

Remembering Ludlow but Forgetting the Columbine:
The 1927-1928 Colorado Coal Strike

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Dissertation directed by Associate Professor Phoebe S.K. Young

This dissertation examines the causes, context, and legacies of the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike in relationship to the history of labor organizing and coalmining in both Colorado and the United States. While historians have written prolifically about the Ludlow Massacre, which took place during the 1913-1914 Colorado coal strike led by the United Mine Workers of America, there has been a curious lack of attention to the Columbine Massacre that occurred not far away within the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, led by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). This dissertation brings to light an understudied set of significant events and the processes of memory that allowed 1920s era strikes to be forgotten in historical narratives. It thus reveals meaningful and important strands of labor activism in an era often understood to be quiescent.

A comparative biography of three key participants before, during, and after the 1927-1928 strike—A.S. Embree, the IWW strike leader; Josephine Roche, the owner of the coalmine property where the Columbine Massacre took place; and Powers Hapgood, who came to work for Roche after she signed the 1928 United Mine Workers' contract—demonstrates the significance of these events to national debates about labor during the period as well as changes and continuities in labor history from the Progressive era to 1930s New Deal labor policies and even through the 1980s.

Reasons why the 1914 Ludlow Massacre has been remembered but the 1927 Columbine Massacre has been forgotten are complex but key to understanding the relationship of these events. Strategic and personal factors helped to shape a narrative that prioritized the well-documented labor militancy and resistance to it during the Progressive era, when Ludlow occurred, over the 1920s and early 1930s, which came to be portrayed as a quiescent era for labor, which, as the biographies show, it was not. Both individuals (such as Roche, Hapgood, and others) and institutions (such as the United Mine Workers and the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers' Union) needed to put the tumultuous twenties behind them and reinvent themselves in the thirties. In the decades that followed, multiple contexts led both historians and even the original participants to reinforce the forgetting. The history of the Columbine thus reorients scholarly understanding of both labor organizing in the 1920s and the construction of public memory and labor history in Colorado and the United States throughout the 20th century.

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Introduction

At dawn on November 21, 1927, twenty Colorado state policemen opened fire on what Denver newspapers reported were at least five hundred protestors near the Columbine coalmine fifteen miles north of Denver. One died immediately, four more died later that day, and by week's end, a sixth man lay dead from his wounds. All were striking coal miners. At least twenty and perhaps as many as sixty more men and women were also injured that day, but we can never know for sure. After word spread that those seeking medical treatment got arrested instead, people stayed home. Over the previous two weeks, daily "parades"—a festive and highly effective form of picketing to try to keep strikebreakers from going to work—had marched through the mining town surrounding the Columbine coal mine. Paraders targeted the mine since it was the largest one still working in the northern Colorado coalfields. The rest had shut down, along with most of the mines throughout the state, since the official Industrial Workers of the World strike call had gone out in mid-October. Until that morning there had been scores of arrests, isolated violence, but no deaths. The shootings changed that, and two more deaths would follow in January. The Columbine Massacre, as it came to be called, was the turning point of the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike.

While this sequence of events might sound somewhat familiar, given the history of labor violence in the region, the strike presents several conundrums. First, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) led the strike even though most historians claim the IWW's influence had faded in the wake of World War I. What are we to make of the IWW leading a statewide coal strike in Colorado nearly a decade later? Second, while the IWW led the strike, the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company (RMFC), which owned the

Columbine, signed a contract with the United Mine Workers (UMW) six months after the strike ended. Ironically, this victory came from a strike in which it had played no role, except to denounce. This agreement appears to be one of only a handful of new contracts (as opposed to renewals), the UMW secured between its organizing peak during World War I until the beginning of the New Deal in 1933. What do the surprising actions of these unions in the Columbine case imply for our understandings of labor history in this era, typically viewed as one of relative quiescence? Third, Josephine Roche, the majority stockowner in the RMFC, initiated the UMW contract. A female mine operator was novelty enough, but an owner who *invited* the United Mine Workers to represent coalminers in the 1920s was unheard of. Moreover, this strike initiated Roche's lifelong association with John L. Lewis, president of the UMW and a key labor figure of the twentieth century. How did this unlikely alliance between Roche, Lewis, and the UMW form and why did it last? We know that coalmining, Lewis, and the UMW played key roles in the dominant labor narratives from World War I through the 1960s – but this story doesn't easily conform to our expectations of this era. In deciphering these developments, this dissertation not only aims to unravel a mystery, but also argues that the confluence of events that created Columbine shifts our understanding of labor in the 1920s and early 1930s and the origins of the New Deal.

Curiously, the 1927-1928 strike has received little historical attention from labor historians, an omission even more confounding considering the substantial quantity and quality of historical scholarship that the 1910-1914 Colorado coal strike (which Colorado

coalminers called the long strike) has generated.¹ Many fine (and some, not so fine) historians, past and present, have written about the especially violent 1913-1914 phase of the long strike, which led to the April 20, 1914, Ludlow Massacre, when eleven children and two women suffocated in a makeshift basement dug beneath a tent that a rag-tag collection of Colorado National Guardsmen set on fire above them.

Most of these 1913-1914 strike historians trace the same narrative arc. After laying out the causes and escalation of the strike, the shocking brutality of the Ludlow Massacre serves as crucial turning point. Some, especially the recent ones, cover the Ten-Day War that immediately followed Ludlow, when an enraged army of striking coalminers armed with Winchester 30-30s took to the nearby hills and waged open warfare upon their equally armed-to-the-teeth opponents. That war only stopped after President Woodrow Wilson dispatched federal troops to Colorado who disarmed both sides. The historians then briefly summarize some of the immediate consequences of the

¹ The following (in chronological order) are some of the books written about the 1913-1914 Colorado coal strike and the Ludlow Massacre: Barron B. Beshoar, *Out of the Depths: The Story of John R. Lawson, A Labor Leader* (Denver: The Colorado Labor Historical Committee of the Denver Trades and Labor Assembly, 1943); Zeese Papanikolas, *Buried Unsung: Louis Tikas and the Ludlow Massacre* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982); Leon Stein and Philip Taft, *Massacre at Ludlow: Four Reports*, republished as *American Labor: From Conspiracy to Collective Bargaining* (New York, NY: Arno Press, 1971); George S. McGovern and Leonard F. Guttridge, *The Great Coalfield War* (Boulder: University of Colorado, 1972, 1996), H.M. Gitelman, *Legacy of the Ludlow Massacre* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988); Priscilla Long, *Where the Sun Never Shines: A History of America's Bloody Coal Industry* (New York, NY: Paragon House, 1989); Joanna Sampson, "Remember Ludlow!": *Ludlow Massacre, April 20, 1914* (self published, 1999); Howard Zinn, "The Colorado Coal Strike, 1913-1914," in Howard Zinn, Dana Frank, and Robin D.G. Kelley, *Three Strikes: Miners, Musicians, Salesgirls, and the Fighting Spirit of Labor's Last Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001); Scott Martelle, *Blood Passion: The Ludlow Massacre and Class War in the American West* (Piscataway, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2007); Thomas G. Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

strike: the public outrage demanding justice that the muckraking and labor press helped generate; the 1915 US Industrial Relations Commission hearings chaired by firebrand Frank P. Walsh that demonized absentee Colorado mine owner John D. Rockefeller, Jr., for causing Ludlow; and Rockefeller's response to that demonization, which included creating the Rockefeller Plan, the best known employee representation organization (dismissed by organized labor as a "company union"), establishing the Rockefeller Foundation, to prevent future labor violence, and hiring publicist Ivy Lee, who blazed the trail of corporate damage control and "spin." Then, the historians jump to the 1930s by concluding, as George McGovern wrote to the introduction of *The Great Coalfield War*, that the 1913-1914 strike, "the most hard fought and violent labor struggle in American history," established a "landmark in the battles of working men and women to achieve recognition of their right to collective bargaining with their employers and to win governmental and public support for that right."²

When Ludlow historians skip from 1914 to the 1930s, they ignore almost twenty years of Colorado coal history. Furthermore, such narrative constructions assign the violence from that Progressive-era strike an outsized influence on the formation of New Deal labor policies.

Perhaps the *memories* of Ludlow helped establish governmentally supported collective bargaining rights, but the strike itself proved a complete and unmitigated loss for the United Mine Workers. After the strike, the United Mine Workers practically disappeared from the state. In 1917, John R. Lawson and Ed Doyle, the primary UMW organizers of the long strike, negotiated exactly one UMW contract in Colorado after the

² McGovern and Guttridge, xi.

union's 1914 defeat. That same year, John L. Lewis rewarded them for that limited victory by forcing them out of the UMW. Even before he officially assumed the UMW presidency in 1920 (a position he held until 1960), Lewis had already "re-organized" (taken over) Colorado's UMW District 15 leadership and governance structure, unpopular and authoritarian moves that resulted in a dramatic decline in Colorado UMW membership. By the time Lewis spoke at the Ludlow Monument dedication ceremony in 1918, he and the UMW officers from its International headquarters had not only appropriated Colorado's UMW, they had also begun appropriating the memories of Ludlow, not just for the state's coalminers, but for future historians, as well.

The way the UMW disappeared in Colorado after 1914 is important, because it set the national pattern that Lewis pursued throughout the 1920s, which paradoxically enabled him to consolidate his own power within the UMW and to lead the organization (into near oblivion) during that decade. What happened to the coal operators, progressive reformers, union leaders, coalminers and their families *after* the Ludlow Massacre in Colorado? What lessons did they draw from it and what relationships emerged between the famous and the forgotten strikes? Tracing these two missing decades of coal mining history will help explain how and why the UMW was able to revitalize itself during the 1930s, not just in Colorado, but also in the rest of the country. I argue that revitalization was not a spontaneous reawakening, as many historical accounts have portrayed it; rather, it rested upon a consequential set of 1920s precedents.

By examining the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike as a case study to help bridge the historical gap between Ludlow and the New Deal, I am not arguing that the strike was unique. Even a cursory look through the online *New York Times* using the word "strike"

as a search term pulls up the following number of articles: 1925—2,514; 1926—4,025; 1927—2,579; 1928—1,841; 1929—2,358. Most of these hits really are about labor strikes, too. For example, in 1926, New York City fur makers, baggage handlers, plasterers, bricklayers, Pennsylvania anthracite coal miners, Chicago gravediggers, and Connecticut musicians went out on strike. In 1927, along with Colorado coal miners, New York City box makers, plumbers, teamsters, and taxi drivers also struck. In the taxi driver strike, at least one person was shot to death and three others were badly beaten during the walkout. In 1928, carpenters, textiles workers (3,500 in Paterson, New Jersey, and 15,000 in Rhode Island), dental mechanics, laundry workers, dry cleaners, and even New Jersey doctors struck. In 1929, Texas railroad workers, oil truck drivers, and cafeteria workers, among others, walked off their jobs. The New York City truck drivers' strike led to street fights, and the cafeteria workers' strike resulted in at least 455 pickets, most extremely militant women, getting arrested. In the Elizabethtown, Tennessee, textile strike that same year, with again, mostly women strikers, state troopers had to be stationed at the mill for it to re-open.

Even though its articles reflected, as they do today, a distinctly regional focus, by the late 1920s, the *Times* increasingly promoted itself as the nation's news source.³ The examples of strikes listed above show that the *Times* reported on events throughout the country, including the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike. But since the Colorado strike—a statewide, seven-month conflict led by the Industrial Workers of the World—warranted just thirty-four total articles, that coverage leads me to believe that the *Times* probably, if anything, under-reported, not over-reported strikes in the rest of the country.

³ George H. Douglas, *The Golden Age of the Newspaper* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999), 129.

What can we learn from just one of those many strikes? While perhaps not unique in its existence, the Columbine strike sits in consequential historic proximity to the famed Ludlow episode and suggests broader national connections through the involvement of three particular individuals— A.S. Embree, Josephine Roche, and Powers Hapgood. Embree led the 1927-1928 IWW strike, Roche inherited the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company in 1927 and spearheaded the 1928 UMW contract, and Powers Hapgood tried, but failed, to democratize the United Mine Workers from within the ranks in the 1920s before coming to Colorado in 1929 to work for Roche. Their involvement in the strike, what led up to and spun out from it, offers crucial evidence for continuities and changes within the labor movement that had national implications not just during the twenties, not just during the New Deal, but also throughout the twentieth century.

Today's labor historians still look for continuity and change in the twentieth century United States' labor movement, but they also find themselves gripped with despair. How is it possible, they want to know, that after the New Deal victories of the 1930s, organized labor finds itself in such a state of steep decline? Can history help explain how unionization in the United States got to this point? In searching for answers to these questions, most contemporary labor historians are focusing their research on the rise of the New Right. The burst of scholarship seeking previously overlooked causes for that ascendancy is as impressive as it is prolific.⁴ The questions driving recent inquiries in

⁴ These are just some of the books on the rise of the New Right and its unraveling of the New Deal: Bruce J. Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sun Belt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, & the Transformation of the South, 1938-1980* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Jennifer Klein, *For All These Rights: Business, Labor, and the Shaping of America's Public-Private Welfare State* (Princeton:

labor history tend to be less rooted in the past's victories than in the present's losses, at least in part as a response to the labor movement's current existential crisis.⁵

Some of these academic conversations have been exploring the unintended consequences that arose from, rather than the factors that led to, the New Deal. In that regard, contemporary scholars join those (including the New Labor historians who began publishing in the late 1950s) from previous eras who mostly ignored 1920s and early 1930s labor history, especially in the United States coal industry. Since Lewis and the UMW are such key figures in New Deal labor history, which most historians consider the turning point for organized labor in the last century, it is hard to fathom why that era in the coalfields remains mostly unexamined. Exploring historical consequences, unintended or otherwise, of the New Deal without equal focus upon its causes, has produced incomplete labor histories built upon often repeated, little examined, and sometimes downright erroneous assumptions.

For example, despite the thousands of strikes that took place, some of the most dramatic in the nation's coalfields, historical narratives of the late 1920s and early 1930s have often characterized this era as a quiescent time for labor. How and why has this narrative been constructed? How did it leave such strident labor militancy out of the picture? I aim both to reintroduce the complexity of labor activism that the RMFC story exemplifies and to examine the process and meaning of forgetting that followed, showing

Princeton University Press, 2003); Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade Against the New Deal* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2009).

⁵ "Expertise Needed: Inter-Union and Federation-Level Organizing: New and Forgotten Methods," Labor and Working Class History Association, <http://lawcha.org/wordpress/2013/04/17/expertise-needed-inter-union-and-federation-level-organizing-new-and-forgotten-methods/>, accessed 15 June 2013.

how national historical narratives gradually subsumed personal and local memories of the strike.

This project will help to write the 1920s back into labor history, and by doing so, will shift twentieth century labor history, as well. The winners and losers become less distinct. Labor history begins to look less like a clear-cut narrative of agitation, defeat, and eventual legislative triumph in the 1930s. Too often, when historians do address the state of organized labor in the 1920s, they caricature the decade as one dominated by employee representation plans, epitomized by Colorado Fuel & Iron's post-Ludlow Rockefeller Plan. In the 1920s, many employers invoked patriotism by calling such in-house unions American Plans, implying that organized labor unions were un-American and perhaps even Bolshevik-directed. As AFL leaders watched union memberships plummet during the decade, they stepped up their rhetorical attacks on what they derisively labeled company unions, charging that such organizations offered workers no voice at all in the workplace.

But hard-nosed anti-union employers and anti-company union AFL officials were not the only competing voices vying to be heard before the New Deal. Many more voices earnestly debated the meaning of industrial democracy, which included debating ideas surrounding citizenship, gender roles, and the relationship between workers and the state. Those broad debates spurred internal debates within the labor movement about specific tactics and strategies. What kinds of workers should be organized? Should labor have strong, professional leaders, or rely on more democratic, but less cohesive grassroots organization? Should workers focus on contracts, direct action (such as strikes, picketing, etc.), or both? Should labor organizations work together, putting aside competing

ideologies, or should they remain separate? Was the federal government an ally or an enemy? What legal strategies and organizations could best represent workers? There were no clear-cut answers to these questions, but as possible solutions circulated among labor organizers, workers, intellectuals, the media, politicians, and other policy makers, these inchoate expressions were not yet, and perhaps never would be the firm, consistent, coherent, fully-thought out policies they were sometimes portrayed to be in the 1930s and afterward.

To explore ways some people thought about answering some of the questions posed above, I will examine the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike and its aftermath in depth, through the lives and legacies of three people who were involved with the strike. The labor history of the Colorado coalfields can help us understand the continuities and changes in the labor movement after Ludlow, until the New Deal, and even resonating through today.

Historiography and Methodology

Historical surveys of the 1920s, which in the context of this dissertation serve as primary sources illustrating standard historical narratives, generally describe the decade as a time of loss for organized labor, because union membership dropped so sharply from its post-World War I peak of an estimated 5 million in 1921 to 3.6 million in 1923, where it hovered throughout the decade. For example, in *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s*, Lynn Dumenil writes, “Although it is important to note workers’ efforts to try to wrest power from their employers in the 1920s, it is still the case that these were the exceptions. For the most part the decade was characterized, in

historian Irving Bernstein's words, by 'a calm seldom if ever matched in American industrial history.'"⁶

In their 1920s chapters, most US History textbooks include at least a paragraph on labor, pointing out the rising income gaps between the upper and middle-classes on one hand, and industrial workers and farmers on the other. Some texts, such as Gary Nash and Julie Roy Jeffrey's *The American People*, describe American workers "lured" into joining company unions (under the euphemistically termed "American Plans") "with promises that seemed to equal union benefits."⁷ "Welfare capitalism," sometimes an outgrowth of privatized efforts to achieve industrial democracy but other times designed to keep workers happy and unions out of the workplace, included profit sharing, pensions, and other perks. One source argues that as the AFL became increasingly conservative, less reactionary unions within the AFL, like the UMW, were plagued by internal strife, which resulted in UMW membership dropping from 785,000 in 1920 to 80,000 by 1928.⁸ Even "[John L.] Lewis had to accept wage reductions in the negotiations of 1927."⁹ Those last two sentences assume the UMW was progressive and Lewis was strong in the twenties. Neither is true.

Then came the 1929 stock market crash and the onset of the Great Depression, but Republican president Herbert Hoover's solutions did not fix the financial collapse, leading to Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt's landslide 1932 presidential victory.

⁶ Lynn Dumenil, *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 63.

⁷ Gary Nash, Julie Roy Jeffrey, John R. Howe, et al, *The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society* (New York, NY: Longman, 2001), 757.

⁸ American Social History Project, *Who Built America? Working People & the Nation's Economy, Politics, Culture, & Society: From the Gilded Age to the Present*, vol. 2 (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1992), 293.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 758.

Roosevelt initiated the National Recovery Administration (NRA) and its 7(a) clause, “which John L. Lewis of the United Mine Workers called an Emancipation Proclamation for labor.”¹⁰ For the first time, the federal government recognized workers’ collective bargaining rights and their rights to join unions. That 7(a) clause led the UMW to begin a nation-wide coalminer organization effort so successful, it jumpstarted the entire labor movement. By 1935, however, that initial labor-organizing outburst fizzled, union memberships dropped to pre-New Deal levels, and the Supreme Court declared the NRA unconstitutional. In response, Congress passed and Roosevelt signed the Wagner Act, establishing modern governmental labor practices that finally created a union recognition clause with some real teeth in it. That same year, Lewis led the formation of the Committee on Industrial Organizations, and soon, he “had scored a remarkable series of victories.”¹¹ This is the standard labor narrative of the 1920s and 1930s, and clearly John L. Lewis and the UMW are central to this history.

Not just US History texts, but also labor history surveys portray the 1920s as a quiescent decade for workers. For example, Melvyn Dubofsky and Foster Rhea Dulles write in *Labor in America: A History*,

While job insecurity may have deterred some employees from joining unions in the face of employer opposition, many of them apparently believed that unions were no longer as necessary as they had formerly believed them to be. What point was there in strikes or other agitation for collective bargaining when the pay envelope was automatically growing

¹⁰ David Goldfield, Carol Abbott, Virginia DeJohn Anderson, et al, *The American Journey: A History of the United States*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2001), 802.

¹¹ Robert Divine, T.H. Breen, George M. Fredrickson, R. Hal Williams, *America Past and Present*, 6th ed. (New York: Longman, 2003), 776.

fatter and a more abundant life seemed to be assured with the rapid approach to the final triumph over poverty?¹²

Of course, not everybody's pay envelope grew fatter. The year 1928 (unmatched until now, in 2013) marked the peak of income inequality in the United States.¹³ So, as the cliché so aptly goes, the rich were getting richer, the poor were growing poorer, and many of those poor people were coal miners and their families. As growing affluence surrounded them, they increasingly turned into an angry and restive lot. They wanted to be part of the nation's apparent rising tide of prosperity, too.

New Labor's preeminent historian David Montgomery, in his much-admired *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925*, also portrays 1920s workers as quiescent. Montgomery writes that negative publicity from the Ludlow Massacre led to the creation of the Rockefeller Plan, the best-known model for employee representation plans, which became a "basic doctrine of personnel managers of the 1920s."¹⁴ The decade's remaining militants focused their discontents onto the Sacco and Vanzetti cause. In 1921, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, two Italian immigrant anarchists, were convicted of a politically motivated robbery and murder and sentenced to death.¹⁵ Legal appeals on their behalf became a

¹² Melvyn Dubofsky and Foster Rhea Dulles, *Labor in America: A History*, 6th ed. (Wheeling, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1949, 1999), 230.

¹³ Paul Wiseman, "Richest 1 Percent Earn Biggest Share Since 20s," *The [Boulder] Daily Camera*, 11 September 2013: 10A. This article was summarizing the findings of a report released on 10 September 2013 by Emmanuel Saez. Saez worked on a team of economists from the University of California, Berkeley, the Paris School of Economics, and Oxford University that analyzed Internal Revenue Service data between 1913 and 2013.

¹⁴ David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

¹⁵ Paul Avrich, *Sacco and Vanzetti: The Anarchist Background* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Avrich writes that although we will probably never know

rallying cry for leftists across the country and even the world. In the book's final pages, Montgomery cites massive Sacco and Vanzetti protests that arose in the summer of 1927 as a brief spike in an otherwise quiet decade for labor: "Even the miners of Colorado Fuel and Iron struck en masse at the behest of the IWW in protest against the pending execution."¹⁶ However, as I will show, this protest was not an anomalous flashpoint in the beaten-down, company-unionized Colorado coalfields that foreshadowed 1930s New Deal labor militancy. Instead, it was the opening salvo of the militant 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike.

Most US survey and labor history narratives, then, portray labor as surging and militant in the teens, ascending and strong during World War I, declining and quiescent in the 1920s, and resurging and militant once again in the 1930s. Although some sources briefly allude to 1920s turmoil in the coalfields, Lewis is portrayed as a strong labor leader during that decade. The implication follows that from that UMW base of strength, Lewis led New Deal labor policies.

I will challenge that interpretation, intentionally blurring the often-distinct historical divisions between the teens, twenties, and thirties. Looking at labor more along a continuum from 1914 through the 1930s, I hope to add to some of the excellent micro-histories that have already been written about this era focusing on the ultimately unsuccessful struggles for southern textile unionization.¹⁷ Surprisingly little has been

whether Sacco and Vanzetti were guilty or not, their anarchist ties were indisputable, and if not they, then it is highly possible that some of their associates committed the murders to help bankroll the anarchist movement in the United States.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ John A. Salmond, *Gastonia 1929: The Story of the Loray Mill Strike* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995); John A. Salmond, *The General Textile Strike of 1934: From Maine to Alabama* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002); Janet

written about other major labor conflicts during this time in other regions outside the South or in other industries, especially coal. The most helpful source that includes information about 1920s coalminers can be found in Melvyn Dubofsky and Warren Van Tine's *John L. Lewis: A Biography*, which covers the disastrous 1927-1928 UMW-led coal strike in Ohio, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania, although it never mentions the Colorado strike or contract. The only UMW survey I have found was published by the UMW. The book completely omits the IWW-led 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, and explains that the 1928 RMFC-UMW contract was a "stroke of luck" made possible entirely after the social reformer Roche inherited the company.¹⁸ The next time Roche appears in the book is when she joins Lewis' UMW Retirement and Pension Fund in 1946.

In 2003, James Gray Pope wrote two articles for the winter and spring publication *Labor History* that began chipping away at Lewis's role in shaping 1933 New Deal policies, a process Michael Goldfield is contributing to right now.¹⁹ Pope specifically challenged the narrative that identifies Franklin D. Roosevelt, the NRA's 7(a) clause, and John L. Lewis as the prime reasons workers "spontaneously" organized into labor unions

Irons, *Testing the New Deal: The General Textile Strike of 1934 in the American South* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, James Leloudis, Robert Korstad, Mary Murphy, Lu Ann Jones, and Christopher B. Daly *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

¹⁸ Maier B. Fox, *United We Stand: The United Mine Workers of America, 1890-1990* (United Mine Workers of America, 1990), 309.

