By 1934, the second year of the historic New Deal, people in southwestern Pennsylvania were mired in the throes of an economic depression which had lasted for almost a decade. Dependent since the 1850s on a coal and steel economy, the region faced after World War I a torrent of problems, including massive job losses from mine mechanization, new competition from oil, gas, and electricity, and the disastrous overproduction of coal. To counter the new fuel competition, overproduction, and the resultant collapse of coal prices, mine operators began to lay off hundreds of miners and to cut wages from 25 to 30 percent. When the miners struck in 1922, mine operators, reinforced by an army of company police and strikebreakers, ruthlessly suppressed the strike and moved to crush the United Mine Workers of America.¹

Despite the Jacksonville Agreement of 1924 — which guaranteed miners a wage of $7.50 a day — operators continued to cut wages and reduce hours. As a result, from 1925 to 1928, southwestern Pennsylvania was ravaged by unsuccessful strikes. Long years of unremitting labor unrest eviscerated the UMWA and, as Muriel Earley Sheppard has described in her chronicle of the bituminous fields, Cloud By Day, brought grinding poverty to the region.²

When the Great Depression came in 1929, it only deepened the poverty and social disorganization of southwestern Pennsylvania.

¹ Thomas H. Coode and John F. Bauman, People, Poverty and Politics: Pennsylvanians During the Great Depression (Lewistown, Pa., 1980).
Evicted from their patch homes, dispossessed miners and their families lived in tents, coke ovens, drainage systems, and whatever makeshift accommodations afforded minimal shelter. By 1934, over 60 percent of the work force in Fayette, Washington, and Westmoreland counties were either unemployed or working only part time. Towns such as Dunbar, Everson, and Fayette City, among others, counted 40 percent of their people unemployed.3

It was to investigate this caldron of misery that in 1934 Federal Emergency Relief Administrator Harry Hopkins sent Henry Francis into Pennsylvania. Francis was a member of Hopkins's corps of journalists, social scientists, and social workers and was dispatched along with Lorena A. Hickok, Martha Gellhorn, Ernestine Ball, and others to probe the extent of social distress and assess the effectiveness of federal work relief programs as they operated throughout the country.

This particular 1934 report of Henry Francis describes the social, economic, political, and social welfare conditions in three counties of southwestern Pennsylvania, and emphasizes the human dimensions of the economic cataclysm of the early 1930s.4 In it Francis also reflects another theme frequently uttered during the early years of the Great Depression. Like other New Dealers such as Rexford Tugwell, M. L. Wilson, and Leon Keyserling, Francis regarded isolated mining and steel populations in Western Pennsylvania as "stranded." Reports such as the following strengthened the commitment of the New Deal to such "back to the land" experiments as the Resettlement Administration's subsistence homesteads, the greenbelt towns, and FERA's encouragement of cooperative manufacturing enterprises.5 It should be noted further that the antiradical strain so indelible in the report suggests that the so-called "thunder on the left" struck negative reverberations penetrating deep into the hearts of Hopkins's roving reporters.6

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3 Coode and Bauman, People, Poverty and Politics.
4 This report from Henry Francis to Harry Hopkins dated November 18, 1934, is one of many reports forwarded to Hopkins by his roving reporters during the early years of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. The reports are found among the Harry Hopkins Papers in the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
5 On the "stranded population" thesis and the various New Deal resettlement experiments, see Bernard Sternsher, Rexford Tugwell and the New Deal (New Brunswick, N.J., 1964); Paul A. Conkin, Tomorrow a New World: The New Deal Community Program (Ithaca, N.Y., 1959).
Dear Mr. Hopkins:

There is one man in Western Pennsylvania who feels that he is "borrowing" from the relief administration. He is "Old Bill" House, a new settler on the mountain behind Connellsville and so rare a client hereabouts that he merits a paragraph.7

In the late fifties, he is starting out to begin anew. Born on a farm and after a life spent in farming, mining and working in factories, he was reduced last summer to a job as caretaker on a mountain property near his present "home." Then he lost that but, having four dollars, he put it down as part payment on a hundred dollars' worth of tillable mountain land, cut down some trees, got them sawed at a mill on nerve or credit and, with the green lumber, built the one-room shack where he now lives.

