

T. Moore

COAL

The Struggle of the Mineworkers

By W. Orr and C. Nelson.

Price: 6d.

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FOREWORD

The demands raised in this pamphlet represent the immediate needs of the mineworkers. To realise them the mineworkers must build organisation capable of successful struggle.

It is necessary to state clearly that the fight for immediate demands and reforms, though providing possibilities for alleviating present conditions, cannot provide a lasting solution of the problems facing the working class under capitalism.

The preamble of the Miners' Federation correctly states that "there can be no peace as long as want and hunger are found among millions of working people and the few who constitute the employing class have all the good things of life.

"Between these two classes the struggle must continue until capitalism is abolished."

Should this pamphlet serve to enlighten our members and strengthen the urge to act and build the organisation, it will have served to fulfil the immediate object of its publication. We must strengthen our forces to play our part more effectively in the struggle to end the system of capitalism and for the creation of the new order, Socialism, which alone guarantees to the masses the right to enjoy high social and cultural conditions in keeping with the high productivity of society.

W.O.

INTRODUCTORY

Despite all the "ballyhoo" about returning prosperity, the conditions of coalminers are not improved, but become worse.

Compared with the lowest level of coal production reached in the period of the present crisis there has been a substantial increase in output, but this has been accompanied by anarchic, price-war competition amongst the owners and sustained attacks by the employers against the mineworkers.

Mineworkers, amid the natural endowments in large, rich, and easily accessible seams of coal, are being ruthlessly exploited to provide cheap coal, high freights and profits for shipping and rail bond-holders and increased dividends for factory owners and the manufacturers of iron, steel, gas and electricity. Coal is "given away" to its capitalist consumers, and coalowners seek to make the most abject slaves of their employees to meet a position mainly of their own creation.

Australian coalminers are already below the wages per ton level established in more backward European and Asiatic countries, and speed-up is so intense in Australian coalmines, which are poorly mechanised, that the per-man-day-production is higher than in any country in the world, with the single exception of the highly mechanised mines of America.

The offensive against the mineworkers continues, and new moves are now being made by the coalowners in the direction of complete mechanisation; electric coalcutters, loaders and locomotives threaten the scrapping of the major portion of coalminers in the next few years.

The owners are determined that the workers who remain shall sacrifice their youth, strength and speed to maintain the unbearable exploitation being forced upon mineworkers. The B.H.P. Collieries, one of the most powerful in the Commonwealth, have already indicated

their intention to refuse employment to any mineworker who has reached 40 years of age.

The terrific exploitation of the workers in the coal-mines is producing a heavy crop of accidents, and the number of workers who are broken in health as a result of their working conditions is growing steadily each year.

The Miners' Union balance-sheets show that the expenditure, per employed member, incurred by the Union in fighting compensation cases has been increased by 100% compared with costs for five years ago.

This disquieting situation arises directly from speed-up, and is greatly aggravated by the using of deputies, whose only duty should be to devote their attention to safety supervision, for work usually performed by members of other unions.

By this improper use of deputies the coalowners seek to increase production and profits, and at the same time they hope to precipitate inter-union struggles over jobs, and secure the isolation of the deputies for use in breaking future struggles of the other mineworkers.

Recent events have shown, however, that the splitting tactics of the employers can be overcome, and there is a general move for combined action to enforce safety and provide protection to the deputies to strengthen them in refusing to engage in any work that is not associated in ensuring safety for themselves, for miners, shiftmen, wheelers, enginedrivers, and boys.

The revolt of the mineworkers against these conditions is rapidly spreading, and a conscious movement is now developing in the direction of planned action to alter these conditions for all of the mineworkers irrespective of craft-union barriers.

The last couple of years have witnessed a whole series of successful partial struggles in all districts, and all of these have revealed a growing strength in the powers of resistance of the mineworkers against the employers.

Side by side with the actual struggle there has been a growing move for unity on industrial lines, and the im-

provement of craft-union relations has been demonstrated in practical fashion in a series of struggles at Ayrfield, Hebburn, Wongawilli, Lithgow State Mine, and in the proposals of the Miners' Federation for a single Federation of mining unions.

The mineworkers are moving over to the offensive to alter their conditions, and each district is putting forward demands for improvement and preparing to fight for these by improving their own organisation and the relations with the rest of the trade unions through direct affiliation with the N.S.W. Labor Council and the strengthening of the Trades and Labor Councils in the districts.

The unions will take a hand and force a change of the coalowners' policy and the conditions it has brought.

WAGE-CUTS.

In 1929, the Northern Colliery Owners' Association "locked out" 10,000 mineworkers for a period of fifteen months, and finally succeeded in forcing a reduction of 12½% on the wages of contract workers and 6d. (six-pence) per day on day wage employees.

Following the lock-out, all other coalowners appealed for similar reductions, and Judge Beeby, who dealt with the claims, stated: "Without application to this Court or to a special Tribunal set up under the Industrial Peace Act, certain associated collieries in the Newcastle district succeeded in forcing a reduction of contract and wage rates of their employees engaged directly in coal production."

