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A TRAGIC MISTAKE

The failure of Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to catch the point in the Colorado miners' war, tragic as it has been in its consequences, has the value of forcing afresh a clear definition of that point: "The right of every American citizen to work (in terms satisfactory to himself without securing the consent of the union;" ~~that is the issue in Mr. Rockefeller's mind.~~ To the defence of this cause ~~he~~ ^{they} pledges himself and the millions of the Colorado ~~Steel~~ ^{Fuel} and Iron Company.

Grant the contention. It is a right and one to be defended. But there is another right equally precious to men, equally recognized by courts and the American people, and one for which in times past quite as much eloquence and blood has been spilled. It is the right of men to act together when they believe it is for their interests.

Mr. Rockefeller knows the value ~~of~~ to men of collective action. The fortune which gives him his position of power in the country is based upon it. His hope of future returns in the Colorado Fuel & Iron ^{all} is based upon it. Moreover, the great corporations in which he is active recognize this to be the right of the men ~~with~~ with whom they deal. Whatever the activity, manufacturing, transporting, financing, ^{everything except labor} legislating, they deal direct with an individual owner, or indirectly through the representatives of a group of owners as they may elect.

Why should this right be refused to labor? Is labor something so unimportant in the operation of the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company that it can be ignored? No, as a matter of fact, it is the only thing in the company which could not be dispensed with. Mr. Rockefeller could - capital could. Labor is the original necessary factor out of which all the others have sprung, and the only one which if the slate

should be wiped clean and we had to start over again, we would have to have - or indeed could use.

Is labor ignoble then that a right granted to men in all their other relations is denied it? No, it takes a brave man to be a miner - a brave, a patient man. Moreover, from the ranks of these men come daily those who are to direct and own mines in the future. The president of the best managed mines in the United States, those of the Frick Coke & Coal Company, once swung a pick at \$1.75 a day. No, it is not because labor is insignificant or ignoble that Mr. Rockefeller declines to recognize those in the ranks who prefer to deal with him in groups.

He gives reasons - one is that 90 per cent of the employees are not in the union. But is that a sound reason? Possibly there are corporations in which Mr. Rockefeller is interested, of which he holds as little as ten per cent of the stocks. Is that a reason why he should not have a hearing through a representative if he wishes; 10 per cent of 50,000 men is 5,000. Is their preference to be denied because they are only 5,000?

Mr. Rockefeller says the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company control "only" one-third of the output of coal and iron in Colorado. But Mr. Rockefeller would be the first to protest that his rights as a citizen were being interfered with if the state refused to listen to his representative because he did not control 51 per cent of the state's output.

He gives another reason:- That the demands of the union do not come direct to him from the 10 per cent in the employ, but from an "outside body." But this "outside body" has the precise relation to the 10 per cent of men in the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company that he and Mr. J. Starr Murphy have to the 40 per cent of stock they own in the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company. Just as he and Mr. Murphy have been

elected to represent a certain amount of money this "outside body" has been elected to represent a certain number of men. There is a difference, however, in the experiences of the two representative bodies. By his own testimony Mr. Rockefeller has never been the inside of the Colorado mines, never explored their inky depths, swung a pick, taken his lunch by the light of a miner's lantern, known the terrors of crumbling vaults, of gas and black damp. The "outside" to a man have known it all.

Mr. Rockefeller declares that he will not recognize a body so famous for violence as the Western Federation of Miners. He is on dangerous ground. Place the records of the two side by side and ask which has brought the greater misery and bitterness to men. The miners' organization was born of the wrongs they suffered. It has been fed on them. Valued by them.

Mr. Rockefeller may not know this but let him read page by page the history of the concerns which made up the company of which he controls so formidable a share that he acts as its spokesman. Let him study the conditions under which the miners have lived for years, read its death roll, follow the fate of those the dead left behind them - never again will he take refuge in charges of violence against those he is fighting.

But he tells us that in recent years the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company has considered its employees, voluntarily granting an eight hour day, semi-monthly pay, check weighman, the right to buy at any ~~store~~ store; an increase in wages. It is true, too, that the company is doing a fine work. It has torn down the former filthy miners' villages and is replacing them by neat cottages. It gives them schools, travelling libraries, kindergartens, and superior medical advice. Its camps have but one saloon apiece, and the county issues its camp licenses only after the company has made the most rigid investigations into the

character of its applicants. Its Minnequa hospital at Pueblo is counted one of the finest in the world.