I visited him there one day last week during a mountain storm. "Old Bill" was snowed in, having neither rubbers nor decent shoes but two gunny sacks, bundled about his feet, permitted him to go to his home-made chicken house and care for Wyandottes. He has sixty of them, having started with fifteen acquired in some mysterious manner to which "Old Bill" never alludes. The sale of chickens, eggs and garden produce from his carefully spaded half-acre, kept him going until a month or so ago. Then he was forced on to direct relief. But he won't be on it long, he assured me. He may get work soon "on the timber," he says, but in any case he'll be "sitting pretty" when the chickens begin to lay again.8

"Old Bill" radiates optimism and self-help. He thanks God and the relief for helping him out. God's been mighty good to him and so's the relief. My, but he "sleeps warm" in those blankets they sent out. "Old Bill" just hates to ask for anything else but he thinks he'll have to "apply" for a pair of shoes. He was the first man I've heard of to "apply" for anything. All the others are "ordering" or "demanding." 9

7 A fascinating account of life in the Connellsville coalfields can be found in Sheppard's Cloud By Day. The mountains referred to where "Old Bill" had his lair were the Laurel Mountains, at the foot of which are located both Connellsville and Uniontown, Pennsylvania.

8 Wyandottes are a common breed of domestic fowl. "Old Bill" was among thousands of southwestern Pennsylvania miners and steelworkers to tend large gardens and to keep chickens, pigs, and cows as a primary means of subsistence and a hedge against hard times due to mine closings and strikes. Gardening was an important factor in the economic equation of pre- and post-Depression southwestern Pennsylvania. Nor was "Old Bill" unique in combining mining and farming; see John F. Bauman, "Family Adaptation in a Southwestern Pennsylvania Coal Patch," The Journal of Ethnic Studies 7 (Fall 1979) : 1-25.

9 Initially, poor boards, then after 1932 the State Emergency Relief
"Oh, I just need a little lift for the winter," explained this Robinson Crusoe of the mountains. "When I get going again I'll pay it all back and, say, I'll send you fellows some good chickens."

I believe "Old Bill" will "get going." He has the will to carry on — the true spirit of the pioneer. He has neither wife nor child but, in his need, he has "helped out" a neighbor's lad who "just can't get along with his step-father." The lad sleeps in the chicken house and shares Bill's food ration. "The boy's unfortunate," Bill House told me, "just unfortunate."

Not so "Old Bill." He's getting along fine; got plenty to be thankful for. Snow came swirling in through inch chinks in the planking and settled on us as we talked. The lumber was used "too green," said Bill, piqued a bit by my critical glance. "It was as tight as a drum when I put it up. Anyway I'm going to line the shack with them (he pointed to a pile of flattened cardboard boxes laboriously dragged up from the grocery store) when I get some tacks."

This man's courage is rare but the so-called "mountain section" of Fayette is inhabited by a class of people inherently as self-reliant as "Old Bill." There are between 500 and 600 farmers and former farmers in the county who own farm land in quantity enough, if properly worked, to make them self-sufficient. Most of them used to live pretty well of [sic] this land until high wages offered by adjacent industry in boom times lured the men-folk from it. Now they are back on it but the neglected farms and plots now cannot be used. Equipment is lacking. Four [sic] four years or more the soil has not been fertilized, limed or, in many cases, even cleared of brush. There are no tools except a few rusty, broken wrecks, no stock, no money for seed. Instead there are mortgages, back interest and back taxes. Clothes are worn out, furniture played out, stoves and pots in disrepair or done for. All these men can do is hope for a little work relief on the roads and projects are few. Only 135 families are on direct relief — you see, they still have pride.10

Board, and after 1933 the Federal Emergency Relief Administration aided the jobless poor by dispensing food orders, clothes, shoes, and other relief in "kind," but not cash. Shoes were one of the most common items of material relief. However, by 1934 the State Emergency Relief Board phased out its food commissaries and gave clients food orders. See Pennsylvania Emergency Relief Handbook (Harrisburg, 1933), and Frank J. Bruno, Trends in Social Work, 1870-1956: A History Based on the Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work (New York, 1957); also Coode and Bauman, People, Poverty and Politics.

