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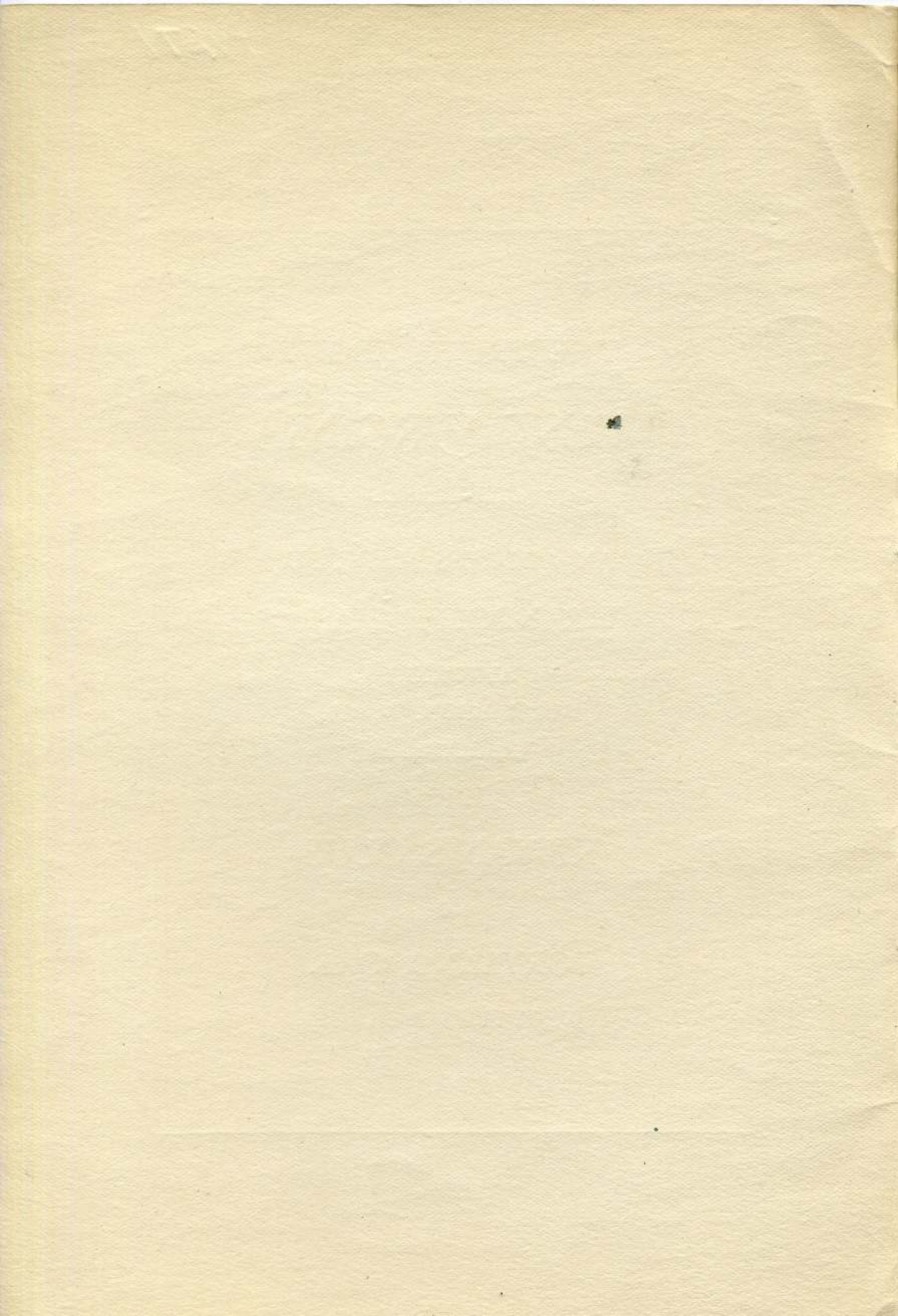
THE TRUTH ABOUT  
WEST VIRGINIA

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AN ADDRESS MADE BY  
RANDOLPH BIAS  
AN ATTORNEY OF  
WILLIAMSON, W. VA.

