

exit of this administration, and it will leave a bitter taste in the mouths of those who were generous enough to swallow its idealism whole. From the point of view of the law, we are in fact no longer at war, and to keep in jail a man whose acts would not have been punishable in peace times is legalism of the smallest caliber. From the point of view of common decency, of morality, there is this to be said of the imprisonment of Debs: that it is a crime, a falsehood, and an act of which no honorable government would be guilty.

## Our Incurable Coal Industry

Our investigation into the coal situation has convinced me that the private interests now in control of the production and distribution of coal, in spite of the efforts by some, are actually unable to prevent a continuance or a repetition of the present deplorable situation. —*Senator Calder, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Reconstruction.*

THESE words of Senator Calder's deserve a more searching consideration than they have received. So far as they are true they imply a drastic and unanswerable criticism of the existing method of producing and distributing one of the commodities most indispensable to the happiness of the American people. When the machinery of any essential industry begins to creak and groan, when it fails to satisfy the needs of its customers or when it satisfies them fitfully and at extortionate prices, the instinctive disposition of the American mind is to fasten all blame on the individuals who are producing and distributing the commodities, to accuse them of incompetence or greed and to pass legislation intended to forbid such malpractice. But if Senator Calder's account is correct, it is, in the case of the abuses of the coal industry, useless to blame individuals. The guilt is not personal. The coal operators and commission merchants are the victims as well as the beneficiaries of the existing system. They, as a group of private individuals who are operating a basic industry in obedience to the motive of their own profit, are unable and really have no license effectively to reorganize and control the industry in the public interest.

Coal is a commodity which the consumer must have and for which he will pay, if necessary, much higher prices than those at which it can be economically produced. For reasons into which we cannot go here but which are well recognized in the industry, the furnishing of an abundant supply of coal to all parts of the country at a low cost is a matter which requires an elaborate and smoothly cooperative organization. The industry as now operated contains the elements of such an organization,

but the mechanism has many weak and outworn parts which frequently get out of order and when anyone of them does fail the breakdown has an unfortunate tendency to be costly to the consumer but profitable to the producer and the distributor. For when the consumer is threatened with a shortage, as he always is when a breakdown occurs, he will bid the price up recklessly in order to be sure of getting his necessary supply. The industry itself is at present incapable of legislating fairly and effectively against these abuses. It is owned and run by individuals and corporations whose interests, except in the matter of joint profits, are exclusive. They can combine to raise prices but not to reform abuses. No one group of owners or operators which happened to control the national association could legislate without discrimination and prejudice for the industry as a whole. The utmost a national coal association can seek to accomplish for the public is the maintenance of a free and fair field for all operators and distributors, and a free and fair field for all the private interests engaged in an industry whose efficiency requires such an elaborate cooperative organization is the mother of the existing abuses. It affords an irresistible temptation and opportunity to profiteer. The operators may intend to combine for the purpose only of purging competition of its abuses, but when competitors whose legitimate motive is private profit combine, the net result of the combination seems necessarily to be an increase of common profits at the expenses of the consumer. The standards of the industry cannot rise higher than its moral source—which is private and exclusive interests.

The inference to be drawn from this impotence of the coal industry to reform its own abuses is both radical and obvious. The American nation cannot obtain from the existing organization, ownership, and motivation of the coal industry the public service to which it is entitled; and the indispensable condition of grading the organization and operation of the industry up to the level of what it should be—that is an essential public service—is to change and improve its motivation. Its ownership must be vested in the community and its operation trusted to a board on which the expert salaried staff, the wage earners and the consuming public would all find adequate representation. The object of such a reorganization would be to substitute for the existing motive of exclusive profits, accruing to people who own and merchandize the coal, a new motive which makes for cooperating individual purposes and efforts. The individuals who manage the industry cannot cooperate for the benefit of the public because the industry as organized affords the owners and merchandizers of coal irresistible op-

opportunities of reaping their largest profits not by serving or satisfying the public but by interrupting the service, and at times by deliberately thwarting the satisfaction of its customers. They never will cooperate until the American nation decides to abolish these privileged opportunities for exclusive profits and reorganizes the industry for the purpose of giving its directors and workers a common personal interest in rendering the industry efficient in satisfying the wants of the consumers of coal.

