

# COAL'S CHILDREN

ISSUED BY THE AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE, 20 S. TWELFTH STREET, PHILADELPHIA

THE story of relief and rehabilitation in the bituminous coal fields of Kentucky and West Virginia has interested so many people and involves so many vital issues in the American economic system that "Coal's Children" has been devised as a means of giving interested persons a running account of developments in the work this winter. There is no subscription charge. The Committee desires that everyone who wants these digests be put on the regular list. However, to avoid waste of our all-too-limited funds we do not wish to send this news to those not interested. So please tell us if you want to receive "Coal's Children" regularly by sending your name and address immediately to the A. F. S. C., 20 South 12th St., Philadelphia, Pa. Please write your name carefully so we won't send your copies to the wrong address. Future issues will be mimeographed.

## 2,100,000 Meals Served in 1932

More than two million meals for hungry school children, a hundred thousand meals for under-nourished pre-school children, fifty-one tons of clothing for shivering coal miners and their families, were distributed through the American Friends Service Committee last year. We entered the work at the request of the Children's Bureau and the President's Committee on Unemployment Relief.

We are not altogether sure just why these organizations asked us to undertake it. Perhaps they remember the relief and reconstruction work which the American Friends Service Committee accomplished in post-war Europe ravished by the wrath of man, and famine; perhaps they knew of the spirit of friendship and good will which we have been trying to promote at home and abroad since the European reconstruction work ended through our centers abroad, the volunteer work of our young people during the summer, our efforts at education for a peaceful world, etc. Perhaps they felt that this spirit of good will, conciliation and reconstruction was surely needed in the chaotic soft coal industry. In any event, the request came and we accepted.

This relief work opened up opportunities for rehabilitation described briefly elsewhere in this bulletin, which probably will be the most significant contribution to the distressful situations of the coal industry.

Now the call has come to return to Kentucky and West Virginia to resume relief work—in most sections relief work that is more sorely needed than it was a year ago. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation is furnishing enough funds to provide for the barest necessities, but funds will have to be found elsewhere for clothing, medical attention, and the work of re-establishing a means of livelihood for the more than 200,000 permanently unemployed miners.

There are now twenty-eight relief workers in thirteen counties of Kentucky and West Virginia, and four who are giving full time to rehabilitation projects in West Virginia and Pennsylvania. We are naming the workers and letting them tell their own stories elsewhere. In spite of slow development because of inadequate or not immediately available funds, there are as many children on the feeding list now as there were a year ago at this time. Adult relief is given (except in extreme cases) only in return for work done. In a few instances the Service Committee has been asked to help provide personnel to map out county work relief programs.

## The Volunteer and His Job

The volunteer—(no, there is no salary beyond maintenance and a small monthly stipend!)—is sent to a county where the need is great. The District Director has already outlined the plans with State officials. The first move is to become acquainted with the county school, health and social agencies if there be such, together with Red Cross workers, service and church groups, mine operators, and others, in order to co-ordinate our activities with those already under way, and to secure the maximum of local co-operation. The children are fed in most cases through the schools, so the next move is to go up and down the "hollers" discovering the children who must be put on the relief list, arranging for a place to cook, for a stove and for women to prepare and serve the carefully planned meals, securing bowls, cups and spoons, etc. Sometimes the schools can be reached by the second-hand Fords and sometimes only on foot or horseback. Next the food supplies must be purchased with care to keep total costs at a pre-arranged minimum. Not the least important responsibility laid on the worker is the keeping of careful records, worked out often at the end of a long, hard day out-of-doors.

Meantime there is the need of clothing—in many cases such dire need that children cannot be in school to receive the food. Again there must be a careful family-to-family check-up on need, hurried trips to the headquarters store house (often donated by the townspeople) to try and fill the "orders," and the setting up of temporary distributing centers. Friendly and generous local co-operation help tremendously. Women's sewing circles, cobbling shops for men and community centers are established wherever possible in mining camps and rural communities.



FEEDING IN A SCHOOL



The volunteer is a young man or woman, often a Friend but sometimes not, who is eager to devote his time and energy to helping his fellowmen. He works with an eagerness and a good will which cannot be purchased for money. This, in brief, is the volunteer and his job.

### It Grew Out of the Garden

Nearly a year ago we began to think how very important it was going to be for as many miners' families as possible to have gardens. We emphasized it all spring. In early summer the Service Committee agreed to co-operate with the Extension Department of West Virginia University to put a full time organizer in the upper end of West Virginia to push the garden program. He did a good job. Not only did he get the local communities interested in their plots, but he formed garden clubs. A community organization of this kind was new to many of the mining camps. Generally there is no social intercourse among these people. The families do not mingle; they have nothing in common unless it be the feuds and want.

