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To the Coal Mine Operators of Virginia & West Virginia

GENTLEMEN :

Pursuant to instructions which we have received from a convention of representative miners of Virginia and West Virginia, held at Huntington, West Virginia, October 31st and November 1st, 1901, we have the honor to invite you to a Joint Convention of Operators and Miners, to be held at Huntington, West Virginia, beginning at 10 A. M., Wednesday, November 27th, 1901, for the purpose of considering jointly, with the representatives of the miners, the question of wages and conditions of employment for such a period of time as may be mutually agreed upon, and for the transaction of such other business as may be of mutual interest or benefit.

This system of adjusting relations between employer and employe has been adopted in the Bituminous fields of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, parts of Tennessee, and Kentucky, Alabama, Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas and Indian Territory, and its advantages are so well recognized by all interests involved that the joint conventions in those states have become permanent institutions and are looked upon by operators and miners as being necessary to the welfare of the trade.

There are many good reasons why this system should be adopted by the operators and miners of Virginia and West Virginia, but we know you are busy men engrossed with the cares of large and increasing business interests and may not want to spare the time neces-

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sary to examine a detailed statement of the reasons why this conference should be held, nevertheless we desire to present you, as briefly as possible, a few of the most important reasons that occur to us.

By bringing all the competing interests in the territory covered by the proposed contract together in a joint conference it can establish wages and conditions of employment as nearly uniform as is possible under the varying conditions of the different coal fields and the markets in which the coal is sold, thus placing every operator on an equitable basis, where, if he secures any advantage over his competitors, it will be due to his superior ability, and not to any advantage he may obtain at the expense of his employes.

It would enable operators to know definitely what the wages and other conditions of employment would be for a given length of time, and knowing the cost of their product, and the fact that there would be little or no fear of trade disputes during the life of the contract, they could bid for contracts with more confidence that their margins would be maintained than can exist under present circumstances.

It would give stability to the coal trade, because every operator would be bound by the contract for a definite period, and could not reduce market prices and create a "slump" by cutting the wages of his workers, to the ultimate injury of himself, his competitors and all the miners, as has so often been done in the past.

It would place in a concrete and definite form the terms of employment for a given time, and thus prevent the numerous local strikes that are caused by either party seeking to change the conditions where no time contract exists.

It would bring the operators and miners into closer association with each other, thereby establishing more friendly relations between them that would be conducive to the welfare of both.

In order to dispel the fear that seems to have been created in the minds of some, through a mistaken idea of the powers of a Joint Convention, that the miners being in greater numbers than the operators, the operators would be outvoted in the convention, and would then be in honor bound to abide by its decisions if they attended it, we would call attention to the fact that in every Joint Convention of Operators and Miners held in other fields the number of delegates on either side has never been taken into consideration in organizing the convention or conducting its proceedings. Each side has been assigned an equal number of votes, and no contract has been entered into until all the interests represented have been satisfied and it has been adopted by a unanimous vote.

For these and many other reasons, and with these safeguards assured, we hope the Coal Mine Operators of Virginia and West Virginia will accept the invitation herewith extended to attend the Joint Convention at Huntington, West Virginia, on Wednesday, November 27th, 1901.

Very respectfully yours,

J. A. SPRINGER,

President District No. 17,

United Mine Workers of America.

Flemington, W. Va.

CLARK JOHNSON,

Secretary District No. 17,

United Mine Workers of America.

Montgomery, W. Va.

November 19th, 1901.



