

Labor and Coal

— A REVIEW —

By WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

Workers who want to know what is behind the present revolt of 40,000 miners in Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia should read **Labor and Coal** by Anna Rochester. It is one of the labor and industry series prepared by the Labor Research Association and issued by the International Publishers, 381—4th Avenue, New York and sells at \$1 a copy.

What does this book do? It tells us first "what is the matter with coal" as mined in the capitalist United States. It traces brilliantly the war boom, the depression in the industry that began long before the general economic crisis, and carries the story of the mining collapse right down to the beginning of the current year.

Then it reveals as no other book has ever revealed the deceptive methods of the companies to hide their profits, and proceeds to examine in detail the various channels through which the capitalist class extracts toll from a "sick" industry even when it is apparently "earning" no "net profits." Along with this it shows the steady growth of mergers and the tightening control of Morgan, Mellon and the other big bankers on the mines. It brings out as particularly significant the control over coal by other industrial companies such as U. S. Steel Corporation. Coal miners who want to know just what combination of financial buzzards they are working for or striking against can readily find the answer in these splendid chapters on the economic and financial aspects of the industry. The worker employed by Pittsburgh Terminal Coal Co., for example, can find on page 66 what other mining companies are tied in with the operators who profit from his exploitation.

Then we come to the coal digger himself. All the necessary facts are here in brief readable yet adequate form along with data on wages, hours, piece rates, speed up, new machinery, unemployment, accidents, deaths, occupational diseases. Those who cannot go to Pittsburgh to see with their own eyes how miners live can with the aid of this book form a very clear picture of mining and the conditions that foreran the present revolt.

The great strike now in progress is not just another coal strike. It has specific features which I shall discuss in another place. But it can only be seen in its full historical



perspective by those who know the story told in the final chapters of this book. It runs from about 1849 to 1931 and covers every great strike as well as the scores of minor struggles that have given the coal diggers their fine traditions of militancy. There were many betrayals along the way, and many tools of the mine owners who sold out the interests of the workers at every opportunity. "The Reign of Lewis" is the title of one of these chapters which tells of the traitor John L. Lewis who assisted by Pat Fagan and his kind played deliberately into the hands of the Rockefellers, Schwabs, Peabodys, U. S. Steel Corporation and others. The crooked dealings of the Faringtons, Nesbits, Fishwicks, Murrays and Kennedys as well as the vacillations of the Howatts and Brophys are also exposed in detail.

Liberals, Socialists, Mustelites, as well as the big labor fakers have tried to discredit this book and have made vicious attacks on the author. This was to be expected, for Comrade Rochester's facts are so straight and so effectively presented they cannot be "answered" except by scold-



Pouring in from all points in the thetic steel workers, who are facing con immediate relief for their families, no e food for their children. Upper picture various demands of the striking miners.

Lower picture, Frank Hollerick an Albert 3, who came all the way from F other miners have the same tale to tel Pittsburgh authorities, following out th to the hunger marchers. Answer by rus

Working C

By Jack Hardy

The coal miner who is lucky enough to have a days' work, never knows, when he leaves his shack in the morning, whether he will return that night or not. For as speed-up and mechanization continue apace, the death and accident toll mount simultaneously. Under the steady drive for increased production, coal-mining has come to be more hazardous than work in the steel mills, on the railroads, structural iron work and many of the other jobs commonly looked upon as the most hazardous occupations in the country. During the ten year period ending December 31, 1929, there were 22,500 fatal and 1,500,000 non-fatal accidents to coal miners on the job.

Large mine disasters such as great floods and spectacular mine fires, which make front page news, frequently are called to general attention. What the newspapers never print, however, are the almost daily stories of miners crushed by two, three, and four by falling coal or rock; bodies mangled underground by mine trains; scores killed by gas or coal dust explosions. Of all miners, at least one out of every six is injured during the course of a year. Among those having full-time work the rate is at least one out of every four.

These accidents can be largely, if not entirely checked. But safety cost money. Power lines, motor haulage and safety devices would eliminate the largest part of the fatalities. But besides being expensive to install, safety measures interfere with speed-up. Under capitalism the interests of large profits are better served by paying meager compensation to the injured worker than by taking the precautions necessary to forestall the killing or maiming of the workers on the job.

ing and epithets. She has torn the mask from all the right wing pretenses of "progressive" leadership. Her book is thus a powerful weapon in the hands of the National Miners Union and the fighting workers. Finally, the book carries a vital description of how the Russian miners live and organize and help to build socialism in the Soviet Union.

"Labor and Coal" can be secured from the National Miners Union in Pittsburgh, from the Workers Book Shop or from International Publishers, 381—4th Avenue, New York.