

## Blackmail

ANOTHER sham-battle has been fought. The opponents divide the gate-receipts. The public pays and will continue to pay for a long time in higher prices for anthracite coal. The only difference between the coal fight and the pre-arranged prize-fights is that in the latter case only the gullible are mulcted, whereas in the former, everybody must pay, directly or indirectly, whether he has seen the show or not.

As if to corroborate the belief of shrewd observers that the whole contest was a frame-up, the United Mine Workers proceeded to broadcast a series of "red" scare stories which have had no rivals since the War, immediately at the close of the negotiations. It was the kind of stuff that might have been expected from the National Association of Manufacturers or the National Civic Federation. All that it meant to anyone who could read between the lines was an attempt to discredit some opposition group within the United Mine Workers which was preparing to challenge the existing Board of Officers. The Union was using against its own insurgents, the poison gas which the big interests had been employing against the Unions.

Neither side regarded the public interest, nor is it easy to see why either side should. As long as the public was able to get low priced coal, what did it care about the wages or living conditions of the miners? In general the public is wholly indifferent to the welfare of the great groups which serve it, until there is interruption of service. What justification is there for the public to complain of lack of consideration when it shows none?

The United States Coal Commission has issued some reports on the subject, which are valuable so far as they illuminate the details of the industry, but mostly they have concerned themselves about superficials. They have not published any important figures dealing with the fundamental conditions which make it possible for the anthracite coal fields to form the basis of the tightest monopoly in the United States. Much was made of the pros and cons of operators and operatives, but hardly a word crept into the public print about the hazy figures lurking in the background—indeed if they were not such respectable people one might refer to them as the "niggers in the coal pile"—the owners of the coal land by whose gracious permission operators and operatives alike are permitted to function.

The operators and operatives alike have to render some service for what they get, but of the mine owners it may be said "they toil not, neither do they spin" but they get theirs just the same." And the higher coal goes in price the more they get in royalties. In many instances they may furnish the explanation why it is that we must pay \$1.00 per ton more for coal in order to give the miner 30 cents. The operator under his contract has to "divvy" with the "royaltor" (a new word, but which deserves to live as descriptive of a limited but highly remunerated

class in the community, whose chief economic function is the dissipation of congested wealth.)

The Coal Commission launches the brilliant suggestion that the Interstate Commerce Commission be charged with regulating the coal industry—a suggestion received by the county at large with a wry smile, remembering the exploits of that body in dealing with the railroads. Such a proposal would doubtless be accepted by the operators and perhaps by the operatives with varying degrees of satisfaction. But where does the public come in. About all that Public Service Commissions have achieved so far is the protection of shareholders and the gouging of the public. It would be so with coal.

Every Single Taxer knows that it is not by restriction but by freedom that salvation must be worked out. All the anthracite coal which counts in the National supply is concentrated in a few counties of a single state. The needs of this country and Canada lend to this deposit a fabulous value. Because of ancient deeds antedating the Government itself and granted by foreign rulers to their favorites or creditors in return for money lent them for personal expenses and dissipations, it has been put in the power of a few people to determine how much, if any, coal the people shall have each winter and at what price. Like Warren Hastings they probably feel that their most conspicuous virtue is moderation. They have striven to estimate "what the traffic will bear" and to charge no more. *Their power to exact high prices depends on their ability to withhold from use the thousands of acres of coal-bearing land which they own, but which they do not work or permit to be worked.*

It has been easy to do this in the past because such land has been assessed at its agricultural value. If such land were assessed at what it would sell for and were compelled to bear its proper share of State and County taxes, the grip of monopoly would soon be shaken or broken. There are signs even in corporation-owned Pennsylvania that such a policy is coming; some of the counties are forcing a policy which will lead to full value assessments and when that time comes we may expect a more intelligent treatment of the whole coal problem. Of course transportation must always play a large part in determining the price of coal to the consumer, but that question too is forcing itself on the public mind as one which must be solved if progress is not to stop. It seemed sometime ago, as if the only way that the public mind could be convinced of the fallacy of the theory, that we must leave the unraveling of our social snarls to government, was by large experiments in Socialism. Fortunately the experiments already made have disillusioned thousands and will probably deter other thousands from following that path. They know now that governments have most of the vices of their constituents and few of their virtues.

