

L.J. - Sunoco. Wednesday, May 5, 1943. *Wed*
(Washington)

COAL

Today John L. Lewis of the beetling brows and bull voice reverted to what might seem like poetry. He spoke about a park and scenery---which might seem to be an apt topic for springtime with the days growing warm and balmy. However, Lewis, in talking about the scenery in the park, was referring, not to the greening of the trees and the twittering of the birds, but to the war labor board and the coal mine situation.

He is against the war labor board, which today in Washington appointed a Fact Finding Committee to consider the coal mine wage dispute. Lewis doesn't want the WLB to consider the dispute at all. Yesterday, Secretary Ickes, in charge of the mines taken over by the Government, referred the whole thing to the board. And later President Roosevelt, talking to a news conference, gave the WLB his own White House backing.

So that put it up to Lewis. Would he attend the hearing held by the war labor board? He was asked that question today, and that was when he replied: "Do you think the scenery in the park has changed any?" Apparently he does not think it has changed, and he will stick to his former refusal to have anything to do with the WLB. He won't be at the hearing.

The technicalities are these: With the Government in control of the mines, Lewis and the mine owners are invited to continue their negotiations for a new contract, this collective bargaining to be presided over by the WLB. If the Union and owners do not start negotiating before the Board, the WLB will then hand down a decision of its own. But will Lewis accept the decision, and will he transform the fifteen-day strike truce into a permanent settlement? Or will he call the miners out on strike again? The belief is that, unless the Labor Board decision meets the Union demand for a pay increase of two dollars a day for the miners, its decision won't bring about peace in the coal mine argument.

We hear that Lewis and his lieutenants think they have already won a victory---this in the form of Secretary Ickes' proclamation of a six-day week for the miners, with time-and-a-half extra pay for the day above their previous five days a week. But they want more---other concessions that will put more money in the miners' pockets.

STRIKE BILL

This afternoon the Senate passed a bill confirming the power of the President to take over factories and mines that may be tied up by strikes. This measure, sponsored by Senator Tom Connally of Texas, is the first bit of strike legislation to be passed by the Senate since the war. It had been under consideration previously, but it had been put on the shelf. Then, after the recent coal mine strike, it was brought to light again, and passed today. The President, under his war powers, has already taken over factories ---and, the coal mines. The bill confirms this authority. And, moreover, it outlaws the calling of a strike at any property taken over by the Government.

MINE EXPLOSION

Tonight at Lafollette, Tennessee, rescue crews are trying to fight their way through the deep shafts of a coal mine---shafts blocked by an explosion and filled with lethal gas. Today shortly after noon there was a violent blast deep in the mine. The force was so great that two men at the mine entrance were knocked flat. And down below twenty-five miners were trapped.

This mine at Lafollette, Tennessee, was one of those closed by the coal strike and ~~one of those that were~~^{re-}opened after the Government took over. The miners returned to work only yesterday, and today the explosion occurred.

TUNISIA

In Tunisia, the news about the American push against the Bizerte naval base may be expressed by two figures---ten and fourteen. Our troops are within ten miles of Bizerte on the West, and fourteen miles on the south.

A key geographical factor in the American advance toward Bizerte is a body of water called Lake Achkel. This lake lies in the American path, and our troops must by-pass it, going north and south of it.

The advance along the North shore of the lake is the one that has got the nearest to Bizerte---ten miles away. Later news tells that a French unit, accompanying the forces of the United States, has gone ahead two miles more---to within eight miles of Bizerte. In all this the focus of fighting was at a hill called Djebel Chemiti. American soldiers battled up the slope, and captured the hill---then stood off a counter-attack by the Axis. The counter-attack was violent but it was beaten back.

The advance along the North of Lake Achkel is important not only because of Bizerte, but also because of a place called Sidi Ahmed. That's the site of a big airfield. As the Nazis are being pushed back into a pocket that is constantly growing smaller,

they lose the use of various airfields---which is one thing that tells heaviest against them. And now our forces are so near their big aviation base at Sidi Ahmed that the field is under artillery fire---which puts it out of use. In fact, the Americans are now within long range cannon shot of Bizerte itself.

