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STRIKES IN THE OHIO COAL FIELDS.

BY THOS. B. BANCROFT.

The coal trade in this State during the past year has been in a very unsatisfactory condition. With the prostration in other branches of industry, the production of coal was, in the early part of the year, in excess of the demand, and prices were so low that the outlook was gloomy indeed. The miners are not generally working half time, and there was no assurance that even this rate of production could be maintained for any length of time. The question of a reduction in the price of mining began to be agitated by the operators, and as a natural consequence, labor troubles followed. The strike at Dell Roy, in Carroll county, was then in progress, and it was followed by the strike at Coalton and Wellston, in Jackson county, and the lock-out in the Hocking Valley. A number of smaller strike and local difficulties have characterized the business of the year throughout the State, but the labor troubles of the Hocking Valley have crowded them all into the

background. The stoppage of the mines at Pomeroy, and the loss of output in the Hocking Valley, caused by the lock-out, depleted the market to some extent, and probably enabled the other districts of the State to work more fully than they otherwise would have done, but even under this decrease of production, coal mining, all over the State, with the exception, perhaps, of the Jackson county mines, has been very irregular, and uncertain throughout the year.

STRIKES.

Whilst coal troubles of a minor character have been no more frequent than usual during the past year, there have been three strikes that are deemed of sufficient importance to deserve notice in this report. These are the strikes at Dell Roy and Coalton, and the lock-out in the Hocking Valley.

The strike at Dell Roy, in Carroll county, which lasted about six months, was inaugurated February 15th. It was caused by a proposed reduction of 13 cents per ton in mining, offered by the operators. Against this the men struck, and a determined resistance was made by them. About Augt 15th, however, the men went to work at the operators' terms. This was followed by a reduction in price of mining at some of the neighboring mines, to conform to the reduced rate at which the men went to work. One result, that was the outgrowth of this strike, was the formation of two coal companies, somewhat corporative in their nature, by miners of the district. These men, during their enforced idleness, united their labor, leased some coal property, and opened up and commenced working two mines. One of them, known as the Connotton Coal Co., is composed of nine miners, who have opened a drift on vein number five, which is found to be of good quality. The other, composed of twelve miners, and called the Russell Hill Coal Co., have sunk a shaft upon the Pike Run vein, at Dell Roy, which is found to be four feet and two inches thick and of excellent quality. Both these companies appear to be doing well, and to have fair prospects of success before them.

In the Coalton district, of Jackson county, the miners had been working for a year under contract, at a price for mining that was to be five cents per ton over and above that paid in the Hocking Valley. This contract expired on the first of May, just at the time when a reduction in the price of mining was being asked in the Hocking Valley. The miners of Coalton were asked to sign

the same contract again, for another year, but, with the doubtful and uncertain state of affairs in the Hocking Valley, they could form no idea what the outcome might be, or what their own price for mining might become. Under these circumstances they refused to sign any contract for a year, but subsequently offered to do so for four months. To this the operators objected, and stated as their reason, that such a contract, for four months only, would expire during their fall trade and at a time when it would be very inconvenient for them to have to open up the question of wages, with all the perplexities attendant thereon. As a consequence, about the middle of May, all the miners of the Coalton district, with the exception of one mine, came out on strike. No disturbance attended the dispute, and the men quietly maintained their position during the whole time of the strike, which lasted about a month. On June 3rd a mass meeting of the miners of the Coalton and Wellston districts was held, and after the transaction of some other business, a general strike of all the commercial mines in the Wellston district was ordered, commencing June 5th. These men had, so far, been working while their brethren of the Coalton district were idle. This order did not include those miners who were working in the furnace banks and supplying coal to the blast furnaces of the district. The men were now all on strike, and matters began to assume a serious aspect, so far as the general business of the district was concerned. However, the same orderly conduct was observed as had previously characterized the difficulty, and after many conferences between the men and operators, the following proposition was submitted by the men to the operators, and by them accepted June 12th, and all resumed work, and have been working with great regularity ever since:

Basis of settlement of the differences between the miners and operators of the Coalton District, Jackson county, Ohio, and adoption of rules governing the future workings of the mines and for resumption of work at once in all the mines in said district.