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TO THE  
KIWANIS CLUB  
OF  
PORTLAND, ORE.  
ON SEPTEMBER 12, 1922



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## FOREWORD

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While in Portland, Oregon, last September, I had an opportunity to do a little something in the way of telling "The Truth About West Virginia" and embraced the opportunity, making the following address. A number of people hearing the address, hearing of it, or seeing it, or a portion of it in one of the newspapers, have been sufficiently interested to ask for a copy of it. To comply with these requests it is printed in this form.

If you have asked for it, this is sent you because of your request. If you have not asked for it, it is sent you that you may, if you care, read what I said. If you are not interested, I imagine you have a yawning waste basket which can and will receive it.

RANDOLPH BIAS,

Williamson, West Virginia.  
February 3, 1923.

# WEST VIRGINIA

As a native of West Virginia I am always glad of a chance to talk about my state and upon occasions have been accused of making opportunity to speak of the glories, grandeur and greatness of West Virginia.

I hope that what I shall say will convince you that half the lies you have heard of us are not true, and cause you properly to appraise the youngest state east of the Mississippi.

Because of labor troubles and disorders in the coal industry in our state it has been for two years the target of assault by yellow journalists, scandal-mongers and plain and fancy prevaricators. We have been abused, maligned, traduced, slandered by the spoken word and libelled by the written word by sensational journalists in the east, middle west, and, I suspect, even on the Pacific Coast. This, too, by men who never saw a coal mine and who knew and cared less about the facts than a hog knows of the procession of the equinoxes. We have been criticised, condemned and denounced by individuals and groups of individuals, ranging from local labor unions to committees of United States Senators. We have been accused of about every crime in the catalogue from profiteering to perjury, highway robbery to homicide, tyranny to treason. The Scripps-McRae papers have called us the Outlaw State, the New York Times has said we are an inferior people, and papers of the Hearst stripe say our state is owned and dominated by robber barons in the coal industry who exploit it for their own greed.

With full knowledge that these implications and charges were unfounded and false, we have endured these

insults and outrages silently, patiently, gone about our business cherishing the hope that the truth would ultimately prevail. We have borne these indignities so long, however, and turned the other cheek so often that some of us have come to believe that patience is no longer a virtue and that silence may come to be construed as an admission of guilt.

Because of this I, for one, am pleased when opportunity permits me to tell the truth about West Virginia.

The story of our problems, troubles and the things and events which have provoked so much unfavorable notoriety is wholly too long to tell you in detail. I can but sketch the high points. Rankling, because its efforts in the winter of 1919-20 to freeze this nation of ours into submission to its program of sixty per cent increase in wages, with six hours comprising a day and five days a week labor, were thwarted by the non-union coal mines of West Virginia, the United Mine Workers of America (an organization with a half million members) in May, 1920, essayed the task of unionizing those mines. The effort started in my home county of Mingo, which is one of a half dozen counties in Southern West Virginia which in the aggregate produce about fifty million tons annually, or approximately ten per cent of all the bituminous coal mined in the United States. The mines in these counties have always been non-union or open shop and because of their knowledge of the plans, purposes and methods of the U. M. W. of A. the mine owners were determined, if possible, to keep them non-union and open shop. The employees in the mines were happy and contented, wages were good and living conditions satisfactory. The average miner was earning from \$7 to \$10 for a day's work and the best of them, who worked regularly, from \$300 to \$500 the month, and in exceptional cases \$600 or \$700 the month. Therefore, the demand for unionization must

come from without the field and did come largely from without the state, from headquarters of the U. M. W. of A. at Indianapolis.

Having lived in this coal field, where I now live, for more than a quarter of a century, I know our people, both mine owners and mine workers, and I say to you the sole trouble arose from the determination of outsiders to compel unionization of these mines, to the end the production of coal there would be controlled by the U. M. W. of A. The men in the mines did not want it nor ask for it and the mine owners opposed it.