¹⁹ James Gray Pope, "The Western Pennsylvania Coal Strike of 1933, Part I: Lawmaking from Below and the Revival of the United Mine Workers," and "The Western Pennsylvania Coal Strike of 1933, Part II: Lawmaking from Above and the Demise of Democracy in the United Mine Workers." *Labor History*, vol. 44, no. 1, (2003) & vol. 44, no. 2, 2003; Michael Goldfield, "The Myth of Section 7(a): How the Coal Miners Organized," unpublished paper presented at the Labor and Working Class History Association meeting, 6 June 2013, New York City, New York.

in 1933. Pope attributes the dominance of this great men and great deeds narrative, in large part, to newspaper reporters such as *New York Times* journalist Louis Stark, who was “long a conduit for the views of John L. Lewis.”²⁰ Stark also wrote about Roche, painting a glowing picture of Roche’s role in the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike.²¹ In this dissertation, I will contextualize that article (along with other print sources, including the Colorado press, national magazines, and especially the *New York Times*), showing how her story helped shape the narrative of labor history being formed at that time. Journalism, often called the first draft of history, plays an important role in this dissertation, and although vital, it took more than winning over influential journalists to get Roche’s version of the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike story to become the (so far) unchallenged narrative of the walkout, a version of history that remembers Ludlow but forgets the Columbine.

Pope and Goldfield argue that standard and often repeated historical narratives attributing the 1933 revitalization of organized labor to UMW organizers in response to the NRA’s 7(a) clause is a myth. Pope shows the Communist Party (CP) National Miners Union (NMU) had already organized the Pennsylvania coalfields by 1928, and Goldfield, using the UMW’s own internal communications as evidence, demonstrates that coalminers in Kentucky, Alabama, and Ohio apparently organized themselves before the NRA passed without UMW organizers or financial support. Of course, that did not keep the UMW from claiming credit.

²⁰ Pope, 235.

²¹ Louis Stark, “A Woman Unravels an Industrial Knot,” *The New York Times*, 7 February 1932, www.nytimes.com.

The evidence I have found pushes coalminer militancy even earlier. There were the militant 1927-1928 coalminer strikes in Pennsylvania (which Powers Hapgood helped lead), in Colorado, and elsewhere, too, although the extent of those strikes needs more research. Late 1920s organizers, such as Embree and Hapgood, were able to agitate the coalminers by constantly reminding them of the UMW-led 1921-1922 strikes. In that strike's settlement, Lewis abandoned the militant, *non*-UMW coalminers who walked out in sympathy and whose main demand had been union recognition. It seems likely that IWW influence did not entirely disappear from Colorado in the teens and twenties, but for sure, Wobblies began effectively organizing in Colorado by 1925. Establishing that coalminer militancy encompassed almost the entire decade of the 1920s, as well as the early 1930s, causes not just a re-examination of the UMW's role in revitalizing organized labor in the New Deal, it also forces a re-examination of the role the IWW and other organizations (including the CP) played in labor's 1933 resurgence—something for future historians to investigate.

A wide historiography surrounds the IWW, yet none of those sources places the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike within a larger, national historical context. Even IWW histories downplay the significance of the strike, one of the organization's biggest, most successful job actions. The primary reason the strike's importance has been ignored can be traced to the New Labor historians. In the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, they rediscovered the Ludlow Massacre and they also rediscovered the Wobblies. One of their favorite informants was Fred Thompson. Most of the New Labor historians treated

Thompson, an old Wobbly who viewed himself as the IWW's official historian, as if he were a reliable source. In remembering the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, he was not.²²

The accounts so far about the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike are strictly regional, a historical parochialism especially difficult to align with national labor history narratives, especially considering the nationalized context of Ludlow.²³ If Colorado coal history is so important from 1913 to 1914, why should the consequences of that strike cease to matter by the 1920s? I will argue that the strike deserves a place within the national labor history narrative because it helps illustrate the 1920s and early 1930s

²² Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), remains the standard IWW narrative. Other IWW histories include Patrick Renshaw, *The Wobblies: The Story of the IWW and Syndicalism in the United States*; Paul Buhle and Nicole Schulman, eds., *Wobblies!: A Graphic History of the Industrial Workers of the World*; Nigel Anthony Sellars' *Oil, Wheat, & Wobblies: The Industrial Workers of the World in Oklahoma, 1905-1930*; Greg Hall, *Harvest Wobblies: The Industrial Workers of the World and Agricultural Laborers in the American West, 1905-1930*; Joyce Kornbluh, *Rebel Voices: An IWW Anthology*; Stewart Bird, Dan Georgiakas, and Deborah Shaffer, *Solidarity Forever: An Oral History of the IWW*; Joseph Conlin, *At the Point of Production: A Local History of the IWW*; Salvatore Salerno, *Red November, Black November: Culture and Community in the Industrial Workers of the World*.

²³ Some important regional studies of the 1927-1928 strike include Phyllis Smith, *Once a Coal Miner: The Story of Colorado's Northern Coal Field* (Boulder: Pruett Publishing Company, 1989); Lowell May and Richard Myers, eds., *Slaughter in Serene: The Columbine Coal Strike Reader* (Denver: Bread and Roses Workers' Cultural Center, 2005); Hazel Alice Glenny, "A History of Labor Disputes in the Northern Colorado Coal Mining Fields with Emphasis on the 1927-1928 Strike," Unpublished Masters' Thesis, University of Colorado at Boulder, 1938; Harry O. Lawson, "The Colorado Coal Strike of 1927-1928," University of Colorado at Boulder, Unpublished Masters' Thesis, 1950; Donald J. McClurg, "The Colorado Coal Strike of 1927," *Labor History*, vol. 4, issue 1 (1963); Charles J. Bayard, "The 1927-1928 Colorado Coal Strike," *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. XXXII, no. 3 (August, 1963); Donald J. McClurg, "Labor Organization in the Coal Mines of Colorado, 1878-1933," Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of California, 1959 (located in the Carnegie Branch Library, Boulder, Colorado); Ronald McMahan, "Rang-U-Tang": The I.W.W. and the 1927 Colorado Coal Strike," in Joseph R. Conlin, ed., *At the Point of Production: A Local History of the I.W.W.* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981).

turmoil in the coalfields, conflicts that directly led to 1930s New Deal Labor policies. The strike also introduced Josephine Roche to John L. Lewis, a personal and professional association that resulted in long-term, highly significant changes within the American labor movement since they represented two of the three votes in the UMW Retirement and Pension Fund from its creation in 1946 to Lewis' death in 1969. Examining the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike will also demonstrate some of the longer-term consequences that flowed from Ludlow, a UMW-led strike so famous yet unsuccessful, it set the stage for the rise of John L. Lewis and established the pattern Lewis used to consolidate his control over the UMW in the 1920s. Furthermore, examining why and how the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike has been forgotten will demonstrate the ways memories of Ludlow have been appropriated to create a dramatic, compelling, yet incomplete and inaccurate twentieth century United States labor narrative.

Contents

This dissertation is divided into two parts. Chapters 1 through 6 provide a narrative of the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike and biographies of A.S. Embree, Josephine Roche, and Powers Hapgood, examining the roles they played surrounding the walkout. Along with the secondary sources previously cited, sources for this section also include contemporary strike articles from Colorado newspapers as well as the *New York Times*, autobiographies, and archival materials from the Industrial Workers of the World, Colorado Fuel and Iron, International Union of Mine Mill and Smelter Workers, Josephine Roche, and Powers Hapgood collections. Individually, A.S. Embree, Josephine Roche, and Powers Hapgood were extremely important in events surrounding the strike,

but in this dissertation, they also represent “types” (and I hope not stereotypes) of people who consistently advocated differing and distinct visions of industrial democracy for society.

Industrial democracy emerged as a key concept in the era and competing definitions of what that nebulous term actually meant helps explain the actions Embree, Roche, and Hapgood took before, during, and after the Columbine strike. In *Labor’s Great War: The Struggle for Industrial Democracy and the Origins of Modern American Labor Relations, 1912-1921*, James McCartin writes that before World War I, three major definitions of industrial democracy emerged:

One vision was advanced by a group of farsighted employers, influenced by renegades from the scientific management movement who had begun to recognize that workers’ participation could influence the efficiency of production. Another vision, championed by the leadership of the AFL, posited the trade union collective bargaining agreement as the sine qua non of democratic industrial relations. A third vision, less fully articulated than the other two, emerged from the ranks of trade union militants and their allies. It linked industrial democracy to a radical restructuring of workplace and social relations.²⁴

These three visions for industrial democracy persisted, and McCartin’s characterization of these distinct ideals for labor and management in fact consistently align with the beliefs that Embree, Roche, and Hapgood acted upon throughout their lives. Embree was a lifelong militant whose worldview “linked industrial democracy to a radical restructuring of workplace and social relations.” Even though he moderated his earlier, IWW views over time—by the 1940s he helped negotiate Mine Mill contracts, something he would not have done twenty years earlier as a Wobbly—Embree never

²⁴ James A. McCartin, *Labor’s Great War: The Struggle for Industrial Democracy and the Origins of Modern American Labor Relations, 1912-1921* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 50-51.

compromised his egalitarian goals for society and he always enjoyed a good, scrappy labor fight. In this dissertation, I will use the word “radical” to describe people like Embree who worked through the labor movement to fundamentally reshape society, and I will use the word “militant” to describe specific tactics used in strikes. For example, the 1910-1914 Colorado coal strike was very militant—since, overall, the goal of the strike’s leaders was that the United Mine Workers be recognized as the workers’ voice for collective bargaining with their employers—but not necessarily radical, although certainly some of its participants were.

Roche was considered part of a “group of farsighted employers,” who believed that “workers’ participation could influence the efficiency of production.” Those ideas celebrating and promoting industrial efficiency and scientific management partly originated in the progressive movement, and Roche joined the Progressive political party along with the progressive social movement that produced so many reformers like her. In this dissertation, I use the term “maternalist” to describe Roche’s reform cohort, borrowing the usage from Molly Ladd-Taylor in *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930*.²⁵ Ladd-Taylor defines maternalist reformers as professional, progressive-era women who successfully passed some of the most important welfare legislation during that era, mostly on behalf of women, children, and sometimes, immigrants.²⁶ Hapgood, like Embree, exhibited utopian as well as militant streaks a mile wide. Hapgood’s father was a paternalist company owner, which helps explain his sympathy with Roche’s brand of maternalistic reform. At his core, however, like the

²⁵ Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

AFL's leadership, Hapgood believed that achieving trade union collective bargaining agreements was the ultimate goal of industrial relations. Tracing Embree, Roche, and Hapgood will show the changes, but more importantly, the continuities of those industrial democracy viewpoints across time.

Chapter 1 begins the narrative by following A.S. Embree's life from what I know about his childhood to his imprisonment for criminal syndicalism charges from 1921 to 1925, with the 1917 Bisbee, Arizona deportation sandwiched in between. Embree was born and raised in Newfoundland, but in 1896, the young college graduate caught gold fever. His experiences trying to reach the Yukon convinced him to join the Western Federation of Miners (WFM), and by 1905 he joined and then later organized on behalf of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in the United States, where he spent the rest of his life. Through Embree's experiences, this chapter traces the histories of both the WFM and the IWW and shows the effects of corporate and US persecution of militants during World War I. Chapter 2 begins in 1926 when the IWW General Executive Board sent Embree to Colorado to organize coalminers. Using both newspaper accounts and sources from the IWW archives, this chapter provides the basic narrative of the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, examines the methods Embree used to organize Colorado's coalminers, and ends with the 1927 Columbine Massacre.

Chapter 3 traces Josephine Roche's life as a maternalist reformer through 1927, to show how that reformer identity shaped her worldview. Roche was part of the remarkable cohort of turn-of-the-twentieth century women's college graduates who created what

Robyn Muncy has called a “dominion of reform.”²⁷ Roche’s impressive employment record demonstrates the progressives’ duality: social reform and social control. Using Roche’s archival materials, I briefly follow her various maternalist careers: a settlement house worker in Greenwich Village alongside future Secretary of Labor Francis Perkins, director of the foreign language division in George Creel’s World War I Committee on Public Information (the official propaganda-generating office during the war), and finally, editorial director for the Women’s Bureau in Washington, D.C. However, I focus most on the two jobs she held in Denver: the city’s first lady cop and juvenile court referee alongside her mentor, Judge Ben Lindsey. Although later Roche biographers would try to make the case that she had always possessed a passionate interest in organized labor issues, her pre-1927 employment record, as well as her archival records, show that is simply not true.

Chapter 4 begins with the Columbine Massacre, when Roche assumed active control over the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company (which she had recently inherited from her parents) following the negative Columbine Massacre publicity. Drawing upon her maternalist reformer ideals, she re-shaped the RMFC into an “experiment” in industrial democracy, not just because she believed it was the right thing to do, but also to convince rich, liberal friends to contribute to her financially troubled business. Roche’s previous experiences prepared her to take control of the Columbine Massacre story and actually turn the violence that occurred there to her advantage, and the most successful strategy she employed to begin erasing the memories of Columbine involved evoking the memories of Ludlow.

²⁷ Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991).

Chapter 5 follows Powers Hapgood from childhood, through Harvard, and into the nation's coalfields. Hapgood's life in the 1920s, much of it spent organizing Pennsylvania coalminers under the tutelage of John Brophy, offers a lens through which to view Lewis' consolidation of power during that decade, a rise possible only because of the UMW's organizational weakness. In the 1920s, Hapgood and Brophy challenged Lewis' power and were both banished from the UMW for their efforts at reforming from within the increasingly Lewis-dominated union. The end of the chapter finds Hapgood adrift, a condition that helped inspire him to move to Colorado and work for Roche. Chapter 6 begins in 1927, after Lewis expelled Hapgood from the UMW and it continues through 1935, when Lewis hired Hapgood as his third paid employee for the Committee (later Congress) of Industrial Organization (CIO). How that reversal between Lewis and Hapgood came about is the focus of the chapter. Hapgood spent a year-and-a-half of that time in Colorado, the happiest period in his otherwise tormented adulthood. His Colorado experiences illustrate some of the methods Roche was testing to shape her own and the RMFC's images, and it further explores the ongoing turmoil in the nation's coalfields. When all his options ran out, Hapgood finally surrendered and went to work for his father, a move he had resisted since college. His disastrous experiences there convinced him (in his case, literally) that paternalistic models of industrial democracy were not very democratic. That personal crisis set the stage for Hapgood to get swept up in the fervor surrounding Lewis' creation of the CIO in 1935.

The second part of this dissertation chronologically as well as thematically explores the historical legacies of the strike and of Embree, Roche, and Hapgood within the context of the US labor movement, beginning with the New Deal and ending in the

late 1980s. Oral histories of the 1927-1928 strike led me to expand my analysis so I could explore answers to the following questions: How do personal and collective memories influence each other to help create dominant narratives? What gets left out or added and why? Why do we remember Ludlow but forget the Columbine?

Only after immersing myself in the secondary sources on the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike did I read the oral history transcripts several authors cited in their books. Those interviews, however, created more questions than they answered. Informants transposed names and events from the 1927-1928 strike with earlier walkouts, while other times, their stories sounded exactly alike, as if they had been re-telling them to each other for years. While struggling to make sense of these personal narratives, I read Daniel James' *Doña María's Story*.²⁸ His book revealed a new way for me to think about and use the interview transcripts I had been reading. Like James' informant, Doña María, the Colorado informants had constructed and re-constructed their personal histories over time for a variety of reasons. Sometimes their stories changed to align with larger, national historical narratives, while other times their stories changed to explain the ways their own lives had turned out.

James' book inspired me to re-examine not only the oral histories, but also the ways historians had used those interviews. His analysis led to Alessandro Portelli and Michel-Rolph Trouillot. Portelli's work explores the way collective memories can prove as malleable as personal recollections. Indeed, personal and collective memories often converge to create "commonsensical" historical narratives that, while not literally true, embody deeper truths about the people, countries, and cultures that create such stories

²⁸ Daniel James, *Doña María's Story: Life History, Memory, and Political Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

than more factual accounts sometimes convey.²⁹ Trouillot interrogates historical silences, linking forgotten narratives not simply to issues surrounding memory but also to power, since the “production of historical narratives involves the uneven contribution of competing groups and individuals who have unequal access to the means for such production.”³⁰

These unequal relationships are especially apparent in print sources, such as newspapers and personal archives. Left out of most collections—such as the archival papers of Josephine Roche and Powers Hapgood—are the often illiterate or at best inarticulate voices of workers and their families. In 1927-1928, mainstream newspapers were hostile toward the strikers and their supporters. Few reporters and even fewer government officials asked workers to recount their version of events. That did not happen until the mid-1970s, when informants were finally asked to share their fifty-year-old memories of the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike. What did they remember and what did they forget? What memories had been silenced and why? In this dissertation, I will explore how and why the dominant labor history of the turbulent teens, the quiescent twenties, and the revitalized thirties has been created, especially as I consider how power, personal memories (the stories we tell about ourselves), and collective memories (which can be as local as the stories communities create among themselves, or as national as the narratives that appear in textbooks) have influenced this historical construction.

²⁹ Alexander Stille, “Prospecting for Truth in the Ore of Memory,” *New York Times* online. 10 March 2001, nytimes.com; Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991); Alessandro Portelli, *The Order Has Been Carried Out: History, Memory, and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome* (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003).

³⁰ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), xix.

In Chapters 7 through 10, therefore, I continue examining the lives and legacies of Embree, Roche, and Hapgood, but the central emphasis of these chapters is examining the construction of historical silences and revisionist narratives surrounding the 1927-1928 strike. Chapter seven shows that the rise of organized labor in the 1930s could never have happened without the turmoil in the nation's coalfields in the late 1920s and early 1930s, uproar that most historical narratives omit, yielding instead to the great men, great deeds school of historical interpretation that overly credits the leadership roles played by Franklin D. Roosevelt and John L. Lewis. Historical "winners," including Roche, had every reason to downplay the 1920s and claim their inspirations and successes sprang directly from the Progressive era. I examine how *New York Times* labor reporter Louis Stark helped create such a narrative, for his contemporaries and for future historians. The real organized labor successes in membership occurred during World War II, and Barron B. Beshoar's 1942 book, *Out of the Depths* credits Ludlow with those gains. Beshoar's book also established the narrative structure most future Ludlow histories emulated, and as I will show in Chapter 10, his book even re-shaped the personal memories of Colorado's coalminers and their families, even among those who had lived it.

By examining the post-World War II careers of Mine Mill organizers Maurice Travis and Clinton Jencks, Chapter 8 shows how the cold war red scare split the Congress of Industrial Organizations (what the acronym CIO stood for after 1938), driving out most of the CIO's best organizers and all of its leftist unions, a purge that dramatically shifted the goals and trajectory of the CIO and the entire US labor movement. Travis organized among black steelworkers in Alabama in 1949. Jencks organized among Mexican-American miners in New Mexico, which led to a 1951-1952 strike there that

women and children pickets helped win. Jencks played himself in the 1954 film *Salt of the Earth* that re-enacted the strike, a blacklisted movie rarely seen until its 1965 re-release. That film, as well as the Western Federation of Miners/International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (WFM/IUMMSW) archival collection that Jencks assembled, also in 1965, sparked historical interest in Jencks', but not Travis', red scare persecution. By placing Jencks strictly within a cold war context, however, historians have downplayed Mine Mill's militant, egalitarian roots, epitomized by former organizers such as A.S. Embree, whose legacies had inspired Travis and Jencks to join and organize on behalf of Mine Mill in the first place.

Chapter 8 also continues following Josephine Roche's life in the post-World War II period. Lewis led the UMW coalminers out on almost constant strikes between 1946 and 1950 to gain defined pensions and health care benefits, and to help achieve both goals, in 1946, Lewis created the UMW Welfare and Retirement Fund and named Roche its manager. By 1950, Lewis finally got the Fund's governance the way he wanted it when he was allowed to appoint Roche as the second out of three trustees operating the Fund. Since Lewis was also a trustee, he and Roche controlled two out of the three votes on the Fund. Therefore, Roche played an important role in shaping UMW policies until 1972, when she was removed from the Fund. From 1950 on, there were few UMW strikes at all, as Lewis increasingly turned his attentions to cooperating with coal operators to increase the Fund's assets, even though those investment decisions were not always in the UMW coalminers' best interests. This chapter also explores what role the memory or forgetting of labor's militant past played in these developments in the CIO, Mine Mill, and the UMW.

Chapter 9 focuses on the rise of New Labor historians whose work began getting published in the late 1950s. Their disgust at the state of contemporary organized labor, as well as their more grassroots approach to expanding the sources they used (including oral histories), helped lead to the re-discovery of the IWW. One of the most willing and interesting informants was the old Wobbly Fred Thompson, whose outsized influence over IWW historiography shows that sometimes the losers, not the winners, write history. Thompson, a minor IWW leader, had personal reasons for downplaying the significance of the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, since he helped destroy its successes. Thompson's influence over IWW histories is yet another reason why we remember Ludlow but forget the Columbine.

The last chapter analyzes the memories of the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike. Many of those memories are found in oral histories conducted for local history projects, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) during the presidency of Jimmy Carter. Carter doubled NEH funding while in office, a purposeful policy whose goal was to democratize history. I will examine why, in the case of the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, that democratically conceived project never escaped its local history confines, why it was not as democratic as it might have been, how NEH projects such as those about the former Colorado coalminers helped fuel the 1980s "culture wars," and why, once again, the informants remembered Ludlow, but forgot the Columbine.

Chapter 1

A.S. Embree: Becoming Radical, 1877-1925

When A. S. Embree (1877-1957) appears in history books, most of the time he is being deported from Bisbee, Arizona, on July 11, 1917. Although it was not the first or even the last time workers got deported from a strike field, what makes the Bisbee deportation stand out historically is its scale. Although records vary, probably 1,200 miners were wrenched from their homes, herded onto train cars like cattle, and shipped to Columbus, New Mexico, because they exhibited the temerity of waging a strike as the United States was mobilizing to enter World War I.

The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) led the strike, a leading factor in the deportation, since many Bisbee citizens had come to view the Wobblies as wild-eyed, non-patriotic radicals. Major copper companies, like Phelps-Dodge (which owned the Copper Queen mine in Bisbee), took advantage of World War I hysteria and got rid of its striking workers, replacing them with a more compliant work force, a shift that helped usher in an anti-organized labor stance in their mines. That outlook hardly limited to copper. In history surveys as well as most labor monographs of the 1920s, a pro-business, anti-labor philosophy epitomizes the entire decade.

Several leading historians have examined the Bisbee deportation, yet not as many, in either quantity or quality, have applied the same level of historical analysis to the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike Embree led a full decade later. Although most

historians abandon Embree after Bisbee, they should continue following him, because his significance as a labor leader neither stopped nor started there. To understand continuities in labor history, it is important to understand more than Embree's role in the Bisbee deportation, including what Embree did before and after 1917. This chapter follows Embree's life from his childhood in a remote Newfoundland fishing village to his jail time in Idaho for criminal syndicalism from 1921 to 1925. I use this time period in Embree's life to help tell the story of the Western Federation of Miners (WFM), the Industrial Workers (IWW) of the World, and the red scare surrounding World War I. Although most historical narratives claim that the World War I red scare destroyed the IWW, as the next Embree chapter demonstrates (to badly paraphrase Mark Twain), the rumors of the IWW's death have been greatly exaggerated. Even after the IWW declined as a labor organization, its militant, egalitarian legacy lived on, as the second part of this dissertation will demonstrate.

No one has yet written an Embree biography, and although he said he wrote a memoir, I have not been able to find it. Embree doesn't tower over IWW history like Big Bill Haywood, but unlike Haywood, Embree stayed active in the labor movement from the late 1890s through the 1940s and his legacy persisted even longer. That longevity makes him an excellent historical subject for examining both change, and especially continuity, in the labor movement over time. Embree joined the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) in 1899, the IWW in 1905, and stayed a Wobbly until 1937, the year he joined the International Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers Union (Mine Mill), a direct descendant of the WFM, organizing for it until

the mid-1940s. Although Mine Mill disintegrated in the 1920s, it revived in the mid-1930s, constituting one of a handful of industrial unions that formed the Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO) in 1935.¹ It was also one of the first to be expelled from the CIO.² Embree enthusiastically participated in all these events and directly influenced important Mine Mill leaders inspired by his legacy.

Adolphus Stewart Embree was born on December 15, 1877, in Blackhead, Newfoundland. Closer to Europe than to western Canada, Blackhead is almost the easternmost point of Canada. Around the turn of the nineteenth century, Napoleonic war blockades created an increased demand for Newfoundland cod, which spawned permanent coastal settlements like Blackhead.³ Fishing was, and remains, dangerous, grueling, seasonal work. Newfoundland fishermen worked whenever the water was not frozen, usually from March through October. When fishermen left their families for months at a time, wives ran the households, and when (and if) the men returned, the entire family helped process the fish for market.⁴

Embree's father, a Methodist pastor, ministered to these families. The year A.S. Embree was born, the census listed his father as the village's only non-

¹ Robert H. Zeiger, *The CIO, 1935-1955* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 24.