RULE 1. The price paid for mining shall be five cents per ton above Hocking Valley prices.

RULE 2. The miners of this district shall be free to act on all questions of a general character in such manner as may be decided upon, from time to time, by the State Miners' Association in their State Convention; provided, that the difference in price named in the first rule shall be deemed a local question.

RULE 3. All differences of a local nature that may arise between operators and miners at any mine in this district shall be settled by the mine committee and mine boss. Should they fail to agree, the difference must be referred to a board of arbitration composed of five miners and five operators and one disinterested party, the latter to be selected by the two first named parties, the decision of the board to be final; pending arbitration work shall continue.

RULE 4. There shall be no meetings held in the mines during working hours.

RULE 5. No operator shall have control over the purchasing power of any of the miners.

RULE 6. The price paid for entry driving shall be \$1.75 per yard when mining is 75 cents per ton, and when 85 cents, \$2.00 per yard, and shall vibrate up and down in the same proportion, except in case there is rock or rock mixture in the bottom removed, in which event it shall be paid for at one-third more over and above the price of the top slate.

RULE 7. No mine shall be prejudiced and no miner victimized by reason of the present trouble in the Coalton district.

Signed on behalf of the miners of Coalton district:

JOHN WALL,
JOHN WYKLE,
JOSEPH SMITH,
CHAS. RITTENHOUSE,
JOHN BLANKENSHIP,
Committee.

Signed on behalf of the operators of Coalton district:

J. J. EVANS,
H. L. CHAPMAN,
EBEN JONES,
J. MORROW,
E. W. REDDING,
Committee.

In the meantime the difficulties continued in the Hocking Valley. Trade was very much depressed and no prospect of its improving. The miners were receiving 70 cents per ton, the usual summer price, but the mines were idle, except when an order was receive for coal at any one of them, and then it would work only long enough to fill the order. From this cause the miners were

unable to work steadily, and from four to ten days' work each month became about the most they could get.

Matters remained in this condition until April 22nd, on which day an address was prepared by the Columbus & Hocking Coal and Iron Co. (known as the Syndicate) and the Ohio Coal Exchange, which was submitted to their miners, and posted up through the district. This address alluded to the depressed state of the trade, and stated that in other mining districts, coming in competition with the Hocking Valley, the price of mining had been reduced so materially that the Hocking Valley operators were no longer able to meet them in prices and closed as follows:

"If we are to hold our trade, keep our mines in operation, and give our employees work during the coming season, we must have our mining for 60 cents per ton until September 1st. We ask you to call a meeting and give us your answer by Monday the 28th. Contracts are being closed every day and Hocking is not securing them."

No action was taken upon this address by the miners, further than to discuss its merits among themselves, until April 30th, when, at a meeting of miners held in Columbus, an address was issued to the general public, giving their arguments and reasons against a reduction in the price of mining, and asking the Syndicate and Coal Exchange to withdraw their notice of reduction. This address was signed by the Executive Board and the President, Vice-President and Secretary of the Ohio Miners' Amalgamated Association.

Next day, May 1st, a general convention of the miners of the district was held at Straitsville, and after transacting some other business, the question of the address issued by the operators, April 22nd, was taken up, and upon motion, it was resolved to indefinitely postpone any consideration of the question of agreeing to any reduction.

A suggestion was made at the meeting by President McBride, that a committee be appointed to meet a committee of the Syndicate and see if some measures could not be devised by which the furnaces and furnace mines of the Valley could be set to work. Such committee was appointed, and on May 8th the two committees met. Articles of agreement, drawn up by the Miners' Association, upon which it was thought these mines could be started, were presented to the Syndicate, and after a long and good-natured discussion, the following agreement was entered into:

MUTUAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE OPERATORS AND THE MINERS OF
DISTRICT NO. 1. OF THE O. M. A. A., ENTERED INTO THIS NINTH
DAY OF MAY, 1884, AT NEW STRAITSVILLE, PERRY COUNTY, OHIO.

