causes of the war should have seemed obscure. Whether our Ambassadors failed to see what M. Isvolsky saw so clearly, or Mr. Wilson's optimistic Secretary of State did not think their reports of sufficient importance to call the President's attention to them, or the President did not take them seriously, we do not know and probably never shall know, though the post-war publications of Henry van Dyke and Brand Whitlock indicate that the war was not altogether a surprise to them.

FOR A NATIONAL COAL INQUIRY

IN the discussion over the present coal strike public opinion has centered quite surprisingly in a demand for a National Coal Commission. The opinion is also strongly expressed that such a commission should not be formed merely to try to end the present difficulty, but that it should continue permanently, just as the Railway Labor Board does; and that it should seek and publish the essential facts relating to the production, sale, carriage, and distribution of coal.

The Bland Bill, now before the House, does not answer to this definition, but does provide for investigation of the facts in the coal industry. The bill as it now stands would provide for the appointment of what it calls a Coal Investigation Agency. This body would have ten members; four would be the heads of the Geological Survey, the Bureau of Mines, the Census Bureau, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics; the other six would consist of three groups of two each, representing the public, the miners, and the operators. These six men would be appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate; the two men in the miners' group to be chosen from four names presented to the President by the head of the United Mine Workers of America, the two members in the operators' group to be chosen from nominees jointly named by the presidents of the Anthracite Bureau of Information and the Anthracite Coal Operators Association. The proposed Coal Investigation Agency is to continue for two years only. This will seem undesirable to those who believe firmly in a permanent coal commission.

Another debatable section of the Bland Bill is that which strictly enjoins the members of the Agency to make public no facts learned by them in the course of their investigation except in reports to Congress. As it is provided that no report need be made by the Agency until the end of its term, this does not seem to be a good method of informing the public of the basic conditions and facts in the coal industry, which is precisely what is needed. It is quite right that the Government should not disclose trade secrets when to do that would injure one competitor as against another, but immediate inquiry and publication of the results of inquiry are certainly desirable.

The Bland Bill does not direct the proposed Agency specifically to bring about the arbitration of the present controversy, but directs it to provide Congress with facts as a basis for legislation "to settle industrial disputes in and prevent the overdevelopment of the coal industry, to stabilize such industry and levy taxes in respect thereto, to regulate commerce in coal among the several States and with foreign nations," and so on.

In presenting this bill to Congress Mr. Bland, who is Chairman of the House Committee on Labor, stated, among other things, that there is no agency in the Federal Government to-day "which has ascertained, or can ascertain, the correct production cost of a ton of coal in a well-operated, efficient mine." He remarked in this connection: "Operators came before the Committee on Labor and obstinately refused to give their cost of production, and it is fair to presume that such reports as were voluntarily made by them to existing Government agencies, who did not have the right to examine books, investigate contracts, and cross-examine witnesses, were padded and unreliable."

Mr. Bland also pointed out the great and pressing necessity of dealing with the overdevelopment and overproduction of the coal-mining industry. This is undoubtedly a crucial point. He declared that there are about one-third too many coal mines and one-third too many miners for the proper economic operation and development of the industry. He also recognized the importance of making the industry free from the present "seasonable" difficulties; and ended by a strong affirmation that the coal industry has become quasi-public in character and of vital concern to the whole people.

THE CHILD LABOR LAW INVALID

THE United States Supreme Court has without dissent decided adversely as to the constitutionality of the Child Labor Law enacted in 1919. It seems, therefore, that for the tremendously important matter of preventing abuses in this direction we must look to the laws of the several States. These laws differ widely in their nature and enforcement. There is a true sense in which the regulation of child labor in the interest of humanity and of the future of the country is a National question. As we have pointed out heretofore, there is an inter-State aspect, in that States that have efficient child labor laws are at a disadvantage commercially in competing with States in which such laws are lax or not well enforced. The failure of this second attempt to regulate child labor by National law must be accepted as necessary from a legal point of view, but from the humane point of view it is regrettable.

In each of the decisions of the Supreme Court as to a National child labor law the view taken was that the law passed by Congress was an attempt to regulate child labor by the imposition of a tax. Both cases came up through a lower court in North Carolina. The Owen-Keating Law forbade the inter-State transportation of the products of factories where restrictions as to child labor were not observed; the law now declared invalid placed a tax of ten per cent on profits made on products where child labor had been employed contrary to the restrictions of the law. The present decision indicates that the Court saw no difference between these two methods of applying Federal regulation.

Chief Justice Taft, who read the decision, declared that "its prohibitory and regulatory effect and purpose are palpable." He added: "There comes a time in the extension of the penalizing features of the so-called tax when it loses its character as such and becomes a mere penalty with the characterization of regulation and punishment. Such is the case in the law before us."

The whole effect and purport of the Supreme Court's decision is that the regulation of intra-State labor conditions belongs to the State and not to the Federal Government, and that child labor has no bearing on inter-State commerce. Though we do not see how the Court can take this view, such it seems clearly to be.

