

sort of law to control, direct, and properly conserve our vanishing forests is absolutely necessary and is of vital importance to every individual in America, for we all use wood. The second is that any such law to be adequate must have teeth in it and must be national in its scope, control, and administration.

This Story Is Called: "What Shall We Do About the Heathen in Mongolia?"

By LOUIS WEITZENKORN

FOR the life of me I cannot disentangle two stories. They have fashioned themselves together in my mind like a pair of amorous angle worms for whom parting would mean mutilation. One is concerned with the life of a mule, a mule that lived and passed in the bowels of an anthracite coal mine. The other has to do with a man named Jenkins who lived and passed as a guard on a subway train which ran from George Washington Park to 437th Street and back again.

The mule was called Buck and was born nine years ago in the mule barns of a coal mine, a thousand feet below the surface of the earth. When he was old enough, when his muscles were almost powerful enough, an agent of the subway—I mean the coal company—put Buck to work hauling empty coal cars from the foot of a shaft to 437th Street—I told you this story was all mixed up in my brain. Buck hauled from the shaft to a coal seam several miles away and back again.

And now to get this tale as straight as possible. It was Thomas Jenkins who got the job in the subway seven years ago and opened car doors on a train from George Washington Park to 437th Street and back again. When Jenkins was given his job they told him to report at 437th Street every morning at five, five punctually, and there get on his train and work through until five in the afternoon, five not quite so punctually, after which he was a free man until five punctually next morning including Sundays. That, of course, is an indirect quotation from the man who gave Thomas Jenkins his job and the author should not be credited with the language. Thomas Jenkins asked how much he would be paid for these twelve daily hours of work and he was told that sixteen dollars and a few cents would about cover his value as a green hand but that there would be great chances of advancement.

He lived on 350th Street near a large gas tank. He had a wife and four children which, dividing six into sixteen dollars and some cents, gives an arithmetical answer in fractions. But they lived on this amount, for Thomas Jenkins had no carfare to pay, as he could walk each morning to the 350th Street subway station to get a train uptown and each night walk from the 350th Street subway station west toward the gas tank.

A man with four children and a wife, it is said, is anxious to hold hard to his job and anxious to get advancement. So every morning Thomas Jenkins arose at four o'clock, swallowed down some coffee made the night before, took a lunch put up the night before, and hurried to his work. He always arrived there a half hour ahead of time, helped the oilers or the wheel inspectors, or erased smutty pencil drawings from the advertising cards. Sometimes

when there was nothing to do but await his train he would stuff a pipe and smoke in the seclusion of a lavatory.

In seven years' time Thomas Jenkins became familiar enough with his work. Indeed, he had the familiarity which breeds contempt. When he began, as a green hand, he called clearly, with careful articulation, the stations. Four Hundred and Thirty-seventh Street, Four Hundred and Sixteenth Street—came out as precisely as an English actor might call them. Old ladies riding uptown never fluttered about if they were riding near Thomas Jenkins's platform because, after a station or two, they knew there was a guard whose enunciation was flawless.

And thus for seven years, or to be exact, six and a half years, Thomas Jenkins worked. Morning, through darkness, walking down into the 350th Street station. Night, through darkness, walking up from the 350th Street station, and all day, including Sundays, down in the beautifully lit tunnels, he hauled coal cars—blast it!—he rode the platform, opening and closing doors under the city.

Strangely enough, however, his advancement never came. Perhaps he was too good in the particular work he had been set to do, or perhaps among the thousands working for the company he was overlooked. A dim event, far away from Thomas Jenkins, a street-car strike in a neighboring city, was, however, followed by a two-dollar raise. It was one of those coincidences which make up life.

As we said, when six and a half years had passed he grew a bit contemptuous. He began by not arriving a half hour ahead of time to wipe the penciled mustaches off those ladies on cold cream advertisements. Then he began slurring the station names and the ever-thickening multitude, sweaty in summer, wet in winter, grew distasteful to him. He dared on occasions to be surly with passengers who missed getting off at their rightful stations.

Then:

He told a pompous gentleman with a white waistcoat and a roast-beef face to—"Go to thunder, you old buzzard! I ain't a slave!" And the pompous gentleman was one of those lawyers who appear in night courts and day courts for the company to prosecute pickpockets and mashers and rowdies. He reported Guard Number Such and Such.

The next morning at five, punctually, Thomas Jenkins was paid off. He was stunned a bit. He forgot the 437th Street station wasn't the 350th Street station and dazedly made his way up the stairs and out. It was coldly winterous. A whipping wind blew up from the river and cut at his face. And then, suddenly, Thomas Jenkins threw his hands to his eyes and moaned.

A passerby stopped.

"What's the matter, old man?"

Thomas Jenkins drew a hand down, waved it toward the east.

"I'm going blind! Something's wrong with my eyes—it's all white when I look over there!"

The passerby laughed ironically. "You're going crazy, you mean. That's the dawn, sunrise, daylight. You'd better get your nut examined."

Oh, yes. That mule Buck. The owners of the coal mine took Buck up above ground and put him staggering into a pasture where retired horses and mules live out their declining years. After a day or so Buck got his sight back and, having neither wife nor children, he munched grass as contentedly as any other old reprobate without a conscience.