² *Ibid.*, 278.

³ Jenny Higgins, "19th Century Migration," Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Web Site, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2008, www.heritage.nf.ca/society/19th_migration.html, accessed 26 December 2011, 2.

⁴ Jenny Higgins and Luke Callanan, "19th Century Communications and Transportation," Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Web Site, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2008, www.heritage.nf.ca/society/19th_comm.html, accessed 26 December 2011, 1-2.

fisherman.⁵ Although Blackhead was the oldest established Methodist community in what is now Canada, it was also isolated, the main reason Newfoundland was the last province to join the Dominion of Canada in 1949. Those two factors—its early founding and geographical isolation—helps explain why Blackhead Methodists stayed true to their original evangelical practices. They did not drink, smoke, play cards, or dance (or they were not supposed to, anyway). Fiercely democratic in nature, they practiced “a disciplined commitment to holy living and social duty.”⁶ Although A.S. Embree trained for the Methodist ministry, he never got ordained. Instead, for over thirty years, he preached the IWW gospel in ways that revealed his Methodist roots. Whenever he led a walkout, strikers were forbidden to drink alcohol or gamble (or they were not supposed to, anyway). Wobblies, especially when leaders like Embree were at the helm, exhibited a utopian, fiercely democratic vision for society. His entire life, he championed the underdog, railed against corrupt big bosses and corporations, and envisioned a society (mostly) undivided by race, class, or gender. Embree’s personal life followed a traditional path: During his long marriage to Lucy, he tried his best to be a good father to his two children. Like any missionary, however, his family often lived in poverty and endured his long absences from home, all for the greater good of the working class.

⁵ “Blackhead Methodist Parish Birth Records (1842-1900),” *NL GenWeb, Parish Records, Conception Bay North—Northern District*, http://nl.canadagenweb.org/cbnorth_norbhuc2801.htm, accessed 29 December 2012.

⁶ Jeremy Black and Roy Porter, *A Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century World History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 463, quoted within Liza Piper, “Newfoundland Methodism,” Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Web Site, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2000, www.heritage.nf.ca/society/methodist.html, accessed 26 December 2012, 1.

How did a preacher's son from an isolated fishing village transform himself into a migratory IWW leader who advocated industrial revolution? Little specific evidence about his childhood survives, but he did leave traces by which we might imagine his likely path. Embree probably received his most important education from his parents, but he also attended school at Mt. Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick. The school housed a separate boys' and girls' academy for younger students and a university for the older male students. College records from 1896 show that Embree wrote for the school newspaper and served as recording secretary for the debate club. Character flashes slip through college newsletters, including joking references to his wild, unkempt hair and his passion for Shakespeare (but little else academic).⁷ Below is the first picture I've found of Embree, taken in 1895 at Mt. Allison. An eighteen-year-old Embree stands farthest to the left.⁸

⁷ *The Argosy*, Vol. 24, New Series No. 1, October 1897: 16, Microfilm 5391, Mount Allison University Libraries and Archives, Sackville, New Brunswick, Canada.

⁸ "Mount Allison University gymnastics team, 1894-1895," Picture Collection, accession 2007.07/157, <http://www.mta.ca/threecheers/galleriesmiscellaneouspictures.05html>, Mount Allison University Archives, accessed 29 July 2012.



Instead of becoming a Methodist minister, Embree studied metal assaying. In 1897, the twenty-year-old Embree, youngest (and smallest) in his class, graduated and immediately headed west, seeking his fortune at the beginning of the Klondike gold rush. Over the next six years, the university newsletter published periodic Embree updates. Almost immediately, he fell critically ill on a prospecting trip heading up the Peace River.⁹ After a year's convalescence, he tried reaching the Yukon again, but the newsletter never reported if he made it to the goldfields or not.¹⁰

Photographs Frank La Roche, William E. Meed, and Eric A. Hegg and others took during the Yukon gold rush reveal fascinating evidence of the almost unbelievable hardships potential prospectors experienced.¹¹ In 1897 and 1898, the

⁹ *The Argosy*, Nov. 1897: 52.

¹⁰ *The Argosy*, April 1898: 12; *The Argosy*, November 1898: 13.

¹¹ "Klondike Gold Rush—The Perilous Journey North," online photographic exhibit available through the UW Libraries Digital Collection Website, University Libraries, University of Washington, Seattle,

Yukon-bound Embree was just one of thousands of men (and hundreds of women) who trekked the unforgiving trails where sudden blizzards and temperatures plunging to minus-40 degrees Fahrenheit could kill even the most well prepared party. Those photographs help explain how Embree, and others, might have become disillusioned with gold's elusive allure. Embree left college adventurously and idealistically seeking gold, but instead encountered sickness, death, greed, and worker exploitation.

By 1899, Embree had joined the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) in Greenwood, British Columbia, a Kootenay Mountains' copper boomtown ten miles north of the Washington state border.¹² By 1900, Embree was working as a newspaper editor in Greenwood, British Columbia.¹³ He stayed there at least until 1908, the year he married Lucy Mackenzie.¹⁴ In Greenwood, Embree served as local WFM secretary and also edited the local newspaper, probably a WFM publication that challenged the interpretation of local events published in the nearby *Rossland Miner*, a newspaper mine operator Fritz Heinze owned.¹⁵

By 1900, Nome (Alaska) fever supplanted Yukon fever. When that last gold rush ended, so did the individual prospectors' dreams of discovering the mother

<http://www.lib.washington.edu/specialcollections/collections/exhibits/klondike/brb>, accessed 9 June 2011.

¹² Mike Solski and John Smaller, *Mine Mill: The History of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers in Canada Since 1895* (Ottawa: Steel Rail Publishing, 1984), 9.

¹³ *The Argosy*, November 1900: 28; *The Argosy*, December 1903: 9.

¹⁴ "Marriage Records, 1872-1936," British Columbia Archives, Canada, [http://search.bcarchives.gov.bc.ca/sn-3F7914A/query/Marriages/find-adv%2B%20givennames%3D\(adolphus\)%20AND%20surname%3D\(embree\)%20%2B%2B%2B%2B](http://search.bcarchives.gov.bc.ca/sn-3F7914A/query/Marriages/find-adv%2B%20givennames%3D(adolphus)%20AND%20surname%3D(embree)%20%2B%2B%2B%2B), accessed 16 August 2013.

¹⁵ Jeremy Mouat, *Roaring Days: Rossland's Mines and the History of British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1995), 28.

lode. Big businesses soon dominated hard rock mining operations, because the easy pickings were gone. What gold remained had to be extracted, and extraction required smelting, a complex chemical and mechanical process only corporations could afford. As mining and smelting technology improved, companies' needs for skilled labor decreased, so they began cutting their labor costs. The WFM tried to combat those wage-cutting efforts.

Although a bigger mining union, the United Mine Workers (UMW) had been formed in 1890, most of its members mined soft rock (coal), while most WFM members mined hard rock (usually quartz that contained metals such as silver, gold, copper, and lead). UMW coal miners dug in various geographic pockets scattered across North America, but most metals were more geographically isolated in the western US and British Columbia. These geographic and job-related differences divided the two organizations. Although the UMW and the WFM briefly united twice, for the most part, their half-hearted efforts to merge throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s proved unsuccessful. However, as will be shown in Chapter 7, their efforts at reuniting in 1935 helped lead to the rise of the Committee on Industrial Organizations (CIO).

The WFM originally formed in reaction to an unsuccessful strike at Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, in 1892, a strike that hasn't received the same level of historical analysis as the Homestead strike that occurred that same year, perhaps because Idaho had no participants as famous (or infamous) as Andrew Carnegie, who owned the Homestead steelworks outside of Pittsburgh, or Carnegie's partner and

Homestead manager, Henry Clay Frick, who barely escaped an assassination attempt by anarchist Alexander Berkman during the strike. The main lesson historians seem to have gleaned from the Homestead strike was that organized labor lost, and another steel workers union would not arise to take its place until the New Deal.

Coeur d' Alene hard rock miners learned a very different lesson. When workers lost that strike, instead of destroying a union, it created one. The Idaho governor's heavy-handed tactics inspired the Coeur d' Alenes' silver and lead miners to join forces with gold miners in Colorado and the already unionized copper miners (who footed the bill for the new union) from Butte, Montana, creating the WFM in 1893.¹⁶ The WFM organized industrially, which meant everybody joined the same union, regardless of the specific job he did. That contrasted to the American Federation of Labor (AFL), whose constituent labor unions mostly organized by craft. For example, Samuel Gompers, the AFL president from 1886 until 1924, rose from the ranks of the cigar makers' union. However, the largest union within the AFL, the United Mine Workers, organized industrially, just like the WFM.

The WFM got its first test of strength later in 1893, when it staged a strike in Cripple Creek, Colorado. Miners won that labor conflict, largely because Colorado's Populist governor refused to send state troops to support the operators (the mine owners). Another strike followed in 1896-7 in Leadville, Colorado, but this time, the miners lost since, among other reasons, Colorado voters had replaced their Populist

¹⁶ Michael P. Malone, *The Battle for Butte: Mining and Politics on the Northern Frontier, 1867-1906* (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 1981), 78-79.

governor with a Republican who willingly authorized troops to protect the operators' interests.

Another WFM strike followed in 1899 (the year Embree joined the union), east of Coeur d' Alenes. During that strike, perhaps as many as a thousand masked and armed miners hijacked a train, steered it to a mine where operators had refused to sign a contract with the WFM, placed two thousand pounds of dynamite under a massive and expensive ore washing mechanism, cleared the area of all people then blew the machine to bits.¹⁷ As intended, this incident struck terror into the hearts of operators throughout the region, which included Colorado, Washington, Idaho, Montana, and British Columbia (BC). As Jeremy Mouat has shown, British Columbia geographically, economically, and culturally had more in common with the Pacific Northwest in the United States than with the rest of Canada. Because traveling north-south was easier than west-east, most BC mining capital (and half its miners) originated from the US, a geographic reality explaining why the WFM represented hard rock miners not just in the American West, but also in British Columbia.¹⁸

By 1899, the WFM represented most BC miners, but instead of blowing things up, those workers passed laws, including the eight-hour day for underground workers, the Alien Labour Act (which forbade importing workers from other

¹⁷ Beverly Gage, *The Day Wall Street Exploded: A Story of America in its First Age of Terror* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 72-74.

¹⁸ See chapter two, "'The Hope of This Country': Smelters, Railways, and the Growth of Rossland, 1895-8," in Jeremy Mouat, *Roaring Days: Rossland's Mines and the History of British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1995); the map on page 30 is especially helpful in showing the railroads and trails that linked the US Pacific Northwest and BC by 1898.

countries to work, including US strikebreakers), and the Conciliation Act (which mandated arbitration during strikes). More important, WFM miners applied pressure to make sure politicians enforced the laws the union had helped pass.¹⁹ A small group of operators tested the miners' political clout and tried forcing a small BC mine to operate as an open shop, resulting in those miners going on strike in 1901. Nearby Rossland WFM miners (who worked the biggest BC mine) joined them in a sympathy strike, leading Canada's Liberal Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier to send William Lyon Mackenzie King, a "youthful university-educated 'labour expert,'" to arbitrate under the terms mandated in the Conciliation Act.²⁰

Thirteen years later, reacting to public outrage over the Ludlow Massacre, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., brought the same Mackenzie King into the Colorado coalfields to help design an employee representation plan for his company, Colorado Fuel and Iron (CF&I). Rockefeller and King hoped the plan would replace the contentious labor relations that had led to the 1910-1914 Colorado coal strike and the violence surrounding it. In 1921, after enriching himself as Rockefeller's labor advisor, King was elected to his first term as prime minister of Canada. His last term ended in 1948, making him the longest serving prime minister in Canadian history. Apparently King was about as dynamic as a dishrag. A Canadian historical website offers the following assessment of his twenty-two years as prime minister: "He had no captivating image, he gave no spellbinding speeches, he championed no radical platform. He is remembered for his mild-mannered, passive, compromise and

¹⁹ Mouat, 86-87.

²⁰ Ibid., 100.

conciliation.” The quote that best sums up his career is, “It is what we prevent, rather than what we do that counts most in Government.”²¹

In 1901, what King prevented was a settlement between the operators and the WFM. During the negotiations, King convinced himself that local union officials possessed no local power to negotiate anything. He believed BC leaders simply followed orders from a “gang of radicals” in Denver who had no interest in bargaining.²² Instead of negotiating an end to the strike as he had been sent to do, King advised Canada’s federal government to turn a blind eye to the strikebreakers operators were importing from the US, an action expressly outlawed in the Alien Labour Act. Government officials followed King’s advice, and the miners lost the strike.

In 1901, King believed he had prevented the radicals from taking over the WFM in British Columbia, but instead, the opposite occurred. The Rossland defeat convinced most of BC’s WFM miners that working within the political system had been a mistake. Radicals, distrusting both politicians and the political process, who previously constituted the WFM minority, soon took over the union. I suspect Embree was part of that radical faction. The same process of radicalization was underway south of the border, too, because WFM members had witnessed the difference a sympathetic or hostile governor could make in a strike zone. After the disastrous, and extremely violent, 1903 Cripple Creek, Colorado, strike, WFM

²¹ *From Canada’s Prime Ministers, 1867-1994: Biographies and Anecdotes* (Ottawa: National Archives of Canada, 1994), 40, used as a source for “The Right Honourable William Lyon Mackenzie King,” *First Among Equals: The Prime Minister in Canadian Life and Politics*, www.collectionscanada.gc.ca, accessed 28 December 2011.

²² A. Ross McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899-1919* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 40.

leaders decided to eschew formal politics altogether and form a new, umbrella organization that would compete with the American Federation of Labor (AFL). That organization was the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).

The IWW was born in Chicago, on June 27, 1905, when WFM secretary William “Big Bill” Haywood, “who would come to be regarded by many Americans as the very personification of the Wobblies,” called to order “200 delegates from thirty-four state, district, and national organizations—socialists, anarchists, radical miners, and revolutionary industrial unionists” to announce its creation.²³ The WFM was the largest union—in leadership, membership, and financial support—backing the IWW. Not just the united militancy, but also the IWW’s rhetoric signaled a new era in labor organization.

The much-quoted first sentence of the IWW’s preamble, “The working class and the employing class have nothing in common,” helps explain the widespread panic the IWW created during the Progressive era. By 1908, the IWW amended its preamble to read that “Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system...It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism...By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.”²⁴ Thirteen years

²³ Joyce L. Kornbluh, ed., *Rebel Voices: An I.W.W. Anthology*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1964), 1.

²⁴ Kornbluh, 12-13.

after the IWW's creation, the federal government would use those words, and more like them, to convict Wobbly leaders of anti-World War I conspiracy charges.

Both progressives and AFL officials hated the IWW, but for different reasons. Progressives wanted to regulate, not destroy, capitalism. They also wanted to mitigate class conflict, and some progressives even denied class existed at all. The AFL hated the IWW because they competed with them for members. As the US prepared to enter World War I, the AFL also wanted to distance itself from the IWW because Wobblies made *all* organized labor look radical, an increasingly untenable image as 100% Americanism-style patriotism swept the country. AFL leaders, such as AFL President Samuel Gompers and UMW President John L. Lewis, hoped that by becoming increasingly conservative, they would gain a co-equal seat with businesses at the federal government policy table that would continue after the war ended. Those leaders were wrong, but they couldn't have known that in 1917.

Hatred and fear of the IWW—and if J. Anthony Lukas is correct, guilt—contributed to the arrest of Wobbly frontman Bill Haywood for murder, a mere six months after the IWW's creation.²⁵ Clarence Darrow won his acquittal, but the cost of the defense (paid for by the IWW), power struggles between Haywood and his two co-defendants as the two-year trial dragged on, and Haywood's absence through 1907 robbed the fledgling IWW of money, momentum, and leadership. Partially because of these conflicts, the WFM quit the IWW in 1907 and four years later, re-joined the AFL (only to quit again soon afterward), beginning a more

²⁵ J. Anthony Lukas, *Big Trouble: A Murder in a Small Western Town Sets off a Struggle for the Soul of America* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 754.

conservative organizational tilt.²⁶ In 1916, it abandoned its WFM name altogether (probably hoping to leave its militant past behind) and rebranded itself the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers. Since that name hardly rolls off the tongue, everybody just called it Mine Mill.

Throughout this time period, various factions within the IWW battled each other, a characteristic that would plague the organization's entire existence. For example, in 1908, the "overalls brigade," so called because they wore workman's overalls and bright red bandanas tied around their necks as symbols of their working class solidarity, hoboed their way on trains from the Pacific Northwest (where Embree had become radicalized) to the IWW annual meeting in Chicago. Advocating direct action (such as strikes) in organizing the working class, they successfully ousted the Midwestern-based Socialist Party faction advocating political action and took control of the IWW.

After his acquittal for murder in Idaho, Haywood symbolized labor radicalism, a status that turned him into a celebrity of sorts and inspired him to move to New York City's Greenwich Village, where he basked in its admiring, bohemian glow. From Mabel Dodge's salon, he helped lead (or at least, took credit for leading) two east coast IWW strikes.²⁷ Although the 1912 Lawrence, Massachusetts, strike succeeded, the 1913 Paterson, New Jersey, strike failed. However, during the strike, Haywood and John Reed (the radical journalist) hatched an idea leading to one of the two edgiest New York City cultural events of that year:

²⁶ Kornbluh, 6.

²⁷ Ardis Cameron, *Radicals of the Worst Sort: Laboring Women in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1860-1912* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 134-5.

the Paterson Pageant, a one-night only performance in Madison Square Garden that re-enacted the strike, used workers as actors, and broke the fourth wall between the performers and the audience. The second groundbreaking cultural event that year was the Armory Show, which introduced New Yorkers to modern art. American visual artist John Sloan painted the backdrop for the Paterson Pageant, and he also exhibited his paintings at the Armory show, demonstrating the fluid relationship between the artistic and labor worlds in New York City during that time. While the Paterson performance created a cutting-edge theatrical experience, however, it neither raised money nor helped win the ongoing strike, further splitting the IWW's leadership.²⁸

In spite of such divisions, memberships among the Socialists, UMW, AFL, and WFM were remarkably fluid during the Progressive era. Take Mother Jones, Haywood, and Embree as examples. From the early 1900s through World War I, Mother Jones agitated for the UMW, either quit or got fired from that organization, spoke and organized for the Socialists, helped found the IWW, quit the Socialists, then returned to the UMW. In these roles, she traveled from West Virginia to Colorado to Mexico, back to West Virginia, back to Colorado, and to several places in between.²⁹ Haywood was simultaneously a member in good standing of the WFM, the IWW, and the Socialists. He moved from his home state of Utah to Idaho, where he participated in the 1899 Coeur d' Alene strike mentioned earlier, to Denver, the headquarters of the WFM. After his acquittal in Idaho, he traveled and spoke

²⁸ Melvyn Dubofsky, *"Big Bill" Haywood* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 77-78.

²⁹ See Chapter Six, "Faithfully Yours for the Revolution," in Elliot Gorn, *Mother Jones: The Most Dangerous Woman in America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001).

frequently, spent a few years in Greenwich Village, took a trip to Europe, then moved to Chicago to run the IWW from its headquarters there.³⁰

Even after the WFM quit the IWW, A.S. Embree belonged to both and saw no conflict in his dual memberships. He traveled widely, although he usually lived in the West, including British Columbia; Nome, Alaska; Coeur d'Alenes, Idaho; Butte, Montana; San Diego, California; Bisbee, Arizona; and Denver, Colorado. Embree joined the IWW in its first year, 1905, and he is first mentioned as an IWW organizer in 1907, in Nome, Alaska, where he edited *The Nome Industrial Worker*.³¹ Embree moved from Nome to San Diego where he grew lettuce and worked as a grocery store clerk from 1910 to 1915.³² Married and father of a young son, perhaps he and his wife tried to create a life of domestic tranquility, although it is hard to imagine Embree contentedly settling into a grocer's life, especially considering what was going on around him in the San Diego region during that time.

On October 10, 1910, labor radicals set off a bomb in the *Los Angeles Times Building*. The explosion and subsequent fire killed twenty-one employees, an incident so terrifying, it sparked the formation of the US Commission on Industrial Relations. The next month, the Mexican Revolution officially began, although many unofficial battles had already been fought including one in Cananea, Sonora. In 1906,

³⁰ Melvyn Dubofsky, *"Big Bill" Haywood* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 77-78.

³¹ Letter from Fred Thompson to Phil Mason (archivist, Wayne State University), 17 November 1965, 26-44, IWW archives (hereafter referred to as IWW archives), Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.

³² "Sam Embree," Clinton Jencks Collection, Box 87, Fd. 10, Archives, University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries.

as part of its overt strategy to recruit more Mexicans,³³ the IWW (working through the WFM) led the Cananea strike that resulted in at least thirty and perhaps as many as one hundred miners being killed by 1,500 Mexican troops and 270 Arizona rangers who rode the forty miles from Bisbee to help put down the strike.³⁴ Mexican copper miners rebelled because not only did they make half of what whites were paid (a differential known as the Mexican wage), American and other foreign interests also owned and managed seventy-five percent of the mines (like Cananea) and the railroad lines throughout Mexico, which understandably created huge resentments among the Mexican people, most of whom were desperately poor. The political consequences of Cananea and textile strikes the following year contributed to the growing groundswell of discontent toward President Porfirio Díaz, who had held office since 1876, and who was (correctly) accused of granting greater protections to American corporations than to Mexican citizens.³⁵

In 1911, a splinter group fighting in the Mexican revolution, led by an American Wobbly and thirteen Mexicans, took over the town of Mexicali, while another group took over the border town of Tijuana only twenty miles south of San Diego in what came to be known as the Baja Revolution.³⁶ The ideological leaders behind the Baja invasion were Ricardo and Enrique Flores Magón, two Mexican anarchist brothers who, starting in 1905, led the *Partido Liberal Mexicano* (tied to

³³James A. Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands: Anarchism and the Plan of San Diego, 1904-1923*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 84.

³⁴John M. Hart, *Anarchism & the Mexican Working Class, 1860-1931*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 92.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 11.

³⁶Ethel Duffy Turner, *Revolution in Baja California: Ricardo Flores Magón's High Noon*, (Detroit: Blain Ethridge Books, 1981), 6.

the IWW) in attacks against Mexican dictator Porfirio Díaz. Díaz jailed them, they escaped, and by 1910, they had moved their headquarters to Los Angeles. From there, they tried to wrestle control of the Mexican Revolution away from Francisco Madero (whose headquarters had been San Antonio, Texas) during the first year of the Mexican Revolution, but after the Baja Revolution failed a year later, so did they.

When the Flores Magón brothers were put on trial in San Diego in 1911 for their revolutionary activities, rowdy Wobblies filled the courtroom during the proceedings.³⁷ We do not know whether Embree was in the courtroom or not, although he certainly was in spirit if nothing else. The Baja Revolution and trial coincided with an IWW free speech fight in San Diego that attracted Southern California Wobblies, itinerant IWWs, as well as radical “stars” like Emma Goldman, who came to town to speak, agitate, and fundraise for both the Wobblies and the Mexican anarchists.³⁸ Joyce Kornbluh writes, “[b]etween 1909 and 1913, there were at least twenty major I.W.W. free speech fights throughout the country. All of them involved the right of the organization to recruit members at street meetings.”³⁹ IWW speakers agitated not just for the right to organize workers, but also for their first amendment rights of speech and assembly, protests which influenced the future

³⁷ Lowell L. Blaisdell, *The Desert Revolution: Baja California, 1911* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1962), 191; Ward S. Albro, *Always a Rebel: Ricardo Flores Magón and the Mexican Revolution* (Ft. Worth: Texas Christian University, 1992), 142.

³⁸ Lawrence D. Taylor, “The Magonista Revolt in Baja California: Capitalist Conspiracy or Rebellion de los Pobres? *The Journal of San Diego History, San Diego Historical Society Quarterly*, Winter 1999, Volume 45, Number 1, available through the San Diego History Center, San Diego University, www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/99winter/magonista.htm, accessed 13 January 2012.

³⁹ Kornbluh, 95.

founder of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) Roger Baldwin to take up their cause, at first, strictly on behalf of labor, and later, on behalf of anyone who had something unpopular to express.⁴⁰ So, while the Wobblies espoused social and industrial revolution, they also claimed it was their American, Constitutional, first amendment right to do so.

It is hard to imagine Embree sitting on the sidelines as these activities swirled around him in Los Angeles, San Diego, and Baja California. At the very least, the ongoing militant activities must have convinced him that the grocery business was not his calling. Other sources also place Embree in Colorado during the 1910-1914 long strike.⁴¹ Perhaps, along with other, mostly Californian Wobblies, he came to Denver between 1912 and 1913, when the IWW waged its longest free speech battle of all.⁴² This two-year period also coincided with the peak of Progressive political dominance in Denver. Even though much has been written about the Wobblies, their free speech battles, and the long strike in Colorado, no source I have read has pointed out the obvious: the IWW free speech battle in Denver took place during the 1910-1914 Colorado coal strike—or as miners called it, the long strike—most infamously known for the 1914 Ludlow Massacre.