Preparing for the nation-wide strike it expected to call and did call April 1, 1922, however, the U. M. W. of A. bent every energy to make of West Virginia a closed union shop, with full knowledge that when this was accomplished it would control enough of the output of the mines to force its will on the public, stop production, paralyze industry and compel acceptance of its terms.

With a mine unionized by this organization not only must every man who works in and about the mine belong to that particular organization, but the mine owner actually must collect, through the pay-roll, the monthly dues and assessments charged against every employee and pay it into the treasury of the union. This enforced payment and collection of dues is called the "Check-Off."

As found in the decision of the U. S. Supreme Court in Coronado Coal Co. case rendered by Chief Justice Taft last June, the U. M. W. of A. is an international organization covering all coal produced in the United States and Canada with the avowed purpose of "increasing wages and improving conditions of employment of its members by legislation, conciliation, joint agreement and strikes." Once it enforces its unionism on all the employees in the industry on the American Continent, then will the Continent and all its people be at their mercy, as was frankly

said by President Harding to be the case now in all union fields, in his address to the joint session of Congress on August 19th last.

The non-union mines of West Virginia and in a few other sections of our country alone stand between the public and these designs of this organization. Once these mines are subdued and brought into the fold then a nation-wide strike ordered by this body would in a month bring the entire country to its knees in surrender. In addition to the conviction it was to their interest and that of their employees to continue to run their mines themselves and not surrender the operation to this organization, the mine owners in parts of West Virginia felt they owed to the public, the great body of consumers, the duty of resisting the demands of the U. M. W. of A.

And so the fight was on. And it has been a fight. The methods employed by the U. M. W. of A. in conducting a strike are very similar to those I am told are employed by the I. W. W. in the West, when that body seeks to accomplish a purpose.

The real struggle was initiated with the killing of ten men at Matewan in my county—shooting them down in cold blood, very similar to what was done at Herrin, Illinois, in June, except the men at Matewan had not formally surrendered when the massacre occurred.

By persuasion, threats and intimidation the organization induced a good many of the mine workers to join them. A strike was called. Many men quit work—some in sympathy with the strike, more in fear of the strikers. The mine owners continued to run and try to run their mines. Those who worked were abused, assaulted, attacked, shot, beaten and sometimes killed. Bodies of men, many of them from other states, concealed themselves in woods and fired thousands of shots into mining camps inhabited by the workmen and the women and children.



Houses were burned, tipples and bridges were dynamited and for a few months a reign of terror prevailed in our county, which was the only one in which the strikers obtained any foothold at all. Conditions were so bad that the Federal Government twice on call from the governor sent federal troops into the field. All told, about forty people were killed, nearly all of whom were non-union workers or officers of the law, including four members of the State Police, all of whom were killed at different times and places and each of whom was shot in the back. Millions of dollars worth of property was destroyed and tens of millions lost in wages and non-production.

Through all this the mines refused to surrender and continued to operate. At first the production was greatly diminished, but it continued to increase until the nationwide strike was called last April, when it had reached normal, and since then, when transportation can be had, the production is above normal. The mine owners, those working, the public generally, including at least ninety-eight per cent of the population, went about their business, and sought to arrest, prosecute and convict the lawless. I am glad to say we have sent several to the state prison, and have hundreds yet to try.

The battle is won against the organization, the mines are free and have been and are producing about one third of all the coal which has been mined in the United States since the mine strike was called April 1st. And that is not all. Notwithstanding the great loss of time, money and production sustained in the fight to prevent having the closed shop fastened on them, and additional cost of production occasioned by spasmodic and impaired transportation service, these mine owners are selling their coal to those who need it most at a fair price, as determined by Secretary Hoover, and not at what the market offers. Coal is being and has been sold at the mines at \$3.50 the

ton when those who sold it were besieged by offers of six, seven, eight and even ten dollars the ton for it. The demand so far exceeds the supply that he who has coal to sell can get almost his own price—if his conscience will allow him to take it.

