

# In Support of the Coal Miners



**ABOUT THE READING** In the spring of 1912, miners in Kanawha County, West Virginia were refused wages equal to those of other area miners. On April 18 they began a strike that would last for over a year. What follows is a letter written by Mother Jones to the Governor of the state on behalf of the miners. Jones' involvement in the strike would lead to her arrest in February 1913.



*As you read, consider what it might be like to live and work under the conditions described.*

To His Excellency  
WILLIAM E. GLASSCOCK,  
Governor of the State of West Virginia

It is respectfully represented unto your excellency that the owners of the various coal mines doing business along the valley of Cabin Creek, Kanawha County, W. Va., are maintaining and have at present in their employ a large force of armed guards . . .

[These men are] armed with Winchesters, a dangerous and deadly weapon . . . [They] also hav[e] in their possession three Gatling guns, which they have stationed at commanding positions overlooking the Cabin Creek Valley . . . [These] weapons said guards use for the purpose of . . . **intimidating**, and **menacing** the lives of all the citizens who live in said valley, who are not in **accord** with the management of the coal companies. . . [These] guards are cruel, and their conduct toward the citizens is such that it would be impossible to give a detailed account of.

Therefore, suffice it to say, however, that they [the mine guards] beat, abuse, maim, and hold up citizens without process of law . . . [They] deny freedom of speech, a provision guaranteed by the Constitution . . . [They also] deny the citizens the

## VOCABULARY

**intimidating** bullying, threatening

**menacing** harassing

**accord** agreement

**detrimental** harmful

**abide** to endure or withstand

**tender** to offer for approval

The mine owners are giving the guards weapons and other supplies.

The guns were intentionally placed in highly visible locations to intimidate the miners.

The use of the word "said," here means, "the previously mentioned."

Let it be adequate simply to say that the guards are abusing the miners.

**In Support of the Coal Miners, *continued***

Primary Source

right to assemble in a peaceable manner for the purpose of discussing questions in which they are concerned. Said guards also hold up a vast body of laboring men who live at the mines, and so conduct themselves that a great number of men, women, and children live in a state of constant fear, unrest, and dread. We hold that the stationing of said guards along the public highways and public places is a menace to the general welfare of the State. That such action on the part of the companies in maintaining such guards is **detrimental** to the best interests of society and an outrage against the honor and dignity of the State of West Virginia.

As citizens interested in the . . . general welfare, and believing that law and order and peace should ever **abide**, that the spirit of brotherly love and justice and freedom should everywhere exist, we must **tender** our petition that you would bring to bear all the powers of your office as chief executive of the State for purpose of disarming said guards and restoring to the citizens of said valley all the rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States and said State.

In duty bound, in behalf of the miners of the State of West Virginia . . .

**The miners were prevented from meeting to discuss their concerns.**

**The workers who live at the mine are very afraid of the guards who oversee them.**

**The petitioners ask that the governor do everything in his power to remove the guards from the mines.**

**WHAT DID YOU LEARN?**

**1.** What was Mother Jones’s main reason for writing this letter to the governor?  
What does she ask the governor to do?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**2.** What offenses have been committed against the miners by the guards?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_