Since, as Kornbluh reminds us, one of the purposes of the free speech battles was to recruit new members in the cities before they dispersed to remote job sites where workers were harder to organize, the timing of Denver's free speech battle

⁴⁰ Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), 73.

⁴¹ Solski and Smaller, 9.

⁴² "Chapter Six: 'Denver Free Speech Fight, 1913,'" Philip S. Foner, ed., *Fellow Workers and Friends: I.W.W. Free-Speech Fights as Told by Participants* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981).

indicates that the IWW was, at least to some extent, involved in the UMW-led strike, especially since the WFM was also deeply involved in the strike, and since Embree surely could not have been the only dual member of both the WFM and the IWW. Moreover, as early as 1910 and continuing through the end of the strike in 1915, Colorado coal companies recruited strikebreakers from other states and even from other countries to try to keep the mines open. Many of those scabs would have passed through Denver's Union Station, arriving by train. The Wobblies soapboxed (literally standing on soapboxes, delivering speeches and acting out plays) outside the train station, probably trying to recruit strikebreakers before they took trains north or south to the coalfields to work. Unlike San Diego, where city boosters and officials violently suppressed the Wobblies' speech, progressive (but not Progressive) Denver police chief George Creel wrote that he directed the city's police force to let the Wobblies speak all they wanted.⁴³ Philip Foner's collection of first-person, free speech accounts, on the other hand, include three from Denver that describe mass arrests, police beatings, and an IWW hunger strike in jail, contradicting the benign scene Creel recalled.

Another interesting set of historical evidence suggests the Wobblies played a role in the long strike. Red bandanas, the kind the IWW overalls brigade had donned, symbolized striking coalminer solidarity during the 1910-1914 Colorado long strike. Of course, this cheap item of working class clothing might just have been coincidental uniform, but again, maybe not. By using the term "rednecks" (a surprisingly different meaning of the word than its modern-day usage), coalminers'

⁴³ George Creel, *Rebel at Large* (New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1947), 103.

enemies tried creating a pejorative term. However, the intended insult did not work, and miners proudly began referring to themselves as rednecks. The bandanas became so central to strikers' identities that they referenced them in the songs sung about the strike, and they posed for photographs, defiantly wearing the bandanas as symbols of their militance in the photographs that can be found online in the Denver Public Library's digital photo collections. Red bandanas also became the "uniform" of the 1921 Blair Mountain strike in West Virginia, in which anywhere from five to fifteen thousand striking coalminers marched and fought against their employers. This simple clothing item helps show the solidarity workers shared with each other from the early 1900s through the 1920s, regardless of whatever official labor group was trying to organize workers' efforts, a commonality that may also have signified simultaneous (which labor organizers and workers called dual) memberships in different labor organizations, such as the UMW, the WFM, and the IWW. Was Embree involved in the 1910-1914 Colorado coal strike? Although some sources claim he was, I have not found any definitive evidence proving so, although the possibilities are interesting to consider.⁴⁴

Between 1910 and 1916, Embree *may* have been in Southern California, Mexico, Colorado, and God knows where else given the Mexican Revolution and the IWW free speech fights going on during that time period. However, by 1917, Embree *definitively* surfaced in the copper mining town of Bisbee, Arizona. In fact, this is the first, last, and only time most historians mention Embree, since he was a strike

⁴⁴ Solski and Smaller, 9.

leader in what Joseph McCartin calls “the most infamous episode to come from the first year of the war,” the Bisbee deportation.⁴⁵ On June 27, 1917, the IWW declared a strike at Bisbee’s Copper Queen mine. In a pre-dawn sweep on July 11, a vigilante committee rounded up over two thousand strikers and sympathizers, corralling them into the town’s baseball field. By 11:00 a.m., after their captors’ kangaroo-court style of questioning—Will you go back to work if you’re released? Are you an American?—thinned the ranks, at least twelve hundred remaining strikers were marched through a gauntlet of armed men (Winchester rifles were the weapon of choice), forced onto waiting cattle cars (conveniently provided by Phelps-Dodge), and “deported” to Columbus, New Mexico.⁴⁶

In Columbus, federal troops held them captive for two months. Most of those troops had been stationed in Columbus because, just a year earlier, Mexican revolutionary Pancho Villa and his followers had invaded the town and killed eighteen people, leading President Woodrow Wilson to authorize “Black Jack” Pershing’s Punitive Expedition into Mexico. Although Pershing (who soon led the US troops in World War I) and his men never found Villa and so withdrew from Mexico five months before the Bisbee deportees arrived, until the official outbreak of World War I, many of the soldiers remained in Columbus, defending the US not from Villa, but instead from a more home-grown threat, IWW strikers.

⁴⁵ Joseph A. McCartin, *Labor’s Great War: The Struggle for Industrial Democracy and the Origins of Modern American Labor Relations, 1912-1921* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 42.

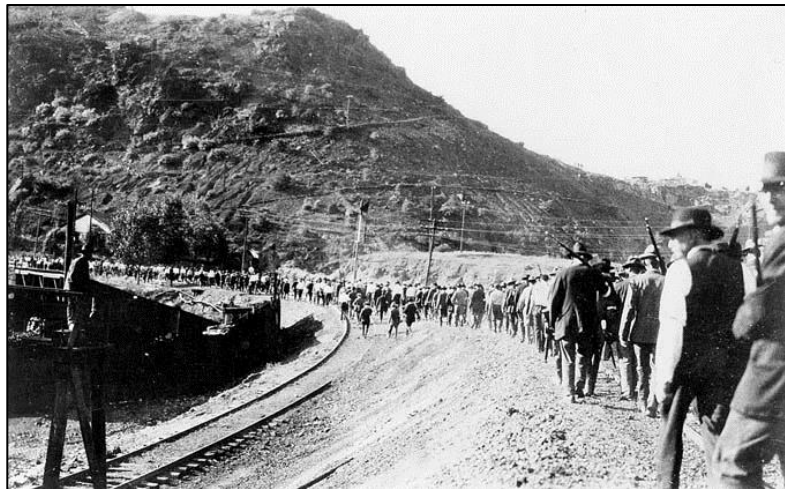
⁴⁶ Katherine Benton-Cohen, *Borderline Americans: Racial Division and Labor War in the Arizona Borderlands* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 1; James W. Byrkit, *Forging the Copper Collar: Arizona’s Labor-Management War, 1901-1921* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1982), 204.

A local photographer captured the initial Bisbee roundup, and many of the photographs are posted online through the University of Arizona archives and the Arizona Memory Project.

The photo below shows the gathering in the ball field.⁴⁷



Below is the gauntlet.⁴⁸



⁴⁷ "The Bisbee Deportation: A University of Arizona Web Exhibit," University of Arizona, Tempe, 2005, <http://www.library.arizona.edu/exhibits/bisbee/primarysources/photographs/deportation.html>, accessed 3 March 2012.

⁴⁸ Ibid., <http://www.library.arizona.edu/exhibits/bisbee/images/43171.jpg>, accessed 3 March 2012.

The photo below (with Embree third from the left) was one of many taken of the deportees in Columbus, New Mexico.⁴⁹



As already mentioned, Bisbee was neither the first nor the last labor deportation, but since it was the *largest*, it has received significant historical attention. Melvyn Dubofsky includes it as an important episode in his IWW survey, *We Shall Be All*. James W. Byrkit's *Forging the Copper Collar: Arizona's Labor-Management War, 1901-1921* argues the deportation allowed the copper bosses to paint all union members as reds so companies like Phelps-Dodge could eliminate organized labor in the 1920s.⁵⁰ Patricia Limerick, in *The Legacy of Conquest*, uses it as an example of Western interdependence on national and international mining

⁴⁹ Arizona Memory Collection, Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records, History and Archives Division, http://azmemory.lib.az.us/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/histphotos&CISOPTR=15163&REC=1, accessed 3 March 2012.

⁵⁰ James W. Byrkit, *Forging the Copper Collar: Arizona's Labor-Management War, 1901-1921* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1982).

interests.⁵¹ Joseph McCartin places the deportation in the first chapter of *Labor's Great War: The Struggle for Industrial Democracy and the Origins of Modern American Labor Relations, 1912-1921* to illustrate why the federal government, if it wanted to win the Great War, needed to establish a three-way partnership that included organized labor and businesses in order to successfully coordinate wartime production. The Bisbee deportation also serves as the turning point in Katherine Benton-Cohen's book exploring constructions of gender, race, and class in *Borderline Americans: Racial Division and Labor War in the Arizona Borderlands*.⁵²

Melvyn Dubofsky offers the clearest Bisbee deportation narrative in his book *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World*, the classic survey of the IWW, published in 1969. Placing the deportation within an outbreak of IWW copper strikes across Arizona and Montana as well as lumber strikes in the Pacific Northwest, Dubofsky calls Embree an IWW militant who led the pre-strike organizing efforts and also helped keep deportees unified during their two-month post-strike imprisonment.⁵³ During the deportation ordeal, Embree served as a spokesman, but above all else, he *wrote* flurries of telegrams and letters to local governmental officials, to IWW leader Bill Haywood, to US President Woodrow Wilson, and to the Secretaries of Labor and War.⁵⁴ He pleaded for blankets, food, Constitutional rights, aid to the men's families back in Bisbee (including his own), and transportation out of Columbus, New Mexico. Dubofsky shows that some of the

⁵¹ Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1987).

⁵² Katherine Benton-Cohen, *Borderline Americans: Racial Division and Labor War in the Arizona Borderlands* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

⁵³ Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 372, 387, 231.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 257-8.

IWW's best organizers, including Embree and Charles MacKinnon (Haywood's brother-in-law) were two-card men (they belonged to two unions), since, as was the case with many previous walkouts among miners, one would have needed a scorecard to keep up with the constantly shifting players and allegiances during the 1917 Arizona copper strikes.⁵⁵

Embree does not appear in McCartin's book by name, but he does appear by type. As mentioned in the introduction, McCartin delineates three views of industrial democracy that competed for dominance during the WWI era. The first, influenced by scientific management and progressivism, advocated cooperation between labor and management as a rational alternative to labor strife. Another, espoused by American Federation of Labor (AFL) advocates, believed that collective bargaining was the ultimate goal of industrial democracy. Embree represents a third strain of industrial democracy, a more radical vision that worked toward completely restructuring society.

Embree was a radical who wanted workers to fundamentally reshape society. He (selectively) advocated militant tactics in order to achieve a radical result, although over time, he modified his radical goals to align with reality. Historians disagree whether or not Wobblies ever had a coherent vision for society, so it is debatable to what extent Wobblies actually advocated racial, ethnic, and gender equality. It is fair to say that many members, such as Embree, at least thought and cared deeply about such issues, and while I have not been able to figure out Embree's views on gender, he consistently strove to eliminate ethnic and racial

⁵⁵ Ibid., 369.

discrimination. While his efforts and rhetoric by today's standards reek with racist assumptions, for his time, they were quite bold and egalitarian. Along with equalizing society's members, Wobblies said they wanted to abolish the wage system and that workers should control the means of production. That sounds Marxist, but they were not Communists, even though some of the IWW's most famous leaders, such as Big Bill Haywood and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, later joined the Communist Party (CP). By the 1920s, most Wobblies hated Communists as much as they hated capitalists, but that distinction counted for little during the red scare, when Wobblies became its primary target.⁵⁶

James McCartin also makes another important argument about industrial democracy during World War I. In exchange for AFL cooperation, "wartime federal labor policy ultimately sought two goals dear to the conservative leaders of the AFL—the destruction of the rival IWW and the federal protection of workers' rights to organize in 'bona fide' [AFL] unions."⁵⁷ Federal protection of workers to join AFL unions during the war and the attempted destruction of radical rivals such as the IWW did not lead to AFL membership growing after the war. In fact, AFL membership plummeted throughout the decade before organized labor purportedly revitalized itself at the beginning of the New Deal, jumpstarted by the 1933, John L. Lewis-led UMW resurgence, a relatively un-examined historical claim I will address in Chapter 7.

⁵⁶ William Preston, Jr., *Aliens and Dissenters: Federal Suppression of Radicals, 1903-1933*, 2nd ed. (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1963), 5; William H. Thomas, Jr., *Unsafe for Democracy: World War I and the U.S. Department's Covert Campaign to Suppress Dissent* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), 5.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 65.

Labor historians have long debated the causes of the 1930s' militant labor recrudescence, a revitalization of Progressive-era militancy that becomes even harder to understand when contrasted with the supposed passivity of 1920s' workers. James Byrkit, in *Forging the Copper Collar*, even argues that the 1917 IWW-led Bisbee strike was neither militant nor radical; Phelps-Dodge (PD) only *portrayed* it that way so that *all* organized labor could be painted red. Byrkit writes that most of the 1,200 deportees had not belonged to any union at all, much less the IWW (which he admits was radical). Of that number, only about one hundred were Wobblies, and among those, probably only twenty-five understood the IWW's philosophy. Many more deportees belonged to the more conservative Mine-Mill, and over three hundred strikers were "two-card" men, meaning they held membership cards in both Mine-Mill and the IWW. Byrkit writes, "Two-card men such as A.S. Embree...certainly were pragmatic unionists, not doctrinaire Wobblies."⁵⁸ In this dissertation, I will argue that Embree was both.

In *The Legacy of Conquest*, Patricia Limerick summarizes Byrkit's book, which she admires, but then disagrees with Byrkit when he takes a "peculiar tack at the end" by assigning blame for the Bisbee deportation to the "powerful colonial relationship [that] existed between the East and the West."⁵⁹ Limerick is right when she argues, "The long-range effect may have suited the interests of Eastern capitalists, but Western mining history, in Bisbee and elsewhere, is by no means a clear morality play of the conviving, manipulative East against the innocent,

⁵⁸ Byrkit, 299-300.

⁵⁹ Limerick, 122.

victimized West.”⁶⁰ In fact, Limerick argues, Bisbee showed the West’s economic interdependence, not independence, on national and international forces, since more than any other Western enterprise, mining relied on non-regional capital. Just as Limerick points out that the 1917 Bisbee deportation was more than an East vs. West morality play, the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike was part of a massive strike wave that unfolded throughout the United States from the 1920s through the early 1930s, although that lack of contextualization has led it to be forgotten in most US labor narratives. Instead, the coal strikes that roiled during that era, including the one in Colorado, have tended to be incorrectly portrayed as regional events.

Katherine Benton-Cohen makes the Bisbee deportation the turning point in *Borderline Americans: Racial Division and Labor War in the Arizona Borderlands*, a study exploring constructions and reconstructions of racial, gender, and national identities in southern Arizona from the late 1800s through the 1930s. She asks, “[W]hich borderline Americans became, in the minds of their neighbors and employers, ‘white Americans,’ and which ones did not”?⁶¹ Her answer, in short, was that everybody became white Americans except “Mexicans,” a word that has evolved into a loaded term, since it has come to describe any person, citizen or not, whose ancestors came to the US from Mexico. By the time the New Deal came to Bisbee, Benton-Cohen argues, Mexicans had become a segregated race, not an ethnicity, and the Bisbee deportation marked a turning point in this re-definition of whiteness for the community.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Benton-Cohen, 7.

Benton-Cohen's own evidence, however, undermines her claim. She quotes a letter from Embree written during the strike that made clear he "saw Mexican workers as 'a sure bet, as we are demanding a minimum of \$5.50 for all topmen.'" ⁶² But, she concludes that "this demand was never a main priority."⁶³ Embree's affiliation with the IWW from its founding, his actions, as well as his memories of the Bisbee strike refute Benton-Cohen's claim. Although there were a staggering number of job classifications in both coal and hard rock mining, topmen were the lowest paid. Topmen worked above ground, often separating the coal or ore from rock, washing the output, and loading it onto train cars. Considered low-skilled workers, they earned less than underground men. Oftentimes, however, the difference between above and underground work had less to do with skill than prejudice. Blacks in the East and Mexicans in the Southwest more often than not were relegated to topmen work, since their employers assigned and oftentimes their fellow workers laid claim to the better paying jobs.

Even though the list of Bisbee deportees contains well over twenty ethnicities and nationalities, the Embree quote Benton-Cohen provides shows that long before the 1930s, Mexicans were discriminated against more than other workers.⁶⁴ Although she claims that equalizing wages between the topmen and underground workers was never a priority, wage equalization had been one of the major causes of the IWW-led 1906 Cananea strike in Mexico, just one year after the organization's founding. As an old man asked to remember the Bisbee strike for

⁶² Ibid., 209.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Bisbee Deportation List, University of Arizona Online Exhibit, <http://digital.library.arizona.edu/bisbee/deportees/03.htm>, accessed 5 July 2004.

inclusion into the Mine Mill archives, Embree recalled that the two main causes of the Bisbee walkout were the speedup (increasing the rate of work beyond the point of safety) and the fact that Mexicans were not allowed to work underground, which meant they got paid two-to-three dollars less per day than all the other copper miners.⁶⁵ Embree also recalled that, in Bisbee, as soon as the strikers were deported, the Mexican workers' wives went to Lucy Embree's house, where together, they organized a relief committee for the families.⁶⁶

As the next chapter will show, the IWW listed wage equalization as their first demand in the 1927-1928 Colorado strike. In 1927-1928, IWW organizers and strikers also convinced Mexican contract beet workers to join the strike. Therefore, Embree clearly advocated ending discrimination against Mexican workers and their families (since beet work was family work). Apparently, Embree and other IWW organizers had begun successfully recruiting Mexicans entering the US through El Paso "enroute to the Colorado beet fields" as early as 1920, just three years after Bisbee.⁶⁷ Not only were Embree's views toward equalizing the Mexican wage consistent over time, Benton-Cohen also shows that Embree tried hard to keep the

⁶⁵ "Sam Embree," from page 2 of undated letter written by A.S. (who later went by the name Sam), which appears to have been written by an elderly Embree expressly for the archival collection Jencks was assembling, Clinton E. Jencks Collection, Box 87, Fd. 10, Archives, University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries. By the shaky hand, it appears Embree wrote the letter in his old age, since the handwriting differs from the firm, confident handwriting Embree displayed earlier in the 1920s. There's also a handwritten account A.S. Embree sent to Fred Thompson in 1930 on file in the IWW archives (145-25), sent in response to what Embree thought was a mistake-filled IWW Industrial Solidarity article published that year (letter from Fred Thompson to Phil Mason, 26-44, IWW archives & letter from Fred Thompson to Gilbert Mers, 25 February 1976, 9-12, Fred Thompson Collection, IWW archives).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁷ "IWW & Bolshevik Activities, Denver," Agent U-71, Case 24259, 29 June 1920: 4, microfilm R655, National Archives Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

Bisbee strike both sober and peaceful, goals he sought throughout later strikes he led. Overall, Embree's strike leadership exhibits a remarkable continuity over time, which we'll see after Embree leaves Bisbee in 1917.

After the Bisbee deportation, Embree and most of the other deportees were held in Columbus, New Mexico, for two months. Federal troops finally released him and the others being held, but as he was returning home to his family in Bisbee, just outside the city limits, local law enforcement authorities re-arrested Embree and set his bail so high (\$3,000), he could not pay it.⁶⁸ His jailers soon released him anyway, and in December of 1917, he returned to Tucson to stand trial, charged with inciting a riot. He was acquitted, and none of the other deportees was ever convicted of anything, suggesting that the charges against them either were too weak to stand up in court or that all along the real purpose of the deportation simply was to break the strike, which it successfully did.⁶⁹

Embree had returned to Arizona from Montana because after getting released on bail, he had headed north to Butte, where another copper strike was still in progress. The sister cities of Bisbee and Butte shared workers, organizers, technology, information, and in 1917, they also shared the distinction of producing more copper than anywhere else in North America.⁷⁰ The Bisbee and Butte strikes were both reactions to the Great War, because while copper was used for plumbing

⁶⁸ Byrkit, 260, 293.

⁶⁹ Ibid., William H. Thomas, Jr., *Unsafe for Democracy: World War I and the U.S. Justice Department's Covert Campaign to Suppress Dissent* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), 160.

⁷⁰ Byrkit, 20-21, 22, 152.

and light bulb filaments, it also sheathed bullets, which, of course, were in high demand during the war. The US economy boomed at the outbreak of war in 1914, corporate profits rose astronomically, and so did workers' wages, because workers suddenly found themselves in short supply. However, wages did not keep pace with wartime inflation, and that discrepancy helped lead to the 1917 strike wave, including Bisbee and Butte, that erupted all across industrial America in 1917 as the US was preparing to enter the war.

Mining corporations in both cities used wartime hysteria to crush organized labor, but workers helped stoke conservatives' worst fears, too. In Arizona, many workers openly sympathized with and fought for the Mexican Revolution's radical working class goals, which included nationalizing all natural resources and re-appropriating privately held estates to poor people. Butte mine owners did not have a nearby Mexican revolution to blame, but operators could, and did, assign the unpatriotic actions of striking miners to an interchangeable cast of "IWWs, Irish zealots, and German sympathizers," as well as radical Finns, again (as in Bisbee), with some justification.⁷¹ For example, when the federal government proclaimed June 2, 1917, national conscription day, on June 5, Finns, Irish patriots, and Wobblies marched together down Butte's main street in a raucous anti-conscription parade. Protestors had ample opportunity to plan their parade, since the groups shared not only the same meeting hall, but also some of the same leaders among their organizations.⁷²

⁷¹ David M. Emmons, *The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875-1925* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 373.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 366-7.

Butte had a much stronger labor tradition than Bisbee, but in the summer of 1917, the decisive anti-labor factor proved to be the addition of federal troops into the already volatile and hostile organized labor-mining operator relationship. After the federal government declared copper a “public utility,” federal troops protected its production. In *Aliens and Dissenters: Federal Suppression of Radicals, 1903-1933*, William Preston, Jr., writes that

While the federal forces in Arizona adopted a police role that was mildly and, to some degree unconsciously anti-labor, their counterparts in Butte, Montana, became at times the vigorous and open ally of the Anaconda Copper Company’s drive against radicals. The lynching of Wobbly organizer Frank Little in August 1917 had been the excuse for the troops to restore law and order. They remained until January 8, 1921.⁷³

During their occupation, federal troops openly allied with local copper mining officials to suppress strikes and eliminate the IWW. Federal government officials targeted Wobblies not just in Butte, but all across the nation. The fledgling US Justice Department Bureau of Investigation, renamed the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in 1935, joined, and soon came to lead, these anti-radical efforts. A young, energetic, virulently anti-red agent, J. Edgar Hoover, rose to power during this red scare campaign.⁷⁴ Justice Department records in the National Archives are filled with spy reports on IWW organizers, including Embree.⁷⁵ When Hoover became head of the future FBI in 1924, he continued pursuing the same kind of anti-

⁷³ William Preston, Jr., *Aliens and Dissenters: Federal Suppression of Radicals, 1903-1933*, 2nd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963, 1994), 110.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁷⁵ “Investigative Reports of the Bureau of Investigation 1908-1922,” Series: Old German Files, 1909-1921, Record Group: M1085, National Archives Administration, (hereafter referred to as NARA M1085), accessed through www.footnote.com and now re-named www.fold3.com, accessed 7 June 2008.

radical policies that had propelled him to power until his death in 1972, making Hoover one of the most important historical actors demonstrating continuity over time, especially in redbaiting organized labor.

On September 5, 1917, Justice Department officials and local policemen raided every IWW office (and most IWW leaders' homes) across the country, ransacking but also confiscating everything they could find.⁷⁶ Federal prosecutors used these materials as evidence against Wobblies who stood trial in Sacramento, Fresno, Omaha, and Wichita. Those trials followed the government's first showcase trial in Chicago (the IWW's headquarters) in which 113 leading Wobblies were charged with conspiring to undermine the US war effort. The trial dragged on for four months, an unprecedentedly long trial for that time.⁷⁷ The IWW seemed determined to turn the proceedings into theater, the same way they had used their earlier histrionic free speech fights to spread the IWW gospel. Witness after witness, including Embree (who testified about the Bisbee deportation), chronicled the deplorable conditions the working class faced across the country. The witnesses also, to a man, denied participating in any anti-war conspiracies. Although the trial exhibited high entertainment value, the IWW defense strategy failed utterly. After a one-hour jury deliberation, much to the defendants' surprise, the Chicago defendants were found guilty, and the judge, who had appeared tolerant and even bemused during the trial, handed out maximum sentences to most of the defendants, including twenty years for Haywood. Facing ill health and the rest of his

⁷⁶ Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 406.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 433.

life in jail, Haywood jumped bail and snuck into the USSR, where he remained until his death in 1928.

After the Chicago trial, the other federal IWW trials soon followed, achieving equally successful conviction rates. According to most historians, the government's persecution of the Wobblies, the 1918 trials and subsequent convictions, Haywood's defection, and the resulting schisms among the jailed and un-jailed Wobblies all led to the IWW's precipitous decline from which it never recovered. Historical monographs on the IWW generally agree with the World War I era death sentence, some with qualification, others with elaboration. William Preston, Jr., elaborates. He argues that the IWW drove the creation of the entire federal government's anti-radical mechanisms that still survive today.

