

the matter, and are fully convinced that the entire proceedings were an attempt on the part of political manipulators to discredit an antagonist.

The New York World, which neglects no opportunity for a fling at Mr. Bryan as the author of all the ill-fortune at the polls of the Democratic party, allowed its correspondent at Saratoga, on the eve of the Democratic State convention, to set forth as a prominent feature of the improved fortunes of the Democracy, with Hill in the saddle, the following described state of affairs:

While the party in this state possessed the taint of Bryanism, the big railroads as well as other corporations withheld their usual contributions to the Democratic cause. This year, however, when the Democrats have a chance of regaining control of the State government, the corporations are expected to again contribute liberally to the Democratic managers. In view of this situation the belief here is that Mr. Hill and his associates will not allow the convention to adopt any canal plank which may alienate the financial support of the railroads.

The newsgatherer of the World was more candid than its editor. The editorial comment of the World has steadily ignored the influence of Mr. Bryan in creating anew the vital moral tone in the party which has made it till now idle for the plutocratic forces to approach it with bribes. The paper of Mr. Pulitzer has persisted in seeing nothing but silver-advocacy in the Kansas City platform and Mr. Bryan's leadership. In employing this pretext for opposition to Bryan, it parrots, in a way most discreditable to a leader of any claim to dignity or following in the Democratic party, the disingenuous cry of the "reorganizers" everywhere. A deeper slough than the Democratic party has ever wandered into awaits it if it surrenders to the mercenary New York professionals who consider it a triumph to be in a position to draw again upon the corruption funds of the predatory plutocracy. This is to be the test between the assistant-Republican Democracy and the democratic Democ-

racy: "Are you bidding for the money that the Republican party draws on?"

#### COAL DEPOSITS AND COAL PRODUCTION.

A dramatic incident affecting the common life of the people is teaching them better than they could possibly learn from books, the vital difference between property in the products of man's labor and property in his natural sources and channels of supply.

Between a coal deposit on the one hand, and on the other the machinery and excavations for extracting coal, together with the coal when extracted, there is a natural difference which no man can rationally deny, and which the people are now coming suddenly to see. Even to the extent that they are not yet noting the difference distinctly, their vision is growing wonderfully clear as to one of its phases. They are realizing as great masses of men have never realized before, that the riches of Nature cannot justly be property.

Probably they would not so formulate the thought. Their formula would more likely run into some sententious expression to the effect that "God didn't make the coal deposits expressly for the pious Mr. Baer." But their meaning and its significance would be the same.

Prominent instances of this tremendous awakening are too numerous to admit of special mention; but of the popular impression, what better proof could be desired than that a Democratic convention of New York state, controlled by David B. Hill, an astute seeker for votes, has demanded governmental ownership and operation of coal mines?

The crudeness of the plan proposed by this convention fairly reflects the crudeness of popular thought upon the subject. There is no necessity for ownership or operation by the government, in order to secure full enjoyment of the common right to coal deposits. So, also the proviso that full compensation be paid reflects the vagueness that still continues regarding the difference between property in labor products and property in natural sources of supply. If property in the bare privilege of permitting coal to be mined is not just property, then it would be unjust to make the people pay for terminating it. To award compensation for ending this predatory priv-

ilege, imposed upon the people of today by the "dead hand" of generations long since turned to dust, would amount to reviving the same privilege in another form. It would transform the owners of coal deposits into owners of a burdensome and unjust public debt.

But the crudeness of the plan proposed and the weakness of the compensation proviso, are of minor moment. When public sentiment once realizes the enormity of property in the natural sources and channels of supply, it will make short work of the compensation folly, just as it did when it realized the enormity of slavery. If owners of coal lands are expecting to take advantage of the sentiment against property in these natural deposits to sell out to the government at a fancy price, they are to be disappointed. Nor will the public be at any loss for a simpler and better plan than the New York convention proposes of securing common rights.

The encouraging thing about the demand of the New York convention is that it arrayed itself definitely against the principle of property in coal deposits, and did so under the pressure of popular sentiment. When that sentiment has become more pronounced, it will have the intelligence to see that all the advantages, with none of the disadvantages and dangers, of public ownership and operation of coal mining, can be accomplished with no more drastic change than the general exemption of labor products from taxation.

If this change were made, industry and commerce would be encouraged by the abolition of its greatest burden; and natural opportunities for industry could no longer be withdrawn from use.

Consider a moment the effect of such a change upon the coal strike situation.

The anthracite coal trust owns thousands of acres of coal deposits. It also owns mining equipments and the value of excavations for mining purposes. If taxes on labor products were abolished, the value of its equipments and excavations would be exempt. But so would similar property, which competition might produce; and that would make it much easier to compete. Very different would be the status of coal deposits. With taxes on production abolished, it would pay better than ever to use these deposits; and as they would then be taxed well up to their value

as deposits, whether used or not, it would not pay at all not to use them, but would entail a continuous and enormous loss.

