

WSM, APRIL 18, 1948
Rep. Albert Gore

Good Morning, Friends:

John L. Lewis, head of the miners union, suddenly called off the disastrous coal strike that has been going on for about 30 days in the face of impending industrial paralysis in the country, and in ~~view~~^{for} of the fact that Mr. Lewis had been brought to a court of justice upon the indictment of both civil and criminal contempt of court. In seeking a way out, Mr. Lewis found two Members of Congress, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mr. Joseph W. Martin, and Senator Styles Bridges who were willing to let not only themselves but their high offices be used to save the face of this inordinate bully. Speaker Martin is my personal friend and, therefore, it was a source of keen disappointment to me that he committed what I think was a grave mistake. I may be in error in my opinion, but my opinion is that whatever chance Speaker Martin had of obtaining the ^{Rep.} ~~Presidential~~ nomination vanished with this ^{regrettable} performance.

Coal is being mined again. That is to be applauded. But the fundamental question, the basic wrong of permitting one man ^{if he chooses} to deny a whole nation the fuel of its economic life continues. If the disobedience and contempt of legal processes by one as powerful and foremost in the public news as John L. Lewis goes unpunished, then it will serve as a sad example for the country, ~~for a bad~~ ^{for others} ~~example~~ who are tempted to profit by such dispicable acts.

In yesterday morning's paper in Washington, I noticed that a 70 year old woman had been put in jail for 18 months because she sold some furniture twice and collected some small sum from both of the purchasers. I do not know all the circumstances. The sentence may be justified. But if

a seventy year old woman can be put in jail for this wrong doing which brought harm to a few people, how much more serious is the nature of the crime which John L. Lewis has committed?

Fortunately, the Justice Department did not withdraw its prosecution of John L. Lewis because he ended the strike a few minutes before he had to go to court. When the trial opened, as I said only a few minutes after John L. Lewis had called off the strike, Mr. Lewis' able battery of lawyers ~~organized~~ argued that Mr. Lewis was not in contempt of court because the strike had ended, but Judge Goldsborough declined to dismiss the suit and the trial proceeded. The Judge postponed his decision until tomorrow. *when we will learn the Verdict of the court.*

Perhaps it would not be proper for me to say what I think the penalty should be. The matter is now in the hands of a Judge who is charged under oath to dispense justice. Perhaps it would not be amiss for me to express the hope that in assessing the penalty the Judge will take cognizance of the importance of Mr. Lewis' example -- a strong and powerful man setting an example before the whole country of utter disregard for the orders of ^{a public contempt} the court for the legal processes of democracy and, indeed, for the welfare of his country. Moreover, I hope the Judge will take into consideration that this is a repeat performance for John L. Lewis who not only acted in contempt of court a year and a half ago, for which he was heavily fined, but that he called crippling strikes during the war! *which threatened the very freedom & existence of our country.* The heavy fine a year and a half ago does not seem to have altered Mr. Lewis' attitude very much. I wonder if he does not need some time to contemplate upon *if a few jail sentences wouldn't be good for* the value and the rules of freedom and justice while beating a few rocks.

Well, we shall see what the judge says tomorrow.

During the week,

Secretary of Defense Forrestal told Congress that Russia now has the secret of the atomic bomb. Of course, scientists have been saying for a long time that the so-called secret of the atomic bomb is somewhat like the law of hydraulic pressure, the fundamental principles of which a great many of the world's leading scientists in many countries have ~~had~~ ^{basic} knowledge. Secretary Forrestal's assertion that Russia has the secret but neither the know-how nor industrial potential to produce the bomb made headlines throughout the country and may have startled some people, but there was positively nothing new in the statement. This statement, however, plus the fact of Russia's mobilization of her manpower and expansion of her plane production and also the course of aggression which she has pursued is sufficient notice to America, it seems to me, that ~~she~~ ^{We} had better look to ~~her~~ ^{our} defenses. It was against this background of facts that the House of Representatives overwhelmingly approved a 70 group airforce over the opposition of most of our own military leaders. The Department of Defense had recommended what they call a balanced program calling for increases in the army and navy and air forces. This so-called balance was obviously a compromise between the three groups. Now I am in no way a strategist and never will be but the only balance which I believe will give the Nation its proper ~~production~~ ^{portion} is to give each branch of our ~~National Defense~~ ^{armed services} sufficient force to do the job assigned to it. The vital and growing responsibility of air forces in the event

of another war should be obvious to all of us. I remember that ten years ago the opponents to building up the air forces were saying don't do too much too soon, wait until we get the most modern planes.