Most labor monographs qualify the IWW's death a bit. They tinker around the edges as they challenge various aspects of Melvyn Dubofsky's IWW history *We Shall Be All*, but they follow his historical lead pronouncing the IWW defunct by 1921.⁷⁸ When the IWW-led 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike is mentioned in IWW

⁷⁸ Patrick Renshaw, *The Wobblies: The Story of the IWW and Syndicalism in the United States* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1967, 1999); Renshaw writes that the Chicago trials damaged the IWW beyond repair, and the 1924 schism was the final nail in the IWW coffin. He also writes that after the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, the former Wobblies joined the WFM (214).; Salvatore Salerno in *Red November, Black November: Culture and Community in the Industrial Workers of the World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), only looks at the IWW before World War I. Joyce L. Kornbluh's *Rebel Voices: An I.W.W. Anthology*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1964, 1968), consists of 12 subsections. The last is from 1924-1964, suggesting that she also dates the end of the IWW to the Midwest and western IWW schism; Two other historians also credit the 1924 schism as the practical end of the IWW, Greg Hall, *Harvest Wobblies: The Industrial Workers of the World and Agricultural Laborers in the American West, 1905-1930* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2001), and Nigel Anthony Sellars, *Oil, Wheat, and Wobblies: The Industrial Workers of the World in Oklahoma, 1905-1930* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998).

histories, which is rare, it is in declension mode. For example, in Joseph R. Conlin's collection of IWW essays, the strike is placed in the book's last section entitled "The I.W.W. After the Fall."⁷⁹ Conlin is following Dubofsky's *We Shall Be All* model that places details about the strike in the final chapter, "Remembrance of Things Past: The IWW Legacy." After summarizing the 1927-1928 strike, Dubofsky concludes that the only real benefit from the strike went not to the IWW but to the United Mine Workers who got a contract, and that by 1928, "Wobblies devoted more thought to reorganizing their general-defense committee than to organizing workers."⁸⁰

While his analysis is correct, it is worth expanding for several reasons. The Colorado strike was one of the most successful IWW strikes ever, so it was more than a freakish anomaly. It was also one of many large, militant strikes in the mid- to late 1920s, especially in the nation's coalfields. It is true that the UMW got a contract, but only because Josephine Roche invited them into her company, not because of anything the UMW did to earn it; she could control the UMW in a way she could not control the IWW. Dubofsky chose Embree's words as the final sentence in *We Shall Be All*, calling it a fitting epitaph for the Wobblies. From his 1917 jail cell, Embree wrote, "The end in view is well worth striving for, but in the struggle itself lies the happiness of the fighter."⁸¹ When Embree wrote that statement, he hardly intended it as an elegiac declaration for a dying organization. His statement encapsulated a lifelong philosophy. So, how did his struggle on behalf of the working class turn out after the Bisbee deportation?

⁷⁹ Conlin, *At the Point of Production: A Local History of the I.W.W.*, 165.

⁸⁰ Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 477.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 484.

It continued. As soon as Embree got out of jail in Arizona, he headed for Butte, and the copper strike there led to the brutal lynching of IWW organizer Frank Little on August 1, 1917.⁸² In 1918, Embree left Butte for Chicago, to testify and to help coordinate the defense efforts for the Chicago trial.⁸³ After the verdicts, Embree wrote the introduction to an IWW-published book, intended to defray the costs of the trial. It included excerpts of trial testimony Wobblies wanted to publicize, including their persecution, the itinerant habits they were forced to adopt in search of seasonal work, the unfairness of brutal bosses, and the excesses of the idle rich who, for example, thought nothing about conducting elaborate weddings for their jewel-encrusted dogs, all paid for by exploiting workers they never even saw.⁸⁴

After the Chicago trial, Embree moved back to Butte where he helped organize IWW strikes in 1918, 1919, and 1920. Embree and the other Butte Wobblies were usually foiled by the overpowering alliance of Anaconda Copper Mining Company, local law enforcement, and federal troops (commanded by future general Omar Bradley). Following the unsuccessful 1917 strike, there had been a two-week 1918 walkout, followed by an 8,000 Butte miner walkout in 1919.⁸⁵ During that strike, federal troops bayoneted strikers first on the picket line again at

⁸² Little became the second most important IWW martyr. The first, Joe Hill, an IWW songwriter, organizer, and activist, was executed in 1915 by a Utah firing squad after being convicted of murdering a grocer during a robbery gone bad. The third, Wesley Everest, a lumberjack and former service man, was lynched in the hysteria following the 1919 Seattle General Strike.

⁸³ Solis and Smaller, 9.

⁸⁴ Robert M. Fogelson and Richard E. Robenstein, eds., *Mass Violence in America* (New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1969), reprint of Harrison George, *The I.W.W. Trial: Story of the Greatest Trial in Labors's History by One of the Defendants*, probably published by the IWW Press in Chicago in 1918.

⁸⁵ Dave Walter, "Who Killed Tom Manning?", 213.

the IWW hall (the same place from which Frank Little had been abducted in 1917, before he was dragged from a car, beaten, and hanged from a bridge).⁸⁶ Although miners won temporary victories in that strike, they spent the next year organizing for their next strike in 1920.

Stanley S. Phipps documented Embree's role in those post-war Butte strikes using local newspapers in Montana and Idaho, magazine articles published from that time period, trial transcripts, and most importantly, German Spy File Records from the National Archives (reports solicited by the Justice Department during World War I). Citing a 1920 *McClure's* magazine article that described Embree as the IWW's "ablest tactician," Phipps shows that, as he had done in Bisbee and would do again in Colorado, Embree urged workers to pursue dual memberships.⁸⁷ That way, the IWW also could have a voice within all of Butte's labor organizations, which was not much of an issue, since the Metal Mine Workers Union (the independent Butte union) and the newly formed One Big Union movement out of Canada were "virtually indistinguishable from the I.W.W.," anyway.⁸⁸ Although most of the public strike demands focused on "bread and butter" issues, Embree included some controversial items (such as the release of IWW political prisoners from jail) to link those conservative demands to more radical Wobbly goals.⁸⁹ As he had done before and would do again, Embree combined radical goals with pragmatic tactics by

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Quote from Harold Lloyd Varney, "X-Raying the Red Philosophy," *McClure's*, August 1920, 28, in Stanley S. Phipps, "A.S. Embree: Labor Leader and Prisoner of Conscience," *The Speculator: A Journal of Butte and Southwest Montana History*, Vol. 2 No. 2 (Summer 1985), 38.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Walter, "Who Killed Tom Manning?", 214.

making sure war veterans wore their uniforms on the picket line.⁹⁰ In 1917, Wobblies had been accused of being treasonous. In every strike afterward, Embree included patriotic appeals.

The 1920 Butte walkout began on April 19. For its first two days, pickets successfully stopped strikebreakers from entering the mine by blocking the main roads to work. The second day of the strike, IWW organizers, including Embree, tried closing down all Butte saloons and card rooms. Staying true to his strict Methodist upbringing, Embree wanted IWW rules strictly enforced: No drinking and no gambling, not even any card playing, were to take place during a strike.⁹¹ The day after the “dry squad” raids, on April 21, Embree led picketing on the Anaconda Road, outside the main entrance to the Neversweat Mine. When the Butte sheriff tried breaking the pickets up, they refused to budge, declaring they had a right to assemble there, because it was a public road paid for with road-taxes; some of the men even produced their road tax receipts as evidence.⁹² Accounts, as they always do, varied as to what happened next, but guards, local law enforcement officials, and picketers began fighting. A barrage of gunshots rang out, and sixteen men were wounded, all picketers who had been shot in the back as they tried to run. One of those men, Tom Manning, died.

Immediately after the Anaconda Road shootings, over two hundred more federal troops were sent to Butte, intensifying the already oppressive atmosphere there. As would be the practice for the next decade or so, a coroner’s jury of six was

⁹⁰ Phipps, 38.

⁹¹ Report from Agent J.L. Webb in Butte, Montana, on 21 April 1920, M1086, available through www.footnote.com/1351626, accessed 7 June 2010.

⁹² Walter, “Who Killed Tom Manning?”, 216.

called to investigate Manning's death. As with the coroner's jury called after the November 21, 1927, Columbine Massacre, the IWW produced its own attorneys who tried to inject evidence that would have introduced the miners' version of events into the official record. However, in both cases, law enforcement officials and mine guards did most of the testifying. Besides, the wounded miners could not identify who had shot them, since their backs had been turned to their shooters. Tom Manning was in no position to identify anyone, either, and no one was indicted for his murder.

Montana Historical Society's Research Historian Dave Walter concludes that the coroner's jury, which failed to assign blame for Manning's death in spite of overwhelming evidence that identified the shooters, was the last straw for the IWW in Butte. When the strike officially ended on May 12, the miners lost. Copper miners, Walter argues, simply gave up fighting after they saw that every powerful force in Butte was aligned against them, including the court system. In the decade following the shooting of Tom Manning, Butte copper miners unions disintegrated, their wages fell, and their former, legendary worker and ethnic solidarity (Butte had been a predominantly Irish town) waned. Walter's interpretation aligns with the historical narrative of the 1920s as a quiescent decade for labor.

After testifying before the coroner's jury, Embree traveled to Idaho both to help raise bail money and to testify for fellow Wobblies on trial for criminal syndicalism there. When states (not the federal government, which tried Wobblies on charges of sedition and treason) brought charges against Wobblies, they were

criminal syndicalism violations. Idaho passed the first such law in 1917, and twenty other, mostly Western, states followed suit by 1920.⁹³ Those laws outlawed individuals associating with others for criminal purposes, but the laws' real intentions were to snare Wobblies, which they did.

After testifying in Idaho, Embree was arrested. Until then, he had proven remarkably adept at staying out of jail. Even though jailed after Bisbee and charged with inciting a riot there, he had been acquitted in December of 1917.⁹⁴ He escaped espionage and sedition charges in all of the 1918 federal trials, no small feat for a Wobbly as visible as Embree. By April of 1919, he found himself under indictment again, this time with twenty other Wobblies in Spokane, Washington. Once again, he escaped conviction.⁹⁵

Embree's non-incarcerated status deeply frustrated Justice Department agent E.B. Sisk, who wrote a letter to his boss suggesting that perhaps the easiest way get to rid of Embree would be to deport him, since Canadians were British Commonwealth citizens.⁹⁶ Although Embree had started the process of becoming an American citizen, he had not finished the process. He had taken out his first

⁹³ "*Whitney v. California*—The California Criminal Syndicalism Act," *Law Library, American Law and Legal Information*, <http://law.jrank.org/pages/22799/Whitney-v-California-California-Criminal-Syndicalism-Act.html>, accessed 15 August 2013; Byrkit, 280; Preston, 123-5; for a more complete legal exploration of criminal syndicalism laws, see Ahmed White, "The Crime of Economic Radicalism: Criminal Syndicalism Laws and the Industrial Workers of the World, 1917-1927, 85 *Oregon Law Review* 649 (2006).

⁹⁴ "H.H. Mock report from Tucson, Arizona, submitted 10 December 1917," M1085, available through www.footnote.com/image/1352900, accessed 7 June 2010.

⁹⁵ Letter from Department of Justice Agent E.B. Sisk to W. E. Allen, Acting Chair [Justice] on 15 April 1919, M1085, available through www.fold.com/image/1353190, accessed 17 June 2012.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

citizenship papers in Nome, Alaska, in either 1909 or 1910.⁹⁷ Then, he had taken out his second papers in San Diego, but since he had no witnesses, they were invalid.⁹⁸ He had even bought Liberty bonds and registered for the draft, but at forty-two years of age, the married father of by-now two children must have known he was unlikely to be called.⁹⁹ None of those efforts made him a citizen, though, and that meant he could be deported.

The problem with the Justice Department's deportation plan was that the Immigration Department (under the Department of Labor) refused to cooperate. A month after Agent Sisk wrote his boss suggesting the deportation route for Embree, Sisk had to write his boss again, letting him know that Immigration Department officials were refusing to cooperate, since the department's instructions were *not* to deport IWWs just because of their membership in that organization.¹⁰⁰ Apparently, during the World War I red scare era, the Immigration Department was the most important federal governmental entity refusing to target Wobblies or to cooperate with those that did. From 1917 to 1920, Justice Department officials; local law enforcement agents in Arizona, Montana, Illinois, Washington, and Idaho; the US Postal Service; Army officers, and Justice Department agents freely shared information about Embree—case number 109390—with each other (through spying on him and his associates and opening their mail) as they attempted to

⁹⁷ Report from Agent E.W. Byrn, Jr., in Butte, Montana, 16 December 1919, M0185, available through www.footnote.com/1351605, accessed 7 June 2010.

⁹⁸ "Adolphus Stewart Embree," Report on 10 November 1919, available through www.footnote.com/1349941, accessed 7 June 2010.

⁹⁹ Bisbee deportation list.

¹⁰⁰ Letter from Department of Justice employee E.B. Sisk to W.E. Allen on 19 May 1919, available through www.fold3.com/1353789, accessed 17 June 2012.

gather enough evidence to either get an arrest that might stick or to convince Immigration that he was threatening enough to deport.¹⁰¹

With Immigration uncooperative, Justice Department agents hatched another plan. Since they could not get Embree deported or make any charges against him stick in Arizona, Washington, or Montana, they would “entice” him into Idaho, a state with a much more hostile attitude towards Wobblies, and arrest him there.¹⁰² That plan worked, and Embree was arrested in Idaho on May 25, 1920. Immediately afterward, a federal agent contacted the prosecuting attorney in Idaho, offering to share all the information the Justice Department had amassed so far on Embree. The prosecutor politely thanked him and said if he brought the case to trial, he would certainly avail himself of that offer. However, he wrote, “We have not a strong case against Embree, for the reason that it is necessary for us to prove that he organized or attempted to organize the I.W.W. in this county. The officers were over eager and arrested him before he had fairly started.”¹⁰³ After making bail, Embree returned to Butte, but in spite of its weakness, the prosecutor did not drop Embree’s case.

¹⁰¹ Memo from H.B. Mock in Tuscon, Arizona, to Chicago Bureau of Investigation Office, 10 December 1917, 2-3 & 5, www.footnote.com/image/1352900; Letter from E.F. Kinknead, Major, U.S. Army to Mr. A. Bruce Bielaski, Chief, Bureau of Investigation, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C., 12 September 1918, www.footnote.com/image/1352986; both accessed 7 June 2011; Letter from W.W. Laurar, Office of the Solicitor, Post Office Department, to Mr. A.B. Bielaski, Chief, Bureau of Investigation, 13 September 1918, www.fold3.com/image/1354220, accessed 17 June 2012.

¹⁰² Report from Agent J.L. Webb from San Antonio on 16 June 1920, M1086, available through www.footnote.com/1351207, accessed 7 June 2010.

¹⁰³ Photostat of letter from Mr. H.J. Hull to Agent F.M. Kelly, 29 May 1920, Justice Report of 4 June 1920, M1086, available through www.footnote.com/1351068, accessed 7 June 2010.

When Embree had left for Idaho after the Anaconda Road shootings, he had not planned on staying long, but his unexpected arrest left his family in dire financial straits in Butte, creating a situation that lets historians get a rare glimpse of Embree's home life. With her husband in jail, Lucy Embree allowed Special Agent D.H. Dickason (who misrepresented himself as a county official) into their Butte home. Dickason had been instructed by the Butte agent in charge of the Embree investigation to "ascertain the manner in which Embree has provided for her, if ever, by work and so forth."¹⁰⁴

Lucy's situation had grown so desperate, she had asked for and received \$20 grocery money from county officials. The *Butte Post*, friendly to the Anaconda Copper interests, then published an article detailing how the wife of A.S. Embree, "the I.W.W. leader who took a prominent part in the riot on Anaconda Road on the afternoon of April 21, and who testified at the inquest on the body of Thomas Manning, had become a county charge."¹⁰⁵ The article so humiliated and incensed Lucy, she fired off a response published the following day in the labor-friendly newspaper, *The Butte Daily Bulletin*.¹⁰⁶ Apparently, those two articles triggered the agent's visit.

Agent Dickason described Lucy Embree as a nervous, seventy-one pound woman who held the same radical beliefs as her husband. (How he discovered her weight, his report does not say.) The Embrees had two children, a ten-year-old boy

¹⁰⁴ Report from Special Agent D.H. Dickason in Butte, Montana, 29 May 1920, M1086, available through www.footnote.com/1350990, accessed 7 June 2010.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Report from Special Agent D.H. Dickason in Butte, Montana, 1 June 1920, available through www.footnote.com/1350963, accessed 7 June 2010.

and a baby girl. Dickason reported that Lucy Embree believed her husband “ ‘got in bad’ with the police by trying to stop the boot-leggers,” because the police were on the take from the bootleggers. Her husband had been blacklisted as a miner since Bisbee, and that was where she had lost a baby because of the terrible company doctors there. She showed the agent the baby’s picture, cried, and “as any mother says,” she told him that baby “was the sweetest of all.” During the interview, the telephone operator called, delivering a telegram from Embree since it was their wedding anniversary. The message was, “Love to the children. I’m all right.” The special agent ended his report with the following assessment: “She is absolutely loyal to him in every way and entertains his views without reservation. There is no literature nor propaganda work of any kind around the house, just a meagerly furnished poor couple of rooms in an undesirable location. She and the children were poorly dressed. Investigation concluded.”¹⁰⁷

As the special agent was snooping around their home, Embree was being released from jail in Idaho. However, after Embree returned to Butte, the Justice Department “circulated rumors among I.W.W. members that Sam [the name he began using] Embree was a ‘stool pigeon and a traitor.’”¹⁰⁸ The whispering campaign seemed to work, since he was removed from the Butte IWW organizing committee.¹⁰⁹ Over this year long period, as Embree awaited trial, correspondence between the Wallace County prosecutor and Justice Department agents continued. Agent F.W. Kelly was especially helpful, sending the Idaho prosecutor copies of

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Phipps quoting Justice Department records, 40.

¹⁰⁹ Phipps, 40.

Embree's courtroom testimonies over the years, including the Manning coroner's report. Kelley advised the prosecutor, "Embree is an experienced and cautious witness," so be careful if you put him on the stand to testify.¹¹⁰ Not only had federal agents plied the district attorney with information, a "representative of the Bunker Hill and Sullivan mining company instructed local officials to 'spare no expense' in their prosecution of Embree."¹¹¹

A year after Embree's arrest, he returned to Idaho to stand trial, and in 1921, he was convicted of criminal syndicalism and sent to the Idaho state penitentiary. Even though his sentence was twenty years, wartime hysteria soon died down. Also, because of several excellent defense committees' efforts, almost all the Wobblies convicted since 1918 were released from federal and state prisons by 1925. Embree was released in 1924, the last Wobbly to be freed in Idaho.¹¹² After a year's probation in that state, spent in abject poverty, since he was forbidden to organize and nobody would hire him, he and his family spent a similarly miserable year in British Columbia.¹¹³

By 1926, Embree was finally a free man once again. Yet, in spite of all he and his family had been through, Embree was unrepentant. Contrary to historical accounts that declare otherwise, there were still leaders such as Embree, who considered themselves Wobblies, through and through. The Embrees moved to

¹¹⁰ From two letters part of Agent F.M. Kelly's 4 June 1920 Report; Letter from Agent Charles K. Andrews to Agent F.W. Kelley on 1 June 1920, www.footnote.com/1351068; Letter from agent F.W. Kelley to H.J. Hull on 4 June 1920, M1086, www.footnote.com/1351001, accessed 7 June 2010.

¹¹¹ Phipps quoting Department of Justice records, 39.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Solski and Smaller, 10.

Chicago, the IWW headquarters, where he planned to resume his IWW career.

However, the IWW had become a very different organization while Embree had been in jail and on probation, as he was about to find out.

Chapter 2:
A.S. Embree:
IWW Leader of the 1927-1928 Colorado Coal Strike

On August 8, 1927, Colorado's coalminers working in the southeast quadrant of the state stunned their bosses when they laid down their picks and went on strike. IWW organizer and spokesman A.S. Embree told the newspapers that the men had walked out to show their support of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, who were scheduled to die soon in the Massachusetts electric chair.¹ The idea circulating in radical circles at the time was that if enough working class people all over the world went out on a general strike, the governor of Massachusetts would surely stop the pending executions. It did not.

By the 1950s, Embree told an historian that the Sacco and Vanzetti strike had been a test to gauge how united the workers really were before he knew what steps to take next in organizing Colorado's coalminers.² After the walkout succeeded, he knew the miners were ready and willing to strike, not just for a short-term demonstration of solidarity on Sacco and Vanzetti's behalf, but also for themselves. Embree dreamed big: He hoped a successful Colorado strike would revitalize the declining fortunes of the IWW and serve as a starting point for coalminers across the

¹ "Final Action Taken at Sunday Night Meeting Despite Statements of Commission Members that Strike Would Violate State Law," *The Pueblo [Colorado] Chieftan*, 7 August 1927: 1.

² Historian Donald J. McClurg interviewed A.S. Embree in Denver, Colorado, on August 17, 1953. He wrote what is probably the best article on the strike, "The Colorado Coal Strike of 1927—Tactical Leadership of the IWW," published in *Labor History* in 1963: 68-92. The article expanded upon material from his unpublished 1959 dissertation for his PhD in economics, "Labor Organization in the Coal Mines of Colorado, 1878-1933," available at the Carnegie Branch of the Boulder [Colorado] Public Library.

United States to coalesce in a movement outside the reach of the United Mine Workers (UMW) and its authoritarian president, John L. Lewis.

Embree's stated reasons for the strike, both in August of 1927 and almost thirty years later, might be equally true. After all, it was this mix of radicalism and pragmatism, of old and new, that made Embree an effective labor leader. Examining Embree's leadership during the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike will show continuities from the past in his strike leadership that also carried over into the future, providing an excellent example of militant, not quiescent, workers led by a deeply vital, not diminished, IWW.

In labor histories, the 1927-1928 Colorado strike has been portrayed as a last gasp for the dying Wobblies (as in Melvyn Dubofsky's *We Shall Be All*), a brief recrudescence of radicalism tied to the executions of Sacco and Vanzetti amid an otherwise staid decade (as in David Montgomery's *The Fall of the House of Labor*), or a localized case study, such as Donald J. McClurg's 1963 *Labor* article, "The Colorado Coal Strike of 1927—Tactical Leadership of the IWW." McClurg called the strike the most successful in Colorado history, and he is right. Most of the state's coalminers walked off the job and they also got a pay raise, the only coalminers in the country who made more money, at least for a few years, between the end of World War I and the New Deal.³ It further weakened the Rockefeller Plan, the "company union" that Mackenzie King and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., had created a decade earlier in response to public outcry over the Ludlow Massacre during the 1910-1914 Colorado coal

³ Ibid., 89.

strike.⁴ By August of 1928, it even led Josephine Roche, the president of the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company (RMFC), to sign a contract with the United Mine Workers (UMW), one of the few new (not renewal) agreements the beleaguered union gained before the beginning of the New Deal in 1933.

However, the strike was not as fruitful for its original organizers—the IWW or Embree. It created a whole new schism within the already struggling organization, which hastened its decline. Even though he led a spectacularly successful strike, Embree became a pariah within the IWW, and he and his family struggled to survive until the late 1930s when the rise of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) revived his personal, labor organizing fortunes once again. Although the strike led to a contract between the RMFC and the UMW, which would seem to be a victory for the workers, the UMW had played no role in the strike whatsoever, except to denounce it. In 1928, the UMW was at its nadir, and the contract that emerged from the Colorado coal strike was negotiated from the union’s weakness, not strength. Furthermore, the particular brand of AFL unionism the UMW espoused in the late 1920s was far removed from the egalitarian model the IWW had promoted during its Colorado strike.

That 1928 UMW contract must have been especially hard for Embree to accept, since it had been that organization’s almost complete absence from the state that allowed Embree to begin his own, slow, methodical organization efforts in

⁴ Jonathan H. Rees, “Chapter Seven: New Union, Same Struggle,” in *Representation and Rebellion: The Rockefeller Plan at the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, 1914-1942* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2010).

March of 1926. Almost as soon as he arrived, Embree wrote a lengthy report assessing the situation in Colorado. The first thing Embree expressed was his unequivocal desire to move back to Chicago, at the latest by early June, so he could rejoin his family. He recommended several Wobblies he thought would do a good job organizing “among the Italians and Slavs who were formerly members of the UMWA,” even though the “main work is to be done among the Mexicans,” since the “Americans and Welsh who are working in the mines are mostly loyal slaves of the companies and it will be practically impossible to line them up in any union except that approved by the boss. But they do not figure largely numerically.”⁵

Embree reported 14,000 coalminers in Colorado, although most newspapers reported closer to 12,500. Almost two-thirds worked in the southern fields and “they have proven that they are good material as union men by the battles they have fought in 1913-1914 and other years. Their betrayal by international officials of the U.M.W.A. in 1921-1922 has disgusted them with that organization and they are now willing to listen to what the I.W.W. has to offer.”⁶ In 1921-1922, Lewis declared a UMW strike that resulted in a contract between already unionized coalfields and their operators. Significantly, Lewis left non-unionized fields out of the agreement, even though many coalminers in those regions, including Colorado, had also joined the strike. Coalminers in Colorado (as well as West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Alabama, Kansas, and others) felt Lewis had abandoned them, which created much bitterness

⁵ Report from A.S. Embree to the Metal Mine IWW meeting, 3-4 March 1926, 51-16, IWW archives.

