

Economic Justice

BULLETIN OF THE NATIONAL RELIGION AND LABOR FOUNDATION

Vol. XVII, No. 8

66 Edgewood Avenue, New Haven 11, Conn.



APRIL, 1949

The American Miner is a Man of Great Faith

By Justin McCarthy

(Mr. McCarthy was formerly a reporter for The Chicago Daily News, labor editor of The Chicago Sun and a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University, 1947-48. He is now working for Allied Syndicates Inc., public relations counsel for the UMWA, and a director of the UMWA News Bureau.)

The American coal miner is a man of great faith.

Like the soldier in battle who turns to God for comfort and help, the coal miner, in his daily battle for survival has a deep-rooted consciousness of his closeness to God.

The "daily battle for survival" of the coal miner is used in the most literal — and not just the economic — sense of the word.

For, from the moment when he enters the mine in the cold, grey minutes of early morning, until he leaves late in the day, tired and grimy with coal dust, he must have faith.

He may pray quietly to himself that his back will not be crushed by falling slate. He must pray that a spark from some piece of machinery will not ignite the gas that is so often present in coal mines. He must have faith that he and his fellow miners will not have their lives snuffed out by falling rock.

So, when one hears a coal miner say, with deep emotion in his voice: "Thank God for John L. Lewis!" one must understand that the coal miner means just that — literally.

To the coal miner, John L. Lewis is a symbol. He is a symbol of strength and unity of purpose. And to the coal miner these are God-given characteristics.

Here's an example:

Mr. Lewis presented the first pension check from the United Mine Workers of America Welfare and Retirement Fund to a 62-year-old retiring Wyoming coal miner on September 9, 1948.

With tears in his eyes and a look of pride on his face, Horace Michael Ainscough, the first pensioner, turned to Mr. Lewis and said: :

"I accept this check, Brother John L. Lewis, and I am deeply grateful for receiving the check No. 1 from the pension fund. I am not thinking of myself so much as I am thinking of others. I am thinking of the widows, the orphans, the older men and their families, the sick and aged, the dependents of the welfare fund and the joy it will bring into their hearts. These people cannot

be here today to thank our president, John L. Lewis. With the deepest humility I offer this fervent prayer — "God bless the day John L. Lewis was born."

It's too bad that those who are forever castigating John L. Lewis and the United Mine Workers of America could not have been present on that occasion.

It's too bad that those who are forever demanding that the government "Stop John L. Lewis" can't talk for a few minutes to just one of the more than 300 coal diggers with broken backs who are now under expert medical care in hospitals on both the East and West Coast. They are being cared for properly for the first time because John L. Lewis and the United Mine Workers of America won for them the UMWA Welfare and Retirement Fund.

Let's go back for a few minutes to 1946. Mr. Lewis is testifying before a Congressional committee investigating the terrible Centralia, Illinois, mine disaster. This is the disaster that snuffed out the lives of 111 coal miners.

Said John L. Lewis:

"During the five years that I have enumerated, 1942 to 1946, inclusive, there were total accidents in the mining industry of 322,637 . . . consider those appalling figures! . . . of which 6,229 were fatal, leaving thousands of widows and more thousands of dependent children as charges upon the community, or left to the sympathy of an unfeeling world. That is a rather terrible record. That record clearly demonstrates that every man who goes to work in a coal mine will be, statistically, killed or injured every six years . . ."

(Continued on Page 2, Col. 1)



John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers of America and board chairman of the UMWA Welfare and Retirement Fund, presents the first pension check from the fund to Horace Michael Ainscough, 62, of Rock Springs, Wyo. With tears in his eyes, Ainscough said: "Thank God for the day John L. Lewis was born." (Acme Photo)

RECEIVED

JUN 7 1949

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Published by the

National Religion and Labor Foundation

Subscription Rate, \$1.00 per year

Editor: Willard Uphaus

Published monthly except July and August

Entered as second class matter April 8, 1935, at the post office at New Haven, Conn., under the Act of March 3, 1879

COAL SHOULD WARM OUR HEARTS, TOO

Economic Justice is especially grateful to Mr. McCarthy for his vivid and stirring description of the crosses many American miners bear, as they produce a basic commodity on which our personal comforts and individual advancement so much depend. Too many of us are guilty of accepting the gifts of God's creation and the labor of man without feeling or appreciation.

