Coal Strike Situation As We Went to Press

By JAY LOVESTONE

President Coolidge has thrown in a "progressive," Governor Pinchot of Pennsylvania, to seek a compromise in order to avoid a strike.

It is not unlikely that Pinchot will threaten to call a special session of the Pennsylvania Legislature to revoke the State Mining License System in order to force the miners to accept the 30-Day truce offer.

A small wage increase will be offered the miners as bait to accept the truce proposal.

Pinchot and Coolidge know that once the miners agree to delay their strike for even one day the likelihood of a strike will fade into the realm of the impossible. That is the reason for their great anxiety to secure some sort of a postponement now.

In the meanwhile the mine owners are flooding the country with publicity, spreading the lie that the workers are getting a terrifically high wage and the rate of wages has continually gone up. Not only that. The mine owners are spreading misinformation as to the real value of the miners' wages today.

On August 23rd, the United States Coal Commission submitted a report to the President which shows that the mine owners are weaving their propaganda fabric out of the whole cloth. Says this report: "It may be pointed out that the labor costs formed 61.6 per cent of the sales realization in 1913, and 59.5 per cent in January-March, 1923."

But the Commission, which no one can accuse of having the slightest sympathy with Organized Labor, goes on to say even more.

"In considering the increase of the labor cost two important facts should always be kept in mind—only part of the increase is due to wage scales, a part being attributable to the greater amount of labor necessary, in the later years, to produce a ton of coal, due to the changes in the physical condition of the mines, such as the mining of seams which formerly were considered too poor to work, etc. Another consideration which applies to the labor cost as well as to the other costs and the sales realization is that the purchasing power of a dollar was much greater in 1913 than in 1923."

Of course the Operators do not advertise this portion of the report. And even that small section of the so-called "public" which arrogates to itself the displeasure of reading the official Government surveys has not yet been given that pleasure of seeing this report in circulation. An analysis of this report shows further that from 1919 to 1923 the total labor cost per ton increased approximately 18 per cent. At the same time the same forty-eight coal companies reporting this fact also made a report showing that in this same period the per ton cost of officers' expenses and salaries increased 60 per cent. What is more, the same companies for the same period show a total increase of 180 per cent in the tax cost per ton.

Finally, their accounting report shows an increase in "general expenses" of 45 per cent. No one knows what the "general expenses" include. Not a single Government investigating Commission has ever been able to find out what's what in these "general expenses." But there is not a single naive one in Washington, altho it is a city famed for squirrel food, who does not know that these

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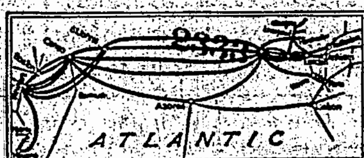

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The Coal Strike Outlook

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"general expenses" only afford the owners another avenue of pocketing millions of dollars annually.

Besides assuming that the Operators are telling the truth about the price in coal rising $2 per ton if the miners get their wage increase there is a leak in their figures somewhere. The Operators say this raise will saddle an additional burden of $90,000,000 on their poor coal-consuming public. Now, the number of tons of anthracite used in the Eastern Territory annually is 85,000,000. On this basis there would be at total rise of $170,000,000 in the cost of coal. Thus, even assuming that the Operators are telling the truth for a change, they would be pocketing a net sum of $80,000,000 on the wage raise. Needless to say the Operators have been making a lot of noise about the public paying more for coal but they have not mentioned a word in all their propaganda about this huge sum of four-score millions that they would pocket by their own increasing the price. The Operators have conveniently omitted telling the public by whom they always swear in case of a strike that the $2 a ton increase in the price of coal would be only that much additional tribute paid to the Coal Barons by the anthracite consumers.