



# THE OPERATORS SIDE OF THE GREAT COAL STRIKE BY John Markle



"THE VOICE OF LABOR." BY JOHN MITCHELL, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED MINE WORKERS, GIVING THE MINERS' SIDE OF THE CONTROVERSY, WAS PUBLISHED IN COLLIER'S WEEKLY SEPTEMBER 6

FOR THE general public to obtain a thorough understanding of the justice that unquestionably obtains on the side of the operators, it is necessary to go into the history of the events which combined to create a situation that, as Mr. Mitchell truly says, is intolerable. The head and foot of the intolerable phase is John Mitchell, president of the United Mine Workers—and representative of anarchy. That Mr. Mitchell holds the power that he claims to-day is due largely to a mistaken enthusiasm, which placed him on a pedestal in the eyes and minds of the men who labor in the anthracite coal fields. To show just how Mr. Mitchell was encouraged and elevated, certain slight repetitions of some things already said may be useful.

In 1900 the coal operators found it necessary to exert their every effort to prevent a strike; in spite of what they could do, Mr. Mitchell succeeded in bringing about a strike of the laborers employed by the various coal operators. Our own employes, yielding to the persuasion of Mitchell and his lieutenants, finally violated the arbitration agreement which they had made with us in 1885. Mr. Mitchell was only successful because of the co-operation of Senator Marcus A. Hanna. Mr. Hanna was at that time chairman of the Republican National Committee, which was endeavoring to secure the re-election of President McKinley. In lurid colors he painted the dangers that would accrue from the election of Mr. Bryan to the Presidency and the disastrous results that would follow the placing in office of a Populist administration. Of the two evils—Bryanism at large or Mitchellism in the anthracite district—Mr. Hanna urged the latter as being, in his opinion, the lesser. Mr. Mitchell was victorious, and the corporations conceded an increase of ten per cent in wages to the miners, regardless of the justice or injustice embodied in their demands. Naturally, therefore, the only course left to the individual operators was to follow suit. So here is where politics played the octopus in the anthracite coal region. The result was that Mr. Mitchell's success encouraged all classes of laborers to organize, to-day, in the coal regions, clerks, teamsters, barbers, and, in fact, all laboring people except house servants, have their respective unions, and "Mother" Jones, Mr. Mitchell's female lieutenant, tried to organize the latter, but failed.

The success of Senator Hanna in 1900, in obtaining the concessions demanded by Mr. John Mitchell, was the immediate cause of the placing of the latter on the pinnacle which he occupies to-day. The coal miners were convinced by Mitchell's victory that he could obtain anything further that they might desire or demand. So complete was their faith that many of them believed the day not far off when, without doing any work, they could sit idly by and receive their wages, simply upon the demand of their leader.

I have already called attention to the lack of discipline existing in the region since the termination of the strike of 1900. It has been the common experience among foremen in the mines that orders were not only disobeyed but that the disobedience was emphasized by such remarks as, "You go to hell John Mitchell's my boss." Repeatedly, when foremen insisted upon having their instructions obeyed, a strike followed. I am not exaggerating when I say that since the concessions demanded in 1900 were granted the management of the vast industries centered in the anthracite districts has been hampered by a condition which can only be termed anarchy. An example of the course pursued by the labor agitators is the mandate issued by the United Mine Workers, that no member thereof should work with a non-union man. The United Mine Workers have been endeavoring to enforce that order on our property and on the properties of all other coal operators whom I have seen. I know of workmen, on our own property and on others, who assert that they cannot possibly do an honest day's work if they comply with the existing regulations of the United Mine Workers. And men have told other operators, as they have told me, that they pray that the operators stand firm in this contest, as, otherwise, employes who have other ambitions than to have the field of individual effort curtailed at the dictation of Mr. Mitchell's union, can no longer exist in the anthracite coal fields. Referring to a statement of President Baer of the Philadelphia and Reading, I find that he declares that the production in his mines since the strike of 1900 has been two-thirds per cent per capita less than before the ten per cent increase in wages was conceded. Our own experience corroborates this statement.