The Garden Club seemed to wake up another undernourished side of their natures and many of the local clubs have turned to permanent organizations. For organizations to keep alive they must have something to do; the gardens were finished. Alice Davis in Morgantown urged them to become responsible this year for the carrying on of the work in each camp in connection with our child feeding. She says the work of preparation and serving meals in about 75% of the camps in Monongalia County is being done by the Garden Clubs as a part of their winter program. So out of our gardens have come in Monongalia County permanent organizations which it is hoped will become a source of enjoyment, a responsibility, and which will have an uplifting effect on the people.

Errol D. Peckham, in Cambria County, Pa., had several large community plots; one containing nearly six acres. These were operated on the community basis. A man receiving his share of the proceeds in proportion to the amount of time he spent on cultivating. These were successful. In the fall he approached several farmers in the local community and asked them to allow some men to help harvest apples and potatoes. The men's share on this project was 1000 bushels.



A TYPICAL HOME SCENE

### Reports From the Field Cows Can't Keep Up

"We have 23 schools running, six of them through feeding centres outside the school building. We have been opening up schools so fast that I can hardly keep track of them. It now looks as if we should have about thirty by the end of the week, though the milkman may have to call a halt on some until Monday—the cows can't keep up with us! I can see at least fifteen schools that still need feeding, and there may be more in the city. This has meant more work, but will be very satisfactory, I think. Week after next, we expect to have the bulk of the school started, and then shall change to cooked rations and take a plunge at the medical end. We have many lists ready now, and shall probably jump to about a thousand by the end of next week. This has been slow work, because the case workers have been head-over-ears in work getting the R. F. C. men on the roads, verifying Red Cross clothing lists, and arranging for purchases of shoes, overalls, and underwear by the county.

"This morning I attended a meeting of the presidents of our garden clubs. A real job has been done here during the summer. Mr. Grimes asked me to speak to the group about the plans for nutrition work and cooking classes. They are most enthusiastic about this project and I think a very good beginning can be made this winter. The matters of boys' and girls' clubs and recreation in general, were also discussed. In the course of the recreation discussion, it was suggested that we might hold a singing competition among the camps and perhaps send the winning group up to Philadelphia, if transportation could be furnished. Here I want to repeat my appeal for musical instruments.

"In the afternoon I went to a meeting of the local Nutrition Committee of the State Welfare Board. In connection with the Garden Clubs project, it was decided to enlist volunteers for nutrition work to serve under the case worker in each district. Chief emphasis is to be laid on the feeding of expectant mothers and infants and the whole work is to be fitted in to the general medical programme as that develops.

### 99% of Children Defective

"After the matter of clothing had been settled, we took up the health problems of the school population. There is no money available for corrective work (teeth, tonsils, vision) in either city or county, although something is being done for city children in the way of free treatment by dentists and physicians. The Kiwanis Club is also providing materials for the correction of some dental defects. Beyond this, nothing is available. Both the group present at this meeting and the county group are very anxious to do something in the way of correcting the most serious defects shown in school examinations. . . . So far it seems that 99% of the children are listed as having more or less serious defects—mainly malnutrition, defective teeth, enlarged tonsils and adenoids. . . .

"The work of community organization in the camps is going on well, in co-operation with Mr. Grimes. We are in great need of many things to keep these people busy and happy during the winter months. First of all, we want books, for children and adults—and magazines of all kinds, especially things like the National Geographic and all sorts of technical periodicals such as Popular Mechanics. Could some of our schools help us? Also, we need anything in the way of wood-working in-



struments, especially jig-saws. We have a number of communities that would form toy-making groups if we could get some tools. Then there are boys' clubs that will need simple tools and even jack knives for carving. And orchestras are wanted everywhere (Sunny has the raw material for one at Bertha), if only someone would get us instruments. . . ."

## Clothes Needed

"I have just received my first definite report of the clothing needs in my territory. A good dependable local man has made a house-to-house visitation in Bens Creek. Here is a summary statement on the basis of his study. There are 70 families in need, divided as follows: 108 boys, 126 girls, besides 20 men and 19 women who are in need. As far as possible, emphasize garments in the following order: 1st shoes, 2nd stockings, 3rd underwear, 4th dresses, shirts and overalls. Following these the following garments in about equal emphasis: Coats, sweaters, topcoats, caps. This is one of the communities where the strike has been on since last January."

## Local Co-operation

"One camp, where I had a very unsatisfactory set-up last year, has had a complete change of face. I went to the store manager last winter, but he simply wouldn't help. The operator had the reputation for being drunk most of the time, so I let him alone. When I met the store manager last Saturday, he picked out a house and woman to cook before we'd talked 20 minutes. The whole camp is destitute. . . .

"A storeroom and a cheap, handy garage, is our next aim. So many things are coming in bulk that we need a large room, not in a private house. The committee is getting one for us.

"I met the Judge, a fine-looking, powerful, middle-aged Kentuckian, in broad felt hat and gaiters, and he proposed that we should have a desk in the room with the County Superintendent of Schools."

"As soon as the children see me driving into a camp the rumor starts, 'We're going to have the soup kitchen again. Goody!'

