

A CALL TO THE MINING INDUSTRY

URGENT NEED FOR COAL

by Ebby Edwards

Following is the text of the talk to be broadcast by the Secretary of the Mineworkers Federation of Great Britain after 1 p.m. news:-

I speak, not for any particular section of the mining industry, but on behalf of the coal needs of the country, and my appeal is especially made to the production side of the industry - the colliery managers and mineworkers.

To-day we are living not only in difficult times, not merely in serious times, but every man, woman and child is in a life and death struggle for his or her very existence. Helpless men, innocent women and children, aged, sick and infirm daily face death at the hands of the murderous Nazi Regime.

No body of workers more than the British miners have pledged themselves by resolution to stand against, to defeat and end Hitler's measures of force, aggression and domination. In the fulfilment of that pledge the miners in coal production - coal as part of the war effort - must play their appropriate part.

Coal is not produced in London, not even in the House of Commons. The unit of coal production, the basis of all coal mining superstructure is the pit. It is at the pit where I plead for vital organisation and the good will of all concerned. A joint responsibility rests upon the managers and the men to create at each pit a real live, active, virile pit production committee. What should be their function? Every question affecting coal production. Every issue affecting complete pit organisation bound up with securing the maximum amount of coal being raised to the surface must be seriously considered. We want pit production committees in reality. With attention to safety, coal, more coal, and yet more coal is the miner's contribution in this hour of the nation's crisis.

At the pit the managers and men know every seam of coal. These seams must be exploited to the success in maximum output. The lay out of the mine, the underground transit problem, is to them common knowledge. Why cannot the committee have a weekly report of stocks of all mining material at the pit? Priority for goods in use at the pit is useless unless all needs are organised with foresight and all requirements correctly scheduled. What of your important machinery? Have you spare parts in case of breakdowns? In every colliery the pit committee should have a weekly schedule of use and replacements of requirements from cage ropes to coal face sprags. Nothing will give more confidence to the mineworkers than to learn from their pit production committee that all goods are in readiness if and when required. Here managers' dignity and workers' aggression must give place to genuine co-operation.

What of the in and outgoing transport from the surface to the coal face? Have you sufficient trams or tubs? What of the track? Are the men getting to the surface all the coal they can produce? What scope for mutual co-operation and improvement in the effort for a record coal production lies along this detailed joint enquiry and survey by the pit production committee!

MAN POWER.

Is the man power at the pit being used to the best advantage? It is coal production that is required and not merely additional names on the colliery books. Because the Government has refused to release trained men in the forces for the pits is no reason for not making the maximum use of the man power

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already available. Remember that Hitler cannot be overthrown by half trained men and that some Cabinet decisions must be kept from the enemy. We cannot expect to run the pits in war time as though the war did not exist. Pit committees must not despise a man who can work regularly but with less than 100 per cent. efficiency. Give the returned miner a fair trial; he is now your comrade, but to say that he is immediately ready for mine work is to contradict the hazardous nature of the miner's calling. A pit cannot be carried on with face men only; repair and air ways are important. Regrading, reclassification and labour transference on a practical plan may be necessary. What of the young men? Thousands of these have been reserved from the forces because coal production was part of the war effort. Are they doing all that can be done? Here the pit committee has a job of work in the interests of the Country.

ABSENTEEISM.

Then there is the man who does not turn up when work is available - the absentee. While facing up to this question I ask the pit committees not to get it out of its true perspective. A detail register should be made out each week of all those absent from work and this carefully examined by the pit production committee. No time need be wasted on men who have been genuinely absent by reason of accident, sickness or family bereavement. These should be classified as unavailable for work. Cases of absence coming under other reasonable causes should be examined in conjunction with the man's attendance record at the pit. Here, personal contact with the man may clarify much. The only men who should be penalised are those proved to be deliberately idle when they could have been at work. These men are sabotaging the war effort and should be subject to the full rigour of the law.

The great mass of the miners are as loyal and assisting in the war effort as much as any other body of workers. Compared job for job their achievement is remarkable. The small percentage of deliberate idlers should not be allowed to besmirch the character and integrity of the mass. In the cycle of modern production the idle days of the deliberate absentee affect the production of those at work out of all proportion to their number. They must be dealt with.

COAL SUPPLIES.

The position of our coal supplies as part of the war effort is not satisfactory. There is no coal crisis, only a deep concern that the margin of supplies should be much greater related to the needs of the country. Details may help the enemy so I leave the loud mouthed critics unanswered.

