

# Reporter Tells What Effect Five And One-Half Month Strike Has Had On Idaho Mining Town

By KEN JACKSON

KELLOGG, Idaho (AP) — The hills that rise steeply above town are green this year—really green for the first time in the memory of most residents.

For since early May there has been no gray smoke rising from the mills and smelters. These processing giants lie asleep, the town withers and the hillsides bloom.

"Sorry, we can't issue syrup this week," reads the sign in the strike store. "Bring your gunny-sacks for spuds."

Outside there is a sound of laughter as a new car, gleaming with a professional polish and loaded with well-dressed youngsters, rolls by en route to a football game.

This is Kellogg—smothering under the blanket of a 5½-month strike but still a community of contrasts. Poverty with pockets of prosperity.

This is a community that lost a million dollar a month payroll but where a roller skating rink in suburban Smelterville just opened to capacity crowds.

Where miners who haven't signed a paycheck in nearly half a year still drive the few blocks to pick up their small box of staples from the strike relief store. Where stores and bars are often deserted on Saturdays, but streets crowded with cars.

Where nearly 2,700 workers were directly idled by the long strikes against Bunker Hill and American Smelting and Refining companies, but credit buying is estimated as up two to three times.

Where neighbor sometimes becomes suspicious of neighbor and one box of groceries separates families from hunger but where there are few incidents and little crime.

"You just don't curl up and die because of the strike," said a housewife.

"You have to keep living—as best you can."

Kellogg is no stranger to strikes and strife.

As in other Western mining towns, the early days were lusty—even bloody. Disputes were settled with fists and pick handles. The strong survived.

The struggles were violent and the wounds deep, but they always healed in the past although the pain often remained. And the community always gained back its strength and became even healthier than before.

But now "depressed" is the favorite adjective used to describe the lead-zinc industry in the still-rich Coeur d'Alene mining district. The same word can be used for many of the residents.

They remember that just a few years ago the "16 operators" were balanced in the same sen-

tence with the giants—Bunker Hill and AS&R. Now only a handful remain.

First the marginal producers closed down. Now many a shaft is boarded up, many a digging over-grown.

The mines fading into history include many with famous names and fabulous records of richness.

And the AS&R has informed its striking employees that "shut-down expense because of the strike may force the company to permanently abandon a property or properties."

Considered among the most likely candidates is the Page Mine, a lead-zinc producer that was showing a loss even before the strike—and is considered

a stronghold of the controversial striking International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (I.M.S.W.).

Doubts about the district are also reflected by departures. More than 750 have left the community since the strike, with utilities shut off at 200 residences. There were 333 fewer pupils enrolled in School

District 391 this year. Superintendent Howard Andrews said the hot lunch program wasn't started this fall when a survey showed that 377 children, or about 28 per cent of those in school, couldn't pay for the meals. The district didn't feel it could afford the \$78.11 a day it would have cost to provide free hot lunches

to the needy. In a community where folks were once guarded, almost fearful, in their comments they now are eager to speak their piece on the strike.

"I just hope my children don't have to work here and go through this," said an imberbered miner. "I've had to learn a lot of new

cooking tricks," said a housewife who has been feeding her family of six on staple-heavy supplies from the Mine-Mill strike relief store.

"Business is off about 60 per cent for me," said a storekeeper. "I can't survive much more of this—yet the union claims this strike is none of my business."

"The businessmen don't care what kind of an agreement we go back to work under," said a young striker. "They just want us to go back to work—period."

"I don't really care who wins," said the wife of another striker. "I just want my husband back at work."

can outwait us and get us to come back on their terms, they've got another think coming," said a picket from his shack. "We can outwait them all."

"Stay around for the excitement," said a teenager. "Something's going to pop soon." Yes, something's going to pop. But what?

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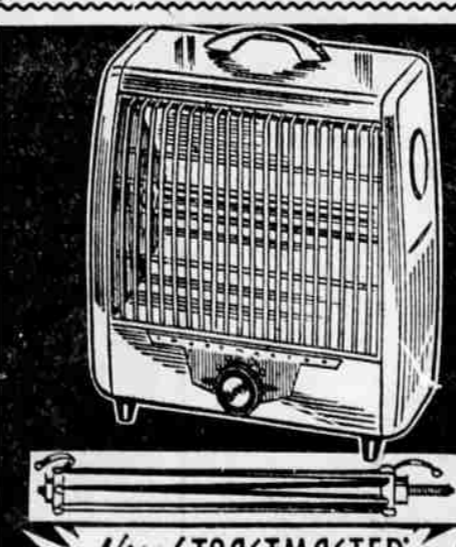
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