

LOBBY BLAMED FOR MINE DEATHS

Five Men Killed Daily;
Ickes Fights Clique
in U. S. Bureau.

By FRANK RYHLICK
Record's Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON, April 6.—
Coal miners are killed at the rate
of about five a day in the U. S.,
largely because of the use of
outmoded machinery, improper
explosives and dangerous con-
struction methods.

The reasons for that condition
in the present age of safety have
been studied quietly for months
by investigators under Secretary
of the Interior Ickes. When the
full story is told, it was learned
today, it will be a sensation com-
parable to the scandalous laxity
of marine inspection brought to
light by the Morro Castle trag-
edy in the summer of 1934.

Lobby Blamed.

Confidential reports on the
Ickes investigation reveal that
the conditions endangering the
lives of the nation's 600,000 or
more coal miners are perpetuated
through a combination of en-
trenched cliques in the Bureau of
Mines and powerful mine lob-
bies.

Chiefly because of that com-
bination the Federal Govern-

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SUNDAY, APRIL 7, 1940

Published Daily and
at the Post Office in

Lobby Blamed for Mine Deaths

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ment has no authority to in-
spect mines or enforce safety reg-
ulations. Inspection is left to the
individual States, where it is fre-
quently under the influence of
mine corporations.

The Bureau of Mines recom-
mends safety rules and equip-
ment, but there its authority
ends, and the bureau itself has
fought attempts to extend its
power. Even after a disaster it
must get the permission of the
owner to enter a mine. The bu-
reau's preliminary report on the
March 16 explosion at the Willow
Grove mine in Ohio, where 72
men were killed, frankly admits
the machines and powder used
in the mine were types long
condemned as unsafe.

But until last month the bu-
reau never made public a report
on a mine disaster. Its findings
were given to the owner for his
information and future guidance.

Breaking up Clique.

Ickes has accepted the resig-
nation of John W. Finch as di-
rector of the bureau and is now
attempting to break up old-line
cliques by transferring key men.
President Roosevelt will enter
the picture in a few days by
sending to the Senate the nomina-
tion of a new director. Dr. R. R.
Sayers, senior surgeon of the
Public Health Service, mean-
while, is acting as director.

Coal operators' lobbying or-
ganizations, of which there are
several in the capital, remain
unchallenged, however. Aided
by Chamber of Commerce
groups, as well as friends in the
Bureau of Mines, they are bring-
ing tremendous pressure against

the Neely bill providing for Fed-
eral mine inspection.

Bureau With Operators.

Congressmen are being deluged
with mail describing the
measure as a menace to private
property or a backdoor effort to
give more power to John L.
Lewis and the United Mine
Workers.

The bill was pushed through
the Senate by Senator Neely (D.,
W. Va.). It now is in charge of
a House subcommittee headed by
Representative Somers (D., N.
Y.), who favors amending the
bill to permit Federal inspection
only with the consent of the
owner.

Investigation discloses that
the Bureau of Mines has aligned
itself with the operators, rather
than the miners or the public
ever since it was organized a
quarter of a century ago. That
alignment is in part necessary
inasmuch as many of its research
experiments and scientific re-
ports concern the owner rather
than the worker. Of about 1000
employees in the bureau, only
about 60 are concerned with mine
safety.

"Voluntary Co-operation."

The coal lobby always throws
its influence behind the Bureau
of Mines appropriation bill and
the bureau has reciprocated by
advocating "voluntary co-opera-
tion" instead of compulsory in-
spection.

The Bureau of Mines was
transferred from the Commerce
Department to the Interior De-
partment in 1933. Until then the
directorship of the bureau tradi-
tionally went to a Western mining
man, but Ickes broke the preced-
ent. He asked the deans of

major mining schools to suggest
a candidate.

Finch, a professor of mining,
was recommended. Ickes sent
his name to the White House.
Democratic National Chairman
Farley heard of the recommenda-
tion and protested that Finch
was a leading member of the
Engineers for Hoover Club.

Politics Overridden.

The appointment went through,
however, on grounds that the
position was too important to be
filled by patronage.

This situation in the bureau
first reached public notice last
month when Ickes ordered the
bureau to publish its report on
the Bartley, W. Va., mine ex-
plosion January 10, which killed
91 men. The bureau opposed the
procedure, declaring that publi-
cation of such information would
violate the confidence of the mine
owners who had permitted the
inspection.

Forced Publication.

Ickes' action was based on an
opinion by the solicitor of the
department that the report could
legally be made public. The
bureau was forced to obey his
order and the report showed
electric mining equipment had
been run down until it was un-
safe.

But the experts point out that
the real need for mine inspec-
tion is not shown by major
highly publicized explosions.
More than half the miners killed
each year are the victims of un-
heralded accidents caused by
faulty roofing and shoring. Latest
annual accident report completed
by the bureau is for 1936. It
shows 629 of the 1342 deaths that
year were caused by such
accidents.

Photo Record 4/7/40