We are glad to tell our readers about the magnificent service being given sick and injured miners through the **UMWA Welfare and Retirement Fund**. We encourage ministers and union officials to order quantities of this issue for distribution. The rates are: 1 to 99 copies, five cents each; 100 to 499 copies, four cents each; 500 and over, three cents each. All orders will be shipped post paid.

The American Coal Miner

"That is the way our society treats our coal miners, and that is why we want a welfare fund in this country, at the cost of this industry, to care for the victims of this industry. I called the roll of them for a five year period for you gentlemen a while ago: 300,000-odd mine-made victims. Some died—more than 6,000. Some lived blind; some with twisted backs, lost limbs, paralyzed bodies, broken bones, the flesh burned from their faces until they're grinning specters of men, because of gas explosions.

"We want a welfare fund for them, at a cost of this industry, a charge on the cost of production.

"Many men in Congress have assailed us for wanting to do something for these victims of our basic industry, an industry essential to the United States and its future, because society would not do it for those people.

"If we must grind up human flesh and bones in an industrial machine, in the industrial machine that we call modern America, then, before God, I assert that those who consume coal, and you and I, who benefit from that service, because we live in comfort, we owe protection to those men first, and we owe security to their families after—if they die."

The mine workers got their welfare fund. But it took fortitude, perseverance and that previously mentioned strength and unity of purpose to bring to reality this dream of economic justice.

Because economic justice is not easily won. The mine workers know that.

The mine workers have a deep-seated resentment against the use of the phrase "the public welfare." That's the phrase that gets thrown at them every time they have to leave the pits to carry on their never-ending battle for economic justice.

A man who faces terrible death every day of his life to keep the nation's economy functioning feels that the

public should consider his "welfare" too. And too often the public ignores the mine workers' problems.

So the next time you hear that the mine workers are fighting for economic justice think twice before you condemn them because someone has told you that they are ignoring the "public welfare."

Let's talk about the coal miner's welfare.

The Miner's Welfare

• The **UMWA Welfare and Retirement Fund** has been in working operation now for a little more than 20 months. The **UMWA Welfare and Retirement Fund** is the fund which protects the nation's 400,000 soft-coal miners and their families.

During the first twenty months, 63,583 men who were disabled were given financial aid by the **UMWA Welfare and Retirement Fund**.

During that period 24,767 widows of coal miners received benefits.

During that period 109,081 wives and children of disabled coal miners were aided by the fund.

During that period 13,374 orphans of coal miners were aided.

During that period 10,489 death benefit payments of \$1,000 each went to the widows or other dependents of coal miners.

During that period 218 men who were paralyzed because their backs were broken in mining accidents were hospitalized.

During that period 2,079 mine workers of members of their families were given specialized medical and hospital care.

And in the hard-coal fields of Eastern Pennsylvania a similar program is being carried out by the **Anthracite Health and Welfare Fund**. This fund protects approximately 80,000 anthracite coal miners and their families.

In a two-year period, the hard-coal fund has aided more than 15,000 miners and dependents.

During that period 8,305 anthracite miners have received disability benefits.

During that period 3,080 widows of hard-coal miners, or other survivors, have received \$1,000 death benefit payments.



Grimacing with pain, a **UMWA** member with a broken back, victim of a mining accident, is carefully loaded into a Pullman berth to begin his journey from Charleston, W. Va., to a California hospital for rehabilitation under the program of the **UMWA Welfare and Retirement Fund**. He is Andrew Boyd, 36, of Blair, W. Va. He is married and the father of three children.

(Photo by Blissard)

"A Coal Miner's Goodbye"

(Economic Justice is deeply grateful to Mr. Korson for the privilege of using "A Coal Miner's Goodbye" in this issue).

From **COAL DUST ON THE FIDDLE. Songs and Stories of the Bituminous Industry.** By George Korson. University of Pennsylvania Press. 1943.

(Recorded: Man, West Virginia, May 28, 1940. Sung by Archie Conway, author. Conway is a local preacher in the United Baptist Church. He made this song while lying flat on his back in a cast grieving over the fact that he would never be able to return to the mines. Falling slate broke his back in the Guyan Eagle mine at Amherstdale, West Virginia, in 1938.)

For years I have been a coal miner,
I worked day by day in the mine;
But no longer am I a coal miner,
I have come to the end of the line.

I toiled 'neath the ground like the others,
Of hard knocks I have had quite a few,
Now my prayer as you labor, my brothers,
Is that God will be watching o'er you.

