

GOOD WITNESS FOR THE OPPOSITION

More of Rev. Dr. Roberts' Writings Introduced by Companies' Attorneys in Cross-Examination.

SOME VERY STRONG DECLARATIONS

Miners' Own Witness Agrees That a Uniform Rate of Wages Is Impracticable Because of the Varying Conditions and Fairly Outguns the Sun in His Presentation of the Strike Reign of Terror.

Few witnesses the operators themselves will call can be expected to give testimony more corroborative of their contentions than that adduced yesterday from Rev. Peter Roberts, Ph.D., the witness before the mine strike commission who the miners called to the stand to succeed their chief witness, President John Mitchell, of the United Mine Workers.

The articles in The Outlook were signed "P. Q. R." Dr. Roberts would not admit or deny that he was the author. When asked if they were not his writings he said, "I would prefer not to answer that question." He, however, admitted indirectly, a dozen times at least that they were his articles. The cross-examiners after reading a passage would ask him if his opinion now was the same as expressed therein, and almost invariably he answered in the affirmative, sometimes with a reservation. "Yes."

When Mr. Wolvorton had finished reading the doctor's arraignment of the strikers for their violence during the strike, the witness insisted on reading a further paragraph from an Outlook article in which he says:

It would be absurd to charge the miners' organization with all these crimes and offenses. Their leaders, generally speaking, deprecate them, and have done all in their power to check it.

During the afternoon the miners' side temporarily withdrew Dr. Roberts from the stand. Physicians were then called to testify to the unhealthfulness of mine work and to contradict the anticipated claim of the companies that they contribute largely to the support of hospitals in the mine regions.

The disagreeable weather of the early morning had the effect of diminishing the size of the crowd of spectators. Every one who came was able to get inside, though many had to stand up. In the afternoon the crowd packed the room, but the number of those who could not gain entrance was small as compared with the days when Mr. Mitchell was on the stand. Chairman E. B. Thomas, of the Erie's board of directors, was present again yesterday.

The commissioners asked numerous questions of the doctor, and especially important colloquies occurred. All seem to be abundantly supplied with patience, good nature and ability to maintain an extremely lively interest in their task.

Mr. Wolvorton resumed the cross-examination of Dr. Roberts at the opening of the morning session on the contents of the doctor's book, at which he was engaged the day before, when the adjourning hour arrived.

Mr. Wolvorton asked Mr. Wolvorton read that because of differences in the different mines "it is impossible to adjust wages on a uniform basis. This cannot be done. It will never be practical. Large powers of discretion in the regulation of wages must be vested in the foreman."

The contention, irregularities, flexures and inequalities in the value of anthracite make it impossible to adjust wages on a uniform basis throughout the anthracite coal fields. Bituminous coal miners meet their only real enemy in the anthracite form basis is laid down for vast areas of the coal field, and the agreement works satisfactorily to both employer and employee.

This cannot be done in the anthracite coal fields, and the difficulty lies in the geological structure of the coal deposits. Conditions of workings constantly change, and with the changes, readjustment of wages must be made. This is left to the discretion of the foreman in charge whose duty it is to do justice by the workman.

Experienced men, who have spent their life time in the anthracite mines, positively believe that the regulation of wages in these coal fields will never be practical. In the case of men working by contract, nothing more than general rules can be laid down. Each shaft has its peculiarities, and never will it be possible to operate these mines without entrusting large powers of discretion, as to the least amount of prices, to the foreman in charge.

The only possible sphere of action for the union is local. Each shaft may have its local assembly, which may be a committee, try to secure its members reasonable remuneration. This is being done, and it is the only way to which the efforts at adjusting contract prices can go.

Some collieries have far more favorable natural conditions than others. There are collieries in the southern coal field which consume from eight to ten per cent of the tonnage to generate steam, because they heat steam from depths of 1,500 feet, two tons of rock and ten tons of water for every ton of coal produced. In mines where there is much rock to be blasted, it is hard sandstone, it will cost the company from \$2 to \$2.5 a yard in allowances. In a shaft in Lackawanna county the employers paid a miner as high as \$6 a yard for blasting rock.

Two difficulties meet us in the effort to get data as to the cost of producing a ton of coal. First, the refusal of the operators to give the figures; and second, the great variety of these figures providing we could get them. No two collieries are alike, and the same colliery has not the same figure for two successive months.

After bringing out that the allowances for cutting rock varies from \$2 to \$6 per yard, Mr. Wolvorton questioned the witness at length on his idea of how it would be possible to make uniform rates for coal. The witness practically admitted it was impossible.

Are Far from It. When asked if mine operators were generally "hard-hearted, unjust men, who ground down the poor to the last penny," Dr. Roberts answered, "Far from it."

Heading from Dr. Roberts' article in the Yale Review, of May, 1902, Mr. Wolvorton showed that at that time the witness had declared there were no dissensions or discontent in the Schuylkill region. The relations between the Reading company and its employees were "most amiable," and that the men of the southern fields were opposed to a strike. In this article, also, Dr. Roberts declared that "no uniform rate of wages can be laid down."

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From an October article of Dr. Roberts in the same paper the witness declared that the miners and laborers of the northern coal field were then at logger-heads over division of pay, and the refusal of the mine owners to oblige the law requiring them to remain in the chamber until the laborer is through. The majority of the miners are home before noon, the article adds.