10 Under the State Emergency Relief Board, founded in 1932, a Local Works Division (LWD) employed workers on state public works projects, especially building "Pinchot Roads" named for the governor, Gifford Pinchot.
Besides these non-farming or partly farming farmers there is a large number of people classified as “villagers” and many of these own small plots and have farming capabilities. A third classification is that of the “mountaineer type” who hitherto have eked out a precarious existence cutting timber, working on roads, etc. Many of this class own some land and could produce something besides moonshine if helped to the acquisition of seed, stock and equipment. But now there are 504 families of the “villager” classification and 207 of the hardy type on the relief caseload. These people are in a bad jam. All standards, except those relating to certain cocles of required behavior under feud fire, are low. Living conditions are deplorable especially insofar as they affect the children. Intermarriage has weakened the stock, and depleted energy and ambition have been still further reduced by the ready accessibility of direct relief. In spite of all this those who know these people well believe that they would perk up and respond satisfactorily to any rehabilitation plan which offered the hope of renewed self-sufficiency and security. But there is no such plan in prospect. Several have found space in the crowded pigeon-holes of Harrisburg, I am told. Things have been happening so quickly it is explained; there has not been time to work things out. Among the first efforts to rehabilitate the impoverished mining populations of the region was the American Friends Service Committee. The AFS provided material relief and provided cash and materials to help jobless mining families construct a village of new homes. See Sheppard, Cloud By Day.

When the New Deal created the FERA the federal government funded a small works division. During the harsh winter of 1933-1934 President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Civil Works Administration (CWA), which employed the jobless on work projects from mattress making, book cataloging, and park maintenance to researching the history of the safety pin. See Searle F. Charles, Minister of Relief: Harry Hopkins and the Depression (Syracuse, N.Y., 1963).
much can be done. You can't do anything with the mountaineer, either; I tell you, this thing of lifting up the lowly can't be done. Not so darned high. Talk about self-help; well you just don't know these people — you don't know the class of people we have here. . . . All you can do with 'em is give 'em work if you've got it or food if you haven't. And pretty soon they'll want food without work; they do already, many of them. This is verbatim from a man who has hired and "known" labor hereabouts for thirty-five years. I should have enjoyed taking this man with me to Belle Vernon.12

Belle Vernon, a little town on the boarder [sic] between Fayette and Westmoreland counties, has a population of a thousand or so which depends on work at the plant of the American Window Glass Company, the railroad and a few minor local industries. The big employer is the glass company and this has been shut down for many months. Last March, I believe, the shut-down came. . . . Well, the place was seething with pent-up discontent, disorganized, despairing revolt against everything. In June the place was visited by organizers of the National Unemployed Council. A local Council was formed and for weeks spellbinders from the National group kept things hot in Belle Vernon which acquired the reputation of being a "hot bed of radicalism." 13 Almost the entire place was on direct relief and there was the usual criticism of the local administration for "catering to such radicalism." Agitation grew, violence became a near prospect and then one day, Mrs. Mingo, the relief visitor, met some of the leaders and invited them to "talk things over." This was done — several times — the first conference being held in the back room of, well, let's call it a restaurant, and Mrs. Mingo, departing from accepted welfare technique, bought the men beer. And while they drank, she talked. What she said I don't know but soon these idle, grouching men decided that it would be a good thing to have a Christmas party for the kids. A group installed itself in a room in local relief head-

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12 This is an eloquent statement of the "stranded miner thesis." Elsewhere in the nation social scientists spoke of stranded farmers eking out miserable existences on marginal land, and stranded textile workers abandoned in dying New England towns like Fall River, Massachusetts. Bureaucratically-minded progressives like Rexford Tugwell and FDR believed that one possible solution to the dilemma of useless populations was to resettle them in subsistence homesteads or in free-standing greenbelt communities. See Joseph L. Arnold, The New Deal in the Suburbs: A History of the Greenbelt Town Program, 1935-1954 (Columbus, Ohio, 1971).

quarters and work was begun. Jack knives came into play and odds and ends of wood and cardboard were transformed into the figures of various animals. They were good enough animals but jack-knifing it was slow work and there are many children in Belle Vernon. Someone suggested Joe Thingumbob's jig-saw. It was lent to the group but for one day only. It must not be kept much longer.