ARTICLE 1. All miners employed in furnace mines shall receive the same rate per ton, for mining, and the same price per yard, for entry driving, as the miners working in commercial mines. All other rules regulating prices for different kinds of work, as well as the system of working mines throughout this district, shall be rigidly observed, and should a violation of said prices, or system, take place, either by the operator or miner, said violation shall be investigated by a joint committee, consisting of three representatives of both parties, and if possible, an amicable settlement arrived at. Failing in this, however, the miners may, if they so desire, stop all furnace mines by giving one week's notice. Said joint meeting shall be held within one week from the time of said difference.

ARTICLE 2. In all cases, when commercial mines suspend work for the purpose of adjusting the price of mining, the price paid for mining shall be maintained in all furnace mines until an adjustment is arrived at by the commercial mines. After a settlement is made, however, prices shall be uniform throughout the district.

ARTICLE 3. During a suspension of work in commercial mines, the furnace mines shall continue working, provided that all coal mined, excepting nut and pea coal, shall be used for no other purpose than that of supplying the furnaces with which the mines are connected.

ARTICLE 4. Should a strike be inaugurated in this district, the miners working in commercial mines shall, after the expiration of two weeks, be entitled to an equal share of the work performed in furnace mines.

ARTICLE 5. In selecting miners to work in furnace mines, we would recommend that no miners should be employed outside of those already under the employment of the company. The miners to be taken from those mines that are nearest to where the furnaces are located. And further, that a sufficient number of miners should be employed in said furnace mines, that will all times enable them to make as near as practical the average wages of other mines operated by the company.

ARTICLE 6. All district rules conflicting with any of these rules are hereby repealed.

ARTICLE 7. These rules shall take effect and be in force after receiving a majority of all votes cast by the miners of District No. 1, of above rules, O. M. A. A.

All returns, for or against, to be made to the Secretary of Conference Committee,

ALEXANDER JOHNSON,
Buchtel, Athens Co., Ohio.

In behalf of the miners:

CHRISTOPHER EVANS, *Chairman*,
ALEXANDER JOHNSON, *Secretary*,
PATRICK HOLERAN,
JOHN HARDESTY,
WM. E. EVANS,
THE COLUMBUS & HOCKING COAL & IRON CO.,
By J. R. BUCHEL, *Vice-President*.

But one furnace was working at the time, and no effort was made to start others, and eventually the men working in the furnace mines were brought out by the other miners.

From the date of this meeting, May 9th, matters progressed in a desultory way, men and operators viewing each other with distrust, and considerable irritation being engendered on both sides. It was evident that that a crisis was at hand, and both parties to the dispute were daily becoming firmer in their views, and the breach between them was constantly widening.

On June 20th, notices were posted at the mines of the Columbus & Hocking Coal and Iron Co., and at those of the Ohio Coal Exchange, stating that on and after Monday, June 23rd, the price paid for mining in those mines would be 60 cents per ton; and at noon of the same day all of their miners quit work. This was the first formal notice of a reduction that had been issued, and in accordance with the resolution of the Miners' Association, it met with a prompt resistance. For some two weeks after this, affairs in the Valley remained in *statu quo*, with the mines and miners idle and no action of importance being taken by either side.

On July 5th, the following notice was issued by the C. & H. C. & I. Co. and the Ohio Coal Exchange:

NOTICE.

"Our appeal of April 22nd for assistance in holding trade for the Hocking Valley having been rejected, and the offer of June 20th to pay 60 cents for mining being refused, we hereby withdraw our offer of 60 cents."

No offer was substitute for the one withdrawn, and on July 12th the miners of the Valley were paid off and ordered to take their tools from out the mines.