That double reform would stimulate profitable coal mining, and bring into competition with the mines already opened, every unopened deposit in the whole anthracite region. How long could owners of coal deposits afford to prevent or suspend operations when operation paid and non-operation caused enormous loss? How long would the miners want to remain on strike when new capital had come into the field to work mines instead of closing them down. Not a day. No owners could make their money any longer by monopolizing coal deposits, but only by operating them; and this would make more jobs for miners than there would be miners to respond, which would send wages up with a bound.

Is it replied that outside workmen would come into the anthracite region in droves to get these extraordinary wages? So they might if it were not for the fact, as fact it would be, that the same double reform, operating upon all kinds of business, would produce like results in all callings.

For this method contemplates the application of tax exemption for labor products, and full ad valorem taxation upon natural sources and channels of supply, not only to coal mining but to all other industries. Coal mines are only impressive illustrations of a general principle. The owners of valuable city lots who hold them out of use because they cannot get their price, are doing precisely the same thing as the owners of coal deposits who hold them out of use because they cannot hire labor cheap. The city lot is a natural source of supply as truly as a coal deposit. It supplies the site for a house while the coal deposit supplies fuel to warm the house. If men were exempt from taxation on their buildings, but were taxed the value of their lots, houses would speedily go up on valuable lots that are now given over to weeds, just as exemptions on coal mining but high ad valorem taxes on coal deposits, would cause coal to pour freely out of mines that are now guarded by troops. If the owner of vacant city lots may say "this is mine," and deprive his fellow-men of the shelter they might make, the owner of coal deposits

may quite as justly say, "this is mine," and deprive his fellow-men of the fuel they might procure.

The lesson to be learned from the coal strike goes deep. It is the lesson of "mine, thine, and ours." What I earn is mine; what you earn is thine; but the natural sources of our supply are ours. The pick I shape is mine; you may use it on the terms to which you and I agree. The coal you dig with it is yours; I may have it on the terms to which you and I agree. But the coal deposit is ours, and neither of us may justly withdraw it from the other's use. That is the natural law. That is the universal principle. Nor does it make any difference—the principle still holds—when instead of a pick I have shaped gigantic mining equipments, and instead of digging handfuls of coal you dig millions of tons. The equipments are mine, the extracted coal is yours, but the coal deposit is ours.

It is a gratifying fact that every day this distinguishable difference, which is the basis of all civic morality, is becoming clearer to popular apprehension. And curiously enough, the man who seems to have done most at this juncture to produce that effect, is Mr. Baer. His offensive claim to a God-given right to property in coal deposits has so shocked the moral sense of the community as to lead it to question anew all paper titles to the globe upon which we live, and to its stores from which we draw. To question such titles thoughtfully is to condemn them.

## NEWS

President Roosevelt's intercession for the purpose of amicably terminating the portentous coal strike in the anthracite regions (p. 406) has not been successful. The principals of the parties in interest, whom he had invited to call upon him at the White House on the 3d, appeared promptly in response to the invitation. The representatives of the coal trust had arrived in Washington the night before in a luxurious private car which they made their headquarters during their stay. They were E. B. Thomas, for the Erie road; President Baer, for the Reading; President Fowler, for the Ontario & Western; David Willcox, for the Delaware & Hudson; President Truesdale, for the D., L. & W.; and John Markle, an independent coal operator. There

was no representative from the Lehigh Valley, one of the principal coal carrying roads. In rather dramatic contrast with the trust magnates, the representatives of the striking miners arrived on a day car, and at midnight walked to a small hotel near the railroad station. They were President Mitchell and three district presidents—Nicholls, Duffy and Fahy. It was President Roosevelt's expectation that at the conference he had thus assembled the coal strike and the consequent coal famine would be ended simultaneously and at once by mutual concessions. But he was speedily undeceived.

When the contending parties arrived at the White House at 11 o'clock on the morning of the 3d, the President read a brief address in which he declared that he spoke neither for the operators nor the miners, but for the general public. Yet he disclaimed "any right or duty to intervene upon legal grounds" or from his official position, explaining his extraordinary action by referring to the gravity of the situation. "The evil possibilities are so far reaching," he proceeded, "so appalling, that it seems to me that you are not only justified in sinking but required to sink for the time being any tenacity as to your respective claims in the matter at issue between you." In conclusion, he said:

In my judgment the situation requires that you meet upon the common plane of the necessities of the public. With all the earnestness there is in me I ask that there be an immediate resumption of operations in the coal mines in some such way as will without a day's unnecessary delay meet the crying needs of the people. I do not invite a discussion of your respective claims and positions. I appeal to your patriotism, to the spirit that sinks personal claims and makes individual sacrifices for the general good.

As soon as the President had closed his address, Mr. Mitchell expressed sympathy with its sentiment, and proceeded to explain that the strikers felt they were not responsible for the gravity of the situation, as they had all along been willing to meet their adversaries and try to adjust their differences. "If we cannot adjust them that way, Mr. President," he added, "we are willing that you shall name a tribunal who shall terminate the issues that have resulted in the strike, and if the gentlemen representing the operators will accept the