The coalowners and the Arbitration Court, who for years humbugged the workers with propaganda directed towards securing submission to "arbitration" and "constitutional procedure," used the unconstitutional and illegal enforcement of wage-cuts in the North as a basis upon which to justify the enforcement of the same wage-cuts on all other districts.

Judge Beeby, in making an award for other districts, stated: "I am forced to the conclusion that contract and wage rates for workmen employed by the claimants should be reduced to the same extent as the reductions recently enforced at Newcastle."

The attack on wages did not end, but, to the contrary, only commenced with the lock-out and the subsequent 12½% reduction.

Figures for New South Wales will serve as an excellent guide as to what has happened to mineworkers' wages during recent years:—

Year.	Production (tons.)	Salaries and Wages.
1929	7,617,736	£4,053,746
1930	7,093,055	£3,731,380
1931	6,432,382	£3,222,379
1932	6,784,222	£3,022,474
1933	7,118,437	£2,972,712

The wages total, as shown in the foregoing table, includes the value of explosives sold to the employees.

Explosives costs—1932	£93,752
1933	£95,981

An additional 750,000 tons of coal was mined in 1934 and an extra 194,908lbs. of explosives were used, which we estimate as having cost an additional £14,000, and this was paid for by the miners out of a reduced wages total.

Each increase in explosives costs must be added to the wage reduction totals already given to arrive at the real wage-cuts imposed.

In spite of big wage reductions, the miners are compelled to pay the same high prices for their explosives which operated before the crisis.

Each decrease in wages means a corresponding increase in the percentage of wages paid for explosives, and every increase in payments for explosives means an additional direct wage-cut.

The above figures, taken from the latest official Year Book of New South Wales, show that since 1930, when the lock-out had concluded and wages had already been reduced, further reductions have been forced and that the total reductions grow each year as compared with 1930.

In 1931 reductions totalled	£509,001
In 1932 reductions totalled	£708,906
In 1933 reductions totalled	£758,668

Total £1,976,575

It will have been noted also that reductions in wages costs have been so effective that, compared with 1930, an additional 25,000 tons of coal was produced in 1933 for £750,000 less in wages.

Figures in connection with wages for the year 1934 are not yet available, but during that year the New South Wales coalowners reduced their pit-top prices of coal by another 6½d. per ton, and this represents a total of £221,433 on last year's production of 7,873,433 tons, and it is safe to say that most of this £221,433 represents new economies at the expense of the safety and wages of the mineworkers.

The Victorian State Coal Mine Report for 1933-34 shows that the number of employees was reduced from 1615 in 1928-1929 to 1330 in 1933-1934, being a reduction of approximately 18%; the wages paid for the same two years are given at £498,961 and £204,407, being a reduction of 57%.

UNEMPLOYMENT.

During the lock-out of 1929-1930, the Bavin Nationalist Government appointed a Royal Commission to investigate the position of the coal industry and how it should be reorganised in the interests of capitalism.

This Commission exhaustively examined the schemes of rationalisation adopted in Europe and elsewhere, and

amongst the recommendations it brought back for adoption by the coalowners were the following (p. 336, Davidson Coal Commission Report) proposals:

"The restoration of a proper measure of discipline and managerial control. The effect of this reform will necessitate the elimination of surplus employees and the greater efficiency of those retained, the removal of the troubles of absenteeism and the 'darg' and of objections to the introduction of coal-cutting machines and other mechanical equipment, and the modification or abolition of the system of 'cavilling.' By this means a further substantial saving in the costs of production can be obtained."

The coalowners have relentlessly pursued the advice tendered, and have reduced the number of employees in the New South Wales collieries from 22,470 in 1929 to 12,964 in 1933 (N.S.W. Year Book, 1932-33, page 285); this is the lowest number of employees since 1911 according to the Davidson Coal Commission, which gave the number of employees in the latter year as 17,675.

The following figures are supplied in the official Year Book:

Year.	Output.	Total Employees.
1929	7,617,736 tons 22,470
1930	7,093,401 tons 20,090
1931	6,432,382 tons 15,808
1932	6,784,222 tons 13,576
*1933	7,118,437 tons 13,349
*1934	7,873,180 tons 13,465

* Figures secured from Mines Department.

In giving effect to the advice of the Davidson Coal Commission the owners immediately began to carry out wholesale dismissals. A stage was reached in 1931 when further dismissals could only be effected by reorganisation, mechanisation, speed-up, and placing deputies and other non-producers to production.

The introduction of these latter measures has resulted in an increase of production between 1931 and 1934 of 1,440,000 tons, being carried out with 2300 less employees.

Mr. Hay, Chief Inspector of Mines in New South Wales, draws attention to the fact that, though there was an increase in the total number of employees during 1934 by 116 as compared with 1933, there was a decrease in the number of top-hands by 79 in the same year to handle production which had increased by 750,000 tons.

Fifty per cent. of colliery employees have been thrown out of work in the last few years; whole communities in the minefields have been rendered destitute, and their life savings where it has been invested in their own homes have been rendered valueless by the closure of the mines which served as the pivot of local economic activity.

Unemployment has not reached its lowest level in the coalfields unless the mineworkers make a determined stand against further mass dismissals resulting from greater speed-up and wholesale mechanisation.

SPEED-UP.