To the South of Lake Achkel, our troops are nearing an important 'road-point' called Ferryville, which is the site of an electrical power station that provides electricity for the ^{great} naval base. So the fall of Ferryville will be a severe blow to the enemy, the more so as the town is a key point of the general system of naval base defense.

In other words, American troops are closing in on the Bizerte area. They have come into their own in the Tunisian battle, and for the past few days have been playing a predominant part.

Their advance continues a threat to outflank the Nazis further south, the forces facing the British First Army. It looks as if these latest American operations might enable the British to get through the last line of hills to the plain in front of Tunis. And it may not be long before the Allied forces cut communications

between Tunis and Bizerte, the two chief Axis strongholds. When that happens, the enemy will be divided in two---with two small gaps
and
pockets of remaining resistance. That will bring about a new phase of
the Tunisian campaign---the final phase.

AIR WAR

London states that last night's air raid against Nazi Germany was made by the biggest fleet of British four-motored bombers ever put in the air. Nazi centers had been blasted by larger fleets of planes---but not by so many of the four-motored giants, *those* Sterlings, Halifaxes and Lancasters. The weight of bombs was almost up to the previous climax, when fifteen hundred tons of bombs were dropped in the one thousand plane raid on Cologne.

Last night's tremendous blow was at the city of Dortmund, in the heart of the German coal mine and industrial area ^{of} ~~in~~ the Ruhr.

TP Thirty bombers were lost in the assault which the Nazis themselves admit did---"major damage." Coal mine and industrial installations were devastated by the weight of high explosives.

RUSSIA

We hear that Joseph E. Davies, former United States ambassador to Moscow, *is definitely going back to Russia, this time* ~~will make a trip to Russia~~ in the company of *Maxim* Litvinov, Soviet ambassador to Washington. This follows reports that Davies would soon go to see Stalin on a special mission. ~~and~~ The word is, that he may try to make a personal attempt to arrange a meeting between President Roosevelt and the Soviet war leader.

Stalin, as we know, did not attend the Casablanca conference between the President and British Prime Minister Churchill, and ever since there have been urgent suggestions^s that a Roosevelt-Stalin meeting should be held. So now our former ambassador to Moscow will try to persuade Stalin---so we hear. This, together with the word that he will travel with Litvinov. The Soviet ambassador *to this country* is scheduled to return to Moscow for consultation with his Government, and he and Davies are close friends.

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One of the thorny questions for discussion between the President and Stalin would be the break between the Soviets and the exiled Polish government. Concerning this President Roosevelt

has sent a personal letter to Polish Premier, General Sikorski, and today we hear from London that Sikorski has replied. What the President wrote to him we do not know. Nor are we told the nature of Sikorski's response.

The anger between the regimes of Stalin and Sikorski centers around that Nazi propaganda story claiming that the Soviets executed ten thousand Polish officers, a story which the Poles considered serious enough for investigation by the Red Cross. Today, ^{here} in Washington, Elmer Davis, director of War Information, discussed the alleged mass killing of Polish officers by the Soviets, and described the Nazi account in these two words---"very fishy."

GENERAL

Today in London, Major General William S. Key of Oklahoma City, took over the temporary command of the American forces based on Britain. For the time being he succeeds Lieutenant General Frank M. Andrews, who was killed in an airplane crash, together with Bishop ~~Samuel Wright~~ Leonard of the Methodist Church. Bishop Leonard was chairman of the General Commission of Army and Navy Chaplains. No definite announcement has been made in London that the bishop also lost his life, but it is assumed that all aboard the ill-fated plane perished.