Job-Hunting in the Country

By A MECHANIC

IN these days of hard times much is written about the unemployment situation in the cities and the plight of the unfortunate men there without jobs. They are pictured sitting on the park benches or lounging in the public libraries, eating the bitter bread of sweet charity—when they can get it. Our small towns and country villages also have their unemployment problem—towns and villages where there are no park benches, municipal lodging-houses, or free public libraries where a man can go for shelter in the cold of winter, and no places where he can obtain even a little food. This probably explains, to some extent, the flocking of the workless masses to the cities in these freezing months.

To my mind, the most pitiful, the most discouraging, and the most mournful sight in the world is a man looking for work—with no work to be had. From my own experience with and observation of workers out of work, I firmly believe that the average jobless man is willing to work and to do any kind of work offered to him.

Here is my experience. By trade I am an automobile mechanic with several years' experience at all makes of cars. I had steady employment during the past two years; and up to a few months ago I had no difficulty in finding occupation at my trade. My pay averaged from \$35 to \$40 a week. Since my last "lay-off" in August I have applied for work in over forty-five different garages and repair-shops in Westchester County. In my quest for work I have spent many dollars for carfare, which I could ill afford, and I have walked many miles without being able to find a steady job at my trade. When I did succeed in getting some work for a time it was at far lower wages and far longer hours than usual. When work got slack I was obliged to work only half-time, which decreased my pay to \$12 for a whole week and thus left me with a wage barely sufficient to keep body and soul together. And I have a wife to provide for as well as myself. Inasmuch as the country also has a housing shortage and rent problem, it may be of interest to note that I am paying \$25 a month for a six-room cottage *without* improvements. Furthermore, coal is \$16 a ton in the town where I live.

Unlike their brothers of the metropolis the automobile mechanics in the country have no organization to protect their interests. The average garage and repair-shop owner hires his men at his own price; and the mechanic has no choice. Wages at the present time are about forty-five cents an hour for the average mechanic's labor. The boss charges on the average \$1.25 an hour for work done on cars. The car owners, knowing or suspecting this piece of profiteering on the part of garage owners, consequently have only the most necessary repair work done, work which they themselves or their drivers are unable to do at home. Hence, to a considerable extent, the slump in work and wages in the automobile repair shops.

Since there are no set qualifications in the automobile mechanic's trade outside of the cities, anybody handy with a screw-driver and a monkey-wrench can apply for a job in a country garage; and in ordinary times he may obtain a place as a "mechanic." Bosses will hire such inexperienced men and boys; and this no doubt accounts for many

of the unexplained accidents to cars just out of the repair shops. It certainly explains something of the difficulty in getting employment, despite experience, at the present time.

The arrogance, the indifference, and the unfriendly attitude which some of the employers exhibit toward a man asking for work are often sufficient to extinguish the little hope and courage he may have in his heart. For instance, at a certain garage in White Plains where I applied for work the manager looked me over carefully before he answered my request. He noticed that I wore a pair of overalls and that my shoes had not been polished for some time. Sneeringly he dismissed me with the remark: "We are not hiring any bums and floaters."

Thinking that there might be an opening, I applied again some days later in the week, dressed in my Sunday clothing. On entering the stockroom, I encountered the same man and addressed him in the hope of making a better impression and perhaps obtaining a job. He was very pleasant at first but when I told him that I was looking for work as a mechanic he grew sarcastic at once and gave me to understand that there was no work in the shop. "What do you mean," he asked, "looking for a grease mutt job dressed up like a banker?"

After two weeks of job-hunting, I entered a small garage in a nearby village with a sense of desperate need to find work. The owner, who treated me fairly well, informed me that while he had no employment for a first-class mechanic, he was willing to hire me at \$4 a day. He was building an addition to his garage, and I started in to dig the foundation. Before I knew it, I was doing carpenter work at \$4 a day, while between times I repaired cars! I can imagine what a brotherhood of carpenters would have had to say about that if there had been an active local union which had discovered the fact. In about two months, the addition was finished and I was again out of a job. It was the same old story once more—up in the morning and out looking for work.

The principal industry in the town where I live is wood-working. The largest mill, which during the past few years has given employment to over 300 men, is now closed. The mill stands useless and deteriorating, and the men are idle. Many of them have found employment elsewhere; and through their moving away the town has been deprived of industrious citizens and a much-needed prosperity it had enjoyed in the past. This condition is typical of many small manufacturing towns in the region; it is either "half-time" or "slowing-up" or "no work at all."

Plenty of other men have had experiences similar to mine in dealing with small employers. I have an acquaintance, an ex-soldier, who was gassed in the trenches of France. He lost his job last summer, shortly after he had been married. He was facing hard conditions in many ways, and he took the first place offered to him. He became a farm-foreman on a gentleman's estate not far from the town where I live. The work was heavy and the wages were small; but he was delighted at having a chance to get a living. He received payment in full for the first month of his services. After that his employer informed him that, owing to financial difficulties in his business, the workers on his place would have to wait for their pay. Now, after some months of hard work, this man has not seen any of the money that is due him. He has exhausted his credit in the village stores and is obliged to live on the charity of others. If he quits his job, he will not get any