We believe it would be very helpful if Congress at the next session would order an investigation into the whole

question of mine ownerships and coal royalties and Pennsylvania's method of taxing such properties, so as to determine what action, if any, may appropriately be taken by the Federal authorities to promote the general welfare.

J. J. M.

## R. L. Outhwaite Resigns From the Labor Party

**P**URSUANT to his intention to start a Single Tax Party in Great Britain (though that will not be its name) Mr. Outhwaite, former M.P., has tendered his resignation as member of the Independent Labor Party. In his letter resigning he says:

"I am at present attending an International Conference for the Taxation of Land Values for the purpose of urging that the demand for the assertion of human rights should be lifted out of the category of rates and taxes and presented as one for emancipation from economic slavery resulting from the private appropriation of the earth."

He concludes by saying, "I can be of no further service to you now."

All the papers of the United Kingdom featured this resignation. The Derby *Telegraph* comments as follows:

"Mr. Outhwaite has washed his hands of the Labor Party. It is not for us to estimate the effects of his defection on the fortunes of that powerful political organization, but we have an idea that it will not be very profound or far-reaching. If political parties were composed almost exclusively of men of his illogical mind, we should never know where we stood. For the fact that some one or other takes a step with which one seriously disagrees is regarded by this strangely constituted politician as a valid and sufficient excuse for having no further association with him on matters with which both parties are in absolute agreement. The case of Mr. Outhwaite is, however, of such an extreme kind, that we trust for the sake of our political consistency, whether we be Liberals or Conservatives, or Labor men, it stands almost alone. He is a gentleman who has long taken the deepest possible interest in the taxation of land values. The friends of that movement recently met at Oxford in furtherance of their ideas. They had a perfect right to confer on such an issue, and many of us felt grateful that amidst the various Coalition tragedies of recent years, this ancient principle of the Liberal faith had not been entirely forgotten."

The *Evening Standard*, of London, has a correspondent who commenting on Mr. Outhwaite's resignation from the Independent Labor Party, says:

"I have a certain feeling personally of affection for Mr. Outhwaite. At one time it was my duty to attend regularly the debates of the House of Commons, and it was always a pleasure to watch him looking like a rather mournful and strictly non-combative eagle, gazing over an entirely indifferent assembly."

The Manchester *Evening News* says, under the heading An Erratic Politician:

"Mr. R. L. Outhwaite, who has now shaken the dust of the I.L.P. from his shoes, was one of the best known of the Liberal headquarters' staff fighters in the early 1900's.

Born in Tasmania, he first plunged into politics in South Africa, and shared in many a rough-and-tumble at noisy meetings there. He was a very active by-election worker for Liberalism for a number of years, and courageous enough to go to West Birmingham and challenge "Joe" in 1906.

While M.P. for Hanley he became associated with the late Mr. Joseph Fels, and took up the crusade for taxation reform which Mr. Fels financed.

Mr. Outhwaite left the Liberal party on grounds of principle which were called also "Pacifism" during the war.

Now he has left the party of his second choice, and probably will plough a lonely political furrow for the rest of his days."

In a communication to the *Staffordshire Sentinel* of August 24, Mr. Outhwaite says:

"I have had four and one-half years seeking to serve Labor through its parties. All the work the Commonwealth League has done amongst the rank and file has been negatived by this sort of trickery. I am tired of it all. To my mind the people are doomed to perish in enslavement if they do not swiftly assert their common right to the land and its rent."

## Why the Commonwealth League was Founded

**I** SAW too that the pettifogging presentation of the cause of emancipation in fiscal terms laid us open to the charge that our chief aim was not to free the people from wage-slavery, but to free the capitalist from repressive burdens. So it seemed to me to be a paramount duty to formulate our demand in terms that would admit of no misconception as to aims. To make manifest to all that Liberty was our goal, and to call on those who had stood for liberty to regard us as their allies. So we founded the Commonwealth League. So we cut ourselves off from old associates, and have spared neither Liberals nor the taxers and raters, who propose justice and liberty on the instalment plan; we have our reward in the Land Nationalisation Bill.—R. L. OUTHWAITE IN *The Commonweal*.

**A**S we go to press we learn of the death of J. W. Bengough, of Toronto, a devoted servant of the cause known to every reader of the REVIEW. Full details of the life and services of our friend will follow in next issue.

IF men cannot find an employer, why cannot they employ themselves? Simply because they are shut out from the element on which human labor can alone be exerted.

—HENRY GEORGE.