Fred English, who was a leader from the first, suggested that instead of using the borrowed saw to cut out a stock of animals, it would be more to the point if they used the time to make a copy of the borrowed tool. Everyone set to work. An old electric motor was dug up from somewhere and repaired; a discarded automobile water pump was fitted dextrously to it to form an eccentric drive; a bench to hold it was contrived and, at the end of the day, a perfect copy of the borrowed saw stood finished. A penny collection was taken up and a dozen saw blades purchased for 25 cents.14

Work on a "mass production" scale then was begun. Everyone in town was interested. The hitherto unsympathetic foreman of the glass works sent down a few planks; the hardware dealer sent up a pound or two of nails; another store supplied a can of paint; the five and ten cent store sent broken, "junked" toys to be repaired. Things positively were humming; there wasn't a minute to listen to oratory imported by the N.U.C., and eventually the group succeeded [sic] from this national body and formed the Unemployed Council of Belle Vernon which in its by-laws bans "political and church arguments of all kinds." The group then made friends fast; the glass company sent more planks; the electric light and water companies contributed light and water free; a local concern sent its truck in to the group for body repairs and a neighboring restaurant, requiring partitions installed, gave the work to the former "reds." When such work failed toy-making proceeded. The place now is filled with them. They are well made and so ingeniously contrived. Prancing horses have checkers for wheels; the hubs of wheelbarrows are made from cotton spools, carved with jack-knives [sic] and sand-papered to a glass finish. The group still has no lathe or plane.

14 Belle Vernon's cooperative enterprise of repairing and making toys was one of a genre of cooperative enterprises that excited the imaginations of New Deal social welfare planners. The FERA supported cooperative canneries in Philadelphia, such as the plant operated by the Philadelphia Barter Association, where the jobless not only grew their own food but canned it, using $5,000 in FERA-supplied equipment. Unfortunately, the Philadelphia Barter Association experiment failed in February 1934 just about the time Belle Vernon launched its operation. See Pennsylvania State Emergency Relief Board, Minutes, Feb. 28, 1934, Aug. 28, 1933, box 7169, Department of Public Welfare Records, Harrisburg.
To-day all the talk in Belle Vernon is about the coming Christmas party. Everybody is cooperating. The Burgess, Mr. Stanley, is lending a Borough truck to the men so that they may go to the mountain and cut a "man's size" Christmas tree. It will be set up in the center of town. The Fire Dept. is lending electric lights for the tree and the power company is giving the current. The local theatre has offered space in case of bad weather. So everything is going famously and Belle Vernon which never had a community tree — no, not even in its prosperous days — is to have one this year — a gift from the unemployed. . . . Every child in town will receive a toy and, if rumor is to be credited, a box of candy from the local Post of the American Legion, the members of which a few months ago were loud in their denunciation of the "local reds who are trying to tear down the flag."

It's not just a game; it's real self-help. One man is making bed quilts, pains-taking hand-sewn patchwork patterns; others turn out good tables, stools and benches. But the prize "something from nothing" industry is that of Anthony Cuppola who is making carved paperknives and really-inspired Blue Eagle ornaments out of rib and shin beef bones which he gets from the local butcher. These things, polished to perfection with Mrs. Cuppola's kitchen Sapolio, are in excellent taste. Thanks to Mrs. Mingo they are finding a sale and if business keeps up the Cuppolas soon will go off relief — saved by beef bones.

Of course all this does not mean that the men are relying upon their new industry to support them indefinitely. They all say that when the glass works reopens — or when any other work offers — they'll jump at it. The glass works expects to reopen soon. The tank is filled. When orders come to light it there is going to be the biggest celebration in Belle Vernon's history.

