

● PSF

Coal Strike (1939)

Subject File

Box 140

1 item

PSF: Coal strike

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 10, 1939.

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE P. S.

The President said he thought this should go to Miss Perkins for her confidential information. Who sent it in and what does the note say?

F. D. R.

PSF: Coal Strike

May 6, 1939

The information from a thoroughly trustworthy source is, in substance, as follows:

A number of prominent industrialists, including Tom Girdler and Wendell Wilkie, together with certain New York City banks have definitely supported the coal operators in their unyielding resistance to John L. Lewis and the United Mine Workers. When, a few days ago, several of the coal operators were ready to sign with Mr. Lewis they were talked to in the severest type of language by the above-mentioned interests and were threatened with the complete ruination of their individual mining businesses through boycott by the industrial and public utility interests represented unless they stood out with the others against Mr. Lewis.

An attempt has been made to obtain the collaboration of eight Governors of coal-mining states in this drive against Mr. Lewis -- a drive which is characterized by my informant as a real showdown effort to break Mr. Lewis and the C.I.O. once and for all, and, both inferentially and by explicit phrasing, to eliminate the last vestiges of political hope the New Deal might have for 1940.

The interests involved in this plan are counting particularly upon Governor John Bricker, of Ohio. He has proclamations already prepared declaring a state of emergency and authorizing the calling out of the National Guard in situations of conflict which it is hoped and intended will be provoked. An effort is being made to get the Unemployment Compensation officials in each state possible to agree not to grant compensation during the period of the suspension of work.

The A.F. of L. is being made a party to a portion of these plans. Administrator Atkinson, of the Ohio Compensation Act conferred with President Green, of the A.F. of L. this morning.

The interests involved in this design hope to create a public attitude of fear and resentment by cutting down public utility services throughout the country and by stressing the jeopardy ensuing therefrom to the hospitals, and other public institutions. My informant specifically states that a considerable fund has been set up -- each interest contributing to the pool -- to help finance those coal operators whose own financial status tends to make them waver and, in short, to use this money in as long a campaign as is necessary to break Mr. Lewis, the mine workers and the C.I.O. completely.

The substance of these plans is known to/a few individuals not a party^{only} to them. Certain individuals in the great life insurance companies, as exemplified by the Metropolitan Life, have been informed of them as have been certain bank directors. Mr. Girdler was in New York City last week and part of this week in connection with the program.