

MINES LIKEN UNTO SLAUGHTER PENS

Some Inside History of the Recent
Fayette County Disasters by
Oak Hill Miner

READY MADE GRAVES FOR VICTIMS

The following letter appeared in last week's issue of the United Mine Workers Journal, written by W. F. Larrison from Oak Hill, which furnishes some inside history from the miners' graveyard:

Once more have we to record the wholesale slaughter of men in this field, victims of the greed of the White Oak Fuel Company. On May 1 the Whipple mine let go at 3:30 p. m. and so far sixteen dead bodies have been taken from the bottom. Fifty-three men escaped up the air shaft, which is provided with a stairway, and by reason of that means of escape the disaster at Stuart was not repeated. Reports as to the number of men in the mine at the time of the explosion are conflicting, and it is impossible to get accurate information on the subject.

On April 30 there was a small explosion at Oakwood, about one mile from Whipple, and several men were burnt. That accident has been kept very quiet, and no news reached the outside world. As it is the policy of the White Oak Fuel Company to suppress all news as far as possible, fearing they might be unable to get fresh victims to work in their various slaughter pens.

The Whipple mine is one of the best equipped in the state, and was opened by the Collins Colliery Company. Under their management it was run in an up-to-date manner. After becoming the property of the White Oak Fuel Company every effort was, of course, made—as in all their operations—to cut out all expenses, and the company has no regard whatever for the safety of human life.

The writer has seen cages running at their operations with no hoods or coverings on them, and during the winter a man's life is in danger from falling ice when going up or down the shaft. One man was killed in this manner in January, 1906. A man dare not kick; to do so means a walk to the office.

We have heard nothing lately about the investigating committee that was appointed last winter to inquire into the cause of the frequent accidents in this state, which are nothing less than murder. If even ordinary precautions were taken all such accidents could be eliminated in this coal field, where natural conditions are favorable to the safe working of mines.

Whipple mine had fortunately a second opening, and to that can be attributed the saving of fifty-three lives. At the Stuart mine, which exploded on January 29, there was but a single opening and not a living thing escaped. We suppose the company already has the coroner's verdict rendered. They have the same jury in all cases and the verdict is furnished the jury ready-made. They even keep ready-made graves on hand. Five were standing open ready to receive the victims of their latest butchery. We suppose Sam Dixon's next industry will be the operation of a coffin factory, as undoubtedly they could make coffins cheaper than they could buy them.

Mr. Dixon informed the writer some months ago that they had always downed the U. M. W. of A. and intended to continue to down it. True, they have in the past, but at what a fearful cost. Will these Lomp Creek miners never realize that the price they are paying for their "personal rights" by not being dictated to by a labor organization is too great? We were at the inquest (so-called) held over the victims of the Stuart disaster—a public inquest where not a half dozen men not interested

directly in the matter were present; an inquest conspicuous for the questions that were not asked; where no witnesses were called who could or would incriminate the company, and when a witness did accidentally get on dangerous ground he was carefully steered away from that point. A mine map was brought in evidence and showed to a jury, not one of whom had ever had a day's experience in mining, and who would not have known a mine map from a Chinese laundry bill. The verdict was, of course, all that the company desired—no one responsible—one of those unavoidable accidents that will occur in the mining of coal. We have no doubt the Whipple verdict will be the same.

The Fayette Journal, the mouthpiece of the White Oak Fuel Company, has stated the cause unknown. It further added that the damage to the mine was slight and the all-important information that the hoisting of coal could be resumed in a few days. The Journal's representative was at the scene of the accident a few hours after it occurred, where Mr. Sam Dixon took him in hand and gave him the "items" for publication in the issue of the following day. The representative of the Fayetteville Sun was also on the ground, but as the publishers of that paper have not mortgaged their souls to the coal company, he received but scant courtesy from the company officials and police and was ordered outside the ropes which were stretched to keep the curious at a respectable distance.

People are leaving this field by the dozens. It looks now as though the question of mine disasters in Sam Dixon's works will make its own solution and that their occurrence will be rendered impossible for the want of victims. Well so be it, possibly those men will get into organized fields, where the right of free speech will not be denied. Possibly if they should return at some future date they will inoculate this section with the needs of unionism and the coming organizer will talk to listening ears.

REPLIES TO ROOSEVELT

Debs Characterizes the President
As Being Either "False or
Forgetful."

Eugene V. Debs has given out the following statement in reply to President Roosevelt's letter to Honor Jaxon:

"After many days President Roosevelt concluded to revise his public announced determination to treat the communication of organized labor with silent contempt. He changed his mind only when he saw the representatives of the working class preparing to move on the White House. In the volatile and vague explanation just issued the President is guilty of a most extraordinary lapse of memory or a deliberate falsehood. In defense of his unenviable position he now claims that he never said anything concerning the guilt of Moyr and Haywood. I answered by quoting the exact words he used in his speech on the occasion of the laying of the corner stone of the office building of the house of representatives, April 14, 1905, as follows:

"The wealthy man who exults because there is a failure of justice in the effort to bring some trust