One of the direct causes of the excessive unemployment in the coalfields was the failure of the miners' organisations to check the systematic speeding-up of production at the expense of the health, safety and wages of those who depend on the industry for their livelihood.

The methods used by the coal bosses to achieve their ends are many and varied.

Threats of closing the mine to enforce increased tonnage is the oldest and most effective method in periods of weakened industrial organisation on the part of the employees.

The period following the lock-out and the defeat of the Federation saw a wholesale breaking of the darg and

an increasing of production by this means. Other measures adopted during the same period secured the cutting out of all kinds of "concession" payments and, in many cases, payments which were already provided for in agreements; miners were advised to maintain their wages level "by filling a few more skips."

An equally effective and, from a union point of view, more dangerous practice developed by the coalowners is the introduction of propaganda to incite competition amongst the lodges to assist the boss in his price-cutting campaigns when fighting for new markets.

Some lodges, and even districts, have fallen for this propaganda and agreed to adjust themselves to competitive struggle so that the lodge or district might secure contracts for their respective employers. Such capitulation, which usually expresses itself in agreement to speeding-up or forfeiting dearly-won conditions, allows the particular employer to set a new low level in coal prices. Someone else strives to cut below this, and so the vicious struggle continues, till to-day a real coolie level of conditions for the mining communities as a whole has been reached.

Other measures used to speed-up production have been the systematic reduction of the number of shiftmen, road-layers, timbermen, wheelers, etc., and the forcing of workers retained in these classifications to perform a very much greater amount of work than formerly. And, by reducing shiftmen, the employers have also forced contract workers to do certain work which was never intended to be part of their contract.

More serious still is the fact that coalowners are using deputies for timbering, road-laying, timber-drawing, and in production, instead of allowing these employees to perform what should be their only duty, namely, the ensuring of safety for themselves and all other employees against bad ventilation, falls, fires, explosions, etc.

Mechanisation is also playing its part in the results secured by the employers, and, alarming though this is,

there are reports to hand still more alarming of pending mechanisation which will rapidly eliminate hundreds of those at present employed.

The extent of speed-up secured by all the foregoing methods since 1931 is given in the following official figures:

Production per Head per Annum. Employees Below Ground in N.S.W.	
Year.	Tons.
1931	554
1932	640
1933	715
1934	776

Speeding-up of production has been carried out in New South Wales districts as follows:

Production per Head per Annum. Employees Below Ground in N.S.W.			
Year.	North.	South.	West.
1931	542 tons	417 tons	811 tons
1932	620 tons	486 tons	1041 tons
1933	701 tons	593 tons	911 tons
1934	824 tons	567 tons	912 tons
Increase ..	283 tons	150 tons	101 tons

The figures show an increase of more than 50% in the North, and mean that the present production of every two employees have put someone out of a job who was previously employed in 1931.

In the South the practice is not quite so vicious, since they have displaced only one in four.

In the West the miners had already been forced to a very high level of production per employee before 1931, and the owners have achieved what seemed to be an almost impossible task by adding an additional 16% to individual production.

There can be no doubt that every failure on the part of the mineworkers to resist speed-up has resulted in thousands of workers being thrown upon the grass when they should have been in employment and earning wages.

The question of a 30-hour week becomes a real necessity, since mineworkers can no longer stand the strain of present conditions.

MECHANISATION.

The quantity of coal produced by machines showed an increase of 500,000 tons between 1931 and 1934, but these figures do not reveal the real danger.

Official records show that the amount of coal cut by machines in New South Wales was as follows:

Year	Tons.
1931	1,378,514
1932	1,410,914
1933	1,724,989
1934	1,965,441

These figures show a progressive increase each year, but reports which come to hand from a number of sources in the industry indicate that the coalowners are aiming at the planned introduction of electric coal-cutters, electric borers, electric loaders, and electric locomotives.

Cases already exist where surface operations are almost completely mechanised to the point of dispensing with all but a few employees, and if the coalowners get their way the same development will be applied underground in a comparatively short time.

The question of the miners' attitude to mechanisation and mass dismissals will call for serious answer at an early date, since the mechanical reorganisation plans of the owners seem to be coming to a head now after long preparation.

A number of mines have installed electric locomotives, and at others new coal-cutting machines have been introduced; at least two mechanical loaders have been introduced at collieries, and also one in the Broken Hill metaliferous mines. (The Barrier miners immediately blackballed the "loader," and a strike took place, but this was "called off" when an assurance was given that the loader would be used only in drives.)

Unrestricted mechanisation in the collieries would throw fresh thousands out of work and provide work for only a few mechanics.

The coalfields as a whole would be further impoverished; not only would the youth be denied a future, but those who have grown up in the industry and produced the profits used to buy the machines would also find themselves scrapped, with a starvation dole the only recompense for their years of toil.

Latest achievements of mechanical devices have been authoritatively described at the American Mining Congress and in their Year Book for 1932 as follows:

"In a five-foot seam with bords 23 feet wide and a machine cut of 35 tons, it is possible with a full complement of 15 men, including machinemen, shotfirers, loaders, roadlayers, timbermen, etc., to produce 315 tons per day of eight hours.

"In a seven-foot seam, a full complement of 13 men with modern machines can produce 310 tons per eight hours."