Had Senator Hanna discontinued his efforts in behalf of Mr. Mitchell's organization after his success of 1900, the American people would have been willing to believe him sincere in his statement that he was only seeking the welfare of the country at large, through the re-election of Mr. McKinley. There were great fear and danger, according to Mr. Hanna, of the election of Mr. Bryan; therefore, he urged a concession to Mitchell's demands as a means of self-preservation from the greater menace embodied in the Bryan doctrine, and the concession was made to what was believed to be political, personal and national expediency. Unfortunately, after the election of Mr. McKinley, Mr. Hanna did not discontinue his co-operation with and assistance to the United Mine Workers. He was, I believe, personally instrumental in

bringing about the organization of the National Civic Federation of Labor, which, the public was told, was to be composed of men in whose ability to satisfactorily arbitrate all questions brought before them implicit confidence might be placed. In view of the general credence given to this idea, it will be well to call attention to the fact that the Civic Federation comprised labor leaders, ministers and business men, as follows:

Industrial Department of the National Civic Federation, members—Samuel Gompers, President of the Federation of Labor; John Mitchell, President of the United Mine Workers; Frank J. Sargent, President of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen; Theodore J. Shaffer, President of the Amalgamated Iron Workers; James Duncan, First Vice-President of the American Federation of Labor; D. J. Keefe, President of the International Association of Longshoremen; Martin Fox, President of the Iron Molders' Union; James M. Lynch, President of the International Typographical Union; Henry White, Secretary of the Garment Workers' Union; Edward E. Clark, Grand Conductor of the Order of Railway Conductors; Walter MacArthur, Editor of the "Coast Seaman's Journal"; James O'Connell, President of the International Association of Machinists; Marcus A. Hanna; Charles M. Schwab; S. R. Callaway, President of the American Locomotive Works; Charles A. Moore, President of National Tool Company; John D. Rockefeller; H. H. Vreeland, President of Metropolitan Traction Company; Lewis Nixon, of the Crescent Shipyard; William H. Pahlser, of the Abrams-Cox Stove Company; J. Kruttschnitt, President of Southern Pacific Railway Company; E. P. Ripley, of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway Company; Marcus M. Marks, of the United Association of Clothing Manufacturers; Grover Cleveland; Charles Francis Adams; Rt. Rev. Henry Codman Potter; Cornelius N. Bliss; Archbishop Ireland; Charles W. Eliot; James H. Eckels; John J. McCook; John G. Milburn; Charles J. Bonaparte; Oscar S. Straus, and Ralph M. Eastler.

Outside of the labor leaders and Mr. Hanna, I believe all the other members of this organization lent their aid in absolute good faith. Not a representative of the owners or operators of the anthracite coal mines is a member of the above body, and I wish it distinctly understood that I have no knowledge that an invitation was ever extended to select representatives of our interests for inclusion among the officers or members of that organization.

I understand, and I believe my informant, that, prior to declaring the strike which we are now contesting, Mr. Mitchell secured the co-operation and assistance of Senator Hanna in an effort to obtain the further increase in wages which the miners are now trying to compel us to agree to. Having failed to intimidate us, Mr. Mitchell ordered the strike, which began on the 10th of May. As he has persistently declared that before ordering the miners out he attempted to induce us to peaceably agree to his demands, I here insert the following verbatim copy of the telegram received by the coal presidents on May 8, 1902, signed "John Mitchell, chairman; T. D. Nicholls, secretary":

"Conscious of the disastrous effects upon mine workers, mine operators and the public in general which would result from a prolonged suspension of work in the anthracite coal regions of Pennsylvania, and with the earnest desire and hope of averting the impending calamity, the representatives of the anthracite mine workers have authorized us to submit the following propositions:

"First—Inasmuch as the anthracite mine operators have proposed to continue the present wage scale for one year, and inasmuch as the anthracite mine workers have unanimously resolved to ask that an increase of twenty per cent should be paid on present prices to all men performing contract work, that eight hours should constitute a day's labor for all persons employed by the hour, day or week, without any reduction in their present wage rate, and that coal should be weighed and paid for by weight wherever practicable; and inasmuch as in our present conferences the anthracite mine workers and mine operators have failed to reach an agreement upon any of the questions at issue, we propose that the Industrial Branch of the National Civic Federation select a committee of five persons to arbitrate and decide all or any of the questions in dispute, the award of such board of arbitration to be binding upon both parties and effective for a period of one year.

