1923-06-30

Notes: May 19th. Talked with Close

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http://hdl.handle.net/10456/39402

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May 19th

Talked with Close. Went to Steel Corporation - first time since Judge Gary's death, though I saw Close a few months after the depression began. They are going on in his department surprisingly. I had an idea that the force had not been kept together as well as it has. They have something like 237,000 men on relief. About twelve percent have full time work and over sixty percent half time, probably thirteen are not employed. These are home, cut on the farm or have gone back to Europe. This cuts the list down to 204,000 I think. These figures I should not publish in this form. He said that Taylor told him when the thing began he should keep every man at work as well as he could and when he could give him no work he must give him relief. They have spent enormous sums for relief from the last report. One of the finest things is the way the workers relief organizations are helping the workers. $250,000 had been spent by these organizations helping each other out.

I asked him about the spirit among the men. He said as far as they could tell it was good but they had been extraordinarily enduring - no disorder. As to how effective the talk of communism that goes on all the time is none of them can tell. Those things he says are on the quiet - in the back room - and you cannot tell from the surface what the men are thinking.
I take it they all feel this way. There is a general motion among the men that the corporation is doing the best it can. Close says the corporation collects no rent from the men living in their houses. There are some thousands of men that verify this who have bought homes - the company banking the money. They have not attempted to collect the interest. That is, they are stalling until work returns. This has good effect.

Another thing which Close is extraordinary proud since it is his scheme is the home insurance, that is, insuring the home that a man is buying until it is all paid out. If he dies the property is his wife's. They have had a hundred and fifty case in which the deed has been handed over to a woman on the death of their husband. He says they are not cutting down their safety work in any degree and the figures are fine that he showed me. See the reports. He is working to make safety a part of operation - the foreman responsible. Says he thinks the new President is coming to it - Irwin. He has known him always. Said he had always called him "Bill." But after the election when he came into the office he spoke to him as Mr. Irwin and he retaliated by saying, Mr. Close. They decided it should be Bill and Charlie as it always had been. He says he can tell you what kind of man Irwin is - when he was made by what he calls the big boss, and as I understand it the first vice president of the Tin Plate Works, from the days he came in accidents began to drop - a downward curve from that time on.
He says there is no department which was not affected in the same way all along the line. They have cut off certain extras, that is he says they are not paying for any passes. Their base ball fields are kept open to members and employers, I think. No money is spent on them, either is the corporation giving money to outside individuals.

He says that in spite of the common stock price. When they offered it last time at 40 200,000 shares were almost at once subscribed double when 400,000 subscriptions came in. I asked him if this was among the rank and file. He said, "Sure."

Thinks that the faith of the men is strong yet in the corporation. He has taken that a thirty percent cut in salary and no dividends on his investment, but he is smiling and happy as ever.

Is full of the talk given today at the Institute on the taxes in the Minnesota and Michigan ore fields. He says that it is a fact that the taxes are higher than the whole cost of the mining, wages included. Tells of a schoolhouse at at a town called Alice which cost two million dollars and would easily house its whole town. He says that he has seen a rug on one of the rooms in the school that cost $35,000.