The American Mining Congress Report, No. 8, states:

"The Sullivan Electric Coal Loader was designed for use in a five-foot seam. Under favorable conditions this machine will load 300 tons in eight hours, and in unfavorable conditions 200 tons is the average for eight hours."

The Whaley Automat Coal Loading Machine is described as follows: "The machine is single motored, track mounted, self-propelling. In addition to coal load-

ing it handles slate or rock in entry work, roof falls, etc. The machine is built in two sizes—average loading, 2 tons per minute; maximum rate, 6 tons per minute."

Miners at the coal-face who at present produce from 6 to 12 tons in 8 hours, can appreciate the results of the introduction of a machine to load this amount in from one to two minutes.

A report submitted by Mr. J. H. Richards, Chief Mining Engineer, Marina Coal Co., U.S.A., describes the work of a "production group" of 18 men producing 428 tons per day.

The "Wigan Observer," an English newspaper, of 15/9/'34, reported the following:

"A new coal mining machine which, it is reported, enables six men to do the work formerly done by 100 experienced miners, has just been perfected after nine months of secret tests, carried out in an up-to-date pit in the Wigan, England, coalfield. At present known as the 'Cutter-Loader,' this machine, it is claimed, has solved at last the problem of loading mechanically the loose coal which has been cut from the face.

"The ordinary coal-cutter is known as the 'Iron-Man.' This new machine may well be called the iron 'Super-Man,' for it not only cuts the coal, but loads it for conveyance to the haulage. Whereas an ordinary collier can shovel from 8 to 15 tons per day, the Cutter-Loader can load two tons per minute. The inventor's name has not yet been disclosed. He is a Scottish mining expert, and for the past nine months the machine has been working under his supervision. Demonstrations recently given before experts from all parts of the country, it is stated, leave no doubt that the Cutter-Loader does all that is claimed for it with extreme efficiency.

"It first travels along the face, cutting the coal, which is blown down by explosives; it then returns, loading the loose coal as it comes. The collier's shovel may, in fact, be replaced by the 'Iron Super-Man,' as his pick was replaced by the 'Iron-Man.'

"The effect of its introduction would mean that the colliers, as we know them to-day, would also be replaced down the mine by semi-skilled engineers."

Mechanisation can and must be resisted when it threatens the very existence of whole communities who are denied any alternative means of earning their living.

These are not the Luddite days of machine smashing; the world has gone through more than a century of high scientific and technical development since the English weavers undertook the smashing of the looms because they thought they were to be put out of a job.

This past century witnessed great technical development, and to-day we suffer from a chronic crisis of over-production and an absence of new markets.

Since the beginning of the 19th century, when the Luddite movement developed, the use of machinery in textiles has grown to such a high productive level that the capitalists themselves only recently destroyed some millions of spindles and textile equipment in England to allow them to maintain their profits.

The natural advantages associated with Australian coalfields, coupled with the high productivity and low wages enforced upon the mineworkers, have, with present methods, made possible the production of coal at the pit's mouth for less labor and total costs than in any other part of the world, almost without exception.

Australian mineworkers must direct their main policy to the improving of conditions, and must resolutely oppose mechanisation with its inevitable accompaniment of increased unemployment and worse conditions.

SICKNESS, ACCIDENT AND DEATH.

The natural consequence of terrific speed-up, safety neglect, and wage-cuts is the big increase in accidents and compensation actions involving the districts of the Miners' Federation in ever-increasing costs per member as shown in the Union balance sheets.

Despite a reduction by half of the working membership of the organisation, the total expenditure involved in fighting compensation cases for sick and injured members remains at the same high level as it did when members were 100% employed.

These figures tell a poignant story of a doubling of the rate of accidents and sickness incurred by members in the course of their employment.

The Western District balance sheet shows that compensation expenses for the years 1928, 1929, and 1930 amounted to £870/3/1, and in 1931, 1932 and 1933, when half of the members had already become unemployed, the costs were £1181/8/6, an increase of approximately 50% in expenditure based on employed members for sickness and accident cases.

The Southern District figures furnish additional proof of the huge price paid by mineworkers in cash and blood in satisfaction of the infamous policy pursued by the coal bosses.

The years 1928, 1929 and 1930 involved the Southern District in total compensation expenses of £1984/14/10, but the years of 1932, 1933 and 1934, although calling for protection of a working membership already reduced by half, saw the figure increase to £2136/10/3.

In the Northern District, costs for compensation remain almost at the same high level, with £7235/7/3 for 1928, 1929 and 1930, and £6408/2/5 for 1931, 1932 and 1933.

An alarming increase is also noticeable in the number of fatal accidents.

The figure reached in New South Wales for 1934 is the highest on record since 1927, when there were twice as many employees in the industry.

The last report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in New South Wales gives a table setting out information regarding fatal accidents:

Year.	Persons employed.	Lives lost.	Lives lost per 1000 employees.
1928	21,468	14	0.65
1929	14,577	12	0.82
1930	16,650	16	0.96
1931	15,667	7	0.45
1932	14,275	13	0.90
1933	13,349	10	0.75
1934	13,465	15	1.11

It will be seen that the rate of fatal accidents per 1000 of employees in 1934 is higher than for any other single year shown in the table.

