

Shorten the Workday!

By ARNE SWABECK.

"I hold no brief for the Illinois operators, but I do for the Illinois miners and my only desire is to help the miners, but in order to do that I must help the operators find a wider market for their coal."

This is the solution offered by President Farrington to the present heavy unemployment in the Illinois coal fields, as contained in his report to the Thirtieth consecutive and Fifth Biennial convention of District No. 12, United Mine Workers of America, and he explains his solution in the following manner:

"There is only one way whereby we can get more work for Illinois and that is to cheapen the cost of production to the degree that will enable the Illinois operators to sell their coal in competition with coal mined in non-union and sparsely organized districts where the cost of production is much less than in Illinois."

A Sham Solution.

Indeed, a poor solution. Cheapening the cost of production of any article has never been known to extend the markets. It has on the other hand, served to increase profits of those who own the tools of production, and perhaps this is what Mr. Farrington desires.

Alexander Howat, in his address to that convention, stated very clearly and definitely that no gains could be made by the working class in general and by the coal miners in particular except what they were ready to fight for and could bring sufficient pressure to bear to obtain. In no instance does the interest of the operators correspond with that of the coal miners. Co-operation with them will help swell their coffers, but bring no additional work to the miners.

Non-Union Conditions.

Farrington's report draws a comparison between the output of the organized mines in Illinois and that of the unorganized mines in West Virginia, Kentucky and Alabama, stating that during the last fiscal years with an average of 146 days work the former show a total output of 73,410,837 tons, while West Virginia during approximately the same period and about the same number of men employed mined 103,000,000 tons. In the West Virginia field wages are much lower than in Illinois. In Alabama miners work 10 hours per day and the operators pay whatever they feel disposed to pay, and "the situation is almost identical with what it was in Illinois prior to 1897."

Would Stop Strikes.

Farrington's report proposes to the Illinois miners, "Respect for contract, elimination of strikes in violation of contract, work when the operator has work to do, careful workmanship, load clean coal, reduce the amount of slack by careful shooting, give an honest day's work, co-operate with the management in doing the things that are right." In other words, do away with strikes, speed up production, make it possible for the Illinois operators to compete with those of the unorganized miners; accept their conditions of work; go back to the conditions which obtained in Illinois prior to 1897.

Fatal to Miners' Union.

This will mean nothing but the ultimate destruction of the miners union. Grant the operators the speed-up system, limit your right to strike, and the next thing which will follow inevitably is a wage reduction. Acceptance by the miners of the proposals made in Farrington's report, will mean an immediate weakening of the miners' union and an invitation to the operators to demand greater concessions. The coal miners' unions of Germany, with the beginning of the occupation of the Ruhr, granted several concessions to the operators, under the general plea of supporting the nation. Today 600,000 of these coal miners in the Ruhr are out on strike against the threat of the operators to take away the prevailing seven-hour day for work below the surface and the eight-hour workday on the surface.

Super Power Pill.

To detract the attention of the rank and file mine workers from the burning issues within their organization and the need of practical steps to relieve the present situation of unemployment and destitution. Farrington's report advances some alluring schemes for the establishment of one or more giant power plants on the Ohio and Mississippi river for the manufacture of electricity. Even this is put up as a means to extend the market and create more work, when as a matter of fact it would rather reduce the need of coal.

In any event the coal operators of the nation are today so completely consolidated into great trusts with interlocking directorates that any temporary gain made along these lines by the miners in one state could only be on the cost of the miners in other states, just as much as the lowering of the conditions of work in one state would react to the same degree on the workers in other states.

Enemy Press Likes It.

It is rather illuminating that the Chicago Tribune, so bitterly condemned by Frank Farrington during this convention, a few ago, carried an editorial lauding Farrington's

scheme for co-operation with the operators as a sane and sensible plan. When the capitalist-controlled dailies praise proposals made by labor leaders there is reason for the rank and file workers to viewing these proposals with suspicion, because these papers voice no other interests than those of the bosses.

Would Be Disastrous.

Acceptance of Farrington's proposals for the cheapening of production of coal in order to "extend the market and create more work for the coal miners" would be disastrous for the miners' union and be the beginning of its complete annihilation. The unemployment situation, however, is a real problem which demands a concrete solution. On the first day of this month, according to Farrington's report, 150 Illinois mines were completely closed, leaving fully 30,000 mine workers out of jobs, with very few of the mines now in operation working more than half time and the great majority of them not even that much.

Shorten the Work-Day.

Yet, what is needed is an adjustment of the hours of worker with no reduction of the day's wage so as to afford employment for all, with compensation at regular union rates for any eventual unemployment and actual steps toward the nationalization of the coal mines. That, however, would mean a real fight with the bosses, for which the rank and file mine workers are ready, but which is feared by Frank Farrington.

POLICEWOMEN IGNORE HUNGRY POLISH GRANNY

Matrons Talk Of Nifty London Policewoman

Police matrons of the West Chicago station were more interested in discussing the proposed visit of Commandant Mary S. Allen, London Women Police, than in providing lunch for a poor old Polish woman who had been brought in friendless at 11:30 at night.

The thin, wrinkled old woman shuffled about the women's quarters of the police station, munching a thick slice of bread she had picked from some one's lunch remains. Over her white-haired head a cheap blue handkerchief was tied. A coarse white knit waist, part of an undergarment, covered her lean body and a trailing black shirt hung on the old frame somehow. Her shoes were too large and run over at the sides.

Prisoners Don't Feed.

The matrons claimed they had fed her well, that she hadn't even drank all the coffee with real cream and sugar that they had offered her for breakfast. The policewomen were jollying one another over their lunch and couldn't be bothered with the prisoners.

A Polish reporter approached the old woman as she wandered in and out of the open cell rooms, opening a bundle on the desk without eagerness but as tho she might find something for herself within. The old woman waved him off, chewed again on her crust of bread, and wouldn't answer.

"Granny," the reporter spoke in Polish, "where do you come from?"

A bread-muffled answer at length: "My son lives near Hoyne and Webster. Stanley Bednarek." She continued her slow shuffle about the rooms.

"Granny," the reporter tried again, but she wouldn't reply nor would she be coaxed into a room with a younger, defiant Polish woman. Granny wouldn't go in and sit down until some one came for her.

Everyone Has a Friend.

"She must have some friend," the police matron in charge remarked. "We can keep her until they find some one to take her; a few days, you know. We're pretty crowded here. Mostly 'sporting women' and drunks."

The wizened old Polish woman kept on wandering about, unemotionally. To be left alone seemed as much as she wished. Her persistence with the dry bread indicated that she hadn't had enough food for a long time, even if the police matrons had given her breakfast. One meal won't fill a stomach that has been nearly empty for weeks.

In the hall the police matron joked with the officer in charge of the men's ward, both speaking in good Irish brogue.

British Can't Tell Irish.

"They say she has her hair short and brushes it back pompadour," the officer said of the British police woman.

"They needn't think they can come over so smart and tell us anything," retorted the rotund matron.

"She wears a uniform, slick. O, she'll come around here. Any place interestin' like this," the officer added.

"Fancy us going to England and getting the royal reception she's getting!"

The old Polish woman shuffled up to the door.

"No, granny, you go back!" The police matron returned to her charges.