"Second—Should the above proposition be unacceptable to you, we propose that a committee composed of Archbishop Ireland, Bishop Potter and one other person whom these two may select be authorized to make an investigation into the wages and conditions of employment existing in the anthracite field, and if they decide that the average annual wages received by anthracite mine workers are sufficient to enable them to live, maintain and educate their families in a manner conformable to established American standards and consistent with American citizenship, we agree to withdraw our claims for higher wages and more equitable conditions of employment, provided that the anthracite mine operators agree to comply with any recommendations the above committee may make affecting the earnings and conditions of labor of their employes."

Knowing, as he surely must have known, that no representative of the operators is a member of the organization to which he proposes to submit arbitration, Mr. Mitchell desires us to agree to allow the "Industrial Branch of the National Civic Federation to select a committee of five persons to arbitrate and decide all or any of the questions in dispute." By this means Mitchell clearly demonstrated his desire to continue controlling the situation through the various labor leaders who are among the officers of the Civic Federation. Equally impossible is his second proposition, wherein he elects to name two arbitrators, they being graciously allowed to select a third, still giving the operators no voice whatever. It will be readily admitted by every one of average intelligence that the distinguished gentlemen whom Mr. Mitchell selected as his second choice must of necessity be absolutely untrained in commercial matters and utterly ignorant of the commercial—which is the practical—side of the question that would be submitted to them.

I think that I have clearly shown in the above the system of double dealing by which Mitchell has attempted to blind the public while duping the ignorant men who constitute his following. To the operators there is nothing new in his duplicity; he followed precisely the same lines in 1900, when he induced our men to break an agreement whereby in 1885 both sides pledged themselves to arbitrate all grievances. In 1900, Mitchell repeatedly asserted that our arbitration agreement was not bona fide, and yet after making such assertion, and after having had my personal assurance that I would abide by the arbitrators' verdict, he said in pleading tones (addressing the audience): "I ask you for the sake of your down-trodden and struggling fellow-workmen, who do not enjoy such advantages as you possess, to go on strike and to help win their battle. The few must suffer for the many."

Continuing his endeavor to blind the public, he again attempted, on the 31 of October, to prove the sincerity of his statements by submitting to the President of the United States, in the conference at Washington, the following remarkable proposition:

"If you will accept this responsibility [that of naming a board of arbitration], and the representatives of the coal operators will signify their willingness to have your decision incorporated in an agreement for not less than one or more than five years, as may be mutually determined between themselves and the anthracite coal-mine workers, and will pay the scale of wages which you and the tribunal appointed by you shall award, we will immediately call a convention and recommend a resumption of work!"

Careful perusal of the above indicates clearly that Mitchell is willing only to have the President appoint a commission whose dictates the operators must bind themselves to yield to at once, leaving ample opportunity and liberty to Mitchell and his associates to do precisely as they see fit. He destroyed arbitration that was honest and fair on our property, and the above is an example of what he chooses to call "arbitration!"

Whatever Mitchell may say, it is very evident that his public declarations are as misleading at all times as I have shown certain of them to be. In his speeches he has dwelt upon the necessity for preservation of law and order, yet every speech has been followed by additional instances of murder, assault, intimidation and dynamiting by members of his organization. If he wishes the public to believe him sincere in his verbal exhortations to peacefulness, he should frankly say whether he has issued mandatory orders to the "locals,"—the word "locals" is synonymous with "branch"—of the United Mine Workers to restrain their men, at all cost, from acts of violence or infraction of the law. If he has done so, he is no longer a factor in this problem, as the daily occurrence of outrage proves conclusively that he does not control the men whom he pretends to represent. If he has not expressly instructed his subordinates to prevent the rioting which is a matter of public knowledge, he has deliberately deceived the public and should no longer expect to be dealt with as an honest or truthful man.