Senator Calder and his committee notwithstanding the essentially radical meaning of their exposure of the abuses of the coal industry are very far from drawing this conclusion, and there is some excuse for their timidity. The proposed reorganization of the coal industry would be a difficult and hazardous experiment which will never be successfully undertaken until modern democratic nations possess a much more intelligent faith than they have at present in the willingness and ability of human nature to find satisfaction in acting upon more disinterested motives. At this moment they do not know how to fit conflicting interests and differing individuals into an effective cooperative organization for the continued performance of a public service. If a political party with a policy of coal nationalization as one of its planks had won the election last fall, it could, considering the rudimentary nature of the existing technique of public administration, scarcely succeed in nationalizing the operation as well as the ownership of the coal industry. But while there are reasons for going slow and being circumspect about putting a policy of nationalization into immediate or early effect, there is no excuse in the light of the assertion at the head of this article for any further evasion of the deep seriousness of the disease which afflicts the coal industry. The American people may not be and are not prepared to practice a remedy as radical as the disease, but if not they must expect to pay a severe penalty for their unpreparedness. They must expect abuses to increase and to become more costly and exasperating until they are ready to substitute for the existing method of producing and distributing coal a new method which will give to the producers of coal an interest in the efficiency of the industry as a public service.

As long as they are not ready to convert the coal industry into a public utility, they should be patient and considerate with the large body of their fellow citizens who suffer more than they do from the existing disorganization of the industry. We refer to the coal miners. In the light of Senator Calder's statement that "the private interests now in control of the production and distribution of coal are unable to prevent" the existing abuses from continu-

ing, should not American public opinion be ashamed of its treatment in the fall of 1919 of the striking bituminous coal miners? The government of the United States with the support of public opinion condemned the strike as an offense against social security. Coal, it declared, was a public necessity and the miners of coal who by quitting work brought suffering and deprivation on the whole community deserved to be treated and were treated as criminals. But the coal industry which the government erected into a public utility for the purpose of breaking a strike was in every other respect merely an opportunity for private profits. The operators were allowed to make large sums of money out of the defects in the machinery of producing and distributing coal, but the miners, when the operators refused to discuss a new wage scale and other demands, were outlawed for adopting their only effective remedy. The gross defects in the machinery of production and distribution were more costly to the miners than to the consumers. They meant for the miners interrupted employment, low and precarious wages and wasteful methods of operation. The disorganization of the industry was reflected in the disorganization of their lives. Their demands on the operators were framed partly for the purpose of doing away with some of the stoppages of production and at the same time with the casual nature of their work. If the organization of the industry had been that of a public utility and had offered to the miners steady employment under acceptable conditions, at fair wages and in the public interest, there would have been a real excuse for outlawing a strike, but to force Americans to work in order that other Americans may profiteer at their expense and at the expense of the public, which was what the government did, was a far more blameworthy performance than that of the striking miners.

This aspect of the matter has unfortunately an immediate practical interest. The operators in the anthracite region are pursuing now a course of action analogous to that of the bituminous operators in 1919. They have finally refused to discuss the acute grievances of the anthracite miners which resulted from the arbitration award of last summer; and there is grave danger that the miners will resume their interrupted vacations. The operators are encouraged to behave in an unconciliatory manner because in the event of a strike they expect public support. They expect to have the industry treated as a public utility when the miners threaten any interference with production and as privileged private possession in so far as they themselves profit from the abuses of the industry and its failure to meet the public needs. It is time to disappoint ex-

pectations of this kind. The grievances of the anthracite miners, like those of their fellow wage-earners in the bituminous field are associated with the disorganization and the inefficiency of the industry. It is all part of one problem. If the government is to intervene and take away the only defence of an aggrieved wage-earner, it is bound to push the intervention further and save the miners from being forced by law to work for the enrichment of greedy coal operators. It should seriously tackle the problem of doing for the coal industry what Senator Calder rightly insists it cannot do for itself. It should prepare to reconstruct the coal industry as an actual as well as merely a legal public utility.