May He throw His great arm round about you,
From harm keep everyone free;
I guess I'll be lonesome without you,
Since it's quitting time forever for me.

My tools are all rusty, I reckon,
I last saw them stacked up inside,
No longer to me do they beckon,
Since I started that last fatal ride.

Some day I'll be absent forever,
Then be true to your union, I pray,
I'll deposit my transfer in heaven
Where no slate falls will come night or day.

We will have a good local in heaven,
Up there where the password is rest,
Where the business is praising our Father,
And no scabs ever mar or molest.

Our Savior is on the committee,
He is pleading our cases alone,
For ages He's been on committee,
Pleading daily to God on His throne.

The Bible up there is the Journal,
And the members all know it is true;
The contract up there is eternal —
It was written for me and for you.

No strikes ever happen in heaven,
The boss loves the men, I declare,
The house is in order in heaven —
I hope I shall see you up there.

During that period 3,138 retired anthracite miners have been placed on the pension rolls.

During that period 502 anthracite miners suffering from anthracosilicosis — "miner's asthma" — have been treated.

This last phase of the anthracite welfare program is made possible by a \$575,000 grant from the fund to the Jefferson Medical College Hospital, Philadelphia. This

hospital is now working out a program to establish outpatient clinics throughout the hard-coal region for the treatment of this crippling type of asthma.

The bituminous welfare fund for the 400,000 soft-coal miners has cost \$68,000,000 in the 20 months' period.

The anthracite fund for 80,000 hard-coal miners has cost \$7,000,000 for a similar period.

Nearly 300,000 American working men, women and children have been helped by these two programs.

Where Does the Money Come From?

Where does the money come from?

Let's ask John L. Lewis.

"The United Mine Workers of America has assumed the position over the years that the cost of caring for the human equity in the coal industry is inherently as valid as the cost of replacement of mining machinery, or the cost of paying taxes, or the cost of paying interest indebtedness, or any other factor incident to the production of a ton of coal for consumers' bins."

The money for the UMWA Welfare and Retirement Fund comes from payments of 20 cents a ton on each ton of coal mined. This money, the UMWA states, is part of the cost of production of a ton of coal.

It's the cost of caring for the "human equity."

Just a little about the administration of the two funds: The funds are charitable trusts.

The three-men board of trustees for the bituminous fund consists of Mr. Lewis, as chairman; Senator Styles Bridges, Republican of New Hampshire, the neutral member; and Mr. Ezra Van Horn, representing the operators.

The three-man board of trustees for the anthracite fund is made up of Thomas Kennedy, vice president of the UMWA, chairman; Robert L. Birtley, president of the Hammond Coal Company, representing the operators, and Mart F. Brennan, president of UMWA District 7.

Administration of the bituminous fund is directed by Miss Josephine Roche, a former coal operator. Administration of the anthracite fund is directed by Paul McNelis, a former miner and member of the UMWA.

Under these directing officials are the heads of the various services of the two funds.

Principle services of the bituminous fund are the medical, health and hospitalization service, the pension service, the death benefit service and the disability benefits service.

Let's look into the history of the UMWA welfare fund idea for a minute.

The History of the Fund Idea

The United Mine Workers of America first proposed a welfare fund for the nation's coal miners in 1945. The coal operators rejected the idea in principle and fact.

The following year the UMWA once again asked the operators to cooperate with the union in the establishment of a fund that would care for the crying needs of the men, women and children of the nation's basic industry. The operators still stubbornly refused to consider such a plan.

It was while the Government was in possession of the mines during 1946 that the now famous Krug-Lewis agreement came into being and established the bituminous welfare fund in principle and fact. The soft-coal fund was financed, in that first year, by a levy of 5 cents

a ton on each ton of coal mined. This fund, however, did not become operative until ten months later.

The following year the operators finally had accepted the principle of the welfare fund and the union and the employers reached an agreement. The royalty payments by the operators to the fund were increased to 10 cents a ton. In 1948 the operators and the union once again agreed on the fund and the royalty payments were increased to 20 cents a ton. The anthracite fund operates on similar royalties.

What are some of the human needs behind these funds?

Human Needs Behind the Funds

You've already read the statements made by Mr. Lewis on casualties in the coal mines.

Let's put some of them another way.

Did you know that for every 1,000,000 man-hours worked, 65 American coal miners become the victims of disabling accidents. For the manufacturing industries as a whole, the rate is 18.6.

