

Verse 4 followed by Chorus

These Appalachian mountains show the scars of a battlefield,
For over a hundred years miners have struggled and died.
In nineteen oh two Roosevelt backed the unions,
But money blinded justice and her hands have been tied.

Notes

In the spring of 2010 I passed through West Virginia on my way from Ohio to Virginia. I had previously toured a coal mine in Beckley, and wanted to understand Mountain Top Removal (MTR) mining. I found a Website on an MTR site on Kayford Mountain (mountainkeeper.org), and I spent part of a day there with Larry Gibson and several groups of college students.

Also that week a mine disaster occurred in the same area, so I checked out the disaster at the Big Branch Mine in Montcoal. I saw a caravan of W VA State Troopers and ambulances hauling out the bodies. Massey Coal CEO (and SOB) Don Blankenship took home \$24 million that year, while the miner's wives took home 29 dead bodies. He spent \$3.5 million to elect just one judge, who promptly overturned rulings against Massey Coal. Fines to Massey are endlessly appealed and often go unpaid.

The Cabin Creek area where I was on Kayford Mountain was part of the bloody miner's strike in 1912. A later violent miner's strike of 1920 was depicted in the John Sayles film *Matewan*. Sheriff Sid Hatfield fought for the miners and was murdered by Baldwin-Felts detectives hired by the mine owners. *Matewan* is further West from Cabin Creek.

W VA has about 20,000 people employed in coal mining, and many more in related jobs. In many W VA counties coal mining provides the only decent wages. W VA provides more jobs in coal mining than any other state, but only produces about 15 percent of the US coal. Coal mining has shifted to surface mines in Wyoming, which produce about 50 percent of US coal.

There is no such thing as clean coal. All coal-fired plants vent CO₂ as a greenhouse gas and other poisons into the atmosphere. Some US coal is exported, but much of it goes to US coal-fired power plants. These plants generate about 50 percent of US electricity. Midwest states (such as Ohio) have the largest number of coal-fired plants (Ohio leads with 114) while the West Coast states have just a few (CA 10, Wash 2, Oregon 1).