I think this a good sample of what can be done to "turn away wrath" and achieve constructive results through disguised guidance. There is "wrath" to be turned away in this region. At South Brownsville, a dozen or so miles from Belle Vernon, Victor Kemonovich, an organizer of the National Unemployed Council, is stirring up plenty. In this he is aided by his wife, Agnes Snear, who ran for the State Legislature, I believe, in the recent election and who has been active in Chicago and elsewhere. Both are very intelligent, active and effective. They live with Ivan Kemonovich and his family, at 1131 Second Street, So. Brownsville. Ivan is Victor's brother. He has a barber's shop in Brownsville and also works in a distillery. Steve, a third brother, is a miner at Mather mine, across the river in Green [sic]
County. I called on appointment to see Victor at the So. Brownsville address but he broke two appointments. Ivan shook his head. Victor always was late and so was Agnes. Just “up in the air” all the time. Ivan says that he doesn’t approve of Victor’s politics. But, he’ll give him a home as long as he has one. He has a good home — spotlessly clean — and cheerful. The Kemonoviches are Croats. Came to this country as children and Victor worked in the mines when he was fifteen years old. “He’s had plenty trouble,” said Ivan, “but Victor’s a fine fellow — just a bit too much talk, that’s all.”

Victor is talking quite effectively to the growing embarrassment of the local relief administration. Visitors report growing discontent which shows itself, at times, in abuse. Miss Silverman, Case Supervisor, told me that visitors have reported to her that they cannot enter certain homes because of the abusive attitude of the clients. One street in Uniontown proper is not being visited for this reason, I was told.\footnote{15 All of Hopkins’s “roving reporters” kept him fully informed about the infusion of radicalism in the region. They appeared to detect an inverse relationship between the extent of radical activity and the prosperity of the New Deal. Francis, like all the other reporters, attempted objectivity; nevertheless, he viewed all “radicals” like Victor Kemonovich and Dr. Teagarden with an unblinking jaundiced eye. Teagarden was a Greene County physician and professor of sociology at Waynesburg College. He headed the United Mine Workers of America General Relief Committee. See Coode and Bauman, \textit{People, Poverty and Politics}.}

Across the river from Brownsville, in Green County, Dr. George W. Teagarden, a country doctor in the little town of Carmichaels, Pa., is fomenting discontent with results similar to those effected by Kemonovich and his aides. Dr. Teagarden comes from a long line of M.D.’s. A sister, Dr. Florence Teagarden, practices in Philadelphia. The doctor has a social welfare background. He taught sociology at Waynesburg College at one time but that was long ago for he has practiced medicine in Green county for more than forty years, during which he has come to “know all there is to know about the miner, the region and the crooks who have been exploiting both.” The doctor “always sympathetic with the miner and a fighter against the intolerable conditions under which they have worked,” realized a year or more ago that the men were “victims of conditions just as unjust and intolerable” as a result of “corruption in the administration of relief.” To fight this “rotten state of affairs” he organized the General Relief Committee of the U.M.W.A., of which he is Chairman and which, he says, represents 5,178 members of the union. This committee which meets frequently at the doctor’s home and at Waynes-
burg, has, as its principal objective, it seems, the overthrowing of the Green County Relief Director and "the crooks under him who, like him, are company men." The wildest possible charges against these men are made by Dr. Teagarden and believed by his followers. Evidence, affidavits, etc., are offered to prove the charges. The result of all this, the Doctor says, is that relief is being "wilfully denied" to certain persons and "given freely to those who stand in." 16 There are also charges of inefficiency and waste. The doctor's feeling against the relief administration is intensified by the refusal of the S.E.R.B. at Harrisburg to pay him a sum of $1300 due to him for medical visits, the bill not having been approved by the Green County Medical Advisory Committee, a body which, according to the doctor, is "company owned and against me because I helped the union." The Doctor also has been taken off the list of participating physicians by Dr. Miller, State Director of the Emergency Medical Relief Board. This "burns him up." I have information that this is not so.

The Doctor is pugnacious, energetic and animated by a great sense of duty. He disregards the Green County relief administration but keeps the Washington County wire hot with complaints. Some of them have been found to be justified and the doctor is of service because he gets the first news of real need. He has the support, he says, of the Pennsylvania Security League whose 60,000 members drawn from recognized social groups, "back him to the last ditch." Representatives of the Civil Liberties' League have been present at his meetings. 17

He told me that "it was a crime the way relief is being administered in Green County"; that families were left without food by case visitors who were "company men" and that children could not go to school for lack of clothing so denied. There was only one case of this kind of which Dr. Teagarden could think off-hand. But he promised a list for the morrow. I investigated the one case and found it to be incorrectly represented by Dr. Teagarden. Members of the U.M.W. local who also were on the doctor's relief committee admitted that the case was not an emergency. The case visitor, worried to death under this constant pressure, had nevertheless issued an emergency order

17 On the organizations of the unemployed like the Pennsylvania Security League, see Helen Seymour, When Clients Organize (Chicago, 1937), and Sidney Lens, Left, Right and Center: Conflicting Forces in American Labor (Chicago, 1949).
for food and clothing for this family and for four others which she said "were not really emergency cases" but which she had satisfied as a result of pressure.