"Friday, with the County Superintendent, who is a member of the local Kentucky Relief Commission, I commandeered a group of men digging a ditch on a 'made work' program, and had them all come to the lunch room, build tables, set up the stove, and repair the steps to the building. I think they were rather glad of the chance to stop digging ditches. . . .

"The day after we approved and weighed the children, nineteen children came back to school the next day, begging to be weighed. Fifteen of these were from one camp, and from a group we particularly wanted to reach, as the mine has been closed for more than six months. So many children are not in school, but the Red Cross is making 56,000 yards of cloth into underwear, dresses and shirts, and this, with the feeding, will bring a great many back.

"Several children and adults are barefooted. Little children paddling through warm, brown dust may look charming with bare feet, but seeing them walking along the frost-covered roads makes a different picture. The K. R. C. is helping about 2000 men with 'made work' so conditions should improve."

## Slides and Movies Are Available

Some excellent slides and 3 reels of movies have recently been made which offer a graphic presentation of conditions and relief activities in the coal fields. These, with titles and an accompanying lecture, can be secured by writing to

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

20 SOUTH 12TH STREET, PHILADELPHIA, PA.

## Rehabilitation

Two hundred thousand men who have made their living out of mining will never be used in that industry again. What shall be done to train them in other trades?

The Service Committee has opened up three shops for the production of hand-made furniture, and has also developed weaving for women. A total of about fifty men and about as many women are now earning a part or all of their living in this way. Chairs, tables, stools, benches, rugs, old-fashioned bed coverlets—these are the products. More valuable than this, however, is the revival of spirit and courage and the development of a new sense of integrity which comes from making beautiful and substantial articles. The camps where these developments have taken place are in the neighborhood of Morgantown, West Virginia. The Mountaineer Craftsmen Co-operative Association has been organized to assume responsibility when we are able to withdraw our subsidy. This organization is now in charge of sales and also does co-operative buying for the camps.

We have made our first transfer of a family from a mine camp to an allotment of land. Twenty acres of land has been bought, and a family, Murphy Baker and his wife and three children, are now building a little house on the land, securing the lumber by trading timber for it. They will have a three-room house at a cost of \$50.00. A cow, a mule, two pigs, chickens, a little of the necessary machinery and maintenance until crops are produced next year, comprise the budget. The total is \$490.00. They are located near enough so that Mr. Baker can mine when the mine is operating and can grow his food supply on his own land. This is experiment No. 1, but needs to be greatly elaborated in number to test out the principle which we feel has great possibilities in many locations of the coal fields.



REHABILITATION-FURNITURE SHOP



AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE  
20 SOUTH 12TH STREET, PHILADELPHIA  
Issued by

## COAL'S CHILDREN

### "Machine Age in the Hills"

This book, by Malcolm Ross, will be published by The Macmillan Company about the middle of January. The book describes the impact of the modern age of machinery on those simple people of pioneer habits who were the mountaineers of the Blue Ridge country before the advent of coal mining in their hills persuaded them to dig coal for a living. The effect on the colorful people of the hills appears in the book in intimate descriptions of their personalities and their grievances; but the main thesis of the book poses the important current problem of what to do with workers who are no longer needed in their industries and cannot be absorbed into other ones. The case is studied in the light of the experience in rehabilitation of the American Friends Service Committee.

Malcolm Ross, a Yale graduate, was more recently the editor of a standard volume on Scientific Research. He is also the author of three novels and a book on aviation. Four years of newspaper reporting, plus a period when he was himself a miner in the Arizona copper mines, contribute to his equipment to discuss the Kentucky situation, which he viewed at first hand for several months last winter.

### Everyone Can Help

Surprising things can be accomplished with small sums of money and things which you have no further use for in your home. One dollar will give 12 hungry little children a warm, nourishing meal. Clothes which you can no longer use will lessen the sting of cold winds on the back of a shivering miner. The need for substantial clothes is unlimited—even greater than last year. Among other items which will mean much in the lives of these people are toys of all sorts, books and magazines, pieces of cloth for sewing circles, games, jig saws, and musical instruments.

Those wanting instructions for local sewing circles, or to purchase cloth or wool, should address the Clothing Committee, 20 South 12th St., Philadelphia, Pa. All money should be sent to 20 South 12th St. Gifts from east of the Appalachian Mountains should be sent to the same address. Gifts from west of the Appalachians should be sent to the nearest relief center.

See list in next column.

### Field Staff

#### PENNSYLVANIA

CAMBRIA COUNTY.....P. O. Box 84, Ebensburg, Pa.  
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LOGAN COUNTY.....212 Terminal Bldg., Logan, W. Va.  
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Howard Ambler, Pa.  
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(Work relief for adults as well as child relief.)  
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Paul Hund, Pa. Nelle Coggins, Tenn.  
BELL COUNTY.....Continental Hotel, Pineville, Ky.  
Edith Lindley, Ind. George Trimble, N. J.  
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**Don't forget to let us know at once if you want to receive the next issue of "Coal's Children."**