Briefly, that is the story of our troubles and of some of its causes. These are the things we have done which have caused outsiders to villify and slander us. We have had our troubles but they are over—or will be over when the rail strike ends. We have our problems and we try to solve them. What state does not have them? We believe that a man who owns property should use and enjoy it as he sees fit, having proper regard for the rights of others. We believe the right to work is as sacred as is the right to strike. We believe the open shop is better for all—employer, employee and consumer—than the closed shop. We believe that murder is murder, no matter by whom committed. We believe that crime should be suppressed and criminals punished. We believe in the enforcement of law and the preservation of order. We believe the whole is greater than a part and that the rights of all are paramount to the demands of a group, however powerful that group.

What state and what people believe otherwise?

We think it unbecoming of the pot to call the kettle black; for those afflicted with a beam to fuss about a mote; for those who live in glass houses to throw stones and for one to gag at a gnat and swallow a camel.

What state and what people think otherwise?

We have our troubles but we meet them like men and women and try to overcome them. We have our problems but we solve them. We have some lawless people, but we curb them and punish violations of law.

What state or community does not have its troubles, its problems and its lawless element?

There is more crime and vice in New York or Chicago in one week than in West Virginia in a year.

Let that state and community that is without fault cast its stone at West Virginia and let all others look after their own faults while we try to work out our own salvation.

West Virginia was born of the Civil War because that part of Virginia which now constitutes West Virginia was loyal to the Union cause and refused to secede.

Its fifty-five counties have twenty-five thousand square miles of area and a million and a half of the best people on earth.

Its people are honest, truthful, industrious, law-abiding and God-fearing. Largely descended from the colonists of Virginia, eighty-nine and nine-tenths per cent of them are native born whites.

Including the time before Virginia was dismembered, the two Virginias gave to history John Smith, Pocahontas, Jamestown, Yorktown and Appomatox; the Declaration of Independence; the fathers of the Constitution; Washington, Jefferson, Marshall, Madison, Monroe, Henry, Mason, the Randolphs and the Lees, and more Presidents than any other state has given the union.

Except alone some of the thirteen original colonies there are more graves of soldiers of the Revolution in West Virginia than in any other state.

West Virginia gave to our cause in the Revolution four of its generals, including Generals Gates, Charles Lee and Alexander Stevens. The first battle of the Revolution (Pt. Pleasant) was fought on West Virginia soil, as was the last battle, at Ft. Henry.

The first Union soldier killed in the Civil War was a West Virginian; the Paul Revere of the Spanish American War, the man who carried the message to Garcia, was a West Virginian; the Commander of the flagship New York

in the battle of Santiago was a West Virginian; and a West Virginian was first of the Allies to reach the Rhine in the World War.

To the Union cause it gave its loyalty and itself; to the Confederacy it gave Stonewall Jackson.

West Virginia has given to the Methodist Church four of its greatest bishops, and that "Father of Methodism West of the Mississippi"—Andrew Monroe; to the Baptist Church she gave the "Spurgeon of America"—John W. Carter.

To invention she gave James Rumsey, who built the first boat propelled by steam ten years before Fulton fulfilled his dream.

To literature she gave Melville Davidson Post and Henry Sydnor Harrison, John Estes Cook, Rebecca Harding Davis and her son, Richard Harding Davis, and John Herbert, who is better known as Herbert Quick.

To athletics and sports she has contributed Jack Dempsey and Bob Martin, the A. E. F. Champion; "Hurry Up" Yost, America's greatest football coach, and Everett Rodgers, considered the greatest fullback ever on the football field.

West Virginia gave to California James Farley, a United States Senator; to Iowa, the greatest Senator it ever had, Jonathan P. Dolliver; to Ohio, four of the greatest governors and its present Republican candidate for governor; to Alabama, Kansas, Maryland and North Dakota, each a governor; to Missouri, Champ Clark, who was speaker of the House of Representatives.

It gave to the colored race its greatest leader, Booker T. Washington. To mathematics, Joseph Ray, whose arithmetics have been standard in United States for forty years.

Although five of West Virginia's members of the House of Representatives were born within her borders,

and the sixth just across the line in Virginia, three of the members of Congress from Missouri, and one each from Ohio, Pennsylvania and Texas are West Virginians.