London has no public report of just what happened---save that General Andrews' plane crashed in Iceland. But there ~~are~~ are authoritative reports telling the story as follows: General Andrews and his party, bound for Iceland, flew in a B-twenty-four bomber, ~~a big four motor plane~~. While they were winging over the North Atlantic, they were warned of bad weather. The cloud and fog conditions of Iceland were reported to be so bad that they were advised to turn back. In response, one word was flashed from the bomber. The word "continuing." Then, when the plane reached Iceland, the weather was as bad as had been stated, or worse. Visibility---zero. Ceiling---zero.

General 2

Today in London an officer who had been associated with General

Andrews said: "That's what Iceland weather will do to you."

And he added: "The old man probably was at the controls himself,

looking for a hole in the clouds to set her down." This ^{informant} ~~informant~~

explained that General Andrews, who had been flying for twenty-six

years, always liked to take over the controls when the going was

tough. So, with zero conditions over Iceland, he very likely

took the place of the regular pilot for a landing. If so, the going

was too tough even for the veteran pilot who wore the three stars

of a lieutenant general, one of ^{ablest and} ~~our~~ ^{most} experienced
officers whom we can ill-afford
to lose.

PACIFIC

Today's usual story about bombing the Japs at Kiska is especially interesting because of some word we have from enemy Germany. Our planes are always smashing at Kiska, doing it every day. Today's Navy bulletin tells of nine raids on May third.

The Berlin report came in the form of a Nazi broadcast which told what Japanese reconnaissance planes are supposed to have observed. The Japs report that the United States has completed the construction of huge bases in Alaska, and is ready to start a big time offensive against the Jap positions in the Aleutians. And the Berlin broadcast went on with the following: "Nobody in Japan deceives himself light-heartedly as regards the great consequences which the success of an American attack would signify for Japan."

To which Nazi opinion we may give our whole-hearted assent.

And American thrust down the Aleutians would point most significantly in the direction of ~~Japan proper~~ ^{the Japanese Kurile Islands,} and Japan ^{proper} - Honshu and Hokkaido.

DRAFT

From Washington we are given a date when the drafting of fathers will begin---"sometime in August, if not sooner," said General Hershey, director of selective service today. He made the statement in a letter to a Senate sub-committee on military affairs---which sub-committee is considering a bill that would forbid the drafting of married men with children.

The Selective Service director wrote in opposition to the measure and stated, "any bill that would prohibit the induction of fathers or even provide exemption until the end of the year, would prevent us from filling our quota," he said. And thereupon General Hershey specified the date when the drafting of men with children would begin---"some time in August, if not sooner."

GASTORIA

Here is a warning that is being repeated time and again on the radio, and I am asked to give another repetition. The request is from the United States Food and Drug Administration and by the Manufacturers of Fletcher's Castoria, that medicine for small children. It has been discovered that because of some mistake, all Castoria shipped since the First of March contains a foreign ingredient which causes nausea and vomiting. All druggists and storekeepers are asked to stop the sale of Castoria, and mothers are requested to turn in any of this medicine that they have purchased in the last sixty days---take it to a drug store and have their money refunded.

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GOLF

In England today there was bitter denunciation of what was called "a monstrous act." Who is guilty of that act? Hätler, the Japs? No not at all. The abysmal crime was committed by an Englishman, a young artillery officer. The monster was in command of a mortar unit, and ordered some target practice, and the shells his battery fired ripped up the greens of a golf course. It was the famous golf course at Sandwich, on the fairways of which many a celebrated personage has played, great golfer, peer of the realm and even Royalty.

What the cannonading did to the greens was a golfing nightmare. You know how heavy artillery shells blast holes in the ground, excavations. And when the bombardment was over the Sandwich ^{1/2} greens looked like open face mining after an earthquake.

Today in London, Golf Magazine called upon the War Office of the British government to discipline the artillery officer who committed what the magazine calls "the monstrous act." What punishment to inflict? I suppose he should' be court-martialled and reduced to the rank of caddie, the ^{is} monster who thought so much about winning the war that he bombarded the greens of the famous golf course at Sandwich, on Thames. - - - and s - l - u - t - m .