⁶ Ibid.

against Lewis and the UMW headquarters, a sentiment that Embree played upon as he organized.

In June of 1926, Embree got his wish and returned to Chicago, editing the IWW newspaper *Industrial Solidarity* that summer. It did not take him long to lose that job since the General Executive Board (GEB) decided that Embree was “incapable of detecting the subtle propaganda” that Communists were successfully slipping into the IWW newspaper.⁷ Embree had been out of circulation for so long in jail, “where he served four years for activity in behalf of Revolutionary Industrial Unionism,” he wasn’t able to understand the subtle ideological battles that had gone on in his absence.⁸ So, although “no discredit is reflected on him, but much credit is due him for the personal sacrifices he has made,” the board “decided that it was best to release this fellow worker for other organization work.”⁹ The GEB sent Embree back to Colorado.

John S. Gambs has a different interpretation on why Embree was returned to Colorado, and we have good reason to trust Gambs on this. Gambs was an academic, a Ph.D. economist who taught at Columbia. He wrote *The Decline of the I.W.W.*, published in 1932, as a supplement to another Columbia Ph.D. economist’s book, Paul F. Brissenden’s earlier IWW study published in 1920.¹⁰ In the book’s introduction, Gambs makes it clear that he had access to Brissenden’s voluminous research notes on the Wobblies from their beginning until 1920 (which, unlike most

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ John S. Gambs, Ph.D., *The Decline of the I.W.W.* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1932); Paul Frederick Brissenden, Ph.D., *The I.W.W.: A Study in American Syndicalism* (New York, NY: Columbia University, 1920).

IWW documents, were *not* confiscated during the WWI era red scare), and he also interviewed many 1920s Wobblies, making him one of the relatively few disinterested researchers examining the IWW in that decade.¹¹ The following is what Gambs had to say about Embree:

In interviews I have gathered that the man sent to Colorado, A.S. Embree, was looked upon as too strong a man to have near general headquarters in Chicago. He had recently been released from prison; he had a personal following; he was, therefore, a threat to office-seekers and office-holders. Embree was sent to Colorado, presumably, because it seemed a hopeless place to go. It is further alleged by interviewees, that when Embree proved himself to be a successful agitator in Colorado, he was immediately withdrawn from the scene.¹²

As this dissertation will show, my research completely supports Gambs' assessment. Did Embree understand what was happening to him? We don't know. We do know that when so directed by the IWW's GEB, Embree loyally returned to Colorado and continued organizing southern Colorado coalminers. Soon, fellow worker Kristen Svanum joined him, and after their efforts showed promise, the IWW sent even more organizers to Colorado, including Paul Seidler and Byron Kitto. However, Embree and Svanum formed the nucleus of organization work.

The pair began by conducting "missionary work": quiet, door-to-door, person-to-person organizing. That kind of organizing was easiest where coalminers owned or rented their own homes. "Closed camps," essentially company towns, were the hardest to penetrate, since company officials and guards kept those men and their families under close supervision. Strangers were easy to spot, so Embree knew each camp needed at least one delegate, an organizer within the camp. The delegate

¹¹ Gambs, 6 & 125.

¹² Gambs, 145.

needed to be stealthy; otherwise, he would get fired. He also needed to speak whatever languages the men in the camps spoke, and increasingly, that meant Spanish.

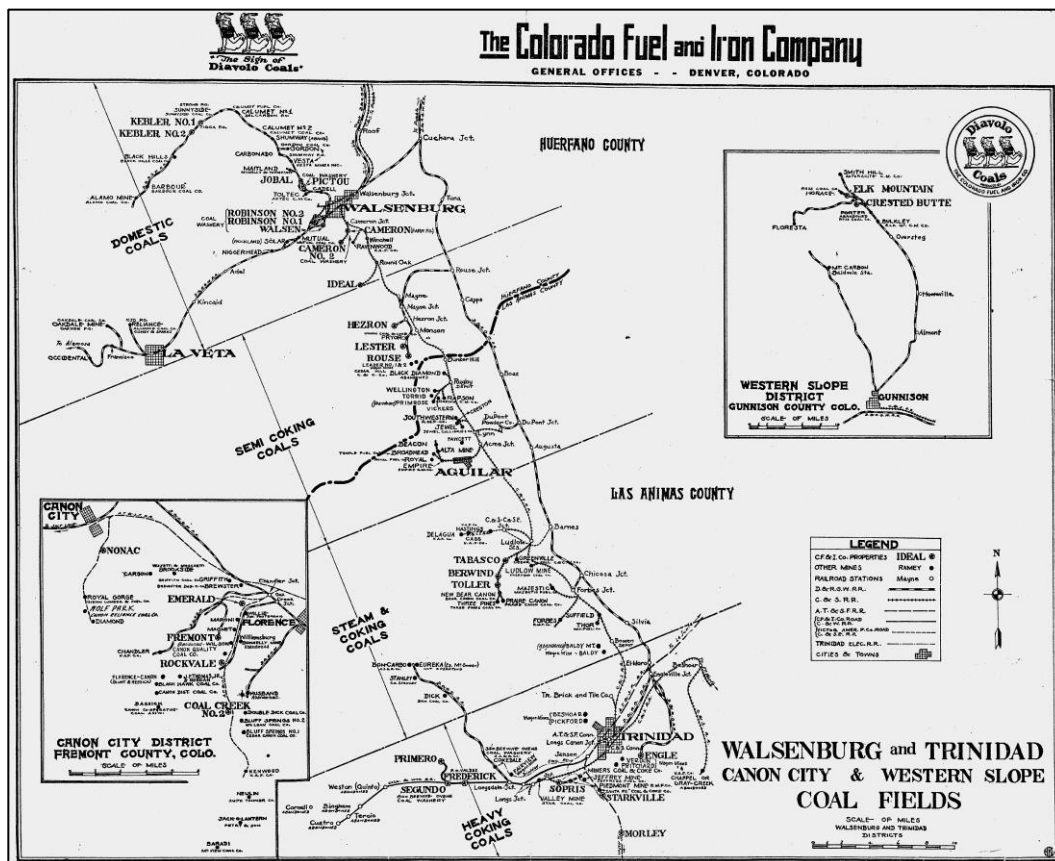
The flood of southern and eastern European immigrants who had comprised the majority of strikers in the 1910-1914 long strike slowed to a trickle at the outbreak of WWI, then practically stopped with the passage of 1920s restrictive federal immigration legislation, especially the 1924 National Origins Act. At the urging of western agribusinesses like Great West Sugar (headquartered in Denver), federal politicians exempted Mexicans from the 1924 act. Combined with the still tumultuous, post-revolutionary domestic turmoil in Mexico and increased demand for cheap labor in the US, Mexican immigration to the US exploded in the 1920s, especially in the American Southwest. One historian estimates that IWW pamphlets and flyers published in Spanish and English (as they often were) would have reached eighty-six percent of the literate coalminers. (Thirty-five percent couldn't read).¹³ Organizers who spoke English and Spanish could communicate with ninety-five percent of the coalminers.¹⁴

Embree chose Walsenburg, in Colorado's southern fields, as the IWW's headquarters. At first, however, most of the meetings were not held there. Instead, they were held after work or on Sundays, the miners' day off, in the open air, often at the Ludlow Memorial. Not only did the memorial rekindle, as well as reshape

¹³ Bobbalee Shuler, "Scab Labor in the Colorado Coal Fields: A Statistical Study of Replacement Workers during the Columbine Strike of 1927-1928," in *Essays and Monographs in Colorado History*, David N. Wetzel, ed. (Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 1988), 67.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 66.

memories of past struggles, solidarity, and ultimate betrayal by the United Mine Workers, it also provided a central, unsupervised meeting place for several nearby closed camps. Today, the memorial is just a mile west of Interstate-25, but in 1927, it was a relatively isolated spot on a dirt, county road, near the railroad tracks, rarely traveled except by people going to or from the coal camps. Ludlow is south of Aguilar, north of Trinidad. The Tabasco, Berwind, and Toller mines are up Berwind Canyon from the Ludlow Monument, sited at the mouth of the canyon, where the Ten-Day War exploded after the Ludlow Massacre. The early 1930s map below shows the southern Colorado CF&I coalmining region.¹⁵



¹⁵ "Walsenburg and Trinidad, Canon City and Western Slope Coal Fields," published by Colorado Fuel & Iron (CF&I), [early 1930s], Bessemer Historical Society/CF&I Archives (referred to as CF&I Archives), Pueblo.

By December 6, 1926, Embree and Svanum felt strong enough to shift their organization efforts from private into public view. They invited Elizabeth Gurley Flynn to speak in Walsenburg, Aguilar, and Pueblo. Even though thirty-six years old, Flynn was still known as the Rebel Girl, a nickname she acquired in 1915 after visiting IWW organizer and songwriter Joe Hill in a Utah jail before his imminent execution.¹⁶ Smitten by Flynn, Hill wrote the song “Rebel Girl” for her, which glorified the virtues of strong women in the labor movement.

For over twenty years, IWW member Flynn spoke on the Wobblies’ behalf. As a female oratorical agitator, she followed in Mother Jones’ footsteps. During the 1910-1914 Colorado strike, Mother Jones’ fiery oratory proved so incendiary, the coal operators tried everything in their power to prevent her from speaking. She inspired the men, but especially the women, to follow her militant example. By the 1920s, Mother Jones had retired, society was changing, and Flynn’s life was changing with it. Politically, Flynn began shifting toward Communism, although she would not officially announce her CP membership until 1936. Increasingly, the kind of speaking Flynn had spent years perfecting was becoming obsolete as motion pictures and radio created new, more intimate methods of communicating with large crowds of people. Also, Flynn was getting older.

Instead of living the tenuous life of a migratory agitator, she settled down in her hometown of New York City, eventually spending more time formulating policy in boardrooms rather than agitating on podiums or street corners. Some of the boards on which Flynn served included the American Civil Liberties Union, which she

¹⁶ The state of Utah said he murdered a grocery store owner in a robbery gone bad; Wobblies said he was framed and his real crime was organizing hard rock miners.

helped co-found, the International Labor Defense, and the IWW's General Defense organization. Before turning their attentions to the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, all three of those legal defense groups spent the second half of the 1920s trying to prevent the executions of Italian immigrant anarchists, Sacco and Vanzetti. As Rebecca N. Hill writes, however, that seven-year Sacco and Vanzetti defense effort "became a stage on which different parties of the left argued with each other."¹⁷ Some of the leftists included not just fellow Italian anarchists, but also members of the Sacco and Vanzetti Defense Committee, comprised of militants, such as Flynn; well-meaning liberals, such as the future Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter; as well as a mix of Boston's most active socialite and Socialist women, such as Mary Donovan, who met her future husband Powers Hapgood while planning protests.

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn could still be persuaded to speak, since she spoke in Walsenburg on December 6, 1926. Embree wrote that she "gave us a good organization talk in connection with the defense spiel and woke up our members besides enabling us to gather in a few new ones."¹⁸ After the dramatic conclusion of her speech, Embree collected twenty signatures at a midnight business meeting, officially establishing Colorado's first new IWW chapter.¹⁹ The Walsenburg chapter was the only one to go public for a long time, and its IWW members comprised its most dedicated organizing core and corps of the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike.²⁰

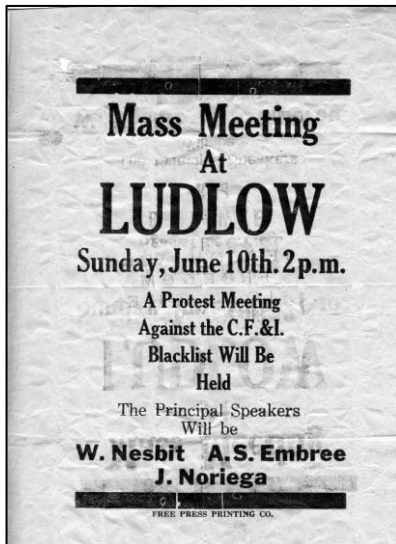
¹⁷ Rebecca N. Hill, "No Wives or Family Encumber Them: Sacco and Vanzetti," in *Men, Mobs, and Law: Anti-Lynching and Labor Defense in U.S. Radical History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 163.

¹⁸ Letter from A.S. Embree to John T. Turner, 6 December 1926, 17-15, IWW archives.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

Yet Embree still was not ready to ask the other Wobblies who had joined to do so publicly.



By the summer of 1927, it was time. By then, there were close to one thousand Wobblies in the southern coalfields. Through its spies, CF&I uncovered the identities of many of the organizers and members and began firing them.²¹ As seen with the flyer on the left, the firings and blacklisting of IWW organizers and members became another rallying point.²² Embree

suggested giving the blacklisted men \$10 and relocating them either to northern New Mexico or the northern Colorado coalfields, to work as IWW organizers.²³ Comparing the names of those who were fired to those later identified as IWW organizers, Embree's suggestion worked. By July, Embree had so successfully organized Colorado's southern fields, he was elected to the IWW General Executive Board, the same board that only a year earlier had fired him from editing *Industrial Solidarity*.²⁴ That same month, Embree served as recording secretary for a district IWW conference in Walsenburg attended by 167 members

²¹ Memo from R.L. Hair, General Superintendent, CF&I, to all Superintendents, 25 July 1927; Minutes of CF&I Superintendents' Meeting, Trinidad District, 7 September 1927; Unidentified meeting, 13 September 1927, INR 1300-9, CF&I archives.

²² INR 1300-7, CF&I archives.

²³ Letter (unidentified sender) to A.K. Payne, 15 September 1927, INR 1300-13, CF&I archives

²⁴ General Executive Board (GEB) Minutes, 8 July 1927, 51-18, IWW archives.

representing 36 different coal camps, including five in New Mexico. Conferences were expensive to hold and difficult to organize, so Embree would not hold many more during the strike. However, this one served several important purposes: educating its members about IWW ideology, training new members with leadership skills, including how to run meetings, and defining the goals of the upcoming strike.

The conference recorded nine resolutions, and significantly, only one related to “bread and butter” issues such as pay and working conditions. The first two related to John L. Lewis and the UMW. By the summer of 1927, Lewis had called a UMW strike in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio that was going badly, according to the resolution, because “Eastern owners are shipping western coal [from western Canada, Washington, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico] to break the strike.”²⁵ Therefore, the “policy being followed by Lewis and the UMW of A in the present strike,” which “tends to divide the coal miners, some of the union districts working, while other union districts are striking,” had forced “union men to scab on their brothers,” making it “harder for those on strike to resist a cut in wages.”²⁶ *All* coalminers needed to stick together, the IWW resolution argued, not follow the suicidal “divide and conquer” tactics that Lewis was responsible for; “Save the Eastern miners and you save yourselves.”²⁷

The third resolution stated, “[W]e are firmly convinced that Sacco and Vanzetti are innocent of the crime of which they stand convicted, and that they are

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ “Minutes, Walsenburg District Conference, 10 July 1927,” 51-18, IWW archives.

²⁷ Ibid.

victims of master class greed.”²⁸ The document demanded their immediate release. Resolution four stated that members should only patronize union establishments. Five reasoned that since unemployment was “mainly due to long hours of work and the introduction of machinery,” members should “devote much of our time in propagating the idea of the Six Hour Day in every industry.” Resolution six declared members should subscribe to the IWW newspaper. Only resolution seven, which subdivided five separate items, related to pay and working conditions in the mines. Resolution eight explained that since “contract and piece work systems are a financial gain only to the employers,” and “the contract system encourages unfair competition among the miners and encourages much favoritism and graft,” IWW members were urged to “carry on a persistent educational campaign against all contract and piece work systems in the mining and other industries.” Resolution nine simply stated that members should promptly pay their IWW dues.²⁹

By the time the August 8, 1927, Sacco and Vanzetti walkout occurred a month later, Embree had been organizing the southern Colorado coalfields for over a year and a half. The walkout was not the spontaneous uprising the press reported, and even though CF&I officials feigned shock, they knew the Wobblies had been actively organizing in their camps, although they had not believed the IWW was strong enough to conduct a walkout.³⁰ They were wrong about the walkout, but they were right, too, because not all of Colorado’s coalminers were solidly behind the IWW yet.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Letter to H.L. Hair from GBP, 24 September 1927, INR 1299-9, CF&I archives.

Divisions surfaced during the southern coalfield meetings held to vote on the August 8 walkout. In Pueblo, headquarters of Rockefeller's Colorado Fuel & Iron (CF&I), industrial commissioner W.H. Young—the industrial commission had been created in 1915 as a response to the Ludlow Massacre—“attempted to sway the miners from striking,” suggesting that donating four days' pay to the Sacco and Vanzetti defense efforts would be more effective in supporting the cause than a walkout. Embree spoke next and told the crowd, “Sacco and Vanzetti don't want your money. They want action.”³¹ After Embree's speech, the Pueblo crowd voted to strike. However, “Meeting in the grandstand near the monument which was erected to victims of the Ludlow strike of former days, 1,000 I.W.W. miners and sympathizers, representing eight different camps, this afternoon voted to postpone for 30 days action on the proposed strike in protest against the hanging of Sacco and Vanzetti.” E.J. Penno of the *Trinidad Free Press*, “official paper of the United Mine Workers in Southern Colorado,” spoke to the crowd and asked them to not only follow the thirty-day strike notice required by the state's industrial commission regulations, but to also support Governor Adams who had recently been elected with their votes.³²

Adams was popular with workers because he was a rare breed in 1920s Colorado politics: He was a politician who continued getting re-elected even though he vigorously opposed the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). The rise of the second KKK swept the entire nation in the first half of the 1920s, but in no state other than Indiana was its

³¹ “Leaders Claim Protest Walkout not Under Law Exacting 30-Day Notice,” *The Pueblo Chieftan*, 7 August 1927: 2.

³² *Ibid.*

influence so great. The Colorado KKK elected a federal Senator, the mayor of Denver (who appointed a Klan police chief), and a governor, Clarence Morley, whose campaign slogan had been, “Every Man under the Capitol Dome a Klansman.”³³ In 1926, while serving as governor, Morley even led a procession of 500 fully robed Klansmen down Denver’s 16th Street, the city’s main civic thoroughfare.³⁴ The KKK also elected many state representatives and senators, but not enough for a majority. As a Democratic state senator and minority leader, Billy Adams mobilized enough votes to keep Governor Clarence Morley from achieving much legislative success. During Morley’s term, the KKK only got two of its bills passed: “one requiring schools to fly the American flag and the other making ownership or operation of a still a felony.”³⁵

Even though he failed to achieve much legislative success, Morley still tried to reward his KKK supporters with plum political appointments. The state’s strict civil service rules, passed during the Progressives’ political dominance a decade earlier, severely thwarted his executive appointment powers. However, Morley discovered a loophole, and on June 10, 1925, “evoked a forgotten antiliquor law and commissioned fifty-two prohibition agents” that ballooned to a force of almost 200 men by year’s end.³⁶ Although the public reason for creating the prohibition police was to enforce state and federal prohibition laws, Morley’s real reason was to “repay

³³ Robert Alan Goldberg, *Hooded Empire: The Ku Klux Klan in Colorado* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 86.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 87.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 91.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 93.

campaign debts, provide employment for jobless Klansmen, and to honor the realm's leading men."³⁷

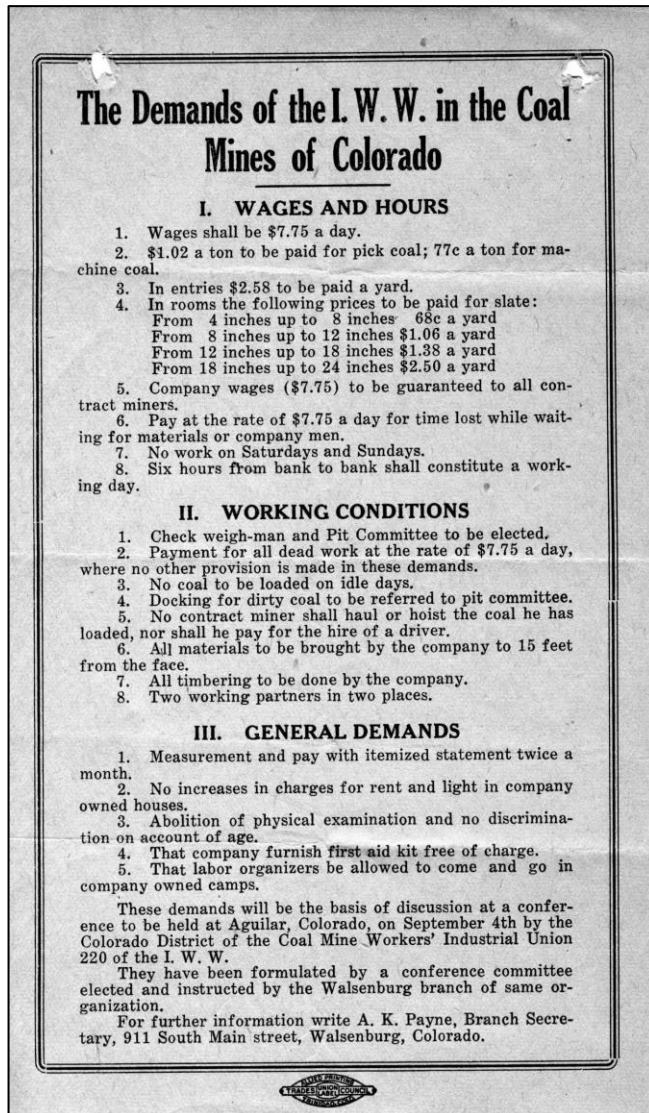
The prohibition police quickly turned into a secret police force accountable to no one, except perhaps Morley. They quickly, and anonymously—over three-quarters of them refused to reveal their identities—began targeting their perceived enemies. In Denver, they harassed their political opponents, but farther afield, they singled out Catholic immigrants. For example, a mere week after their appointments in the southern coalfields near Trinidad, these prohibition police “battered in the doors of fifty homes without identifying themselves, drew revolvers, and lined up the frightened men and women for search.”³⁸ They followed suit in Weld County, where most of the state’s northern coalfields and Great West Sugar beet fields (worked by contract Mexican labor) were located.

By December 31, 1925, public indignation forced the governor to disband the prohibition officers, although Morley still retained their services as an honorary, non-salaried force. When Adams won the governorship in 1926, he very publicly disbanded this much-hated group.³⁹ Yet, as we shall soon see, the governor’s executive authority to reconstitute the officers remained in place. When the UMW official spoke at the Ludlow meeting, he reminded the crowd of all Adams had done for them, imploring the workers not to join the IWW sponsored Sacco and Vanzetti walkout. His arguments carried the day. Therefore, Embree and Svanum still had organizing work to do.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 93.

³⁹ Ibid., 94.



Embree had not called the walkout a strike; otherwise, it would have fallen under the rules of Colorado's industrial commission mandating thirty days' notice ahead of time. However, the newspapers called it a strike, and industrial commissioners quickly rushed to the southern coalfields to negotiate a deal with the IWW organizers. By Wednesday morning, coalminers were back at

work, and as quickly as the newspaper story had exploded onto the front pages, it just as quickly disappeared.

Embree and Svanum now knew their weaknesses, and over the next month, they crafted a plan to address them. On September 4, the IWW organizers and southern coalminers held another conference in Pueblo with Kristen Svanum chairing.⁴⁰ Carefully following the industrial commission rules, the attendees drew

⁴⁰ McClurg, 73.

up a list of strike demands (above) that looked nothing like July's nine resolutions, because *everything* had been cut *except* the "bread and butter" demands for better pay and working conditions.⁴¹

Next, the crowd created a committee called the All State Conference of Colorado Coal Mines (although the name of this committee changed slightly several times during the strike), and those members signed and submitted their demands to the state industrial commissioners. The petition was clear: Colorado coalminers would strike in thirty days if their demands were not met. Although the IWW had followed the industrial commission's rules to the letter, even with the conservative demands and all mention of the IWW expunged, the industrial commission refused to accept the petition. All three commissioners agreed: The committee did not legally represent the coalminers. The commissioners knew the committee was only a front for the IWW, which they said was not a bona fide (code for AFL) labor organization. Therefore, *anything* this group presented to the commission would *always* be illegal.⁴²

Since IWW organizers had been extremely careful to follow all the industrial commission rules, when the commissioners completely rejected both the conservative petition and the committee presenting it, that intransigence must have helped consolidate worker discontent among coalminers still loyal to the UMW, like those in the Ludlow crowd that had voted against joining the Sacco and Vanzetti walkout. After the commissioners denied the petition, their rejection gave the IWW

⁴¹ "The Demands of the I.W.W. in the Coal Fields of Colorado," INR 1300-13, CF&I archives.

