

From:
UNITED MINE WORKERS OF AMERICA
NEWS BUREAU
907 Fifteenth Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C.

By:
Allied Syndicates, Inc.
745 Fifth Avenue, NYC
Phone - PLaza 9-6411

Washington, D. C., May 20th ¹⁹⁴⁸ — John L. Lewis, President of the United Mine Workers of America, today made the following statement at a press conference held in the ULWA Building:

"The Policy Committee reviewed the situation this morning and has voted to recess and leave the city. The International Executive Board will have a session tomorrow beginning at 10:00 a.m. just to dispose of routine matters that have accumulated since the last meeting. The Board will only be in session tomorrow and then will leave the city.

"We have no further advice from the operators and the Policy Committee left determination of any immediate matters of policy to the International Officers who are here pending their return. No date has been set for their return.

"The failure of the conference to organize is in itself unfortunate and will make for a delay in the negotiations, and probably accentuate the apprehensions which are being built up in predicting a possible stoppage of the mines when the contract has expired.

"The Mine Workers deplore of course the constant suggestions that are made that the termination of the contract insures that there will be a stoppage. We are constantly hopeful that wage negotiations in good faith would negotiate a successor contract and make unnecessary any suspension of mining. That of course is the prime purpose of wage negotiations.

"The situation on the operators' side of the industry must be clearly apparent to you trained and practical observers among the newspaper men. Mr. Harry Moses sits in the conference representing 59,000,000 tons of annual production in the steel industry. It is a solid block and Mr. Moses will vote that tonnage at all times in accordance with Mr. Fairless' instructions, president of U. S. Steel, and in no other manner. Mr. George Love sits in the conference with 84,000,000 tons of annual production. Mr. Love will vote that tonnage in accordance with instructions from Mr. George Humphrey of Cleveland and in no other manner. Mr. George Humphrey is a steel man, partner of Mr. Weir in National Steel which owns Weirton Steel and Gulf Steel. Mr. Humphrey is also a member of the Iron and Steel Institute and in cooperation with Mr. Fairless this year the same as last year, 1947. It is unlikely that Mr. Humphrey will at this time instruct Mr. Love to vote on a contract which Mr. Fairless does not approve for his tonnage.

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"Associated with these two blocks of tonnage is Mr. Francis with his southern interests with 158,000,000 tons of production. His general attitude is more reprehensible, more malignant toward collective bargaining than is the case of Mr. Fairless and Mr. Humphrey.

"It is clearly apparent that this triumvirate of men, Fairless, Humphrey and Francis, have complete control of the Bituminous Industry as far as affecting the possibility of negotiating a new agreement. So the responsibility this year for peace or war in the coal industry clearly devolves upon these three men. As a matter of fact it simmers down to a decision of two men; namely, Fairless and Humphrey, because if they elected to make an agreement Francis' tonnage in the South, the tonnage in the Middle West and the tonnage in the far west would have no alternative but to follow, just the same as happened in 1947 when the national agreement was negotiated by Messrs. Fairless and Humphrey in the Carlton Hotel and accepted by the whole national industry.

"This is clear evidence of the tremendous power which they hold in their industry... That power was augmented in 1948 over 1947 by the greater prosperity of these financial interests and their tremendously enhanced profits.

"The Mine Workers would like to believe that additional prosperity to the industry would cause it to adopt the policy of live and let live toward the Mine Workers. Apparently, however, it operates to increase their arrogance and their contempt for collective bargaining. Witness their attitude of non-compliance with the existing contract as affecting the Welfare Fund and their clearly defined obligation to seat the Southern tonnage in the Regional Associations of the South that are signatories to the agreement.

"The power of Messrs. Fairless and Humphrey was demonstrated to the citizens of the country last year when they, alone and unaided, negotiated this agreement which they have been dishonoring. It is amazing the indifference with which the public accepts violations of contract by powerful interests of this character.

"The Welfare Fund for instance is estopped from functioning for a period of 11 months of the 12 month agreement and through the usage of the Taft Slave Law the legal determination of the questions which are involved seemingly remains far in the future. That creates an acute situation more grave in character because benefits now being paid by the '46 Fund will be stopped by exhaustion of the fund by July 1st. Thousands of widows, thousands of orphans, and thousands of sick and injured men now writhing on beds of pain in their humble domiciles will be left

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to live or die on July 1st. Such a brutal act upon the part of the operators will create such convulsions of anger among the Mine Workers of this country that the situation is fraught with grave potentials.

"It is inconceivable that the United Mine Workers could or would negotiate a successor agreement that fails to activate the Welfare Fund and contractually abate the current caviling on this subject.

"Neither the officers of the Organization nor the members of the policy committee have power or authority so to do and in honor they would personally refuse to do so. That makes for a heavy responsibility for Mr. Fairless and Mr. Humphrey, towering magnates of industry as they are.

"Mr. Fairless' pension is well taken care of. \$27,677.00 a year pension is what he will draw when he retires from the U. S. Steel Corporation, and Mr. Fairless is one who says a miner is not entitled to \$100 per month after 20 years in his coal mines.

"Mr. Fairless, Mr. Humphrey and Mr. Francis cannot do that to the coal miners of the country and the citizens of this country should not permit Messrs. Fairless, Humphrey and Francis to try to do it.

"The coal miners of this country are not yet slaves although the Taft Slave Statute seeks to make them so.

"It is time for the people of this country to stop believing that only coal miners are wrong and that only corporations are right.

"Coal is essential. It is the life blood of our economy, and the coal miners are entitled to fair treatment from the United States Steel Corporation, the M. A. Hanna Company and from the people of this country including the federal judiciary. That is about all unless you have some questions."

In response to an inquiry as to the discussions that took place in the Policy Committee meeting, Mr. Lewis said that he doubted there was anything that he hadn't already discussed.

The Press asked if Mr. Lewis believed that the contract will remain in effect after June 30th. Mr. Lewis said that he had no statement.

The Press referred to the statement where Mr. Lewis said he deplored the constant suggestions that are made that the termination of the contract insures that there will be a stoppage — Mr. Lewis said that "the purpose of the conference was to negotiate a new agreement and render unnecessary any stoppage of work". Mr. Lewis said "there is still time providing these gentlemen in power have in their mind to convene a constructive conference — if they want to, and negotiate an

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agreement — that is what I am suggesting. They have power to do so."

In response to an inquiry regarding any other demands beyond the activation of the '47 Welfare Fund, Mr. Lewis said that "we have not had any chance in conference to present them to the operators and do not care to go into detail at this time." Mr. Lewis stated that the banks will not honor any checks drawn on the '47 Fund because of the Van Horn legal action.

"We can't spend one penny of the '47 Fund and there is approximately Thirty-Six Million dollars now in the Fund," Mr. Lewis said.

Mr. Lewis said that the press could see him tomorrow (Friday) after the meeting of the International Executive Board if they desired.

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