A BUSINESS THERMOMETER

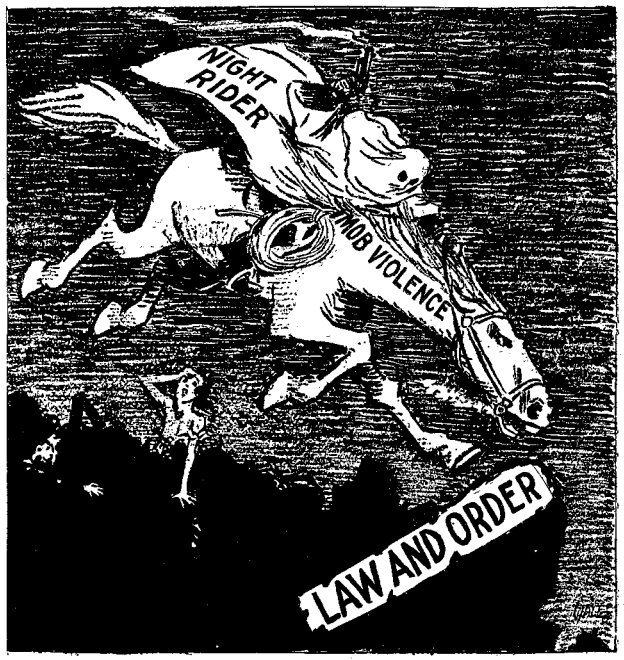
IN an issue of The Outlook in January, 1908, it was pointed out that the flow of American immigration was regulated by the law of supply and demand and that its eastward and westward currents might be accepted as a thermometer of the condition of the American labor market. This fact was established by the sudden cessation of industrial employment following the financial disturbance of that year, which was looked upon as the puncturing of a bubble of inflation. The consequent reduction in the stream of incoming aliens and the rapid increase in the outward flow of immigrant laborers until it exceeded in volume the incoming were immediately recognized as an economic symptom.

With the outbreak of the war, however, this test of labor conditions was

WHY ALL THESE GLIDING GHOSTS?

(Julius Cæsar, Act I, Scene 3)

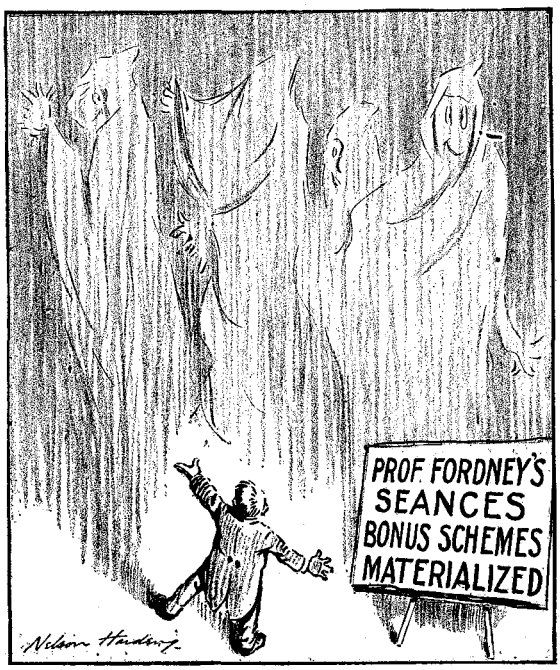
Gale in the Los Angeles Times



RIDING FOR A FALL

From F. L. Munn, Los Angeles, Cal.

Harding in the Brooklyn Eagle



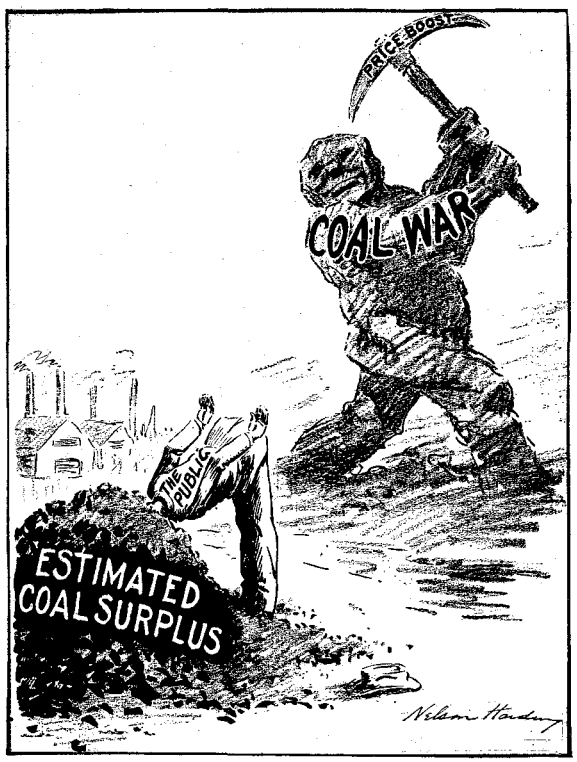
THEY'RE STILL RATHER ETHEREAL, PROFESSOR

Donahey in the Cleveland Plain Dealer

CONSTERNATION!

From Julius J. H. Hayn, Buffalo, N. Y.

Harding in the Brooklyn Eagle



THE GREAT AMERICAN OSTRICH