

# Hounding the Yellow Dog

By ROBERT W. BRUÈRE

**F**OR a good many years, that strange beast known in the world of labor as the "yellow dog" has been running at large in American industry, spreading terror and perplexity. If he were a pedigreed German police dog, a bull terrier, a Grossmannstein or even a Schnauzer, the judges would know what to do with him. Being the thing he is, he is hounded from one jurisdiction to another. The chances are that he will never find a home or a decent burial until the inexpert and harassed public takes serious account of him.

What is this "yellow dog"? Who or what fathered him? Who turned him loose? So far as I, a layman, have been able to discover, his great-great-grandmother came from the kennels of the late Mark Hanna, his common-law father was Conspiracy, familiarly known through the statutory breed fancied by the late John Sherman.

What seems to have happened was something like this. Back in the eighties and nineties, the bituminous coal industry, never able to practice birth control, had produced, as it has heedlessly continued to do ever since, too many mines, too many operators, too many miners, too much coal. As prices dropped, operators cut wages; as wages became cut-throat, miners organized in self-defense. Operators cried Conspiracy, called in the sheriff, and chased the agitators all over the lot.

Some operators, notably Mark Hanna, considered this foolish business. They encouraged the miners in their territory to unionize with the understanding that the union would carry on its organizing campaign in other fields and equalize competitive conditions—standardize hours and wages at a humane level and so stabilize the industry. After a rough and difficult start, the union made great headway. In due course, it organized all of the older coal fields, particularly what is known as the Central Competitive Field—Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and a large slice of Pennsylvania. Up to the time of the War, the combined efforts of the union and the operators in this vast territory went far to stabilize the industry to everybody's gain.

But during and immediately after the War, there was a rapid expansion of bituminous coal mining into what are known as the newer fields, especially West Virginia. These fields, in part because they were off the main highways of

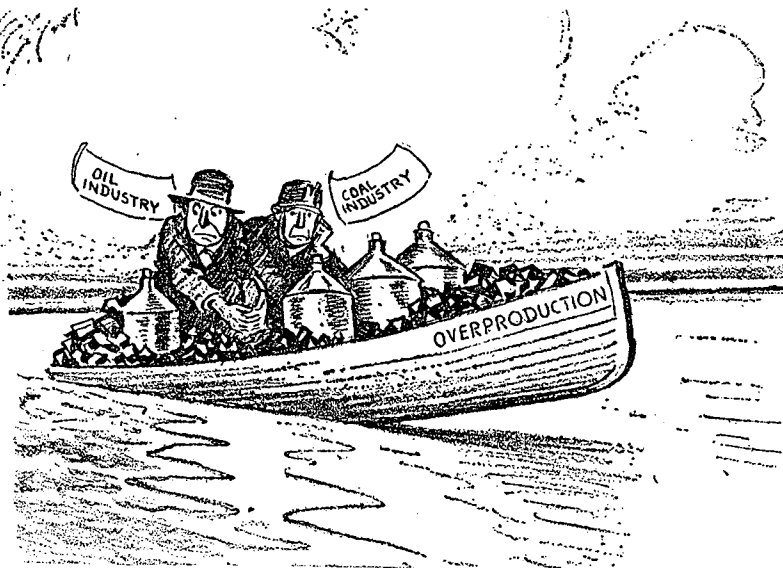
commerce, were at a competitive disadvantage even though, being new, their coal was more accessible. They met this disadvantage by undercutting the union scale and barring out the union.

The operators in the older fields put it up to the union to make good on their moral obligation to equalize competitive conditions throughout the industry. The union made the attempt—spent millions of dollars, almost exhausted its resources in the effort. The bitterness of the struggle bred violence on both sides—in each case in defense of "sacred human rights and moral principles." The union lost the battle, or, at least, has not won it to date. The newer fields, operating far below the union scale, have taken more and more of the market from the old fields.

For years, operators in these older fields have appealed to the union for relief. In 1924, the union, supported by distinguished members of the federal government, asked for three more years time. The operators of the Central

Competitive Field reluctantly signed the Jacksonville agreement, which ran to April 1, 1927. Before it expired, however, a number of the largest operators, notably some who had workings in or contiguous to the newer fields, broke away; some of them closed down; some broke the agreement, or tried to save their faces by skirting around it. Increasingly, they have claimed their inability to operate in the face of such a wage differential. In 1927, practically all of them refused to renew the Jacksonville scale. The present strike was on.

