

Harrowing Half Hours Ahead for Hard Coal Men

First Session of Senate Committee Only Light Overture—Jazz Music Later Will Make Public Sit Up and Take Notice

By GEORGE NON McCAIN

New York, Dec. 6.—There are some exceedingly harrowing half hours ahead for the anthracite coal business men in one way and another.

The first hearing before Senator Charles D. Ives, Senate committee on the anthracite coal business, was held here today in Washington.

There will be jazz music that will make the public sit up and look around later. The music will be in the form of a drama some time this week in Washington when the committee convenes.

The Senate committee examined only five witnesses. Three of them gave startling testimony as to producing coal companies. Two witnesses defended themselves or tried their best to.

It was said that:

It is important for a number of the committee that its purpose is to take up the coal problem in regular order. Build an ideal and legal structure, as it were. It will not examine those who charge outrage to coal men with political testimony.

They got a bunch of that information on Saturday.

The committee is not going to be partial in selecting its witnesses, either. It matters not whether the producers belong to the so-called trust, as the "big seven" companies are called, or whether they are independent operators, wholesalers, brokers, or just plain ordinary retailers.

It will not only examine these alleged producers, big and little, but it will go through their books, wherever it has reason to believe there is a reason or pretense.

Labor Last to Be Called

There will be testimony from householders and user buyers of coal in the vicinity of mines and collieries. Railroad executives will be called upon as to the legal rate of storage and freight rates. The relations between mining corporations and the sales corporations will also come under scrutiny.

The coal industry to be directed to step up to the captain's deck will be labor. Its representatives will be invited to furnish first-hand information as to wages and working conditions. Even the members of the geological survey who prepare the statistics of coal production will likely be sworn in to the accuracy of their figures.

It begins to look as if a real investigation were on foot that the mining firms and corporations who are mixed up in the elaborate and general work of marketing the public are headed for a tremendous lot of trouble.

The hearing on Saturday was a revelation as to speed and penetration. The committee and its counsel gave graphic and colorful information of the night sort. It dug right in.

Senator Edge of New Jersey, ought to have been an attorney instead of a newspaperman. In cross-examination of witnesses and ability to bring out relevant facts, he displayed remarkable ability. Between Senator Edge and District Attorney Lewis the other states' witnesses, T. R. Schumaker of the East Boston Coal Co. at Kingston, Pa., in particular, had a most distressing time.

There was a vast amount of nervous tossing with blood and paper, fumbling with watch chains and moistening of dry lips while the ordeal lasted. At times, in the examination of Mr. Schumaker and W. H. Williams, vice president of the Hudson Coal Co., the situation became not only interesting, but tense.

The outstanding feature in the testimony of one of the gentlemen, Mr. Schumaker, was defective memory.

Mr. Williams, a smooth shaven,

mainly to the effect that steam sizes of anthracite were a byproduct sold at a much lower figure than household sizes. That it was really a loss to the coal producers, that is, it was sold at a loss.

Senator Edge instantly countered by inquiring why if it was a byproduct it was a loss?

A long and labored explanation ensued, punctuated by sharp queries from Senator Edge, who handled this subject for the committee exclusively. He privately said that he got his pointer from the EVENING PUBLIC LEDGER.

The answers of the witness failed to convince him. The explanation did not explain the injustice of the action.

Perhaps the most striking feature of Vice President Williams' testimony was that relative to release of domestic sizes. Both Senator Edge and the chairman, Senator Fiddler, insisted upon knowing why, if there was no understanding among the operators, a practical uniformity of prices upon "domestic" coal prevail throughout the anthracite region.

The witness positively affirmed that there was no price fixing agreement, arrangement or understanding. He spoke for his own company, the Delaware and Hudson. In fact, he said, he did not know what the prices of other coal companies were.

Ignorant of Coal Price

"Do you mean to say," inquired Senator Edge, "that you do not know the prices asked by your competitors for their coal?"

"No, only what I have heard in a general way."

"And you do not know today what other operators are getting for their coal?"

"All I know is what I have seen in the newspapers," was the reply. Then he laughed the newspapers for their alleged misrepresentations.

A remarkable panacea for high prices was offered by Mr. Williams. It will undoubtedly strike not only Philadelphians, but every household who has a ton or two of coal in his cellar, where ordinarily he would have his bins full, as a wonderful remedy. Here it is: If the people would stop buying coal, the price would fall overnight. There is a coal panic. People in New York and elsewhere are hoarding coal.

District Attorney Lewis instantly challenged the assertion. If there is coal hoarding how could the witness account for the confessed coal shortage as shown in official reports of the geological survey? The further fact that New York was crying for coal and unable to obtain it, except at the most exorbitant prices?

Mr. Williams stoutly denied the assertion of Paul Administrator Holtman, of Massachusetts, that there was a dangerous shortage of coal through New England and outrageous prices. He said, throughout New England, he resided to this. His statements were corroborated by another witness, Campbell, who was familiar with conditions, he said, throughout New England.

The discussion became acrimonious and reached a point where the veracity of the two, for and against, was dragged before the committee.

But the testimony and figures were against the coal operator.

The examination of T. R. Schumaker damaged his side instead of helping it. He was not only an official of the East Boston Coal Co. He betrayed great unfamiliarity about his bookkeeping and got sadly tangled.

His memory gave evidence of having holes in it, particularly when he asserted that the profits of his company last year had only been \$2,000, on which they had paid an income tax of \$200.

Witness Badly "Fussed"

Toward the end of the examination Mr. Schumaker got badly fussed, a condition that was sorely improved when Senator Edge announced that the committee would have to make an examination of his books.

Of course, the above incidents are only the beginning. The documents and evidence of changed way bills, invoices, etc., are yet to be submitted by Mr. Lewis. Also a vast mass of "inside" information.

"We are going to put this thing through until we get all of the facts," said Senator Edge. "From indications there is ample material for established getting committees.

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