The frightfulness of the present conditions and their effect upon the mineworkers are clearly revealed in evidence recently submitted before Judge Winnicke by Idris Williams, President of the Wonthaggi Miners, who declared:

"We have claimed that sickness in the coal mining industry is much more acute than in any other industry. Since our previous evidence in this regard our balance sheets reveal the following:—July, 1933, to March, 1934, payments from the Union Sick and Benefit Fund amounted to £1311/6/-, covering 8½ months.

"This Fund was opened again after resumption of work on August 14th, 1934, and up to June 30th, 1935, it paid out £1501/11/4, plus a liability to the end of June of £54/13/4, making a total of £1556/4/8 for 10½ months. All payments are made on the basis of £1 per week. It is compulsory for a member to be off for one week before getting payment; then it is paid on part-week if a member returns to work without completing any other full week of work. The Fund is controlled by medical certificates declaring on the Fund, then progressive each fortnight, and a final certificate on resumption. Our total membership over the two years was 875, with 50 half-members. The average sickness is two weeks per member per annum. In addition, 12 members were sick for a longer period than the Fund provides for, and therefore this period is not taken into account."

The Queensland District has not been involved in heavy financial expenditure in the period under review, and recent figures of accidents are less than in 1929 and 1930, but the same tendency towards increase is also shown in this District, and later figures are as follow:

West Moreton District Accidents.

Year.	Fatal.	Ordinary.	Occupational.	Total
1930-1931	1	210	3	214
1931-1932	1	162	2	165
1932-1933	—	141	—	141
1933-1934	2	191	1	194
1934-1935	2	218	—	220

The Miners' Federation has charged the N.S.W. Government and the coalowners with playing with the lives of the mineworkers.

Despite the agreement of the N.S.W. Mines Department nearly a year ago, that the methods of production at the Ayrfield Colliery were pregnant with possibilities of serious disaster, and their promise to propose amending legislation to remove the dangers, there has been no serious action taken by the Stevens Government to put an end to the conditions complained of.

Even more recently the Miners' Federation has made representations to the mineowners and insurance companies for a supply of safety hats to underground employees.

The Mines Department, insurance companies, owners, all agree that such hats are life-savers, but no indication has yet been made that they intend to make such hats available, though the total cost of £3000 could be met by means of a levy of less than one-tenth of a penny on one year's production of coal in New South Wales.

The mineworkers are asking if their lives are held at a lower value by the mineowners.

With unemployment growing, wages decreasing, work becoming unbearably hard, and in conditions where health and safety are neglected and the workers' orga-

nisations have to pay twice as much to defend compensation cases, and with fatal accidents on the increase, there can be no reason for failing to understand the growing revolt of the coalfields against present conditions.

SOME "SOLUTIONS."

During the currency of the present crisis there have been many "quack remedies" advanced as proposals for the solution of the unemployment problem in the minefields.

These "remedies" or "solutions" are advanced by coal-owners seeking to justify their continued attacks upon working conditions, by subsidy-seeking speculators requiring financial backing for "new processes," and by politicians seeking votes.

We should be failing in our duty to the mineworkers if we neglected to give some attention to the various theories and solutions developed in the present period.

The owners have claimed that coal is being displaced by oil because the costs of coal production are too high, but the lie direct has been given to this statement by the Fuel Research Committee, composed of authorities on the matter, who reported during the past few days:

"From all investigations into the competitive uses of fuel oil, it has been shown that the major factor in the decline of the coal market has not been brought about by the substitution of oil for coal, but that the drop in the consumption of coal has been due to the depressed state of industry coupled with the marked fuel economies introduced into all coal-burning operations."

The report also indicates that the "efficiencies now operating" have so reduced fuel needs "that the restoration of industry to its pre-depression level will not restore the coal market to its former high level."

The Fuel Research Committee also stated that "It was suggested to the Committee that in addition to the indus-

trial depression, the decline in consumption of coal was largely due to the use of fuel oil, and investigations were carried out to ascertain to what extent coal had been replaced by other fuels."

The report continues: "It was found that the amount of fuel oil burned in direct competition with coal was relatively small and accounted for only about 3% of the total fuel requirements of industry. It was also discovered that there was a distinct tendency for the replacement of oil by coal for heating purposes."

Another argument used by the coalowners is that reduced prices will bring new markets, but we have shown from the foregoing that if the owners could eliminate competing fuels in Australia an increase of only 3% would accrue—we have also shown that Australian costs of production are amongst the lowest in the world, and if low prices determined the matter then new markets should have been found long ago. The facts are, however, that every coal-producing country has a surplus of coal for export, and there are no new markets.

The Fuel Research Committee reports that it "has been in touch with two concerns interested in the production of oil from coal by carbonisation methods, but neither of them had any concrete proposals for immediate consideration."

In regard to the extraction of oil from coal, the Research Committee states: "No action is deemed necessary or desirable pending the results of the commercial operations of the plant of Imperial Chemical Industries Ltd., at Billingham, England."

Should it finally be deemed "necessary or desirable" to develop the Billingham process in Australia, the unemployed problem of the coalfields will not be "solved," and if hopes of such "solution" are allowed to weaken resistance to the owners' attacks and to mechanisation the problem of unemployment will become worse than ever.