Did you know that for the same number of man-hours worked there are 1.19 fatal accidents in coal mining? In manufacturing it is .09.

Or have you considered the fact that during the first 12 months of America's participation in World War II casualties in the coal industry exceeded all casualties in all American armed forces — on land, sea and in the air.

The 260,000 plus bituminous coal miners and members of their families who have been aided by the welfare fund know that the coal industry is still grinding up human flesh and bones.

But the industry is no longer throwing its human waste upon an industrial scrap heap "to live or die according to the circumstances which attended them," as John L. Lewis puts it.

One of the surprising results of the establishment of the welfare fund has been the fact that despite their loud protestations, the average coal operator will admit privately: (1) That such a welfare fund was long needed; and (2) That John L. Lewis was the one man who was strong enough to bring it about.

In 1946 the coal operators sent a letter to President Truman pleading that Mr. Lewis' proposal for a welfare fund for mine workers was a plot to "establish by contract a new social and economic philosophy."

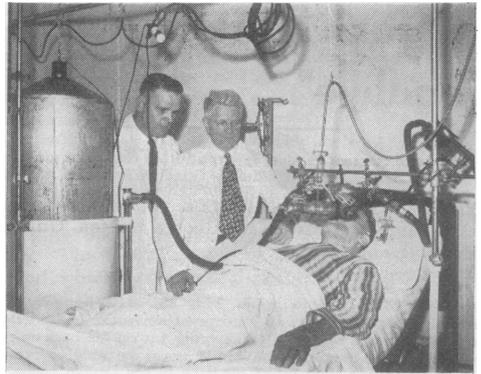
Actually, the only "revolutionary" thing about the principle of the welfare fund is its practical application. It's fairly simple to get even the most conservative employer to admit—as a matter of principle—that a man is as good as a machine.

But when the United Mine Workers of America applied that principle of simple justice to the men who dig the nation's coal it scared employers all over the nation.

Let's hear from a few of these men who are receiving help from the United Mine Workers of America Welfare and Retirement Fund to get a better idea of the human equity involved:

Ezra Arnold of Drakesboro, Kentucky—"Hunger and tears no longer plague miners' homes. Just writing to thank John L. Lewis for what he has done for me and others that have spent their best days in the mines."

Michael Shima of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—"Received your check for my disability and am writing to thank you for something that means the difference be-



A victim of anthraco-silicosis, or "miner's asthma," receives treatment in the Jefferson Medical College Hospital, Philadelphia, under the program of the Anthracite Health and Welfare Fund. He is Anthony Cebulesky, 65, of Summit Hill, Pa.

(Allied Syndicates Photo)

tween starvation and that of being able to live again."

Carl Romich of Springfield, Illinois—"I want to thank you and members of the Board for the retirement check which I am most happy to receive . . . I never dreamed that I would ever live this long, after many years of hard work, to receive such humanitarian assistance. I am 72 years old, have been a member of the UMWA for 48 years . . . worked for Peabody for 30 years . . . had to retire due to a mine injury and consequently have been unable to do any kind of work since, even outside jobs."

Joe Chambers of Copper Hill, Virginia—"I spent my life underground . . . a member of the UMWA from year 1900 . . . shut off from work because of illness in 1936, I have been unable to work since that time. Life has been hard. But thanks to God and our beloved President Lewis I have become a benefit-drawing member. I feel life will be much easier for me and my aged companion (we just celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary). We now feel like we have a pay day we can call our own. It has been a long time not to have a pay day."

Such letters pour into the UMWA headquarters and the welfare fund office by the thousands. They are words deep from the hearts of the men of the mining industry.

It costs 20 cents a ton to get this important job done.

We think you'll agree that it's worth it to turn American working men from a state of pauperization into assets to the community.

Let Justice T. Alan Goldsborough of the U. S. District Court of the District of Columbia speak for the public:

On June 22, 1948, Judge Goldsborough ruled that the UMWA Welfare Fund pension plan was a good plan, legal and business-like.

He said: "There seems to be nothing that shocks the mind at the idea that the members of the United Mine Workers of America who have worked for 20 years under the ground, and are 62 years old, and were employed on May 29, 1946, should get \$100 a month pensions . . . It is meager. It is just enough to keep them from being objects of charity in their old age. It is just enough to give them a little dignity. It is something to make them hold their heads up."