Further on in the article Dr. Roberts states that "interest in the union flags when there is no conflict on or impending; that twenty per cent of the members were at that time refusing to pay their dues and another twenty per cent were paying them in a perfunctory way. It was his declaration that the officers of the union were very much concerned about the dissensions and lack of interest in the union.

Mr. Wolvorton pointed out that at the close of the strike, the thousands of mine workers from the anthracite region who flocked into the bituminous region flocked back again with such a rush that the railroads could scarcely take care of them. Dr. Roberts said they were attracted here by social and property ties. Mr. Wolvorton mentioned that many of these backwashers, whose relatives were all in the old country, "Maybe they had girls in this region," said the witness.

Mr. Wolvorton elicited from the witness that there are fifteen religious holidays observed in the anthracite region; that the mines are sometimes shut down by breaker boys "turning out" to go to the circus.

Not Due to Carelessness. The witness did not agree with the mine inspectors that the majority of accidents are due to the carelessness of the injured. He held that primarily the hazardous character of the industry is blamable.

Judge Gray remarked, "There is a margin of carelessness naturally belonging to a human being."

Mr. Wolvorton said it was his experience that this margin was intensified by the fact that the miners' occupations. They became used to danger and consequently reckless of it.

Judge Gray told that while on the tour through the mine regions he was riding on a mine car underground, and if it wasn't for the fact that the box was pulling him back his forehead would have struck against a "collar."

"But," said Mr. Wolvorton, "nature has done something for you and me that is not taken into consideration in the construction of the mine cars. It is true, he would say, as applied to employer and employee, but not further than this."

As to mine inspectors' reports, Dr. Roberts explained that the reports of accidents were often secured.

Here Mr. Wolvorton read from Dr. Roberts' book the following on the spirit of unionism:

Spirit of Unionism. The spirit of unionism among the employees brings about many strange and inconsistent actions. Men who are individual fighters and personal liberty are the least tolerant of these rights when governed by the union. One of the aims of the organization is to promote peace and order, and yet many acts are done by its members which disturb the peace of the society. When a member of the Thirtieth regiment secured work in the collieries of Lackawanna county a committee of the local union asked the foreman to dismiss him. He refused to do so and the employee went on strike. If a miner will not join the union the driver will not give him cars. Last December a small boy, about 10 years of age, driving in one of the collieries of the northern field delivered a car to an elderly man old enough to be his grandfather, and told him, "You put your tools in that and get out for you won't get no more cars." The miner appealed to the foreman, the latter went to the boy and ordered him to drive cars to the chamber in question; he told him he would not do it. The foreman told the child, "You had better take my tape and book, for you seem to be a little fellow."

The child was the hero of the hour. Five driver-boys, from the age of 15 to 18 years, in another shaft, had wage grievances not involving, all told, more than fifty cents a day. Without a word of warning to their parents, or a single attempt at disturbing their grievances, they declared a strike. The employees lost by it over \$3000 in wages, and the boys were referred to by mass meetings as examples to their fathers in "manhood, courage and liberty." A father and son worked at a washery during the strike. When resuming work, the employer at that colliery would not begin work until the father and son were discharged. The foreman had to do it. The offenders had to appeal to the local union for membership as the only condition of securing work. They were admitted by paying an entrance fee of \$15. The regular rate was \$3 a member. Miners often have two or three laborers to work for them, but when a miner takes a contract which enables him to work for himself, he is disqualified as a member of the union, although he pays the standard wage in the colliery to the men he hires. During the last strike some of the miners were sworn in as deputies by the companies to guard their property. These men are now members of the union, but they are closely watched and suspected of being spies in behalf of the operators.

Off Times Ludicrous. Instances of the spirit of unionism often met with are more ludicrous than serious. Four boarders left a boarding house at the same time, saying, "They weren't going to board with us no more, 'cause they had a board with us no more." A butcher wagon in its rounds stopped to sell meat at the door of a non-union man. Some of the union men told the butcher, "If you sell to him you won't to us. A miller saw in a barber's chair being lathered for a shave. Six union men entered and took their seats. They identified the man in the miller's chair as a non-union man. As the barber was about to apply the razor, one of the men said, "If you shave that man you don't shave us." The man had vacated the chair unshaved, a storekeeper insisted on his personal liberty, which finds so large a place in the addresses of the labor leaders, and declared in his personal liberty claims. The spirit of unionism is everywhere. All issues of labor which can be organized are formed into unions. It is the fashion of the day, and the union, and if you are not, the boycott falls on you.

Purchased Firearms. When the strike was about to be declared, a company of "foreigners" visited a mining town to purchase firearms. They carried a stock of these goods, which they carried a stock of these goods. They entered one place and bought the implements and the other store lost that portion of its stock that night. A carpenter on the first day of the strike was engaged repairing a house as one of these men came along. They shouted, "You strike, strike all you fellows, and the prudent man packed up his tools and went home. In a shaft in Luzerne county where this class of labor was in the majority, the local union was governed by them. The English-speaking employees were members of the union, but held different views from those of the Slavs and Italians. The president of the union gave some opinions in a meeting of the union they were thrown out. 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