Correctly stated, the position is as follows: If all the oil requirements of Australia were produced internally there would not be a single additional employee engaged in distribution; on the contrary, large numbers now employed on distribution would be rendered unnecessary if oil requirements could be met without import handling and if wholesaling and retailing were carried out by a single producing company in place of the many now operating.

Commonwealth oil consumption is 250,000,000 gallons. Results at Billingham show 100 gallons per ton, and Australia could meet its requirements in oil from the hydrogenation of 2,500,000 tons of coal. Under present methods of production this would mean re-employment for only half of the experienced miners now unemployed, but, if mechanisation of the mines is allowed, the total coal and oil requirements could be met by less than half of the present employees.

The absence of possibilities for immediate development of hydrogenation, to meet Australia's requirements in oil fuel, is revealed in the report of Mr. Rodgers, Commonwealth expert, who showed that the total capacity of the Billingham plant, costing £8,000,000 (English), was 700,000 tons of coal annually. Australia would require four such plants to meet her oil needs, and the cost, after allowing for exchange, would be approximately £40,000,000.

Newnes Shale Oil Development is also included in the "solutions" of the unemployment problems of the minefields, but expert opinion, contained in the Shale Oil Investigation Committee's report of 1934, shows that the Newnes shale mines would require a full complement of less than 300 miners altogether.

Such are the "solutions," and it should be clear that these will not materially reduce unemployment; on the contrary, unemployment in the minefields will become a much larger problem if we neglect the struggle to defend present conditions by hoping for easy "solutions."

The development of shale oil and coal oil production would provide some additional employment, and to this extent we must fight for the benefits that are possible; but exaggerations of such possibilities must be ruthlessly exposed as humbugging and misleading propaganda.

A world authority on these questions, Dr. C. H. Lander, has stated on many occasions that the whole tendency of improved efficiency and development in fuel matters had the effect of reducing the amount of coal mined.

In a recent statement Dr. Lander stated: "If it should go forth from that meeting of technical men that the immediate effect (of coal oil production) could NOT be to increase materially the amount of coal mined, it would be a good thing for the community, because it was not desirable that the unemployed should depend on something which could never happen."

Unfortunately, there is no easy way out, and mine-workers will require to look to the strengthening of their industrial organisation as a necessary step in the direction of successful defence and improvement of their conditions.

TO SUMMARISE.

The effect of the owners' drive against the mine-workers may be summarised as follows:

Since the 12½% wage-cut in 1930, additional reductions have been made in the wages bill for 1931, 1932 and 1933 amounting to a total of £2,000,000. The total wages bill was reduced from more than £4,000,000 in 1931 to less than £3,000,000 in 1933, a reduction of more than 25%.

The total number of employees has been reduced by nearly one-half in less than 10 years, from 24,125 in 1926 to 13,349 in 1933.

Further large reductions of the numbers of employees are part of the owners' plans for mechanisation.

Underground mineworkers in New South Wales have been speeded-up from 554 tons per employee per year in 1931 to 776 tons per employee per year in 1934, an increase of more than 40%.

In 1931 there were 15,667 employees used to produce 6,019,809 tons of coal, and for 1934 7,873,180 tons were produced by 13,465 employees.

Safety has been neglected to an alarming extent, and in 1934 there were 15 fatal accidents, representing 1.11 per thousand employees killed as against a lower death rate for all years back to 1925.

The balance sheets of the Miners' Federation show that the cost to the Union, per employed member, for fighting compensation has been doubled in the last three years as compared with the preceding three years.

Wages are smashed, unemployment is becoming more extensive than employment, speed-up has become unbearable and has led to the maiming and killing of large numbers of employees, and is being continued to enforce fresh dismissals; mining communities are rendered destitute, youths are denied any future, and the older men are without any compensation for their years of toil and profit-making for the coalowners.

THE MINEWORKERS' DEMANDS.

A whole series of demands have been formulated by the mine-workers to cover the needs which their struggles have revealed.

First and foremost is the demand for a 30-hour week to be worked in five days of six hours each.

This demand provides the only substantial basis for alleviation of the problem of the chronic unemployment and providing a chance for the youth of the coalfields and for the relieving of the awful strain of a 43-hour week of the present criminal exploitation.

Wage adjustments are demanded to allow the employees to earn as much in 30 hours as they now do in 43 hours; the added cost of giving effect to such demands can easily be borne by forcing the capitalists to pay more for their coal.

Of equal importance in the eyes of all mineworkers is the need to enforce correct practice to govern safety supervision at all mines.

The miners insist that safety men shall be employed only to ensure safe working conditions and that the owners shall be prevented from endangering the lives of all their employees by attempting to put the safety men to the production of coal and dividends.

Mechanisation, under conditions of capitalism where machines are used to increase exploitation and unemployment, is looked upon as an abomination to be resisted at every step.

Mineworkers have decided to resist further mechanisation as they would resist any other move for their extermination by the capitalists who wish to reach for extra profits over the wholesale desolation of minefields.

The plight of the aged miners who have grown old in coal production has compelled the raising of special demands for the provision of adequate pensions to all mineworkers on reaching the age of 60 years.