⁴² "I.W.W. Ignored By the State at Pueblo Meet," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 15 October 1927:1.

organizers the gift of time, as they delayed their proposed strike date from October 8 to October 18. As McClurg writes, "Ostensibly, the reason for the change was to allow time to take a strike vote. Actually, the committee planned to use the time organizing the northern field, and thus increase the scope and effectiveness of the walkout."⁴³ As they had in the southern Colorado coalfields, organizers in the north included appealing to the Mexicans, so IWW organizers expanded their organizing efforts beyond the coalfields into the beet fields. On October 11, the *Daily Camera* in Boulder ran an article that described IWW literature circulating in Spanish and English "that tells the Mexican field workers that they were the first owners of this western land, that they got here before the English, and that they could take it back. All they need do is organize. They are being organized, too."⁴⁴ It is interesting to wonder if the newspaper article accurately translated the flyers. If so, they were reminiscent of the promises the Germans had made to Mexicans ten years earlier in the Zimmerman telegram, made public on March 1, 1917. That telegram helped lead the US to declare war on April 6 and helped foment the patriotic hysteria on the Mexican border that led to the Bisbee deportation in June.

By October 14, following CF&I's lead, almost all the state's coal companies gave their workers a sixty-eight cent a day raise, obviously hoping to fend off a strike.⁴⁵ Yet, worker discontent concerned far more than wages. For example, four days before the walkout officially began, in Lafayette (the northern strike

⁴³ McClurg, 75-76.

⁴⁴ "Mexican Workers in Beet Fields Being Organized," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 11 October 1927: 1.

⁴⁵ "I.W.W. Ignored By the State at Pueblo Meet," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 15 October 1927:1.

headquarters), Mrs. McCready, the Lafayette High School music teacher, was kidnapped, driven around with a bag over her head, and dumped on the side of the road. The *Camera* reported that the incident was believed to be “the outgrowth of bitterness that exists in Lafayette from activities of the late Ku Klux Klan of which McCready is said to have been a member.”⁴⁶ According to a 1970s Lafayette oral history, McCready’s husband, Lafayette’s school superintendent at that time, was also either a current or former Klan member, and most of the town’s prominent citizens, including all the school board members and several teachers, belonged to the Klan, something that the first and increasingly second generation of immigrant parents and their children clearly resented. Just a few years before the 1927-1928 strike, Klan members had burned crosses in front of the Lafayette Catholic church, as well as at the Columbine coalmine, where many immigrants lived.⁴⁷ While no hard evidence proves that IWW organizers put anybody up to scaring Mrs. McCready, she immediately renounced her Klan membership upon her release, showing that the Lafayette community power structure was already shifting dramatically over issues that related to much more than coalminers’ pay.

Local power structures were also shifting in the southern fields, too. On October 17, Walsenburg mayor John Pritchard led a mob of seventy-five businessmen to the IWW’s southern headquarters in town. Then, someone tossed a brick through the front plate glass window, the men entered and ransacked the office, they “burned all the literature and office records and books found in the

⁴⁶ “Mrs. McCready of Lafayette Kidnaped (this is the 1927 spelling) for a Short Ride,” The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 14 October 1927: 1.

⁴⁷ Transcribed oral interview of Mary Borstnick by Donna Carbone, 1983, Tape #1044, Lafayette Public Library, 1.

building” in the street, and when they were finished, they posted a resolution on the door ordering the organizers to leave town immediately.⁴⁸ Using the Walsenburg raids to fire up the crowds, the next night, both the southern and northern fields voted to go on strike the next day, a unity never achieved during the 1910-1914 long strike. The meeting grew so large in Lafayette, Embree moved it from the old UMW hall, recently re-christened the IWW hall, to the local ballpark to accommodate the estimated 4,000 people who assembled for the vote.⁴⁹

On October 18, the first day of the strike, president of the Colorado State Federation of Labor (which represented AFL unions) Earl Hoage, stated that although the coalminers had legitimate grievances, the IWW was a “renegade, radical organization,” and the AFL would take no part in the strike.⁵⁰ On October 19, the chair of the state industrial commission, Thomas Annear, announced that the northern Colorado strike was illegal, because coalminers had not provided thirty days’ notice to the commission and that the southern field strike was also illegal because the committee, even though it provided the required thirty days’ notice, did not represent the miners.⁵¹

⁴⁸ “Mayor and Citizens of Walsenburg Broke Up Headquarters of I.W.W. and Notified the Members of Organization to Stay Out of Town,” The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 17 October 1927: 1.

⁴⁹ “Thousands of Colorado Coal Miners Strike Under Orders of I.W.W.,” The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 18 October 1927: 1.

⁵⁰ “Hoage Says Federation Won’t Play with I.W.W.,” The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 18 October 1927: 1.

⁵¹ “Thomas Annear Leaves for Boulder County to Compel Obedience to Law—He says Strike Illegal,” The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 19 October 1927: 1.

Hoage's and Annear's statements exemplified what had gone wrong with the industrial commission since its creation by the Colorado legislature in 1915. Before Democrat Billy Adams was elected governor in 1926, Annear had chaired the Colorado Democratic Party.⁵² After his victory, Adams appointed Annear to chair the industrial commission, an appointment representing pure political patronage, a far cry from the "disinterested body" of three commissioners that was supposed to represent the interests society's three segments involved with industrial disputes: business, labor, and the public.

After the Ludlow Massacre, both the Democrats and Republicans, bereft of any constructive ideas of their own, deferred to the Progressives, who in their 1914 Colorado platform recommended establishing a group of experts that would mediate labor disputes, so violence like the Ludlow Massacre would never happen again.⁵³ By 1927, the business voice always represented business, but so did the "public" voice. That left labor's voice, and it always represented the AFL's point of view. Even though Hoage was not an industrial commissioner, his views perfectly aligned with the labor commissioner's position. In the 1920s, AFL membership declined dramatically both locally and nationally, a drop that probably led AFL officials to hate the IWW at least as much as it had during World War I, and maybe more.

By the outbreak of the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, the three industrial commissioners who were supposed to represent labor, business, and the public

⁵² "On Ranger System Smokes Out Shoup," The [Denver] *Rocky Mountain News*, 13 October 1926: 1.

⁵³ Colin B. Goodykoontz, ed., "Platform of Progressive Party in Colorado, 1914," *Papers of Edward P. Costigan Relating to the Progressive Movement in Colorado, 1902-1917* (Boulder: University of Colorado, 1941), 294; Progressive Party papers, 10-7, Josephine Roche Papers, Archives, University of Colorado Boulder Libraries.

consistently sang from the same page about the strike. By October 21, the newspapers joined the chorus and began running sensational, front-page stories about the walkout. Denver's two major dailies, in the throes of a circulation war, tried to out-sensationalize the other, so for its duration, the strike appeared daily on the front pages, often accompanied with elaborate photo collages or political cartoons about the walkout or its leaders. All the state's papers showed particular fascination with the strike's militant women, and the Boulder *Daily Camera* (the major newspaper in the northern field), carried this fascination even further, repeatedly calling the strike's many militant women "Amazons."

Labeling militant women as Amazons was far from new. Starting in the late 1800s, newspapers had used the term in an attempt to turn unruly women into a non-threatening joke.⁵⁴ This strike was no different, and the transformation came quickly. For example, within the first week of the strike, the *Camera* reported that out of sixty pickets who had been arrested on October 21 in southern Colorado, twenty were "chattering women," one with a "suckling babe at her breast" who "led the strikers' 'victory' chorus in the plaintive strains of 'Solidarity,' battle cry of the

⁵⁴ The inspirations for both Kali N. Gross, *Colored Amazons: Crime, Violence, and Black Women in the City of Brotherly Love, 1880-1910* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006) and Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors after the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), originated from post-Civil War newspaper articles describing black women as criminals, strikers, and Amazons. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's chapter, "Amazons," in *Well-Behaved Women Seldom Make History* (New York, NY: Vintage, 2008), beautifully explores the concept of Amazons in history.

radicals.”⁵⁵ By the next day, the paper had already converted the chattering women into sixteen, rock-hurling Amazons who got arrested alongside fifty-six men.⁵⁶ Fifty more southern coalfield arrests followed two days later, when Santa Benash (another Amazon) led a group of protestors up Berwind Canyon who were all arrested after they “staged a riot” at one of the nearby closed camps.⁵⁷ Newspapers also labeled Benash’s older sister, Milka Sablich, an Amazon, but the press soon assigned her more personalized nicknames—“The Girl in Red” (her signature color) and “Flaming Milka” (as in flaming youth)—that reflected the 1920s’ newfound obsession with celebrity culture. Milka Sablich became the star of the strike.



The first week of the strike, sheriffs on horseback tried dispersing one of the daily closed camp picketing operations in Berwind Canyon. Sablich stood her ground and a horse trampled her; she sustained bad bruises and several broken bones. The next day, the *Denver Post* ran a photograph (to the left) of Sablich—smiling, defiant, and

⁵⁵ “Walsenburg Jail Holds 60 Picketers, Twenty of Them Chattering Women,” The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 21 October 1927: 1.

⁵⁶ “Amazons Jailed for Hurling Rocks,” The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 22 October 1927: 1.

⁵⁷ “Amazon Leader and Other I.W.W. Jailed Today,” The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 24 October 1927: 1.

hospitalized—on the front page, with a head shot of another young, attractive male IWW organizer, Byron Kitto, superimposed next to hers, visually suggesting they were a romantic couple.⁵⁸

Sablich and Kitto would have been an odd pair. Kitto became radicalized as a law student in San Francisco. He joined the IWW there, and moved to Boston to work on the Sacco and Vanzetti defense committee for the Wobblies, doing such impressive work, the IWW leadership asked him to come to Colorado to organize. Newspaper stories listed him as a publicity man, but such titles meant little, since all the organizers did whatever was needed, including speaking. Although we do not have records of any speeches delivered during the almost-constant mass meetings, listeners noted that Kitto's style differed from most of the other national IWW speakers. The older Wobblies, such as Embree, had developed their public speaking chops during the free speech movements. Literally standing on soapboxes, they had to be loud and dramatic to attract and keep the crowd's attention. Over a decade later, Kitto spoke to the crowds in a more intimate, familiar way, using 1920s slang that made him sound very modern.⁵⁹ His education, the way he spoke, the way he connected with the crowds (especially the women), and his good looks made him an important new IWW leader in the strike.

Sablich could not have been more different from Kitto. Born in Walsenburg, she and her parents lived in the Forbes tent colony during the long strike. Forbes coalminers worked not for CF&I, but for the RMFC, which owned some properties

⁵⁸ "Two Strike Leaders," *The Denver Post*, 29 October 1929: 1.

⁵⁹ Written transcription of tape "Memory of Mary Gallagher about Byron Kitto," made for part of the oral history collection for University of California, 1955, 23-6, IWW papers.

such as Forbes in the southern fields, although most RMFC properties were in the north. When the IWW strike began, Sablich worked in a laundry, the kind of low paid, domestic work coal miners' daughters did before they got married, usually to other coalminers. Leading strikers not only lifted her out of her mundane existence, it also revealed natural leadership qualities she might not have known she possessed had the strike not occurred. Like everyone else in the area, she had grown up hearing stories of the strike, and as a six-year-old who turned seven during the 1913-1914 walkout, Sablich would have remembered her own version of events, too.⁶⁰ Sablich drew upon those memories, since the protests she led usually began at the Ludlow Monument before proceeding up Berwind Canyon, where the Ten-Day War had had raged. Directly linking the past to the present, Sablich became a fascinating and fearsome symbol of the strike.

Sablich, and other militant women followed in the footsteps of women like Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Mother Jones. Flynn's 1926 southern coalfield appearances showed women (and men) what they could aspire to, yet it also reminded them of what they had accomplished in the past. During the progressive era, Flynn helped organize and lead strikes all over the country, but she was forever linked to Lawrence, Massachusetts; Paterson, New Jersey; and the Mesabi Range in Minnesota, all strikes in which militant women had played key roles.

Flynn's inspiration was the most famous labor hellraiser of all, Mother Jones, who began agitating for workers in the late 1800s. Stories of Mother Jones and the

⁶⁰ Richard Myers, "The Women of the 'Twenties Coal Strikes," Lowell May and Richard Myers, eds., *Slaughter in Serene: The Columbine Strike Reader* (Denver: Bread and Roses Workers' Cultural Center & the Industrial Workers of the World), 161-162.

women she inspired were central to the memories of Ludlow, especially for women in the southern Colorado coalfields. During the long strike, the head of the state's National Guard believed Mother Jones was the most dangerous, incendiary person in the strike zone, which was why he repeatedly had her arrested. Women in Trinidad held a parade protesting Mother Jones' incarceration that devolved into the "Mother Jones riot." Photographs taken by a UMW organizer captured the guardsmen on horseback charging into the procession of marching women, making the soldiers look like fools and bullies.⁶¹ No wonder Milka Sablich confronted the soldiers on horseback who rode into their demonstration. So had the women during the "Mother Jones riot." How could she do less?

The portrayal of women in the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike as Amazons was not strictly a localized, Colorado phenomenon, either. For example, the *New York Times* also ran a story about the "riot" at the Ideal Mine where Sablich was injured. After "ten women advanced on a group of twelve mounted and armed guards" at the mine, "hurling stones and daring them to 'start something,' ...thirty men pickets remained behind in motor cars while the Amazons took the offensive."⁶² The *Times* article concluded by describing a "20-year-old bobbed haired Mexican girl, known as Rosia," who had been particularly active among the pickets. Here follows Rosia's description: "A dirt-begrimed brown felt hat pulled down over her shorn tresses, she has trudged forth daily to help wage the conversational battle that has kept scores of

⁶¹ *The Military Occupation, Coal Strike Zone of Colorado, Colorado National Guard, 1913-1914: Report of Commanding General to the Governor for the Use of the Congressional Committee* (Denver: Press of the Smith Brooks, Printing Company), 1914, 27-28.

⁶² "I.W.W. Amazons Lead Fray in Colorado Strike; Stone and Dare Guards, Men Staying Behind," *The New York Times*, 23 October 1927, www.nytimes.com.

men from the mines. Two of her brothers were killed in the bloody days of the 1913-1914 Colorado coal strike.” In other words, Rosia, a dirty Mexican flapper, convinced strikebreakers not to scab based on her memories of Ludlow. Remember Ludlow indeed.

On October 26, a week into the strike, Governor Adams issued his first official statement on the walkout. It was a convoluted mess. He said,

An unfortunate condition exists in the coal fields of the State by reason of the I.W.W., an un-American organization, having attempted to bring about a strike, and in this attempt has openly and publicly advocated and practiced defiance and violation of the law.⁶³

Like the industrial commissioners and the operators, Adams still denied the ongoing strike was even taking place, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. He next stated, “Picketing and intimidation are unlawful. Every man has a right to quit work if so inclined. Every man has an equal right to work and is entitled to protection in that right.”⁶⁴ So, even though Adams had run as a friend of labor in 1926, this part of his statement demonstrated his extreme limits in supporting striking workers.

It was true, however, that the IWW openly violated the state picketing law. In 1920, Colorado passed a law that forbade picketing of any kind. That same year Governor Oliver Shoup also created the Colorado Rangers, a group of, as it turned out, renegade state policemen who not only harassed private citizens, they also helped break up the 1921-1922 Colorado coal strike. Even though Shoup’s

⁶³ “Colorado Governor Denounces the I.W.W.,” *The New York Times*, 27 October 1927, www.nytimes.com.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

progressive successor, Democratic Governor William Sweet, disbanded the Rangers as soon as he took office, in 1926, Adams faced Shoup as his Republican opponent in that year's gubernatorial race.⁶⁵ In an election devoid of almost any substantial difference between the two, since Shoup and Adams were both "dry" candidates and fiscal conservatives, Adams successfully revived Shoup's creation of the Rangers as a campaign issue, another reason, in addition to standing up to the Klan, that workers rallied on his behalf.

The main purpose of picketing is to discourage (and its opponents would say intimidate) strikebreakers from going to work and breaking the strike. Relatively few mines stayed open during the strike, but when they did, that was where pickets congregated. In the north, pickets targeted the Columbine, the only large, northern coalmine that tried staying open during the strike, but most of the picketing—and the arrests—took place in the south. A month into the strike, when addressing a sympathetic New York City crowd at the Rand School, Socialist Party stalwart Norman Thomas estimated that at least 200 strikers had been illegally arrested so far.⁶⁶ He was probably right, but there is no reliable way of knowing how many people went to jail, since in most cases they were never charged with anything.

Adams concluded his strike statement with an ominous threat. If at any time the local officers were unable to maintain peace, "the State stands ready and will give

⁶⁵ John P. Lewis, "On Ranger System 'Smokes Out' Shoup," The [Denver] *Rocky Mountain News*, 13 October 1926: 1; "Labor and Farmers Indorse Adams for Office of Governor," 21 October 1926, The [Denver] *Rocky Mountain News*: 1; "Shoup Caught in Dilemma as He Attempts to Dodge Boomerang of Ranger Law," 17 October 1926, The [Denver] *Rocky Mountain News*: 1; "State Ranger Law to be Chief Issue in Governor's Race," The [Denver] *Rocky Mountain News*, 12 October 1926: 3.

⁶⁶ "Appeals to Aid Miners," The *New York Times*, 15 November 1927, www.nytimes.com.

them any and all assistance necessary, and use every instrument within the power of the Governor to both enforce the law and protect life and property.”⁶⁷ Unfortunately, the governor had few “instruments” within his power, especially since, at his urging, the state budget had been slashed to the bone. If Adams chose to summon the Colorado National Guard as Governor Ammons had done in 1913, the state would have to pass a special bond to pay them.

As would be the case with the 1927 Columbine Massacre, much of what had gone wrong at Ludlow was directly tied to stingy state funding. When the state of Colorado failed to meet its National Guard payroll, the regular guardsmen, understandably, went home. By spring of 1914, the newly formed National Guard that replaced the regular Guard consisted of an agglomeration of mine guards, out-of-work cowboys, local sheriffs, and Guardsmen willing to work without pay (and the motives of Guards who *wanted* to work without financial remuneration should have been a flag big and red enough not to hire them).⁶⁸ As the saying goes, you get what you pay for, so had Colorado been willing to pay for a professional, relatively unbiased National Guard to work in the strike zone, perhaps things might have gone differently during the long strike.

That Colorado stinginess had not changed appreciably since 1913. Governor Adams promised fiscal conservatism, and to that pledge, although not to others, he stayed true. Following secretary of the treasury Andrew Mellon’s national lead, the

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Beshoar, 152-3, 164 (1943); McGovern and Guttridge, 156-157, 172, 186, 192, 205-207; Zinn, “The Colorado Strike, 1913-1914,” 35; Priscilla Long, *Where the Sun Never Shines: A History of America’s Bloody Coal Industry* (New York, NY: Paragon House, 1989), 290; Martelle, 158-159; Andrews, 270.

state aggressively adopted trickle-down economics and slashed corporate taxes, even for enormously profitable companies like Great West Sugar. For example, Great West Sugar in Boulder County protested the county assessor's valuations in 1925, 1926, and 1927, and each year the state equalization board overrode the county and sided with Great West, reducing the corporation's tax bill by almost five million dollars over that three-year period.⁶⁹ Colorado simply did not have much money to work with, even in flush economic times. Furthermore, at Adams' urging, the state legislature had passed a stripped-down, two-year appropriations bill coinciding with his term. Part of that budget allocated \$18,400 annually to fund a state police force in case of emergencies.⁷⁰ Adams would soon discover, as Ammons had before him, that the lack of funds would lead to tragedy in the coalfields.

From day one, Adams tried to fight the strike on the cheap. At first, that meant leaving all strike control measures in the hands (and wallets) of local law enforcement agencies and coal companies. On October 17, when 4,000 people had met in the Lafayette ballpark and voted to walk out on the strike the following day, not everybody went home after the meeting. Some camped out around the Columbine, and their campfires so unnerved the Weld County sheriff that the next day, he authorized twenty "special deputies" just to guard the Columbine.⁷¹ Even with the extra men, the sheriffs were overwhelmed and understaffed, and the newly deputized locals (as well as the older professionals) often let strikers' behaviors

⁶⁹ "Longmont Sugar Factory Allowed a Tax Reduction," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 19 October 1927: 3.

⁷⁰ "Gov. Adams Expected to Send Units of Troops to Mines," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 16 November 1927: 1.

⁷¹ "Pickets Stationed by the Strikers at the Columbine," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 19 October 1927: 1.

slide, since the strikers were their neighbors. For example, twice after the strike call went out, carloads of pickets parked on the highway outside the Columbine turnoff and blocked strikebreakers from going to their morning shift. By the time the sheriffs arrived, the pickets were gone. Even though sheriffs probably knew who had blocked the roads, they chose not to pursue the picketers.⁷²

Officials at the RMFC lived in Denver, so they were not overly concerned about community relations, one reason they might have been fighting the strike more aggressively than the locals. Under normal conditions, there might be one, sometimes two mine guards on duty at the Columbine, but by early November, there were eight.⁷³ Authorities in the southern fields hired extra sheriffs and mine guards, too. Sometimes CF&I officials forced coalminers to serve as mine guards, though they did not want to.⁷⁴ Even with the extra guards, CF&I could not stop the picketing on its own any more successfully than the RMFC in the north, so it decided to close the mines when there was picketing unless the state sent its own police force to the mines.⁷⁵ That was hardly the case at the RMFC, where officials decided to keep the Columbine open in spite of the picketing, which grew larger and more raucous as the strike progressed.

Picketing represented just one militant tactic IWW organizers pursued during the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike. IWW organizers, especially Embree, pragmatically adopted many more tactics, some old and some new, as the strike

⁷² "Picketing in County Reported Here Today," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 4 November 1927: 1.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Meeting of Employees with Mr. Hair and Mr. Matteson, 3 November 1927, INR 1300-9, CF&I archives.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

escalated. After the July and September conferences, IWW organizers decided to direct the strike through mass meetings instead, because, as Donald McClurg's research cited earlier shows, they were cheaper and quicker to organize. The meetings of striking coalminers also represented a legendary New England town hall style of direct democracy that IWW leaders such as Embree believed represented the embodiment of the industrial democracy they were fighting for.⁷⁶ Although mass meetings, such as the one held in Lafayette's ball field, were an old strategy, the car headlights illuminating the meetings provided a new twist. Automobiles helped unify the state strike, since they allowed organizers, strikers, and supporters to easily drive between the northern and southern fields and the few outlying fields within the state.

Another novel strategy grew out of the state industrial commission's refusal to recognize the IWW. Since industrial commissioners had declared anything the IWW did would be illegal, starting with its first, official conference in September, Embree began recruiting strikers, not on behalf of the IWW, but for the Colorado Strike Committee. Although almost everybody knew that the new committee was an IWW front, its creation was an attempt to make the strike conform to state law. The committee even issued its own white strike cards. As he had in Bisbee and in Butte, Embree was using dual unionism to its fullest potential, but this time, he pushed the concept even further, since the dual union was a façade. Perhaps Embree thought those white cards, instead of the easily identifiable red IWW membership cards, provided better protection in case of an arrest. Another purpose for the new union

⁷⁶ Letter from A.S. Embree to Joseph Wagner (Chairman of the IWW General Executive Board), 6 July 1928, 96-10, IWW papers.

was to overcome residual loyalties to the UMW. If coalminers were able to produce their old UMW cards, they got the new white cards for free, without having to pay an IWW initiation fee.⁷⁷ As the strike escalated, Embree and IWW organizers talked less and less about the IWW in an attempt to get as many of the state's coalminers to join the strike as possible. Membership could come later.

The Colorado Strike Committee even elected its own representatives. Its first chairman, Lafayette grocer Karl Clemens, represented the striking miners even though, as the Denver newspapers reported, he had never worked a day in the mines. Perhaps Clemens was elected for the same reason that A. Philip Randolph served as president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Because Randolph was *not* a porter, he had greater freedom to speak for men who were, since he did not have to fear retaliation or dismissal on the job. Clemens and eight other committee members (including a woman) from both fields met, smiled, shook hands, posed for pictures, and talked with Governor Adams about the strike in his office on Thursday, October 27. A photograph of the parley appeared on the front pages of the two leading Denver newspapers, and as the *Denver Post* caption pointed out, "It was the first time the I.W.W. ever has been accorded official recognition," a statement equally true and ironic, since the governor officially met with the Colorado Strike Committee.⁷⁸

The meeting's impact is unclear. On the one hand, after the meeting, the committee decided to present the governor's plan for an orderly, peaceful way of proceeding with the strike to Colorado's coalminers. The governor had told the

⁷⁷ A.V. Azuara, "The One Big Union of Coal Mine Workers," CF&I Archives, INR 1299-8.