One point which should be particularly impressed on the public is that we maintain our ability to settle the strike without any outside interference, and that we would have succeeded in accomplishing this end long since had not the striking miners been led to believe that political influence would be brought to bear in their behalf. The influence of the political managers has been decidedly inimical to the interests of the miners whom they have succeeded in deluding, voluntarily or involuntarily. Senator Hanna in 1900, by his intervention prior to the national elections, placed John Mitchell before his constituents in the light of a leader who had successfully met and conquered the employer, which was the direct cause of a tremendous increase in the influence of the president of the United Mine Workers, and a consequent development of his arrogance and self-appreciation. It seems strange that United States Senators Quay and Peurose of Pennsylvania and Senator Platt and Governor Odell of New York should now be striving with all their political strength to keep Mr. Mitchell and his organization in existence, using as a plea for their attitude the welfare of the American people.

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### THE GREAT COAL STRIKE

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ple. Peculiarly incomprehensible is the action of these gentlemen when to consider that while they are encouraging and dealing with this representative of anarchism, his own men continue almost daily murdering, brutally assaulting, coercing and attempting to intimidate defenceless men and women, and dynamiting bridges, trains, collieries and houses throughout the anthracite region.

What can the American people think of such men as Messrs. Quay, Penrose, Platt and Odell, when they condescend to treat with a man representing an organization that may certainly be called anarchistic? I have no hesitancy in saying that if these gentlemen were to exert their influence to re-establish law and order in the anthracite mining districts, thereby giving full opportunity to work to such men as desire to do so—which opportunity, above all else, the Constitution of the United States guarantees—the great majority of the striking miners would soon be back in the mines, the public would, within a very reasonable time, have an ample supply of anthracite coal, and the existing menace to lives and interests would be immediately done away with. The result would be the prompt banishment of Mitchell and his fellow professional agitators from the State to which they came without invitation. They would be sent back to the field from which, in my opinion, Senator Hanna was influential in bringing them, *to wit*, Illinois. As ex-Secretary of the Treasury Lyman J. Gage declared recently, "The burning question has been forced upon us, whether the fundamental and inextinguishable right of man to freedom is to be recognized or trodden under the heels of a brutal mob."

There is no use discussing any merits of the controversy heretofore existing between employer and employe in the anthracite coal fields. That a condition of anarchy exists there at the present time is abundantly evidenced by the unlawful acts that are of daily occurrence. Surely the American people will not tolerate such a condition. Establish law and order first, and then the employe will be in a position to abide by his agreement to take up and deal with the grievances of his own employes and adjust them upon their merits. Under no consideration will the operators recognize an organization that has proved itself as lawless and anarchistic as has the United Mine Workers of which John Mitchell is the president. The presidents of coal companies and the coal operators are fighting for a principle, in which every American citizen is as much interested as ourselves. I believe that with the knowledge the American public is now obtaining of the conditions existing in the anthracite coal fields, the people will rise with one accord and insist upon maintaining that American freedom for which our forefathers fought, and that with one voice they will claim as does Dr. Hillis: "Every man's right to work is so sacred in this republic of freedom that if he needs guns from Wilkesbarre to Washington to protect him, there ought to be bayonets enough there to ensure him work, or else this republic had better go out of existence."

We invite a thorough, public and impartial investigation of existing conditions in the anthracite coal region, and we maintain that such investigation would discover the following status: Professional agitators, represented by John Mitchell and his lieutenants, are using brutality, assault and even murder to intimidate, coerce and hold in subjection a great majority of honest workmen who, if let alone and protected, would to-day be mining the coal of which the public stands in such dire need. If you could see a parade of the striking miners, you would find at their head the professional agitators, in gorgeous array; but when rioting is in progress the professional agitator pushes forward, from a safe

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