## The Permanent Crime Wave

**I**F newspaper accounts of the "crime wave" lead people to think that it is abnormal and temporary, they are grossly misleading. Undoubtedly in New York City and in some other places there is an increase of crime, but the increase over the normal is much less startling than the normal condition itself. Compared to other civilized countries the United States is in a perpetual crime wave, and unless we fix our attention on the normal, we shall not go far in improvement because we shall draw the wrong inferences from a gust of excitement.

In Mr. Raymond Fosdick's excellent book on *American Police Systems*\* there are eloquent statistics. Take premeditated murders. In 1916 there were nine in London for a population of seven and a quarter million people; in Chicago, one-third as large, there were one hundred and five. This on the basis of population is a ratio of nearly thirty-five to one. Now compare Chicago, not with London, but with England and Wales; that is to say, compare two and a half million people with thirty-eight million. There were twenty more murders in Chicago than in all England and Wales. Or take New York City: in 1916, 1917, 1918, it had six times as many homicides as London. Each year from 1914 to 1918 New York had more homicides than occurred in London during any three year period before 1914. Glasgow for 1916-18 inclusive had thirty-eight homicides; Philadelphia, just a trifle larger, had two hundred and eighty-one. Liverpool and St. Louis, which are about the same size, show a proportion of one to eleven in 1915 and one to eight in 1916. Los Angeles, one twentieth the size of London, had two more homicides

than London in 1916. Berlin before the war averaged twenty-five murders a year; Vienna nineteen.

The burglary statistics are no less ignominious. New York in 1915 had 11,652 burglaries; London had 1,459; all of England and Wales had 6,737. In 1918 when London had 2,777 felonies which we should classify as burglaries, New York had 7,412, Chicago 3,643, Detroit 2,047, Cleveland 2,608, St. Louis 2,989. No wonder burglary insurance in American cities costs fifteen to twenty times as much as in England.

Recently the newspapers have reported many robberies as if they were a sensational novelty. Well, in 1915 in New York City there were 838, enough to furnish at least two sensations a day, and three a day for several months. In the same year there were 20 robberies in London, not enough to make a story every two weeks. During 1918 Chicago had 22 robberies for every one committed in London. Detroit and Cleveland regularly average from three to five times as many robberies as all of Great Britain. And if you are interested in automobile thefts reported, you can think of a total of 16,896 for the year 1919 in New York, Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis and Cleveland. There were enough automobiles stolen in five American cities to move the whole city of Geneva anywhere that the League of Nations preferred.

Do these figures prove that our police are inactive? They break the world's record for arrests. In 1917 Boston beat London by 32,520; Philadelphia beat London by 20,005; Chicago by 61,874 and New York by 111,874. These are revealing figures. Our police, judged by their arrests, are indeed active; judged by the rate of crime they are painfully ineffective. If arresting were the way to prevent crime, we ought to be almost immune. How is the discrepancy to be explained? There is no one explanation, but several. In the first place we ask our police to enforce those moral laws which churches and schools have failed to enforce. A vast amount of their energy goes into hunting sinners, and not criminals. And yet being a turbulent people without a social discipline behind us, and with a distinct tradition in favor of violence and lawlessness, derived from the frontier, the lynching bee, the vigilance committee, the shoot 'em at sunrise temper, and the Unwritten Law, there is more real police work to do than in a settled country like England. But our good people are usually more interested in vice than in crime. Moreover when they become thoroughly excited about something, they immediately show the weak minded members of the community that lawlessness and violence may be good Americanism. The contempt for law shown by American judges, American

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