These are good things. They are the material manifestation of a new spirit which is at work in American industry. The core of that spirit is that men are men - they may be of fifty-eight tongues and of any color and nation, as in these mines, but they are men and are to be treated as men. But men require something more than things done for them. They require that things which concern them be done with them. This is what Mr. Rockefeller fails to see. Or, if he realizes dimly something of what is at issue, the situation is so complicated that he takes his stand as the advocate of a group which has not asked his services.

"Are the labor unions," asks Mr. Rockefeller, "representing a small minority of the workers of the country, to be sustained in their disregard of the inalienable right of every American citizen to work without interference, whether he be a union or a non-union man?"

Mr. Rockefeller may be sure they are not. They will no more be sustained in that disregard than the Standard Oil Company was in ~~the~~ its original contention that it owned the oil business; than it was sustained in the efforts to force if it could not wheedle any man who produced, carried or sold oil ~~with~~ into its union.

"Surely," continues Mr. Rockefeller, "the vast majority of American citizens will, without fear or favor, stand for even-handed justice under the Constitution and equal rights for every citizen."

They will; they will sustain the labor unions in their right to grow as large as they can by legitimate means, just as they have and will sustain Mr. Rockefeller in the same right. They will sustain the union, too, in their desire to act through representatives just as they sustain Mr. Rockefeller when he acts through representatives.

Black, bitter and chaotic as the struggle in the Colorado mines

has become it is for the men in power to find a peaceful and righteous way out.

That is their business - just as it is the business of Wilson's administration to find a peaceful way out of the Mexican embroglio. Failure or success in either case is measured by the blood shed or spared.

No one man's will or judgment or desire can settle it. No system or organization, no amount of property or power can settle it. It is the affair of all concerned. There is the in young Mr. Rockefeller's way. He has learned the needs and and power of money. He has not learned that in carrying on great enterprises you can no more ignore the laws of their minds and their hearts than the laws of steam and electricity. Human nature suppressed reaches out like the pent up fires of earth, and it is no more careful of what it destroys.

Mr. Rockefeller is dealing with men and the difficulty is the difficulty of many of us in all ranks of life, of those of us who write about them legislate for them, devise schemes to give them justice and happiness. We don't know enough about them.

"Look at what we have done for them," he says. But it is not that they are asking. It is part in bringing all that about. It is to have a share in their own affairs. A man's and house and school is his affair, and when any porportion of a laboring body has become so intelligent and so interested that it is willing to organize and fight and starve if necessary for the sake of that right, why that body is worth recognizing, preserving, cultivating. It is the union of the force, the part in which you can look for fresh ability, fresh invention, courage, leadership, all of the qualities which men must develop within an industry if they are to make it stable and self perpetuating. Moreover, it is a thinking force and it will not be denied.

This hard lesson Mr. Rockefeller must learn. If he would go himself to Colorado, take a pick, live the life of a miner for a few

months, walk among men as the Christ whom he follows with such openness, and, I believe, sincerity, once did, then he would have the right which knowledge, and knowledge alone, gives to speak for men.

There's a big chance for him in this nasty business. It is to get the point - the ^{full} real point - which is the right of men to act ^{together} ⁱⁿ ^{unity} if they so desire. ^{exercise} The ~~exercise~~ of that right, often with a violence and a corruption the labor union has rarely equalled, brought him to his present position. Let him help to extend the right to all men and at the same time ^{help} by wise counsel to strip it of all the evils which alone make it dangerous.

He has another great chance : There is going on within American industry a tremendous movement for its peaceful redemption. It is a movement founded on the recognition of the powers of men and women whatever their nation or their creed to respond to opportunities for growth. In the name of the common man industry after industry is revolutionizing itself. The very breath of this movement is co-operation. It cannot live without the active partnership in it of those whom it affects. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Its outward form may be ^{used} improved. Conditions, hours, wages, safety, homes may be improved, but without the sympathetic understanding of the theory on which it is based, the powers of men to develop it, it is nothing but a shell. It can never bring to industry the peace it needs. Indeed it is the more liable to increase bitterness if it is suspected that these changes are made to silence the deeper things in men's hearts - those things for which through all the ages they have left homes and friends and faced hardships and death to preserve.

If Mr. Rockefeller will learn what the changes which ~~xxxx~~ have already been wrought in conditions around his mines mean - that they are but the shell of a precious kernel, and if he will, like a man seek to preserve and cultivate that kernel, he will do for his time one of the greatest services man can do.