

Daniel De Leon

Editorial: ‘With Feelings of Grave Concern and Sincere Sorrow’

President Joseph Dunkerly of the United Mine Workers of America has issued, in conjunction with his colleagues, a startling address to the members of District No. 11. In this circular he declares that, although the wages of the miners in Indiana “are already too small to enable them to live and enjoy life as American citizens should and meet their obligations,” he and his associates believe “with feelings of grave concern and sincere sorrow,” that at this time “the interests of the hands will be promoted by the acceptance of a reasonably small and *temporary* reduction.”

It is not in this respect that the circular is startling; it becomes so when it reaches the reasons for this advice to accept a reduction, which will be *temporary*.

The reasons, as given in the circular, are these:

When a relative scale of price was first made for this competitive district—of which we are a part—and differentials made which were considered fair by operators and miners, our prices were 6 cents per ton less than Western Pennsylvania and 5 cents per ton more than Ohio (Hocking Valley) . . . Since the reductions in the above named states have been accepted by the miners our relative position has been changed. Instead of Western Pennsylvania being 6 cents per ton above us we are now from 10 to 20 cents per ton higher than they. Instead of

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Ohio being but 5 cents per ton below us they are 20, while West Virginia is too far below us to mention.

In other words, the bosses of the Indiana coal mines are, together with their fellows in Pennsylvania, Ohio, etc., playing a unique game of see-saw: One of them, in one State, lowers the wages of his men; thereupon the others in the other States put on a poor mouth, declare they hate of all things to lower wages, but competition in another State “forces” them to the thing; they propose a reduction to their men; and the officers of the union, “with feelings of grave concern and sincere sorrow,” recommend to the rank and file to submit to a *temporary* reduction. These men submit, and are forthwith put down lower than in the other States which had been the ostensible cause of the reduction.

Then comes act No. 2. The bosses in the first State, the State that led in the reduction, now put on the looks of outraged innocence; it is then their turn to make a poor mouth, to declare they hate of all things to lower wages, but that competition in the other States “forces” them to do the thing; accordingly, they proceed to “propose” a reduction to their men and officers of the union, “with feelings of grave concern and sincere sorrow,” again recommend to their rank and file to submit to a *temporary* reduction.

Acts Nos. 3, 4, 5, etc., go on in identical style: one set of bosses always lowers wages, whereupon the others must follow suit and do so with a vengeance, whereupon the first “feel constrained” to do likewise, etc., and at every step the officers of the unions, “with feelings of grave concern and sincere sorrow,” recommend to their rank and file to submit to the *temporary* reduction.

Indeed the reduction is “temporary;” it is never permanent; it is sure to be reduced still further.

Startling, in the face of these facts, is that fact that these officers do not see through the game and that they are dumb where they should speak in clarion tones, announcing to the

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rank and file that its degradation is steady and certain; that it can be stopped only by the public ownership of the mines; and that to do that it is necessary that the working class in all industries draw together, set up its own political party, and fill every office in the land with men from their own rank{s}, pledged to carry out the programme of the Co-operative Commonwealth.

It is “with feelings of grave concern and sincere sorrow” that one must view the conduct of President Dunkerly and all such labor leaders as he.

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*A De Leon editorial transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the
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