

The Coal Miners' Strike (July 15, 1897)

The strike of the coal miners is without a parallel in the annals of labor struggles. It is a strike of both employees and employers, the former against starvation and the latter against bankruptcy and ruin.

From the black mouth of the mine issues the wail of famishing miner and from his hovel habitation comes in accents sad and clear the refrain from the despairing wife and suffering child.

The mine is no longer profitable to the operator, nor yields up a living wage for the miner, and so the mine, once the source of untold wealth to the owner and of high wages to the miner, is abandoned by both until in some mysterious way the pall is lifted and some measure of the former prosperity comes back again.

Will it come? Let time answer.

In this sad struggle to save the child from the wolf of want, the miner has the sympathy, the tears of the country, but these will not help him. He is battling against cruel conditions which are as inexorable as fate and all we can do is to stand by him as best we can and hope for the best.

In contemplating this strange and tragic struggle, but one conclusion is possible. The competitive commercial system has done its worst, and in the mining industry, the rock bottom has been reached. The trust alone is triumphant.

In the competitive war which raged long and fiercely, profits have been reduced to nil and wages to starvation. Both employer and employee are exhausted. Under the system that leveled them down to ruin and starvation they can never build up again.

What is the remedy? There is but one. It is the collective ownership of mines, so that instead of being operated for "profit" in the interest of the individual they shall be operated by the whole people for their common welfare.