

Call it five dollars for good measure, and then think of the monumental effrontery of men like Mark Hanna, who burn up more than twice as much in cigars—think of their talking about the comforts of the American workingman with his full dinner pail! Nor is this condition peculiar to Pennsylvania. There, if anywhere, the dinner pail ought to be fullest, for it is there that republican protection is supposed to do its most perfect work. But whether or not its work be more perfect there than elsewhere, the “full” dinner pails which have been there uncovered are no more empty than the dinner pails that are still covered.

The solemn and sorrowful truth about the matter is that it is bitter mockery to describe the American workingman’s dinner pail anywhere as full. How many workingmen have an average income of more than \$250 a year? Some do get \$300. Not so many get \$400. Fewer still get \$500. He who gets \$1,000 is a veritable nabob. Yet \$1,000 a year is less than \$20 a week. It is probable that labor incomes are more accurately represented by half that amount—\$10 a week. And with what comfort can a man bring up a family upon \$10 a week? In the imagination of people whose money comes easy, he could doubtless do wonders with that income. But what can he do in reality? As Kipling somewhere says—there are men who, when their own front door’s closed, will swear that the whole world’s warm.

But you can’t close your own front door any more than you can sport a “full dinner pail” on \$10 a week.

Of the merits of the miners’ strike no room is left for debate. Their pay is wretchedly small. Yet they are forced to buy blasting powder of their employers at an exorbitant price. Yet they are compelled to take pay in orders upon company stores, where goods are sold to them at swindlers’ rates. Yet they are required to mine hundreds of pounds more than a ton for every ton of coal they get credit

for. Yet they are assessed for mine physicians, and their employers thrust upon them favorites of their own. In a word, they are as truly enslaved as if they were chattels upon an auction block. They must accept these extortionate terms or starve. For their employers are invested by law with a monopoly of the highways over which coal must go to market, and of the natural beds from which the coal must be mined. They are absolutely at the mercy of the power which these monopolists are thereby able to wield. Here are reasons enough for a strike. But before striking the miners sought by every possible means to make the matter a question of amicable concession or of arbitration. They at first wanted the operators to meet them in a friendly joint conference, pledging themselves to withdraw every demand that could be shown to be unreasonable. The operators arrogantly ignored the invitation. Then the miners proposed arbitration. But the operators had “nothing to arbitrate.” Controlling the highways and controlling nature’s coal deposits, why should they arbitrate? That was their attitude. And now that these uncrowned kings have forced the strike—either because they wished to influence the coal market so as to rob consumers, or to crush the strikers so as to rob miners, or both—let the responsibility rest upon them, where it belongs. Moreover, let the word go forth that highways and coal deposits ought not, shall not, and do not of right belong to any man or set of men; but that of right they are and of necessity must be made common property. Thus shall coal miners be freed from helpless servitude, coal consumers be protected from conspiracies against them, and the whole public be saved from periodical wars between starving coal miners and overfed coal monopolists.

Mr. Bryan’s formal letter of acceptance, while a necessary and valuable contribution from him to the campaign literature of his party,

is so completely overshadowed by his masterly acceptance speech at Indianapolis that but little need be said of it beyond advising its careful perusal. For our own part there is much in it to commend, along with some things to which we cannot assent. On the question of trusts, for instance, as we have noted heretofore, Mr. Bryan seems to make the mistake of regarding trusts as producing monopolies instead of seeing that monopolies produce trusts. His anti-trust policy, therefore, aims to suppress trusts by hostile legislation directly against them, rather than to undermine them by repealing the legal monopolies out of which they grow and upon which they flourish. Nevertheless, we are obliged to notice even upon this point that he recognizes in the Dingley law a “trust breeding measure,” which is suggestive at least of his growing perception of the true nature of the trust evil. But matters of agreement or disagreement on this or other points covered by Mr. Bryan’s letter of acceptance are not up for discussion at the present juncture. We are now in a campaign involving almost the right of discussion itself, a campaign in which the institutions that make possible a just settlement of any and all domestic questions are at stake. In such an emergency secondary questions must wait. It is enough that Mr. Bryan explains with characteristic candor his position upon every matter of public policy mentioned in his platform, and that he concludes by reiterating the assurances of his Indianapolis speech, that none of the subjects treated in his letter, however important each may seem in itself, presses “so imperatively for solution as the question which the platform declares to be the paramount issue in this campaign.”

That is, indeed, the sole issue upon which every voter will declare himself next November, whether he thinks so or not. To vote for McKinley is to indorse his policy of imperialism. To vote for Bryan is to condemn it. And a vote for a hope-