Well, there is something to that argument but on the other hand I

think it is a fact that not a single American plane was used in World

War II which was not already designed before the war began. I recall,

too, that several years prior to that General Billie Mitchell had been

court marshalled by the War Department because he advocated the

necessity and importance of an air force contrary to the brass hat line.

Instead of being stigmatized in history by this Court Marshall General

Billie Mitchell is now held in warmer esteem in the hearts of his

countrymen than any and all of those who prosecuted and condemned him.

Again we hear the arguments against doing too much too

soon. Perhaps there is some weight of logic on the side of those

who make such contentions but as for me I shall resolve doubts about

questions involving our security in favor of preparedness because I

not only remember the arguments about doing too much too soon

I remember the pitiful fact that when Pearl Harbor came we had done too

little too late.

I offered an amendment on the floor of the House of Representatives to provide sufficient funds to set in motion a program

which would assure what the air force leaders say is a minimum

requirement for an adequate air force, 70 groups. Some members

may have supported a 70 group air force as a means of avoiding

their plain duty to strength^{en} the other branches of our national defense with more manpower. Such was not my purpose - not at all. I am and have been ready to face that duty too but I sincerely believe that the air force has become our first line of defense. In years gone by we regarded the battleship as the juggernaut of our first line of defense. I still think we need a navy but when one considers the part that battleships will play in another war or even what part they played in the last war then I think he must come inescapably to the conclusion that both as a defensive weapon and has an instrument of war, superiority in the air must be made secondary to any other branch of our national defense.

Aside from its grave economic and international effects, it tends to make a mockery of government by law. To reasonable-minded citizens who wish to get on with the business of recovery and to meet our commitments as a people worthy of trust, this blind and irrational obstruction will seem the more inexcusable because it repeats Mr. Lewis' performance of only a year and a half ago when he and the UMW were heavily fined for contempt of court in a similar case of open defiance.

In a democracy there is no substitute, of course, for slow judicial action. We must again wait for the courts to go through the motions of hearing arguments, trying a contempt case and finally imposing the national will on the recalcitrants. Even when that is done, Mr. Lewis will be free in 80 days to begin his sabotage tactics all over again.

We think the people are thoroughly sick of this periodic holdup of industry and defiance of Government. If Congress does not provide a more effective remedy, it will invite either anarchy on one hand or police-state methods on the other to the great detriment of our economy as well as our standing in the world.

have endured.

Contempt

To date the coal strike has been the story of ~~this~~ a surly and cantankerous bully thumbing his nose at the Nation. If John L. Lewis were an ordinary citizen, his insolent and arbitrary conduct could be overlooked as of no public consequence. But he happens to be a powerful dictator in one of the country's basic industries. His nose thumbing has cost the United States 47 million tons of coal. And if the strike continues into next week, as now appears certain, the Nation's railroads and factories will be going out of action at a rate that can be thought of only in terms of disaster.

The extent of the crippling power exerted by the United Mine Workers chieftain may be seen in the order of yesterday to cut both passenger and freight traffic on coal-burning railroads to one half of normal next week. By the middle of next week, Secretary Krug has estimated, 36 per cent of the Nation's power plants, 56 per cent of its steel and rolling mills, 36 per cent of its cement mills and 43 per cent of other industries will be shut down for want of fuel or power. And this comes at a time when the United States has pledged itself to strain its resources and productive capacity to aid friendly peoples in western Europe whose freedom is in danger.

It is not, of course, a case of the United Mine Workers against the coal operators. That case receded into the background when the President's emergency board brought in its report and the Federal District Court in Washington issued an injunction against continuation of the strike. The board found that "their stoppage has precipitated a crisis in the industry and in the Nation as a whole." The President added that the "national health and safety" were imperiled. In the face of that grave situation, the court invoked the law enacted only last year by Congress in an effort to meet precisely such a national calamity. It is now a case of John Lewis against the United States and the national welfare and security.

In these circumstances

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