In support of this demand the Miners' Federation has directed attention to certain facts which prove that the old mineworkers have themselves produced the resources with which such a pension scheme can be carried out.

Prior to the repeal of the Miners' Accident Relief Act in 1918, the miners, now grown old in the industry, had contributed £400,000 to the Miners' Accident Relief Fund, and with the repeal of the Act a sum of £343,600 was transferred to the New South Wales Treasury.

Attention is also directed to the fact that a sum of £60,000, which was granted by the Federal Government for repatriation of coalminers in 1930, has not yet been distributed.

The Miners' Federation is also claiming that the Mines Departments are showing a large surplus from royalties, after all Departmental expenses have been met, and that such surplus should be devoted to the provision of decent Old Age Pensions for mineworkers.

The N.S.W. Mines Departmental Report for 1934 contains the following figures under the heading of "Revenues":

Year.	Surplus over Expenditure.
1929-30	£99,271
1930-31	£90,899
1931-32	£79,014
1932-33	£81,213
1933-34	£99,369
Surplus, 5 years	£439,766

A claim of the Miners' Federation that the Miners' Accident Fund surplus, £343,600, plus the undistributed repatriation moneys, £60,000, and the New South Wales Mines Department surplus, £439,766, in all totalling £843,366, be used for a Pension Fund, is supported with assertions that the present pace is killing the old men when they should be able to retire with a guarantee of a measure of comfort; also, that provision for such retirement will provide better opportunities for the employment of many young mineworkers who are denied the right to work and to earn reasonable wages and to live a normal life.

In addition to demands for reasonable pensions for aged mineworkers, the Federation will demand better insurance for their sick and injured members.

Figures already published in this pamphlet reveal the fact that a higher premium is being paid by mineworkers to secure the enforcement of the compensation to which they are legally entitled.

New and improved facilities are urgently required to provide speedy and satisfactory settlement of compensa-

tion claims by much less expensive means than those provided for at present.

Expenses incurred in establishing claims for compensation must be made a charge on the industries and on the insurance companies per medium of a special fund created for this purpose and administered by a board completely independent of the insurance agencies and the mineowners.

The Mineworkers' Union will in addition, more than ever, force their claims for the provision of adequate insurance to meet the needs of their sick members, and for the exposure and amending of existing legislation which allows destruction of workers by occupational diseases without any pretence of enforcing insurance for such workers and their dependants.

The main programme of the mineworkers will be to secure—

- (1) A 30-hour week;
- (2) Corresponding increase of tonnage and hour rates;
- (3) Enforcement of safety and protection for deputies;
- (4) The defeat of further mechanisation at expense of wages, safety or employment;
- (5) Adequate Old Age Pensions;
- (6) Amended insurance legislation for sick, injured, and unemployed members.

THE MINEWORKERS' ORGANISATION.

In preparation for the enforcement of their claims, the mineworkers have made definite progress towards consolidating and improving their industrial organisation.

In the campaign, to this end, the Miners' Federation, which is representative of nearly 90% of the mineworkers, is playing the leading part.

During the last couple of years the educational work of the Union has been very materially improved as a

result of the reintroduction of the official organ of the Federation, "Common Cause," under direct editorial control of the Union and assisted by the voluntary reporters in the districts.

The fight for trade union unity in the coalfields has been a feature of the consistent policy pursued by the Miners' Federation, and agreement has already been achieved with the Enginedrivers, which is the next biggest union in the coal industry; amongst the smaller unions there is a growing urge that the Miners' Federation should take over all the members of such unions, collectively.

The progress already recorded in the discussions of trade union unity within the coalmining industry has already placed on the orders of the day the question of a federation or amalgamation of the existing unions into the one organisation.

The further development of the campaign is being watched with deep interest and approval by the active members of all the unions affected.

Not only is the one union being brought closer, but the mineworkers are also getting closer to the unionists of the other industries, and Labor Councils are being formed in the West and South of New South Wales, and the Northern District miners have become an affiliated section of the Newcastle Labor Council. Wonthaggi has formed its own Industrial Council, and in the Barrier District the mining unions are still improving on the present forms of industrial organisation existing there. In Sydney, the Miners' Federation delegates have taken their seats with railwaymen, builders, metalworkers, etc., on the N.S.W. Trades and Labor Council.

Within the Miners' Federation efforts are being directed towards a general mobilisation of the employed and unemployed members.

Area Committees are organised in the West and North to co-ordinate the educational and organising work of the adjoining lodges, and to break down all existing

isolation or suspicion between the lodges, so that united action can be more readily secured in regard to job questions.

The Area Committees provide the Federation with extra forces for organising work and for educational and agitational activity to facilitate the building of one union and a powerful public sympathy and support behind the mineworkers in their struggles for the improvement of conditions.

Wonthaggi and the Southern District have learned in the course of their long periods of struggle in the last two years, of the great value of increasing the Union's organisational work, and the efforts of our most active members are directed towards improving upon the work already carried out.

There are still many weaknesses to be found in the work of the Union and in the relations of the employed and unemployed, but these are steadily being overcome and eliminated. When the fight is forced upon the mineworkers, they should not hesitate to seize the advantage which the struggle provides to turn the greater interest and activity of the workers into improved organisation with which to ensure victory.