The economic and other causes behind this development are complex. One important contributing cause, however, was the "yellow dog," the name by which the union expresses its feeling for the type of individual wage agreement under which the employer binds the employe as a condition of employment not to join the union or hold any converse with its representatives. The union contends that such a pledge is inequitable, unconstitutional, immoral—on the same footing with a pledge against joining a church, a fraternity, or a political party. The classic case is that of the Hitchman Coal & Coke Co. vs. Mitchell. This company required miners seeking employment with it to pledge themselves not to join the union. When the union, in fulfillment of its obligation to (Continued on page 134)



Knott in the Dallas News

*"The bituminous coal industry, never able to practice birth control, had produced, as it has heedlessly continued to do ever since, too many mines, too many operators, too many miners, too much coal."*

# A Conference Program Conceived in Malice

By J. PENNYROYAL

I HAVE attended what I hope is a decent quota of conferences on social work, and I have wistfully conned the programs of many more. Wistfully, I hasten to explain, not because of what these programs offered, but because of what they failed to offer. None of the multifarious sections, divisions, groups and Lord-knows-what has hit upon the topics that seem to me really interesting. In this pre-conference season, when it is the fashion to do one's job instead of talk about it, I shall therefore comfort myself by jotting down a short list of papers I do not expect to find on any program—but wouldn't I rush to hear them if I did!

I might begin with An Epidemiological Study of the Conference Habit. There must be some reason why this germ spreads so virulently in certain sections of the calendar and certain quarters of the globe. May, for example, is late in the year for nasopharyngeal disorders, yet it is filled with the drone of public speakers. It was possible last spring for a social worker with a comfortable travel budget to spend practically the whole month in the semi-coma of conference rooms. He might have considered Jewish social work, settlement work, common or garden social work, tuberculosis, and the relation of health to the family budget, almost without stopping. The same congestion afflicts the near neighbors of social work—the sociologists and their kin—at Christmas time, though why the Christmas meetings should be called "learned" and the May meetings should just be meetings I can't make out: both are filled to capacity with large words and a solemn manner. And why in heaven's name when people have come together for one conference in one place should they clamor for a dozen more conferences all around the fringe, until the delegate's day looks like a broken kaleidoscope and a too-hospitable town is all bogged up with palavers. Something could be learned about these phenomena, I suspect, by the people who work out by logarithms the incidence of scarlet-fever germs at a lobster party.

Next on my program I should schedule an address on The Gift of Tongues in Social Work. The early Christians who bragged of the rhapsodies in which they were completely unintelligible to their fellow-worshippers had nothing on the community organizer or the mental hygienist in full cry. I remember taking what I thought was a dignified appeal letter to a somnolent critic who happened to be chairman of a finance committee. He read the draft through without comment, leaned back, closed his eyes, and seemed to pass gently into oblivion. After a soundless interval he murmured: "Personally, I have always preferred the language of Genesis." I was annoyed at the time (though I rewrote the letter). Since then I have come to agree with him.

But there is a trace of protective coloration in the jargon of the social worker, and you can't argue or laugh that away. Passionately desirous as he is of a place in the professional sun, he reads enviously the journals of the older

and better recognized professions. Finding them exquisitely inscrutable, he seeks a similar badge for his calling and election. He must have a terminology, by gum, or he isn't scientific. And if he isn't scientific how can he escape a nagging sense of inferiority when he deals with money, as in the case of his board, or with erudition, as in the case of his neighbors on the campus?

Speaking of boards reminds me of the delicate balance that is maintained between the people who pay social work salaries and those who receive them. There is an art—and a pretty subtle one at times—of what might be called creative listening, of hearing your president speak his mind and then gently twining him around your finger till he approves *your* plan. The social work executive sometimes seems determined to defend, at all costs, his intellectual virginity. Shifting the metaphor slightly, I shall ask him to read a paper on The Eugenical Sterilization of Everybody's Program but Mine.

This, of course, is distinctly an executive's problem. Most conferences are planned to provide nice, kind, educational features for the junior staff, but I think this is the wrong track. It is the man in the corner office, with the plate-glass top on his desk, who needs educating, for it is he who hires and fires, who dominates staff decisions, who mediates between the case worker and the pillar of society. What an audience there would be for a discussion of The Jehovah Complex in General Secretaries! It works in so many fascinating forms, positive and negative, that a whole conference might be devoted to its ramifications. There is, for example, the executive who loves to play providence to all his colleagues, who advises them as to their place of residence, their personal budgets, their choice of vacations, and even their matrimonial dilemmas. And there is the other kind who is too busy to be seen, and whose subordinates speak when they are spoken to. There is the executive who hands down his ukases, and there is the other sort who always approaches a chalk-line of decision by circling a round-table, who confers endlessly with one foot in the Rubicon. For this particular species, I want to work up a meeting on A Time-Study of Democratic Procedure.

ALLIED with this is the subject of Posture in the Social Worker. I have learned quietly to avoid, with loathing, the man or woman who is always Looking Forward. Nor do I love the kind who are always Looking Backward, but, unlike Bellamy, usually take their stand in yesterday and look backward to day-before-yesterday. I should like to hear a thorough discussion of the question whether either posture doesn't lead inevitably to a Stiff Neck. And in passing I hope some one will pay his respects to the man who Leans Over Backward to be Fair and Reasonable, and who sometimes loses his balance entirely in the process. It's pretty hard to see yourself as others see you when you're leaning over backward for any purpose whatever.

Thanks to Frankwood Williams and his kind, we are,