I want my fellow miners in every part of the British coalfield to be conscious that the courage, self-sacrifice and heroism of the boys in the forces is not alone sufficient. They have proved themselves splendid, but this is a mechanised war. The need is for ships, aeroplanes, tanks, guns, shells. Coal is part of the job to secure mechanical equipment. If factories fail, if shipyards stop for want of coal, if electrical and gas undertakings are short of coal, the finger of scorn will be raised against those in our industry. If the poor people have empty grates this winter and the morale suffers, our industry has a grave responsibility.

It is useless to argue now why we have not more stocks of coal put by as a reserve. We have put by all that could be spared. We were asked in March to produce more this summer for that very purpose. Now the days are becoming shorter; black-out prevents movement and turnover; a blitz may bring further disorganisation. Thanks to Russia however we still enjoy a respite and our job is to get the maximum coal we can now. Don't be nervous that this is going to mean short time later on. The Government are taking steps to stock coal at or near the pits so that regular production can be kept up even should transport be difficult for a time.

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Had our Navy and Air Force boys, following the evacuation of Dunkirk, failed in the fight for Britain, our country, like others in Europe, would have been but a part of the Nazi Slave State. Today our material resources would have been disposed of by Hitler in opposition to the Soviet Union. Hitler's world power would have been certain. How thankful we ought to be that it is not so; circumstances willed it otherwise. Do the miners realise what we have come through? Do you realise what we are going through? Do you realise the dangers we still face?

How many really appreciate the serious nature of the struggle in which we are engaged. The entry of Russia should not breed apathy or indifference, complacency or slackness - it should be an urge for action. I get sore when I hear of preparation for battles in 1942, 3 and 4. The future of the world depends on our success in present battles. The present hour may perhaps be our last opportunity. Are we using it to the full?

To talk of the epic struggle of the Soviet Union, the great partner in the common war task, is not sufficient unless the miners play their part. The stand of the Russian people is glorious. Remember their defence is not merely based on patriotic emotion. They fight to preserve a way of life. Their system of social and economic economy is part and parcel of their life and existence. This alone explains the spirit and sacrifice of their people.

To destroy their great dam on the Dnieper River; the basis of the largest Hydro-Electric power installation in the world, which took years to build with the labour and sacrifice of a struggling people. That magnificent life-line of factories - link of industry and agriculture. They built it for peace and security. They destroyed it to prevent its use by the enemy as an act of war. In that act alone can be seen the magnitude of the sacrifice the Soviet Union is prepared to make. That magnificent achievement of their whole Regime thrown into the scales.

What of their policy of "Scorched earth". Think of those great areas of grain ripening to harvest; that food of life for the toiling masses, burned, destroyed - homes destroyed - deliberate sabotage of property. What a devotion of military defence.

The faster the Germans advance the greater the danger of Russian resources falling into German hands.

The miners have already sent £70,000's worth of medical supplies on to the Russian battlefield. To heal the sick and wounded is an act of humanity; to prevent a continuation of the slaughter of those brave defenders is better. Intensified production is inseparable from military action. To win through the materials of war are made by the furnaces of coal and its power. The miner who in these times does not give his maximum, commits not merely an offence, he commits a crime. One tank now, one aeroplane now, one gun now, is worth ten in six months time.

Remember we fight for the right to live!

We fight that life should be free!

Imagine you are looking on the face of a great clock. The hours are clearly marked.

- At 1 o'clock the Nazi Regime takes Austria
- At 2 o'clock the Nazi Regime takes Czechoslovakia
- At 3 o'clock the Nazi Regime takes Poland
- At 4 o'clock the Nazi Regime takes Denmark
- At 5 o'clock the Nazi Regime takes Norway
- At 6 o'clock the Nazi Regime takes Holland
- At 7 o'clock the Nazi Regime takes Belgium
- At 8 o'clock the Nazi Regime takes France
- At 9 o'clock the Nazi Regime takes Yugoslavia
- At 10 o'clock the Nazi Regime takes Greece
- At 11 o'clock the Nazi Regime strikes at the Soviet Union

(Success)

At 12 will come Britain's hour.

Arise! The alarm has sounded. Maybe we are late.

SUCCESS OR FAILURE!

LIFE OR DEATH!

It depends on action now.

I ask the miners to play their part.