At San Francisco in August (1922) the American Bar Association elected as its President a West Virginian, John W. Davis, who was once Solicitor General of the United States and later Ambassador to Great Britain.

And now, ye good Oregonians, lend me both your ears and most of your attention while I whisper to you some history of Oregon, with which you may not be familiar.

Do you know you owe your discovery and existence to us Virginians? Well, you do!

I know that three or four hundred years ago a Spaniard may have sighted you from afar off; that in 1579 Sir Francis Drake *found* you and, as New Albion, carried you home to England as a gift to Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen; and that in 1792 a bunch of Boston traders financed Captain Robert Gray, who sailed the first vessel carrying the American Flag around the world, and who later in his ship *Columbia* actually discovered you and your river named for his ship. I know all these things; but I tell you that but for Virginia and the part played by Virginians the "Where rolls the Oregon" of Bryant in his *Thanatopsis* might be the primitive forest of a hundred and thirty years ago, when it was the abiding place of Indians and wild animals.

A Virginian, Thomas Jefferson, then President, in 1805 sent on an exploring expedition to the west two other Virginians, one his private secretary, Meriwether Lewis (who afterwards become Governor of Louisiana Territory) and the other William Clark, brother of the more famous George Rogers Clark (and who afterwards was governor of Missouri Territory.) These men discovered and explored you and told the world of you. Later came the

fur traders and still later the missionaries. Followed the dispute with Spain and the boundary dispute with England. But in 1819 a Virginian, Monroe, as President, by a treaty with Spain, took you over—you, Washington and Idaho—and paid for you five million dollars. I wonder if you were worth it!

Nor is this all. One of your earliest and best Chief Justices, Chief Justice Thornton, was a West Virginian, and a West Virginian, John Stevenson, founded this city of Portland, of yours.

So, you see, we come near being kinsmen. I wonder if we are not all cousins!

Your late governor and senator, Senator Chamberlain, was educated at a Virginia University, named for two distinguished Virginians, Washington and Lee; as was the Senior Senator from your sister state on the north—Senator Poindexter.

West Virginia has water power furnishing almost inexhaustible hydro-electric possibilities. We have coal enough to supply the world with fuel for a century and uncut lumber on our hills sufficient to bridge the seven seas and leave enough for ordinary use for a long time.

Our mineral products last year were worth two-thirds of a billion dollars and our manufactured products sold for four hundred seventy-one million dollars.

We have produced enough oil—of highest grade—to make a lake upon which the navies of the world might float and we produce gas enough to supply a half-dozen adjoining states and still have some left for ourselves.

We grow the finest apples on earth, bar none, and have more blue grass than Kentucky. We have all the blue blood that is good for a people and enough red blood to take our own part.

We are spending a hundred million dollars on our roads and highways, one-half whereof is supplied by the

state, and when these highways are completed then the world can traverse our state in ease and comfort in every direction and learn the justification of our claim to being the Switzerland of America.

Our property is assessed at approximately two billion dollars, which means that on the average each family of five owns property assessed at more than six thousand dollars—and which, in turn, correctly indicates there is little poverty.

We have a splendid school system and church facilities adequate to our needs.

West Virginia produces more glass than any state on earth; it has the largest axe factory, shovel factory, bottle factory, sanitary pottery factory, clothes pin factory, proprietary remedy factory and the only factory producing pressed prismatic glass.

We are a happy, contented, industrious, sociable, hospitable, and law-abiding people and we are proud of our State.

West Virginia has been said to be a northern state, because it adhered to the north in the war between the states and because its northernmost city is farther north than Trenton, N. J., Harrisburg, Penn., or Beatrice, Nebraska. It has been called an eastern state because its easternmost city is farther east than Rochester, N. Y. or Hagerstown, Maryland. Some regard it as a southern state because most of it lies south of the Mason-Dixon line and because its southernmost city is farther south than Richmond, Va., or St. Louis. Still others call it a western state because its westernmost city is farther west than Sandusky, Ohio, or Johnson City, Tenn.

But be that as it may, I give you the toast: "Here is to West Virginia, be she northern, eastern, southern or western, she is a very fine state for the shape she is in!"











