

## The Pennsylvania Coal Strike is On (May 19, 1902)

Terre Haute, Ind., May 19, [1902].

The miners' strike is on in the anthracite coal regions of Pennsylvania. The operators were defiant and eager for the fray. The miners pulled every wire to prevent the collision and finally voted to go out in the very last extremity. A large minority voted against the strike and President [John] Mitchell, all accounts agree, did his best to prevent it.

Most earnestly do I hope the poor devils will win, but there is no use trying to conceal the fact that they are up against it and that the coal and railroad companies have been preparing for the fight, openly courted it, and are determined to wipe out the union and run their mines to suit themselves.

At this writing everything is quiet as a graveyard in the anthracite region, but nevertheless the Republican governor,<sup>1</sup> elected largely by the votes of coal miners who don't believe in going into politics, has already sworn tin an army of special coal police, armed with Winchesters, to protect "property" and incidentally to perforate the hides of the striking miners if this becomes necessary to break up their strike and force them back into their holes through starvation tunnel, to dig for their masters.

That is all they are fit for; at least that is what they themselves seem to think, for that is what they voted for under the direction of some of their district officers, who are simply the political pluggers of the gang of robbers that fleece the poor coal diggers when they work and have them murdered when they strike.

Pennsylvania, where hell is active as Mt. Pelée,<sup>2</sup> and slavery in full blast, has a Republican majority of 300,000, made up quite largely of the poor devils now on strike.

The governor is already making active preparation to return bullet for ballot in accordance wit the invariable program of the capitalist class, whom the miners and other workingmen have made the ruling class of the country.

President Mitchell will do the best he can in a trying position. He has issued a request that miners abstain from the use of liquor during the strike, and, acting upon his advice, they thronged the churches on Sunday last and took the oath of total abstinence and the pledge to entirely keep out of saloons till the strike is settled.

As for the Civic Federation, it has already done its worst. It has delayed and dallied six weeks, taken the heart out of many of the strikers, and set them by the ears among themselves. Had the miners struck April 1, as they intended, they would have been far stronger than they are today.

My advice to you, striking miners, is to keep away from the capitalistic partnership of priest and politician, to cut loose from the Civic Federation, and to stand together to a man and fight it out yourselves. If you can't win, no one else can win for you; and if in the end you find that the corporations can beat you at the game of famine, you may, and it is hoped that you will, have your eyes opened to the fact that your vote is your best weapon and that if the 140,000 miners of Pennsylvania will cast a solid vote for socialism, they will soon drive the robbers from the state and take possession of the mines and make themselves the masters of their industry, and the workmen the rulers of the state.

As for the army of coal police already marshaled and armed by the governor to shoot the strikers upon the assumption that they are criminals, I advise that the miners in convention assembled unanimously resolve that, while they propose to keep within the law, they also propose to exercise all the rights and privileges the law grants them; and, furthermore, that the monstrous crime of Latimer shall not be repeated, and if any striker is shot down without good cause the first shot shall be the signal for war and the miners will shoot back; and if killing must be the program of the coal barons, let it be an operator for a miner instead of miners only, as in the past.

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<sup>1</sup> Governor of Pennsylvania was William A. Stone (1846-1920), elected to office in 1898.

<sup>2</sup> Mt. Pelée, an active volcano on the island of Martinique, erupted in late April and early May 1902 in what was the worst volcanic disaster of the twentieth century. An estimated

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30,000 people were killed by lava, boiling water, and mud in a series of devastating eruptions.

<sup>3</sup> An unrelated second part of the article offered commentary on the ascension to the throne of King Alfonso XIII of Spain.