



Personality and Coal in West Virginia

A Field for Friends Service



A Miner's Children and Their Home

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

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PERSONALITY AND COAL IN WEST VIRGINIA

In response to several appeals for emergency relief, made to the American Friends' Service Committee on behalf of unemployed miners of West Virginia, two Friends were appointed by the Committee to visit the West Virginia coal fields in order to determine at first hand the extent of the reported need, and the possible steps which the American Friends' Service Committee might take in helping to relieve it.

The two Friends appointed for this purpose, Drew Pearson and Walter H. Abel, visited West Virginia just before the declaration of the national coal strike, and spent one week interviewing the operators, the miners, the Red Cross, miners' relief organizations, and interested individuals, and inspecting conditions in the mining camps.

Following are some leading quotations from their report:

Extent and Location of the Need

"We are satisfied by our investigations that there is widespread destitution, and much need of relief, among the families of the miners.



A GLIMPSE OF WET BRANCH

When representatives of the American Friends' Service Committee visited this camp, of which only one end is seen in the picture, it contained seventy families dependent upon outside help for the necessities of life.

"The best estimate which we were able to obtain as to the total extent of need in the State was made about two months ago. At that time it was estimated that approximately 28,000 families were dependent upon charity, with an average of three children to the family. According to this estimate, the total number of children dependent upon charity was about 75,000. As the period of unemployment has increased since that time, the extent of the destitution has increased accordingly.

"We were surprised to discover that this need is not located to any important degree in Logan and Mingo Counties, which have received so much publicity in the North. The miners in these counties are either non-union, and so have been working, or else have been living in the tent colonies, and receiving aid from the international union organization. Though living under hard conditions, these tent colonies have thus far managed to get along.

"The main need is found in the union areas, where unemployment has prevailed. These areas are located around three principal cen-

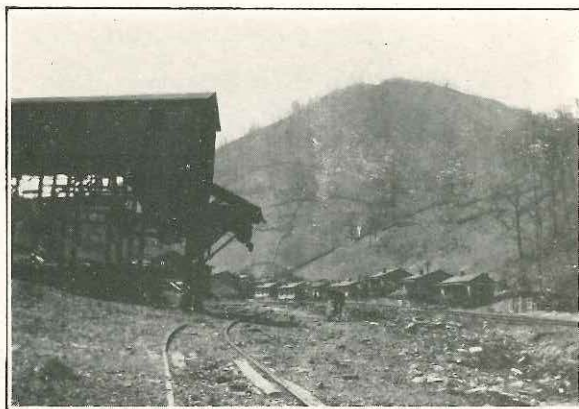
ters: 1, around Charleston, in upper Kanawha County; 2, around Beckley, in Raleigh and Fayette Counties, and 3, around Grafton.

The Fundamental Need: Food

"The fundamental need is for food. It should be understood that conditions do not in any sense compare with those reported in Russia. There is no famine. Two or three relief agencies, though they are not able to properly feed the destitute population, are at present preventing actual starvation. There is, however, increasing lack of food, and increasing undernourishment. The latter strikes particularly hard upon the children, who, in most cases, have no milk and light cereals, and are forced to live upon beans, corn-meal, flour and occasional bacon, which is all that the present relief agencies can supply. Yet even this coarse food is not being provided in sufficient quantities to meet the need. There is, therefore, need of even coarse

IN THE SHADOW OF THE "TIPPLE"

The "camps" in which the miners live are owned by the mine operators, as in most cases is also the store, which is the only place where provisions may be bought. A miner's hut is rarely out of sight of a tippie, or elevated shed near the entrance to a mine, from which the coal is emptied into underlying cars.



food for adults. The tent colonies near Beckley, which are receiving aid from a Baltimore committee, are living on two short meals a day. Families which had no food whatever for the next day were reported to us."

Clothing and some medical attention are also needed, but in less degree.

Possibility of Permanent Educational Work

"Though impressed with the need for emergency relief work in the West Virginia coal fields, we were still more impressed by the opportunity which they offer for more permanent educational and social service activities. The miners in the fields we visited, though practically all of native American stock, are to a large degree illiterate, having had no opportunities for education. Service workers who would go among them, living with them and for them, could help them to higher standards in many ways. Night schools could be established to give them the elements of education. Their interest in sanitation and cleanliness could be developed. The women could be taught to sew and to cook—neither of which they are able to do intelligently at present. In the education of the miner lies one important step toward the solution of the coal problem."

The Work to Be Undertaken

As a result of the above report, it has been decided to undertake emergency relief work in the West Virginia coal fields, and to issue this appeal for \$3,500 to be used in support of the work. The plan is for Friends to take over a selected group of mining camps, and there to carry on a child-feeding program of two or three months' duration, provided the need continues so long. Two Friends are to be selected to head the work, with the probable assistance of a trained district nurse. They will organize committees of miners to assist with the work, which will be somewhat similar in method to that already used by Friends in their child-feeding abroad.

It is estimated that a daily ration of a dish of oatmeal and a cup of cocoa, with milk and sugar for both, can be supplied at a cost of twenty-five cents per child per week. Thirty-five hundred dollars (\$3,500) will cover all expenses for a program supplying this ration daily to about four hundred children for a period of two months.

A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR SERVICE

Such a service as this will contribute to the physical, and so to the mental and moral growth of little children, who are in no way responsible for the industrial situation which causes their suffering. It will give Friends an opportunity to study conditions in detail, so that they may judge of the possibilities for later undertaking permanent educational work in the mining regions. It will project the leaven of disinterested good-will into the field of strained industrial relations, affording by its spirit and service an example of the principle of love which alone can bring the brotherhood desired by Christians.

WILL YOU SEND YOUR CONTRIBUTION NOW?

American Friends Service Committee

Charles F. Jenkins, Treasurer
20 South Twelfth Street
Philadelphia, Pa.

Please find enclosed \$. for West Virginia Relief.

Name.

Street.

City. State.