I bear in mind that we are not particularly interested in maladministration as such. But charges such as those of Dr. Teagarden and activities of the Kemonovich order are affecting mental states. Not only of clients but also of the relief workers, themselves. Many are harrassed [sic] and discouraged. It is significant, I think, that a workers' protective organization has sprung up within the body of the Fayette County Relief Administration. Workers told me that this had been made necessary by injustices done to certain of them. In Washington County there is no "relief workers' union" but there is much dissatisfaction in the ranks based on too long hours at too small pay.

Failure to receive clothing as ordered is responsible for 80 per cent of the complaints received from protest groups. Forty per cent. of supervisors' time in Washington County, I was told, was spent in following through mistakes either in ordering or filling orders. Friction with Harrisburg is blamed for the shortage of clothing which remains serious. On Nov. 10th., the Fayette County organization was entirely out of the following articles:

Women's winter suits, vests, bloomers, Misses' winter union suits, hose, slips. Children's suits, 3 to 6 years; winter suits, 2 to 6 years; hose; layettes, Men's hose, pants, dress shirts, work shirts, Boys' hose, long pants, dress shirts, work shirts. Youth's dress shirts.

On the same date it had 72 women's sweaters on hand but in 2 sizes out of 7. Sizes 20, 22, 24, and 26 in misses' sweaters were out. There were only 29 pair of infants' high shoes in stock. Out of 125 pairs of men's work shoes in stock six sizes were lacking. There were 1700 men's winter union suits but only 6 size 34. Of 660 pairs of youth's shoes, 596 were in three sizes. Only 23 pairs of youth's high shoes were in stock.

A report on Washington County discloses similar shortage. The first need is for a better clothing supply; the second for a better system of distribution. The present one is too slow. The shoe department now is more than 7,000 pairs behind its orders. Good weather helps. Severe weather would bring trouble. Ernest Cole, Regional Supervisor, says: "The situation in Fayette is ready to boil over; there's the basis here for a conflagration."

Things were "boiling hot" last week at the Bertha Consumers' Mine near Eldersville in Washington County. Here on this blackened
"patch" of desolate shacks I heard a story typical of the worst type of commercial "shoestring" operation. This mine has changed hands and receivers several times during the last six years and each change has resulted in a loss of from four to six weeks' pay by the workers. The last attempt to operate at Bertha was made by one, J. C. Cook who had leased the mine on a royalty basis from the Crown Coal Company, of Pittsburgh, J. H. Jones, president and principle owner. The mine operated under Cook for a few months and then missed a payroll. That was on October 13th. The men walked out and another pay which had been fully worked out in the meantime was missed. So the men lost the product of one month's work. They lost more than that. Back in July Cook, needing money, told the men that they would have to assist him by purchasing stock in the mine and paying for it out of their wages. Nearly every one of the 150 odd men was sold a hundred dollars' worth of stock and this was to be paid for at par at the rate of ten percent of wages earned. Some of the men paid in as much as $61 on stock; the average was around $30. All men hired were required to purchase stock in consideration of a job. Then Cooke failed to turn into the U.M.W. union treasury moneys withheld from their wages. This almost precipitated a strike and feeling was bad when Cooke broke the camel's back by missing a pay.

I am told by the men that upwards of $4,000 was paid by them to Cooke for stock. In addition he owes $6,000 back wages. He also owes money to the concern which, under contract, ran the company store. As a result the store closed down with the mine. All went on relief. Conditions are the worst at this camp. There is no doctor on or near the patch. Morale is down.

