields and in eliminating the union fields. Every soft-coal miner knows that John L. Lewis' present policy is not building up the organization, but ruining it. John L. Lewis best expresses his policy of class collaboration in his book "The Miners' Fight for American Standards," as follows:

"The policy of the United Mine Workers of America is neither new nor revolutionary. It does not command the admiration of visionaries and utopians. It ought to have the support of every thinking business man in the United States, because it proposes to allow natural economic laws free play in the production and distribution of coal. . . . Real cooperation between the men and the ownership can be attained, all the more so because they have a common interest in resisting the onslaught of the irresponsible elements which dominate the industry in regions where labor is virtually enslaved. Once the operating side casts aside the shop-worn cant as to the responsibility of the union for all the maladjustments in the business, and that every inefficiency traces back to the miners, or their working and wage contracts, they will be surprised to find what a degree of cooperation will be theirs for the asking."

John L. Lewis is convinced that the policy of the United Mine Workers of America should have the support of every business man in the United States. It is a policy that looks out for the interests of the business men. It does not interfere with the natural economic laws of capitalism which in the anthracite coal industry make it possible for the most fabulous profits to be wrung out of the sweat and toil of the workers. John L. Lewis further states that if the ownership only desire, they will be surprised what cooperation will be theirs for the asking. The miners, according to Lewis, have a common interest with the ownership of the mines. The anthracite industry is owned and controlled by the Rockefeller and Morgan interests. What common interests can the workers in that industry have with the owners? The workers, through the John L. Lewis policy, have the right to strike during a strike that will last months. In that period the anthracite monopoly will pocket millions of dollars in profits that would otherwise be unrealizable.

John L. Lewis in that very same book further elaborates on the policy of class collaboration to point out that the policy of the United Mine Workers of America is in the interest of the economical mines, with good equipment and competent management. In other words the policy of John

L. Lewis is in the interests of those mines that can afford good equipment and management. It is in the interest therefore of the mines supported by big capital. It is in the interest of the mines in the hands of Wall Street. The policy pursued by John L. Lewis in the anthracite strike proves that conclusively.

John L. Lewis is as much interested in protracting the anthracite strike as are the mine operators. That is why he concluded an agreement with the operators to keep the ten thousand maintenance men on the job. Let him take those men off. The moment he does, a struggle of intense bitterness will flare up in the anthracite. But why do that? That would not be in the interest of the mine owners. Their properties would suffer. Their profits from higher prices and culm-bank coal would be eaten up.

Lewis Gets His Stick of Candy.

What will be the reward for John L. Lewis? The reward for John L. Lewis will be the check-off. The coal companies will collect the dues for John L. Lewis. This will be a fine arrangement and one that will greatly benefit the anthracite operators, because of the numerous strikes that take place in the various collieries, the greatest number of which happen to be "button" strikes called by the men to force the non-union workers to join the union, pay their dues and obtain buttons which indicate that the worker has paid his dues for the month. The button strikes are a source of constant irritation to the operators. John L. Lewis is anxious for the check-off. It assures him that the flow of per capita tax from the anthracite will be steady. With the closing down of the union fields in the bituminous the check-off becomes of vital necessity to the money chests of the United Mine Workers of America. With the check-off enforced there is no need to worry about the condition of the miners! The flow of per capita to the union office will go on uninterrupted.

Lewis and Operators Win, Miners Lose.

The anthracite strike will therefore help the Morgan and Rockefeller interests to eliminate some independents in the anthracite and will enable them to pocket millions of dollars of profits while the mines are idle. The miners will remain out on strike for many months. They will probably go back to work without any material advantages gained. The check-off will be won by Lewis. The strike is a John L. Lewis strike, a strike led by the policy of class collaboration. It is cooperation between the officials of the union and the owners of the mines for mutual self interest. It does not in the least help the worker or attempt to solve their intolerable conditions.

Ever since 1902, when President Roosevelt interfered in the anthracite strike of that year, the anthracite industry has been in the care of the United States government. The government has taken care to protect the interests of the owners of the industry. In 1902, machinery was established for the settlement of disputes in the industry. The board of Conciliation was formed. It has been most unsatisfactory in the settlement of disputes. It provides for a policy of class collaboration. The United Mine Workers Union does not ask for the elimination of this board. The United States Coal Commission asks for its continuance.

Government Suppresses Coal Facts.

The United States Coal Commission was appointed by the president for the purpose of determining the facts in the anthracite industry. It was given a sum of \$600,000 dollars. It has not yet published its report. A few mimeographed

copies have been distributed, but the reports have not yet been made available to the general public. The reason is obvious. It is to the interests of the anthracite mine owners that the facts should not be known.

The United States Coal Commission, in its recommendations on the anthracite controversy, proposes nothing that would benefit the miners or hurt the operators. That it is looking out for the interests of the whole coal industry (soft as well as hard) is evidenced in its last recommendation that the renewal date for the anthracite agreement shall be sufficiently far from the renewal dates of the bituminous agreements that suspension in both industries at once shall not be invited.

This division of the miners' forces advocated by the United States Coal Commission is in line with the policy of John L. Lewis. No general strike in the coal industry. While the anthracite is striking and the West Virginia fields are in the throes of a bitter struggle, the bulk of the coal industry is working and producing coal. This policy of John L. Lewis is fostered by the government and plays right into the hands of the coal barons.

Lewis Machine Helps Jail Progressives.

That the government is keeping its watchful eye on the anthracite strike is evidenced by the reception that was given to the campaign started by the Progressive Miners' Committee in the anthracite. The Progressive Miners' Committee revived many of the issues that were once advocated by the United Mine Workers but which have been relegated to oblivion since the assumption of the presidency by J. L. Lewis. The six-hour day and the five-day week, and the nationalization of the coal mines are among the demands once raised by the United Mine Workers. These, together with other proposals, were raised by the progressive miners in an effort to make the anthracite strike a real struggle in the interests of the workers. Some of the other demands were, a minimum wage, a general strike of all the coal miners, unity of the railroad

workers with the anthracite strikers, no settlement without an increase in wages, and the calling out the maintenance men to prevent the prolongation of the strike.

The moment the campaign started for the raising of these demands, authorities began to suppress it. Inciting the local authorities were none other than the agents of John L. Lewis in control of the district union organizations in the anthracite. The meetings of the progressives were broken up and their speakers arrested. Patrick Toohey and Alex Reid were sent to prison as vagrants for six months. The reactionary officials of the Lewis machine appeared in court and testified against the progressive miners and urged that they be jailed. The Federal authorities were on the job also to see whether or not some of the progressives could be deported. The capitalist press raved against the reds. When the progressive miners were sent to prison, Rinaldo Cappellini, president of District One, the largest district of the United Mine Workers in the anthracite, sent a letter congratulating the chief of police of the city of Scranton. The anthracite strike is a clear demonstration of where the policy of class collaboration leads to. It leads to the unity of the reactionary bureaucrats with the employers and their government against the militant progressive workers. It works to the advantage of the union officials and the capitalists. In the anthracite it means millions in the pockets of Morgan and Rockefeller, it means a guaranteed per capita through the check-off for the Lewis bureaucratic machine, and for the miners it means months of idleness with suffering and starvation. For the progressive militants, it means persecution and jail.

The anthracite strike is a powerful argument for the elimination of the policy of class collaboration and the adoption of a militant fighting policy. The anthracite strike clearly demonstrates that the advocates of class collaboration are the agents of capitalism and that their rule must be eliminated from the American labor movement.