

Winnetka Weekly Talk

ISSUED FRIDAY OF EACH WEEK
by
The Lake Shore Publishing Company
1222 Central Ave., Wilmette, Ill.
Business Telephone.....Wilmette 1921
Editorial Telephone.....Wilmette 1920
Winnetka Office Telephone..Winn. 388
SUBSCRIPTION.....\$1.00 A YEAR
Strictly in advance

Address all communications to the Winnetka Weekly Talk, Wilmette, Ill. Anonymous communications will be passed to the waste basket. The same applies to rejected manuscript unless return postage is enclosed. Articles for publication should reach this office by Tuesday afternoon to insure appearance in current issue.

Resolutions of condolence, cards of thanks, obituary poetry, notices of entertainments or other affairs where an admittance charge will be made or a collection taken, will be charged for at regular advertising rates.

Entered in the postoffice at Winnetka, Illinois, as mail matter of the second class, under the act of March 3, 1879.



FRIDAY, JANUARY 25, 1918

The Fuel Situation.

As the situation regarding the fuel conditions of the United States clears and we are given time to put together the information and the statements which are available, it appears more and more certain that the crisis is rather one of transportation and distribution than of supply. It is beginning to appear that the trouble is in the railroad management rather than within the real province of the fuel administrator, except incidentally.

The fuel situation has not come upon us suddenly. All last summer there was a full appreciation of what the winter would bring, except for the fact that it has been unexpectedly severe. The problem was left for solution after the crisis had become acute, instead of being faced when there was yet time to work out ways and means to meet it without inflicting hardship upon anyone. We have been for two years and more leading up to this certain situation so far as the supply of coal is concerned. During these two years there has never been a normal surplus supply of coal in the yards either of dealers or of railroads, not since the price went skyrocketing, and the reason for it is not far to seek.

Under the readjustment of labor conditions incident to the increased cost of living after the breaking out of the war in Europe, the wage of the miner increased from three to eight times what it had ever been before. Quite naturally the improvident man, receiving for two days' labor as much or more than he had before accustomed to receive for the full six, or even seven days in the week, was content to rest for the five days and work for the two with equal financial recompense. The proprietor of the mine, was satisfied with the great profit which he received for a limited output of coal was ready enough to keep the supply down and the price up, since he thus made more money and handled much less business. This is the situation which has been for three years developing, and which everybody who habitually reads the signs of the times, knew would come with the first tie-up of freight by abnormal weather conditions. It is this which has made the present condition critical by rendering it out of the question to relieve the railroads of the necessity for carrying coal in order to facilitate the movement of congested freight incident to the heavy production of war supplies.

It is certainly no fault of the mining operators or owners that the freight terminals in the East are so clogged with laden cars that there

is no possibility of the coal cars being able to make their way to the seaport and supply the ships which are said to be lying in harbor, unable to set out to sea because their bunkers are empty of coal. It is no fault of the manufacturing industries that there is this congestion, and the closing of all producing plants for the five-day period and for one day a week for nine succeeding weeks, is more necessary to relieve the railroads of their heavy burden and permit time for adjustment, than for the sake of saving coal.

However, as Dr. Garfield has pointed out, "This is war," and the American people are not entirely unacquainted with what that means. There will be patience with the situation and a whole-hearted effort on the part of manufacturers and business generally to act in accordance with the orders of the fuel administration.

But it will be expected that the sacrifice which is being so cheerfully made be productive of some permanent good, that the opportunity given to bring a degree of order out of the chaos which is now our transportation system will be utilized for that purpose and that having succeeded in clearing the way a little of its clogged business, there will be such measures devised and adopted as will keep the country free from a similar situation in the future.

The important point in the lesson which we are learning with such inconvenience today is the necessity of providing for the future before it becomes the immediate present. One wonders if we will remember that after this crisis is past, if the government will adopt adequate measures, even the conscription of labor for the operation of the coal mines, not at a soldier's pay necessarily, but at something like the normal wage for the type of labor which is done.

We should certainly resolve to try to keep the present experience in mind, at least for the duration of the war, and to keep the men at Washington reminded at sufficiently frequent intervals that we shall not enter another winter exposed to the conditions which beset us today.

Classified Ads

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WANTED—YOUNG GENERAL HOUSE-work maid; good references; good wages. Tel. Winn. 532-W. T45-1tp

WANTED—WOMAN TO DO GENERAL housework mornings. Phone Winnetka 461. T45-1tc

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LET MISS CARLSTEN DO YOUR dressmaking and alterations. Phone Winnetka 911 before 8 a. m. T29-tfc

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LOST—LADIES GOLD WATCH in leather wrist strap; monogram "I. A."; from N. W. depot to or in Glencoe January 15; finder please phone Glencoe 175; reward. G-1tc

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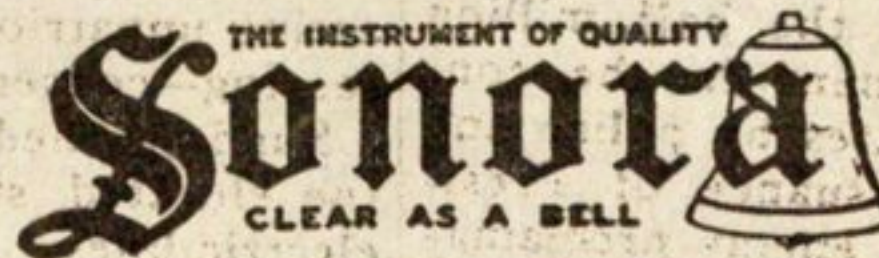
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Limited service hourly to Milwaukee from 7:28 A. M. to 10:28 P. M. Running time one hour fifty-seven minutes. Parlor Cars 9:28 A. M. and 2:28 P. M. Dining Cars 12:28 P. M. and 5:28 P. M.