Here ended all official communication between the men and operators, and the long lock-out commenced. At this date quite three thousand miners were out of employment in the Valley.

The only official action looking to a solution of the difficulty, taken after this time, was a resolution passed by a convention of miners held in Columbus, September 10th, declining, in consideration of the dull state of the trade, to ask the usual advance of ten cents per ton on mining, which had hitherto always been given September 1st. In some parts of the State this advance had already been accorded, but the miners benefited by it consented to its withdrawal, for the general good.

On July 14th, two hundred and fifty Italians were brought into the Valley, from outside, under contract to work in the machine mines at \$1.40 per day. These men were accompanied by a strong force of guards from the Pinkerton Detective Agency of Chicago, and were at once set to work.

Since this time men have been continually brought into the Valley from abroad and set to work in the mines under contract (a copy of which is given below) and at this writing some 1,500 men, blacks and whites, occupy the places once filled by the resident miners, and about fifteen of the mines of the Valley are working with this labor.

MINERS' ANNUAL CONTRACT.

This agreement, made this 6th day of September, A. D. 1884, between the Columbus & Hocking Coal and Iron Co. of the first part and ——— of the second part:

Witnesseth: That the said party of the second part has agreed, and by these presents does agree, to enter into the employment of said party of the first part as a miner of coal, to commence on the 6th day of September, 1884, and to continue therein until the 6th day of September, 1885, and to abide by, adhere to, and

observe the rules and regulations promulgated from time to time by the said C. & H. C. & I. Co. for the purpose of regulating mining and other employment in and about coal mines of said C. & H. C. & I. Co., and not to be absent without leave, except in case of sickness or other unavoidable contingency which would prevent him from work; also to keep his room in good working order.

The said party of the first part agrees to pay the said party of the second part for each and every ton of 2,000 pounds of coal mined by him and delivered on bank cars at the face of the room where the same is mined, after it is screened over the one and one-quarter inch screen of the company, the sum of fifty cents. All payment to be made on the regular pay-day and in accordance with the rules and regulations aforesaid; and the pay-day will be on the 15th of each month for all wages or moneys the party of the second part may have earned during the last month previous to such pay-day.

And the party of the second part further agrees that he will not stop work, nor join any strike or combination for the purpose of obtaining or causing the said C. & H. C. & I. Co. to pay their miners an advance of wages or beyond what is specified, nor will he in any way aid, abet or countenance any such strike, combination or scheme for any purpose whatever during the time specified in the first clause of said contract. And if the second party shall violate any of the provisions of this contract in this regard at any time, he shall thereby forfeit all claims for coal previously mined and not paid for, and the first party be released from liability therefor.

In witness whereof the said parties have hereunto set their hands and seals the day and year first above written.

(Signatures of the company and superintendent, a witness, and the miner.)

RULES AND REGULATIONS

Adopted for the purpose of regulating mining and other employment in and about their coal mines.

1. Every employe of the company will be expected to perform a full day's work in his respective lines of employment, unless the foreman of his department orders less time to be worked.

2. Any suspension of work during working hours by any portion or of all of the company's employes for the purpose of

holding or attending any meeting for any purpose whatsoever, whether above or below ground, affecting operation of the company's mines, is positively forbidden.

3. The company will not deal with any committee purporting to represent any league, organization or combination of workmen, but will deal directly with each of its employes.

4. Any employe who may have been discharged by the company, or who may leave with the consent of the company, shall receive all arrearages of pay due him at once.

5. No person will be allowed to interfere in any manner with the employer's just right of employing, retaining and discharging from employment, as provided herein, any person or persons whom the superintendent or bank boss, having charge of the mines for the time being, may consider proper, nor interfere in any way by threats or menace, or otherwise with the right of any employe to work or engage to work in any way and upon any terms and with whom he may think proper and best for his interest or the benefit of his family.