The owners of the Bulger Block Coal Co., at Smith Township, who once "took a fling" at Bertha are willing to take another one if they can come to terms with Cook concerning his "rights" in the lease. The men have voted to work for Bulger and forget their back pay. Now it seems that there will be delay over the lease. The men say that "it's a bad law which keeps us from work" and their opinion of the due processes of law was fortified when the Bituminous Coal Labor Board wrote their secretary that the Board could do nothing about getting them their dues from Cooke. And there's the strange thing — the men all believe that Cooke is honest. Jones, they say, is behind all their troubles.

A similar case, now in litigation, concerns another "shoestring" mine operated until recently by the Valda Coal Co., now in receivership. Valda closed down after 2 pays had been missed. That was on
Oct. 4th. The store also closed, money being owed by the company on food for which the miners already had paid through wage check-offs. Electric light and water also were cut off for non-payment of bills. The owner of the mine, a Mrs. Bergwyn, who leased it to Valda and who has $300,000 in royalties due to her, came to the rescue of the patch and paid back bills for light and water and these were restored. There are about forty families on this patch. They need clothes and coal, there being no more coal on the dump. In fact, they need everything we have. What such people really need most is a little Russian back country justice. It is a pity they have no Small Claim's Court.

Both of these mines just referred to are in Washington County where, as of Nov. 15th., the case load is around 6,300 on direct and 790 on work relief. In a previous report I estimated that the load would reach 9,000 of both cases this winter. This estimate is conservative. It is based on the assumption that the relief load in North Charleroi, Dunlevy and other nearby river towns will be no more than tripled. The Pittsburgh Steel Company has plants at these places and your investigator covering steel operations in this field undoubtedly will be able to correct this estimate if necessary. I have not visited these steel towns but am relying on the Home Visitor for figures concerning relief prospects there. He reports 140 families on relief in five towns and estimates work prospects to be so good that this number may not be more than tripled.

To get back to conditions generally in Fayette County. Outside of coal mining there are only 14 industries in the county which employ 100 or more workers. Here they are:

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<th>Nature</th>
<th>Employees</th>
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It will be seen that life in Fayette County depends almost solely upon coal mining. There is some agriculture but the condition of this has been noted. As I said in my last letter less than 50 out of more than 150 coal and coke plants are operating. It is admitted that a large proportion of those shut down never will reopen; many of those now operating have only a few years coal ahead of them. Coal is "going back" on the County; what was once a rich empire is almost ready to be dumped by its rulers; it has been bled white both above and below the ground. Populations have been left stranded not only without work but without prospects of ever being reemployed in coal mining. What are they to do? Are they to remain indefinitely on direct relief. Will they have to move into other communities for possible absorption into other industries? Are they to be placed on homestead projects? What is going to happen to them? Every thoughtful person in Fayette is asking this question and all discussion concerning relief ends at this point. When I ask people for their impressions of the effect of relief they all take the short view. Perhaps the truth is that, so far as present relief is concerned, no other view can be taken — perhaps, so far as the long range results are concerned, relief is having very little effect at all. It is helping the children. Malnutrition, which always has been the bane of child life on these depressing patches where for forty years bare existence has been so pitifully depressing is being reduced for the children are getting more milk from relief than they ever did from the best pay envelopes. That is something but it is not enough for the future of these youngsters under the present circumstances is hardly brighter than that of the parents.

I do not know what the answer is. I have found no one who does. But, as I left Pennsylvania, one great need seemed to stand out clearly — the need for an intensive study of all these people — a careful survey by trained people of all these mining town populations, all the hill folk and of the areas harboring those stranded workers who have nothing in the present and even less in the future to contemplate. Possibly such a study would suggest a way out. I do not know; again I have found no one who does. There is nothing very hopeful or constructive in the mass of public opinion contacted in Western Penn-
sylvania. One hears that miners can do nothing but mine coal. I used to think so myself but down here in W. Virginia I find people who believe the contrary. The West Virginia miner, I am told, is doing things which prove his adaptability. May not these coal diggers a few miles north have “hidden resources,” too, in mind and spirit? Would it not be well to take stock of the Pennsylvania miner? He can’t do it himself. He sees no way out — wants no way out other than work in the same old mine at living pay. But he’s not going to get it in Fayette County. He’ll float along if you keep him supplied with life belts without ever dreaming of getting to shore. But I suspect that once on stable ground he might find himself and for the first time be happy.

Very truly yours,
HENRY W. FRANCIS