## *Archives of Socialism* — SPRINGHILL

*There are* 7000 *people in Springhill, Nova Scotia. For* 125 *years coal mining has been their main source of life. It has also brought them tragedy. On Oct.* 23 *the latest of its disasters occurred, bringing death to* 74 *miners.*

*On Nov.* 12 *the Dominion Coal Co., operators of the mine, issued a statement: "After careful consideration it has been decided not to open the coal mines here."*

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*An epitaph? In the record of life for the wealth producers under capitalism there are many. Here is one, from the* Western Clarion of Jan. 11, 1908.:

### The Victims

**By May Beals**

The flaring, flickering light from the lamps in their caps showed their coal-begrimed faces as they huddled together and talked in hushed tones of the things that had happened. Near them on the floor of the mine lay a man's head, blackened and blood-smeared. A little beyond it was a hand, the fingers twitching slightly. From underneath the mass of slate, newly fallen, a little red stream trickled slowly toward them. They moved a little farther from it, and a little farther, until they were huddled against the opposite wall, but it followed them stealthily.

They knew that they must die. No human power could rescue them before the deadly gases crept upon them. But the horror in their eyes was not all a horror of death.

The youngest, a boy of 14, slipped his hand into his father's.

"Let's write to her," he said, "and to the children."

"Write," groaned the father. "Write! What can we tell her? Can we tell her how to fill six mouths when she has nothing — nothing?"

"We can tell her," the boy said bravely, though the horror deepened in his eyes, "that we're not afraid to die."

The man was already fumbling in his pocket for a pencil. The others followed his example.

"I'm not afraid to die," the father said, "but God knows I'm afraid for her to live."

They crouched down in the narrow space and began writing on such scraps of papers as they could find in their pockets, spreading it as smoothly as possible on knee or dinner pail or smooth bit of slate. For a long while there was unbroken silence, save for the labored breathing of the men as the air became more oppressive and the scratching of the pencils as their work-stiffened fingers moved clumsily, but rapidly in the race with death. And, though they knew that it was their master's greed for profits that had made the mine a death trap, there was no word of bitterness or resentment in the letters they wrote to their dearest.

Before they had finished writing one of them fell back and lay writhing and gasping for breath. They did not try to relieve him. They knew that to do so would only prolong his torture. When he lay still at last, with distorted face and protruding tongue, they felt a little relieved. They knew he was at rest.

The boy was trembling violently. Each breath was harder to draw than the one before it. He turned a little with his back to the dead man, and looked at his father.

"I'll tell her to use my clothes for the children," he whispered. "She won't do it unless I tell her to — and

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and outside, in the clear morning sunlight, the women were weeping.

But in one of the costliest mansions of a city not far away a man sat at his breakfast table scowling over the news that had just reached him over the telephone.

He looked across the prettily painted thing for whom he had divorced the wife of his youth.

"It will cost a confounded lot of money," he growled, "to get that mine in working order again."



# PEACE

*Peace is indivisable, they said,*
*Yet here for peace we tantalize*
*Each other's life with death . . .*

Probably the greatest single problem that afflicts humanity today in this capitalistic world is the ever-present threat of war. This was highlighted recently by statements, made before the assembled representatives at the British Association conference in Glasgow, to the effect that, even with available armaments, it was probable that nine out of ten people in the northern hemisphere could be wiped out in a third world conflict.

The terrible feature about the whole deadly business is humanity's acceptance of it. If we were to enter a building and find a group of individuals sharpening knives for the purpose of fighting each other we would conclude that we had strayed among the most dangerous lunatics. Yet we accept an even more terrible state of affairs in our "civilised" world today. Most of the finest scientific brains in the world, are actually permanently engaged in an even more deadly game of knife sharpening.

On the one hand, we have inadequately financed organisations pursuing a quest to find remedies for the bodily diseases that afflict humanity; on the other, elaborate laboratories, with recourse to an apparently bottom-less purse, which, at the behest of national governments, devote great scientific skill and vast wealth and resources to finding ever more deadly means of life-destruction — means that even include the deliberate development of germ spreading processes for the destruction of humanity in a future war.

Could anything be more stupid, more criminally senseless, than the devotion of human skill and energy to the purpose of making the most terrifying machines for dispatching humanity from this earth? Is it not a staggering thought that even now in some country (our masters would have us believe, Russia) a team of skilled engineers and scientists are putting the "finishing touch" to a weapon that in a year or two may destroy your life, with thousands, even millions, of others in the community in which you live.

And yet in most of the "advanced" nations that make up our planet packaged death is being continually produced, made more deadly, and stock-piled, with greater diligence than food or essential medicines.

During the last bout of global homicide we were told that Winston Churchill had united the British people and instilled into them a new vigour for prosecuting the war effort. Whether or not it was due to the efforts of Churchill may be a point to dispute; none could dispute, however, the terrible earnestness with which the authorities did undertake the task of creating a war-like spirit in the people. All manner of devices, appeals and exhortations were employed at national level to inculcate the feelings necessary on the part of the masses for the successful prosecution of the war-effort.

Something was brought out of the hat for everyone: the "spirit-of-adventure" angle was employed, religious feelings resorted to, past fears drawn on, and future hopes set in relief. We were told (as no doubt were the Germans and Russians) that our "way-of-life" was in danger; well produced films inculcated the requisite ingredients of hope, hate, fear, adventure, indignation and action, and the radio and newspapers willingly set themselves the task of promoting the war-effort.

We Socialists would affirm that "our way-of-life," that is, the way of life of the working class was never threatened; our way is the way of wage-slavery and none of the conflicting sides had as a war aim the ending of the capitalist system which gives rise to our conditions of slav-