When the mineworkers fully realise their own power, there will be a definite and lasting improvement in the character of their organisation.

With miners' lodges fully active, with unity between the craft unions, with area committees to co-ordinate the activities of the various lodges and unite the work of the employed and unemployed, there is almost nothing they could not do to improve the miners' conditions.

Such a union will see and understand every move of the employers to smash conditions, and will be able to mobilise the most telling opposition immediately the need has arisen.

When engaged in struggle the Union will be able to throw into the field, in its own defence, an army of agita-

tors and propagandists who will combat the coalowners and the hostile propaganda of the capitalist Press; they will be able to range the entire working class behind them in the winning of their battles.

The Miners' Federation is headed in the right direction, and will be able to defeat the plans which have been hatched for the further enslavement of the mineworkers.

The Miners' Federation can arrest and defeat the coalowners' attack, and itself assume the offensive for the enforcement of the programme of demands already adopted by the membership.

Struggle between the coalowners and the mineworkers is inevitable; the former are actuated only by such plans as may assist to speed-up production and to reduce production costs, so as to enhance their own returns by way of profits. In the struggle for markets, the owners have shown that they will continue to cut prices, and consequently wages, so long as they are allowed to do so.

Mineworkers, on the other hand, are inspired by the need to fight intolerable working conditions for the employed and against the continued starvation of the unemployed, and the very pronounced threat that thousands now employed may soon be added to the ranks of the destitute unemployed.

Mineworkers need only contemplate the privation and misery which will follow defeat to make each of them take and keep his vow to assist the Miners' Federation in every way to build up the organisation so necessary to ensure a working-class victory.



APPENDIX

SOME INTERNATIONAL FIGURES.

Latest figures supplied by the International Labor Office in relation to the coal production per head per annum in other countries provides an interesting basis for comparison with Australia:

WORLD COAL INDUSTRY.

Production per Head per Annum.
Metric Tons (2204.6lbs.).

Country.	Underground	
	Workers.	All Workers.
Czechoslovakia	308 tons	241 tons
France	261 "	185 "
Ruhr	451 "	363 "
Upper Silesia	507 "	389 "
Saxony	246 "	196 "
Great Britain	331 "	266 "
Netherlands	480 "	336 "
Poland	512 "	350 "
Saar	278 "	205 "
Canada	561 "	438 "
India	186 "	135 "
Japan	250 "	181 "
South Africa	—	479 "

Note.—The above figures are for the year 1931, the latest available annual compilation of production per head per annum on an international scale.

Against the figures which range from 186 tons per employee in India to 561 tons in Canada, we place the New South Wales figures of:

Production per Head per Annum.
Employees Below Ground in N.S.W.

Year.	Tons.
1931	554
1932	640
1933	715
1934	776

In examining these figures it should be noted that Australian coal production is less mechanised than most other countries, and figures for Australia are given in tons of 2240lbs.

The following table is taken from the Davidson Coal Commission Report, page 362:

Coal Cut by Machinery in Various Countries.—Expressed as a Percentage of the Total Output (for 1927).

Country.	Year (1927).
United Kingdom	42.4 per cent.
Germany (Ruhr)	83.0 " "
France:	
Nord	70.0 " "
Pas de Calais	65.0 " "
Czechoslovakia	59.6 " "
Belgium	81.0 " "
United States of America (Bituminous)	72.2 " "
New South Wales	20.5 " "

Because of low wages and high productivity in the Australian mines the labor costs of production are also very much below the average in America, Europe and Asia:

Average Labor Cost per Metric Ton in 1931.
Expressed in Sterling.

Including Employers' Insurance Contributions.

Country.	Price per Ton. (English currency)	
	s.	d.
Belgium	14	11.04
Czechoslovakia	9	6.4
France	11	1.6
Germany (Ruhr)	9	9.6
Great Britain	9	11.5
Netherlands	11	5.5
Saar	15	7.2
Poland	5	11.7
Canada	10	1.6
Japan	6	8.8

In Australia:

The average pit-top price of coal in Australia for 1934 was 11s. 6.5d., including explosives costs, labor costs, salaries, directors' fees, depreciation, insurance, profits, and all other charges against production.

Figures showing labor costs only are not available, but for the year 1931 official records give total production in New South Wales at 6,432,382 tons, and total wages, salaries and directors' fees at £3,222,379, making the average "labor" costs, including costs of powder, directors', superintendent and managerial fees, at 10s. 0.23d. per ton. (Australian currency), or approximately 7/6 per ton English currency.

It should be noted, however, that the value of coal at the pit's mouth in New South Wales fell from an average of 14/4 per ton in 1931 to 11/6½ per ton in 1934, and this represents a further drop of 20 per cent., mainly at the expense of the mineworker because of speed-up, safety neglect, alteration of conditions, etc.

By continuing the method of equation as above, average labor costs in Australia are found to be much less than 6/- per ton (English) if explosives, directors' fees, and other charges not incurred in production are removed.

Australian miners cannot feel proud of the fact that they have been forced to accept lower "wages per ton payments" than even the workers of the countries of Fascist dictatorship.



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