

UNITED MINE WORKERS OF AMERICA
NEWS BUREAU
ROOM 418, WEST VIRGINIAN HOTEL
Bluefield, West Virginia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bluefield, West Virginia, June 8, 1949. -- Mr. John Owens, international secretary-treasurer of the United Mine Workers of America and chief UMWA negotiator in present contract discussions with the Southern Coal Producers' Association, today issued the following statement:

"The profit-swollen Southern coal industry has made several grotesque proposals to representatives of the United Mine Workers of America.

"In the interest of good-faith bargaining, the representatives of the UMWA have given serious consideration to these proposals. We have done so in the hope of bringing enlightenment to the medieval minds that do the thinking for the spokesmen of this holding-corporation, the Southern Coal Producers' Association.

"In their frantic effort to turn back the clock on the American coal miner in his struggle for human dignity, these operators, in a mealy-mouthed statement, have made four principal demands upon the union:

"1. They would return the coal miners to a condition of serfdom by fining them for exercising their basic American right to work when willing and able. They ask us to surrender a fundamental freedom.

"2. They would take from the miners the right to put down their tools so that they might memorialize their union brothers killed in the mines. We say to the coal operators that they can eliminate the necessity for memorial periods by quitting the bloody slaughter of an average of more than 1,800 of our members a year over 35 years.

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"3. They would take from the aged and infirm veterans of this industry their \$100-a-month pensions. Of this amount Justice T. Alan Goldsborough of the District Court of the District of Columbia said: '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.'

"4. They would force longer hours of back-breaking toil upon the nation's coal miners. They would remove from the pockets of the mineworkers \$125,000,000 a year in wages.

"They talk from both sides of their mouths, these millionaire coal operators. With tongue in cheek they speak of enlightened labor relations. From the other side of their mouths they admit they would take from the coal miner his American privilege of realizing increased purchasing power and a better standard of living. They would destroy his security in old age and throw him upon a human scrap heap at the mercy of circumstances.

"To their proposals we cry 'shame'. To the American public we say: 'By their demands, these Southern operators would return America's basic industry, and by pattern-setting chain reaction the rest of industry, to the dark days of the robber barons, of depression and of national economic chaos.'"

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