

WSM, May 2, 1943

Good Morning, Friends:

John L. Lewis has put on the "squeeze." Most people thought he would not go to this extreme. But, today, nearly all of the nation's coal miners are out on strike. ^{at Lewis' Call.} This is the most difficult domestic challenge President Roosevelt has ever faced. ~~There is a saying, oft repeated in the coal fields, "that you can't mine coal with bayonets."~~ There is no doubt here of ^{that} ~~two things:~~ (1) Lewis is dictator of the miner's union; and (2) ^{that} the miners themselves, at least a majority of them, believe in Lewis and in the justness of the demands he is making in their name.

So, if we are to have coal, the coal miners must be induced back into the coal mines. And there is one thing certain - the nation can not ~~do~~ without coal. ~~There~~ There is a supply on top of the ground sufficient to last for a while, but ~~not~~ ^{only a short time.} for very long. Without coal, there can be no steel.

Without steel, there can be no tanks, guns, planes, or ships. Without these things, our soldiers can not fight successfully on the battlefield. We were attacked savagely at Pearl Harbor, and by that attack the Japs hoped to cripple our navy and drive us from the Pacific. They moved in for the kill but were met at Midway and turned back. The Japs have not stopped us. The Germans have concentrated the mightiest submarine force in world history on the shipping lanes of the Atlantic in order to stop us from sending men and equipment with which to eventually crush them. But the men and guns have been going in a steady stream and our boys are driving Hitler's forces out of Africa now. Hitler hasn't stopped us. John L. Lewis threatens to stop us.

One's first impulse is that he should be treated as a saboteur, and as a traitor. His conduct is sufficiently vile, contemptible, and unpatriotic ~~but would that be the best thing to do?~~ to justify such treatment, Folks, I am trying to discuss this threat to our war effort in a restrained manner this morning. Frankly, my feelings are so intense that I find it difficult to do so. ~~Let it not be underestimated.~~ It is an explosively dangerous situation. ~~Let us ask ourselves~~ what can be done?

~~I think John L. Lewis could be arrested and punished severely. The President could send soldiers into the coal fields and seize the minds. The coal miners could be drafted. The President could tell the mine owners to meet Lewis' demands. Efforts at a compromise could be made. Or the President can appeal to the miners on a patriotic basis to go back into the minds and thus try to break Lewis' leadership of the miners union. I am not undertaking, this morning, to predict what will be done. I don't think anyone yet knows what will finally be done, or what the outcome will be. I certainly do not.~~

~~this thing I do know,~~
If John L. Lewis wins his point, it will only be the beginning of ~~strikes.~~ to wage demands. It would sound the death knell of the stabilization program, and the government's effort at wage control and price control might as well be stopped. It is, I believe, generally understood that John L. Lewis has ~~only~~ asked for a \$2 a day wage increase. Actually, he is demanding much more. He is demanding a \$2 per day increase in base pay, but he is also demanding that the miners be paid for the time consumed in riding from the mouth of the

mine back to the face of the coal and also for the ride from the place of work back to the mouth of the mine. This ~~time~~ amounts to an average of about 2 hours per day and the miners draw an average of more than \$1.00 per hour. So, you see this demand means another \$2 per day. All in all, his demands amount to about ^{an} \$5 per day increase. If such ^{an} increase as ~~this should be given, the coal miners~~

this should be given the coal miners, many people who have been willing to see price ceiling on agriculture commodities will then turn an about face - in fact, as I said before, the whole program would go up in smoke and we would have a chaotic runaway situation. ~~Hard on the heels of the coal strike might be a steel strike - strikes all over the country.~~ So it is hard to over-estimate the dangers inherent in this situation. As I said before, I don't know what the President will do. I can not see that he has any choice but to stand firm. The people of the nation will support him if he does so, and they would condemn him for any knuckling down to Lewis in this hour of crisis. Just imagine the thoughts running through the mind

^{dying in cars}
of wounded soldiers ⁱⁿ temporary hospitals in North Africa - boys who have lost ^{an} arms, ~~who have lost~~ an eye, a leg, who have gapping wounds in their stomachs, and consider themselves lucky to be alive at all. Think what must be running through the minds of pilots who are going into the sky to shoot it out with Jap Zeros out over the Pacific Ocean, with nothing above them but the heavens and nothing below them but the briney deep. These boys are

fighting for America, for home. They are risking, they are giving their lives. What do you suppose their thoughts are of people striking for more wages when they are already drawing a dollar an hour. Yes, the President must act firmly. His leadership of the country is challenged. In fact, I think the whole government is challenged by this mad egotist who thinks that not even the war, not even the interest of America, should be a stumbling block to the accomplishments of his warped ambitions. John L. Lewis stands today in open contempt of the government. He has defied the President of the United States who is our war-time Commander-in-Chief. He has placed himself and his imperious will above the law, above the government and above the safety and welfare of his country. The darkest dungeon in the dirtiest prison in America would be too good for him.

Price Administrator Prentiss Brown went on the radio Friday night and condemned the wage demands of ~~John L.~~ Lewis. He said that he could not fail to do so and be consistent after having spoken out against the Bankhead and Pace Bill designed to raise some farm prices. *I should say he could not.*

The very small and temporary benefits which the Bankhead Bill would have given to farmers was as nothing compared with the demands made by Lewis for the miners.

In his speech, Mr. Brown said that he was going to roll back a lot of prices which had gotten out of line. Now Mr. Brown will find that this rolling back prices is indeed complicated. It is much easier to apply a ceiling to an existing price than to try to reduce a price. *as well as more inequities.* A reduction brings on many complications. I don't know yet just how vigorously Mr. Brown intends to try to roll back prices. His speech was obviously timed and calculated to have its effect upon the tussle between Lewis and President Roosevelt.