6. No employe will be permitted to fill his place by another man without the consent of the bank boss or superintendent.

7. Every employe will be paid once a month at the regular pay-day all wages or moneys he may have earned during the last month previous to such pay-day, after deducting any indebtedness which such employe may owe to the company, or which the company, with the consent of such employe, may have assumed to pay to any other person.

8. It shall be the duty of every employe working in or about the mines to keep his working place in good order and repair. Any such employe who shall willfully, negligently or carelessly suffer his working place to get out of order or repair, and who shall not, upon request, immediately put the same in repair, the company may put such working place in repair at expense of the miner in fault, and may retain the amount of such expense from the next or any future payment to which said employe would be otherwise entitled until fully reimbursed from such expense.

9. No employe, who has left the employment of the company, whether voluntarily or by discharge, will be entitled to receive any arrearages of pay due him for labor performed, whether on the regular pay-day or during the interval preceding pay-day, until he shall have put his working place in perfect working order, as re-

quired by this contract with the company. All employes leaving said employment will be requested to procure the certificate of the bank boss that they have complied with the requirements of this rule as aforesaid before making application at the company's office for final settlement.

10. Any tenant of of the company upon leaving its service, whether voluntary or by discharge, will not be entitled to receive any part of wages due him for labor performed until he shall have vacated the premises occupied by him and presented the keys of the same at the office.

From July 14th, when the first lot of men were brought into the Valley to replace the old hands, all the mines which were started in this manner have been guarded, day and night, by a large force composed of what are known as "Pinkerton guards," and others, employed for that purpose, from among the residents of the vicinity. The C., H. V. & T. Railroad also placed guards upon their bridges on the Monday Creek branch of their road, and kept a patrol train running over that part of their road every night.

Hundreds of the old miners of the Valley left the district and went elsewhere, in Ohio and other States, to seek employment. A great number of those who remained found work at neighboring mines that continued working at the old prices. Most noticeable among these were the miners of the Ohio Central Coal Co., and those of Messrs. W. P. Rend & Co. These mines, located at Jacksonsville, in Athens county, and at Corning, Shawnee and Straitsville, in Perry county, were filled to repletion with men. Four, or more, were placed in every room; and this work was so arranged by the Miners' Association, that all the idle miners had their just share of it by turns, and one and all contributed liberally of their earnings to the support who were not so employed.

On September 10th, the Ohio Central Coal Co. closed all their mines, which threw out of employment, not only the recently employed men, but their own old hands as well. Subsequently, the Rend mine, at Straitsville, was thrown idle by the refusal of the C., H. V. & T. Railroad to furnish cars for their coal. This, however, was but temporary, and in a few days this matter was adjusted and the mine resumed work. Contributions of food and money from other mining districts, from trades' unions, and the general public, came in largely for the support of the miners in this struggle, and commissaries were established all through the Valley,

where rations were served out to those entitled to receive them. Seldom, if ever, in the history of strikes, has such thorough organization been met with on both sides; and certainly there has never been such firm determination shown by both parties to hold out to the bitter end.

Perhaps no conflict between capital and labor has ever caused such wide-spread interest as has this of the Hocking Valley. The press, all over the land, has teemed with accounts of it, and much that is exaggerated and false has crept into their statements.

Disturbances have occurred, during the disagreement, that have been charged upon the miners, and by them credited to the guards. Without entering upon the merits of the case, it will be sufficient to make a plain statement of the facts.

On the night of August 30th, a hopper, near Straitsville, was burned, and the same night an attack was made upon the camp at Snake Hollow, in Hocking county, and a guard, named Hare, was killed.

On August 31st, a call was made upon the Governor, by the Sheriff of Hocking county, for the aid of the militia to assist in maintaining the peace. That night, the Governor went himself to the Valley, and, after viewing the ground over, returned September 1st, and on September 2nd, four companies of militia were sent down, under command of Assistant Adjutant General Dill. These companies were stationed at Sand Run, Longstreth, Murray City and Snake Hollow. One of the companies, being considered in excess of the requirements of the occasion, was withdrawn September 8th. The remainder were on duty until the latter part of the month, when, there appearing no further occasion for them, they were gradually dithdrawn. Those at Sand Run and Murray City were relieved September 27th. On September 29th, these were followed by those stationed at Snake Hollow, and, on October 3rd, the few remaining on duty at Longstreth were discharged.

On October 11th, the coal in five mines about Straitsville and Sand Run, and in one mine at Carbon Hill, and in one at Shawnee, was found to be burning. They were all sealed up and allowed to remain shut until the fire was extinguished, which, in the worst case, was about two months.

On the night of November 5th, an attack was made upon the guards at Murray City, which was repulsed, and, on the same

night, three bridges on the Monday Creek branch of the C., H. V. & T. Railroad were burned.

On _____, (will some reader kindly furnish the missing date.) the hoppers at W. A. Shoemaker & Co.'s mines near Nelsonville, were destroyed by fire.

The effect of this conflict between employers and employed has been disastrous to both parties, and far-reaching in its effects. It cannot be denied that the loss to the operators has been very heavy, and the deplorable condition of the miners needs no argument to prove. But for the assistance derived from their brethren in this State as well as from other sources, they would have been unable to have continued the struggle as long as it has lasted.

The vexed question of capital and labor is growing daily in importance, and is one that has occupied the attention of political economists for years, and will continue to do so for years to come. Many theories have been advanced towards its solution, while but few have proved of any practical value. A board of Arbitration has been the favorite idea of many, but from local causes, this has seldom been found to give entire satisfaction.

A system has been in use in the coal regions of Eastern Pennsylvania for the last fifteen years, or more, that so far as the question of wages is concerned, has proven eminently satisfactory, and I see no reason why it might not be adopted in the mining regions of this State. It is as follows: When first adopted, a joint committee of operators and men met and agreed upon a basis price, to be paid for mining coal and for days' wages, whenever coal sold at \$2.50 per ton at the shipping point. A point was also agreed upon, below which the price paid for mining and for days' wages should never go, in any event.

With this as a basis, at the close of each month the two committees meet to arrange the price of wages for that month. This is done in the following manner: The name of every operator in the district is placed in a hat, and five names are drawn therefrom. The joint committee then wait upon the five operators, so drawn, and from their books the average price received by each for his coal, during the month, is taken. The average of these prices, received by the five, is then struck, and upon this average the wages to be paid for that month are fixed. The following, clipped from a recent paper, will perhaps show the method adopted more clearly:

"The following collieries, drawn to furnish prices of coal, sold in November, 1884, to determine the rate of wages to be paid for that month, in the Schuylkill district, make the following returns:

Girard colliery, (P. & R. C. and I. Co.)	-	-	-	-	-	\$2.42
Wadesville colliery, do	-	-	-	-	-	2.45
Girard Mammoth colliery, do	-	-	-	-	-	2.41
Gilbertor colliery, do	-	-	-	-	-	2.44
M. H. Gap colliery, do	-	-	-	-	-	2.40

The average of these rates being \$2.42 2-5, the rate of wages to be paid for the month of November, 1884, is three (3) per cent. below the \$2.50 basis."

I see no reason why some system of this nature cannot be introduced in the mining regions of Ohio. The first and only difficulty to be overcome, is in arriving at a just, equitable and satisfactory basis to start from. This once accomplished, the rest is plain sailing. This plan could be adopted by each mining section alone, for itself, or as wages in most of the districts in the State are governed more or less by those paid the Hocking Valley, it could be adopted in the Hocking Valley alone, and wages in other parts of the State could be regulated by prices in the Valley. This plan is *known* to have worked well in practice, and is offered here as a suggestion only, but if from it should spring any method by which such difficulties as we have witnessed during the present year can in future be avoided, I shall consider the time well spent in aiding to bring it about.