⁷⁸ "Howdy! Said Governor Adams," The *Denver Post*, 28 October 1927: 1.

committee he believed that if each coal camp authorized its own strike committee, then signed petitions and presented those to the industrial commission, surely then the Colorado industrial commission would declare the strike legal. In a move that seems to have exhibited good faith, the IWW printed and paid for over 20,000 petitions, and began circulating them in the northern coalfields.⁷⁹ However, when Clemens and other committee members tried entering the southern field's closed camps to circulate the petitions, CF&I mine guards would not let them in, so the petition idea quickly fizzled.⁸⁰

On the other hand, in an exclusive interview with *Camera* reporters afterward, the governor made clear that he thought Clemens' interpretation of what they had discussed at their meeting was "absurd."⁸¹ Not all the strikers demonstrated good faith, either. The day before the conference, northern field striking coalminers (who were all out on strike except for a few mines that owners worked themselves, and of course, at the Columbine) and their supporters formed a "car caravan" of fifty vehicles that left Lafayette, proceeded to Fremont County in the southern field, and camped out near the working mines that night. American flags festooned each car, with the lead and tail cars flying the largest flags of all.⁸² On Thursday, the very day the governor met with the strike committee in his office, the northern caravan

⁷⁹ "From Karl Clemens to all Branches of the Colo. Miners Effectuated in Strike," 3 November 1927; Receipt from Balaban Brothers, Printers and Publishers, Denver, made out to Kristen Svanum, 5 November 1927 for 20,000 printed petitions costing \$81.69, INR 1299-3, CF&I archives.

⁸⁰ J.F. Myhan note, 12 November 1927, CF&I Archives, INR 1300-9.

⁸¹ "Gov. Adams Tells Camera That Clemens Statement Issued Today is Absurd," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 3 November 1927: 1.

⁸² "50 Cars Took Lafayette Strikers to Fremont County," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 26 October 1927: 1.

converged with another 100-car caravan that had formed near Florence (also in Fremont County), and the two groups held a mass meeting that evening in Trinidad.

Mass meetings were held constantly—in the mornings, in the afternoons, and in the evenings—but the Sunday rallies were usually the biggest of all. That was because mines (like most businesses) closed on Sundays, so mid-afternoon rallies attracted all kinds of people looking for something to do. Not only were the meetings an important way to keep idle strikers' spirits high, the meetings served as the decision-making and education mechanisms for the strike.⁸³ The committee running the strike was not exactly democratic, but it was representational, comprising seven people representing each major ethnic or racial group: Americans, Mexicans, Spanish, Greeks, Italians, Slavs, and Negroes.⁸⁴ Spanish, also called Old Mexicans, represented miners whose families had lived in Colorado for generations dating back to the 1500s. Mexicans were newer immigrants, sometimes citizens, sometimes not. Although the distinction between Old and new Mexicans was fading fast amid the white population, the difference between the two groups was still significant enough to matter to the strike committee.

Besides making strike decisions, the meetings provided inspiration and entertainment. Revival-like in structure, they included a heady combination of speakers, both national and local, interspersed with generous musical interludes featuring local bands, soloists, and group-led singing of IWW favorites from the *Little*

⁸³ Letter from IWW Secretary-Treasurer Lee Tullin to organizer A.K. Payne, 20 September 1927; Letter from A.K. Payne to Kristen Svanum, 28 September 1927, INR 1300-13, CF&I archives.

⁸⁴ A.S. Embree, "Great Strike Scheduled for October 18," *Industrial Solidarity*, Vol. X No. 38: 1, INR 1299-4, CF&I archives.

Red Song Book (still little, still red, but reissued in 1927 under the new title of *Songs to Fan the Flames of Discontent*), as well as more modern, tin pan alley songs appropriated with pro-worker lyrics.⁸⁵ National speakers, like IWW organizers Embree and Svanum, Frank Palmer, and James Cannon from the International Labor Defender, among others, expertly invigorated the crowds. Local speakers, like Milka Sablich, knew their audience and moved the crowds with their personal testimonies. Local, often bilingual speakers emerged, too, since Spanish, and other dominant languages, were always part of the program. As one IWW reporter wrote,

One couldn't call any of them gifted orators or "able speakers." As a matter of fact most of them murdered the English language,—and more power to them for that. They were earnest, sincere, and they spoke the language of the mass. They voiced the hopes, the aspirations and the determination of their fellow worker miners now on strike.⁸⁶

The Rebel Girls (an interchangeable group of local, singing girls) opened each meeting, usually singing "Solidarity Forever." A big cheer closed each meeting, and it went like this:

Rang-a-Tang, Rang-a-tang
Zip, boom, bah!
Who in the heck do you think we are?
Wobblies, Wobblies, ha, ha, ha!

We are rough, we are tough,
We never take a bluff,
Of free speech we never get enough,
Who? We! Wobblies! Wobblies! Wobblies!⁸⁷

⁸⁵ *Songs to Fan the Flames of Discontent* (Chicago: IWW, 1927), INR 1299-8, CF&I archives.

⁸⁶ "Whee! Here's the Spirit of the I.W.W.: Trinidad Hall Re-opened, Picketing Resumed!" *Industrial Worker*, Vol. X No. 2, 14 January 1928: 2, INR 1300-6, CF&I archives.

⁸⁷ Leo Michaels, "Lafayette Branch Report," *Industrial Worker*, Vol. X no. 2, 14 January 1928: 3, INR 1300-6, CF&I archives.

What transpired between the opening, Rebel Girls' songs and the final cheer could last anywhere from half an hour to over three hours, and Sunday meetings could go even longer. The meetings were entertaining, that was where strike decisions got made, but they also promoted IWW goals that included ethnic and racial egalitarianism. During the strike, the only racial references were aimed toward blacks, and although relatively few lived (or mined coal) in Colorado, the IWW made a concerted effort to feature striking black coalminers in the mass meetings. As with women, eastern and southern European ethnic groups, and Spanish speakers, blacks seemed to appreciate being taken seriously for a change, and several became important speakers at the mass rallies.

William Lofton, a black coalminer, was the most important. In many ways, he was the perfect Wobbly speaker. Since he lived in Louisville, he understood the northern coalfield community, even though as the strike progressed, he spoke all across the state. Lofton appealed to the crowd, telling them he was on strike to "try to give my children the advantages that I didn't get."⁸⁸ By encouraging the Loftons and the Beraneks (Lafayette residents Joe and Elizabeth Beranek had sixteen children, so everybody in the northern coalfields knew who they were) to assume strike leadership positions, IWW organizers such as Embree were trying to dispel the IWW stereotype of IWW members as transient, "footloose," single men with no interests in their communities.⁸⁹ IWW newspaper photos show that Lofton not only was handsome, his beautiful tenor always "made a hit with the crowd," which no doubt

⁸⁸ "One thousand Led by the I.W.W. Held Meeting Here Sunday," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 21 November 1927: 1.

⁸⁹ A.A. Swain, "I.W.W. to Tell Gov. Adams How Good They Are," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 25 October 1927: 1.

attracted people who just came to hear him sing. Lofton also understood rhetoric in a way that helped recruit new members. Combating the image of Wobblies as irreligious, Lofton often led mass meetings in a prayer, although the *Industrial Worker* reported that “Lofton said he does his praying in church, his organizing on the job, and his voting in the union hall.”⁹⁰ Other times, he closed his portion of the program like this: “My skin is black, my heart is white, my card is RED.”⁹¹

Even as the mass meetings increased in size and frequency, Adams’ October 28 meeting with Clemmons showed that he still held out hope the strike could be settled without incident. To Adams, however, “without incident” meant that *all* forms of picketing would stop, and there was no way the IWW would agree to that. Adams viewed the IWW’s stance toward picketing as openly defying the law, but IWW organizers did not. After the Colorado Strike Committee conferred with Adams, however, they did stop using the word “picketing” in public (although they continued using it in their newspapers) and began using more euphemistic terms for their actions. For example, when large groups of cars traveled to coalmines as the morning shift was starting or ending, they were no longer picketing but participating in car caravans; Wobblies stopped picketing the coal camps but began holding parades.

IWW organizers’ reasoning went like this: Drivers had a right to travel on public roads, and strikers and their supporters also had the right to hold their meetings where even private roads led to public facilities, such as federal post offices

⁹⁰ “Preacher Turns to Wobblies in Colorado Strike of Mine Workers,” *Industrial Worker*, Vol. IX No. 47, 26 November 1927, CF&I, INR 1300-6.

⁹¹ A.K. Orr, “Wm. H. Lofton,” *Industrial Solidarity*, 14 December 1927: 2.

or public schools. Since almost all the coal camps had both, including the Columbine, Wobblies should be able to hold their meetings and parades at the camps. When they drove their cars on public roads or held mass rallies or parades where there were public facilities, IWW organizers contended, they were patriotically exercising their Constitutionally protected first amendment rights of speech and assembly, a position reinforced when American flagbearers led all their parades. Of course, these first amendment arguments were the same the IWW had used during their progressive era free speech fights and that Embree had used in Butte. Through constant repetition during mass meetings, these ideas transferred to the attendees, becoming part of the vocabulary and rationale that described and motivated their actions, as evidenced in their coroners' testimonies after the November 21, 1927, Columbine Massacre and the January 12, 1928, shootings in Walsenburg.⁹²

In 1927, the Supreme Court agreed with the Wobblies. That year, in *Fiske v. Kansas*, the Court held that criminal syndicalism laws assuming criminal intent flowed from the IWW preamble violated—through the 14th amendment—Wobblies' first amendment rights. Unfortunately for the IWW organizers in Colorado, that process of incorporation (applying the Bill of Rights to the states through the 14th Amendment) that began in the 1920s was not consistently understood or followed by local judges during the strike, so the IWW's Constitutional arguments worked

⁹² At both inquests, IWW members and their supporters volunteered to testify. I included the IWW "cheer" that closed every IWW meeting that referred to free speech, and in the inquest testimony, it's remarkable how many people use the exact words when insisting that none of them was armed, since they'd been instructed never to carry weapons of any kind, "not even a pocket knife." Some examples include the testimonies of of Bill Allander (202) at the *Weld County Inquest* (202), and the testimonies of Pete Verbich (29), Mrs. Fluenta Pappas (36), Nemesio Edilla (43) at the Huerfano County Coroner's Inquest, CF&I papers, INR, 1300-21.

about as well for them during the strike as they had during the progressive era and the red scare, which is to say, they did not work at all. No matter how many American flags they put on their cars or carried in their parades, Adams was not alone in viewing practically everything the IWW said or did as un-American and against the law.

The coal operators shared Adams' viewpoint, and by the second week of the strike, they were fast losing their patience with the IWW and the strike. Mass meetings in both the northern and southern fields were growing larger and more unruly by the day, and not only were striking coalminers halting coal production, they were threatening the social order. The all-night meeting the IWW held on November 3, in Aguilar, led by none other than Milka Sablich, "The Girl in Red," seemed to be the last straw. When attendees decided to "parade" at the Morley and Berwind mines (near Ludlow) at dawn that morning after the all-night meeting, for the first time, CF&I officials flatly stated that they would do whatever it took to protect their property.⁹³ Probably even more important, even though CF&I publicly claimed production at its mines was increasing since the strike began, on November 3, the company laid off 2,500 workers (about half its workforce) at its Pueblo steel plant, because there was not enough coal to run the plant.⁹⁴

The next day, on November 4, with the stroke of a pen, Governor Adams revived Governor Morley's hated prohibition officers, calling them the Colorado state

⁹³ "Adams Details Armed Guards to Strike Zone," The [Denver] *Rocky Mountain News*, 5 November 1927: 1.

⁹⁴ "Order to Close C.F. & I. 14-Inch Mill Revoked," The [Denver] *Rocky Mountain News*, 3 November 1927:2.

police. As even conservative newspapers noted, after campaigning against the Colorado Rangers, Adams had recreated them in everything but name. The Boulder *Daily Camera* reported that Adams decided to fight the strike with the new state police force so that he could “enforce state laws in the strike zone without going to the heavy expense of calling out the National Guard.”⁹⁵ Denver’s Democratic newspaper, the *Rocky Mountain News*, reported that Adams had revived the state police “to avoid the friction which might arise if guardsmen in uniforms were called out.”⁹⁶ Whatever Adams’ motives, the newly constituted state police immediately entered the southern strike zone and began making mass arrests.

The first showdown took place in the southern fields. Colonel Louis Scherf and seventeen other state policemen arrested seven speakers “as they climbed the steps of the [Berwind] post office to address the crowd.”⁹⁷ In the melee that followed, the police attacked the crowd with “clubs and fists,” although this encounter seemed to delight newspapers. Although the police were under strict orders not to shoot, they were armed with pistols. They were also vastly outnumbered, something the National Guard Adjutant General, who the governor sent to observe the situation, noted with concern.⁹⁸

Just two days later, by November 6, most of the IWW organizers, including Embree and Svanum, had been arrested, jailed in Walsenburg, secretly moved in the

⁹⁵ “Gov. Adams Revives The State Law Enforcement Department,” The *Daily Camera*, 4 November 1927:1.

⁹⁶ “Adams Orders Armed Guards to Enforce Anti-Picketing Edict in Southern Colorado,” The *Rocky Mountain News*, 6 November 1927: 1.

⁹⁷ “Strikers Plan New Moves in Picketing ‘War’ with Guards,” The [Denver] *Rocky Mountain News*, 6 November 1927: 2.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

middle of the night to a more secure jail in Pueblo, but still not charged with anything. In response, Walsenburg Wobblies held a mass meeting, after which local residents reported seeing “signal fires and rockets flaming from nearby hills.”⁹⁹ Those sightings (or rumored sightings) prompted local officials to increase their patrols and install machine guns at the county courthouse, which housed the jail. Fearing carloads of Wobblies were on their way from Walsenburg to Pueblo to break their leaders out of jail, one hundred armed deputies guarded the Pueblo jail all night. The next night, Pueblo doubled the number of deputies and “armed [them] with tear bombs and machine guns.” Pueblo officials also parked three fire engines in front of the jail, just in case.¹⁰⁰

Adams authorized twenty more state police the next day and sent them to the southern fields. When added to the locals who had been deputized, that brought to sixty the number of men under Scherf’s control. Their orders had been to arrest all strike leaders, and the police assumed that anyone who spoke must be a leader. On November 9, when the Walsenburg IWW meeting began, police rushed the stage, trying to arrest speaker after speaker. But much like the 1960 lunch counter sit-ins that swept the South in the black civil rights movement, no matter how many speakers they arrested, a new speaker took the stage. According to *The Rocky Mountain News*, the crowd attacked the police with knives, chairs, and spades. Although two policemen were slightly injured, here are the names of the most seriously injured Wobblies: Carmello Martinez, Jose Camachio, Panciano Sloriano,

⁹⁹ “Most of Arrested Pickets in Southern Colorado ‘Lost’,” *The [Denver] Rocky Mountain News*, 9 November 1927: 2.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

Pablo Trujillo, Andy Archuletta, Juan Alvarado, Pablo Espinosa, Ruqino Garcia, Jose Sciof, Cahilla Ciruria, and Casimirio Valdez.¹⁰¹

Since the 1910-1914 long strike, which CF&I public relations' apologist Ivy Lee blamed on violent Greek immigrants, a significant economic and demographic shift had taken place in Colorado.¹⁰² In 1920, Colorado had 14,340 residents the census described as Mexicans. By 1930, it had 57,676. However, almost eighty percent of people classified as Mexicans were born in the United States.¹⁰³ Out of a partial list of almost eight hundred IWW members CF&I officials amassed, representing twenty different ethnicities, only forty members were classified as Americans, and even fewer as Greeks. Eastern and southern Europeans no longer comprised the bulk of CF&I's striking coalminers; over half had Spanish names, the same as in the northern field.¹⁰⁴

Although newspaper evidence tells us that Mexicans were key participants and leaders in the strike, their stories are almost impossible to find. This massive historical silence is the greatest omission from the strike records. Who were these strikers and their families? Were they mostly new immigrants, or had their families lived in the Southwest for generations? Did they participate in the strike because

¹⁰¹ "16 Persons injured as Strikers and State Guards Stage Wild Battle at I.W.W. Headquarters," The [Denver] *Rocky Mountain News*, 9 November 1927: 1.

¹⁰² Ivy Lee (not attributed as the author on the book's cover, but attributed in the CF&I archives file folder title), *Facts Concerning the Struggle in Colorado for Industrial Freedom*, Issued by the Coal Mine Managers, [1914-15?], 10, INR 1300, CF&I archives.

¹⁰³ R.W. Roskelley, *Population Trends in Colorado* (Fort Collins: Cooperative Plan of Rural Research, Division of Research, WPA, 1940), 56.

¹⁰⁴ "Member lists of IWWs to Mine Superintendents," 27 January 1928, CF&I Archives, INR-1300, FII.

they were tired of always holding the lowest paying jobs in the mines and getting assigned to the worst company housing, or were they accepted as equals in their communities? Were they apolitical, or had they fought in the Mexican Revolution, adopting those sometimes-radical values? Were the strikers recent arrivals, driven out of Mexico because of the late 1920s' Cristero Rebellion that pitted devout Catholics against a more anti-clerical Mexican president who tried to strip the Church of its control over Mexican society? Did the coalminers know the beet workers?

These are just some of the questions I would love to have answers to, but they were not asked during the strike, and they were not asked fifty years later during oral interviews with the oldtimer, English-speaking, former strikers, either. Evidence about Mexican American participation is scant but intriguing. For example, Kristen Svanum wrote a letter of introduction for Ramon P. Gonzalez, highly recommending him to other IWWs, in part, because Gonzalez had "shown his reliability in the Mexican Revolution as a member of the Magon group and in the 1917 strike of the I.W.W. in Arizona." Also, "before the strike," he was "our most competent job delegate in Aguilar," which was why Svanum thought the IWW had been so successful in Las Animas County. Not only did he speak Spanish, invaluable for the strike, Gonzalez had proven himself capable of succeeding at any kind of "work he may offer to do."¹⁰⁵

Other historians have referred to Mexican American participation in the 1927-1928 strike. Zaragosa Vargas has suggested that coalminers working alongside Mexican contract beet workers in 1927 and 1928 organized themselves for the first

¹⁰⁵ Letter of introduction for Ramon Gonzalez by Kristen Svanum (confiscated during an arrest of another IWW organizer), INR 1300-11, CF&I archives.

time in a militant IWW union that they brought with them when they moved to the industrial Midwest in the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁰⁶ Vickie Ruiz's dedication in *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* follows: "In memory of my grandfather, Albino Ruiz, beet worker, coal miner, Wobblie."¹⁰⁷ In an email, Ruiz wrote that her grandfather played all three roles in the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike. Those memories, conflicts, and grudges within her family over which family members went on strike and which ones scabbed resonated even as late as her own mother's funeral in 1971, years after the strike ended.¹⁰⁸ Clearly, Ruiz family activism influenced her career choice, since as a labor historian, she has spent most of her career looking for and writing about other, also silenced stories in the Mexican American community. In the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, although over half, and maybe more, of its participants were Mexican Americans, it seems incredible that the strongest evidence of their participation appears most often in newspapers that were openly hostile toward Mexicans, Mexican Americans, the strike, the strikers, and their supporters.

The day after the police broke up the Walsenburg meeting and attacked its participants, approximately 3,000 people assembled at the Ludlow Monument. Four airplanes, one armed with bombs, buzzed the meeting and people fled to the

¹⁰⁶ Zaragosa Vargas, *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 156.

¹⁰⁷ Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), dedication.

¹⁰⁸ Email from Vicki Ruiz to me on 22 August 2013.

surrounding hills in terror. CF&I also that day installed machine guns in all its camps.¹⁰⁹ At the same time the strike intensified in the south, it escalated in the north, too. On Monday, November 6 (the day of the Walsenburg attacks), over one thousand people met in Lafayette and at least two hundred proceeded onto the Columbine, for yet another mass meeting there. Not only did many of the strikers own cars, making transportation easier across the state, they also had access to telephones. News traveled fast during the strike, and the morning after the Walsenburg attacks, carloads of protestors blocked a mine in nearby Frederick as more carloads of protestors blocked the road entering the Columbine mine, successfully closing the mine.¹¹⁰

On Tuesday morning, November 8, the *Camera* reported that an unidentified Amazon urged 800 protestors, including women and children, to destroy the tippie when they invaded the Columbine compound. However, Wobblies related a very different scene, instead describing the gathering as a patriotic, festive parade, in which they marched around the camp, singing, emulating the “Spirit of ’76” by following a flag bearer, a fife, and a drum.¹¹¹ Local sheriffs arrested the musicians, but the crowd surrounded the police, and the musicians escaped into the crowd. Strikebreakers at the Columbine that day also joined the paraders, reducing the

¹⁰⁹ Telegram from Juan Noriega, Walsenburg, Nov. 7, Box 5, Folder 20, IWW Archives.

¹¹⁰ “Picketers Terrorized Miners at the Columbine and Not One of the 175 Working Miners is Working in the Weld County Property,” The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 7 November 1927: 1.

¹¹¹ Almost all the state police, Weld County sheriffs, and “volunteer” IWW witnesses who testified during the Weld County coroner’s inquest referred to the parades in the Columbine including a flag and a drum. The fife was not mentioned as happening every time, but there are no specific dates referred to in the inquest, it’s hard to tell if the fife player appeared every time or not.

number of men working that day to seventy-five. The *Camera* reported that, “No warrants have been sworn out for leaders of the picketing parties today, according to authorities, because of the reason that there appear to be no leaders. The crowd of picketers resembles a herd of sheep in that it mills about, following anyone who starts to do something.”¹¹²

Governor Adams and the operators thought that when the IWW organizers were arrested, the strike would end. Instead, the strike intensified as the newly leaderless strikers exhibited two characteristics of an IWW strike: the singing of “Solidarity Forever” and the repetition of the mantra, “We are all leaders.”¹¹³ Although Wobblies have often been criticized for having no consistent ideology, both the song and the sentiment embodied their beliefs. The Wobblies were not about to stop their strike just because Embree, Svanum, Kitto, Juan Noriega, Lofton, and Sablich, among others, were in jail. It had taken Embree and other IWW organizers a year and a half to organize Colorado coalminers by convincing them that they were all leaders. Embree and others had also appealed to the memories of Ludlow. Once those latent leadership skills, passions, and old grudges re-surfaced, it appears that IWW organizers had actually served as moderating influences on the crowds, but after the leaders were in jail, their moderating influence disappeared.

¹¹² “Columbine Miners Were Threatened by Large Meeting of the Strikers,” The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 8 November 1927: 1.

¹¹³ Staughton Lynd, ed., *“We are All Leaders”: The Alternative Unionism of the Early 1930s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 7. Staughton’s argument in this book is that industrial unionism did not suddenly emerge in 1930 with the creation of the CIO. He traces such militancy to the early 1930s, also arguing that most militant organizers had been active in the IWW. Of course, in this dissertation, I am arguing that this worker militancy precedes the early 1930s, and can be traced back to the 1920s, showing continuity with the IWW’s strength during the Progressive era.

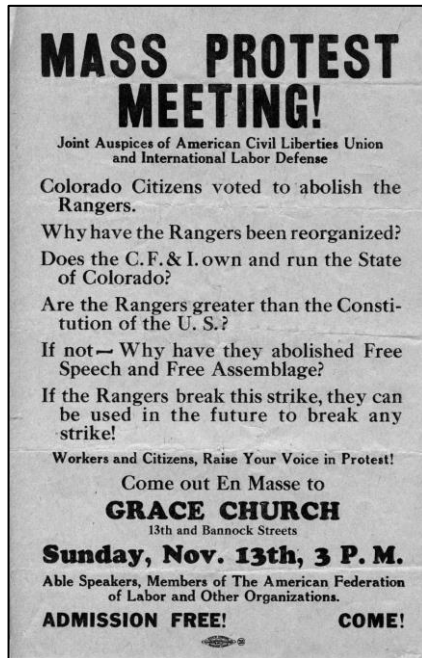
In the northern fields, the parades at the Columbine became almost daily events, and the Wobblies expanded their efforts in the nearby sugar beet fields, too. On November 11, the IWW held a “monster mass meeting” at Ft. Lupton (about ten miles east of the Columbine), where speakers urged the sugar beet workers to join the strike. Then approximately 2,000 striking miners fanned out into the fields and inside the processing factory to recruit new members.¹¹⁴ Newspaper accounts reported that the sugar beet workers did not join the strike, but Sarah Deutsch, in *No Separate Refuge*, and Zaragosa Vargas, in *Proletarians of the North*, cited evidence that suggests otherwise. Deutsch quoted an organizer who claimed that the IWW had founded fourteen sugar beet locals with 1,700 hundred members by January of 1928.¹¹⁵ Vargas writes that by 1928, “Mexican sugar-beet workers had organized *La Liga Obrera de Habla Española* (Spanish-Speaking Workers’ League) with the help of the militant Industrial Workers of the World. The influence of *La Liga* was widespread; it extended into northern Colorado, the Denver area, and northern New Mexico among a workforce that was largely migratory.”¹¹⁶ As mentioned earlier, the influence of that union, which formed in Colorado’s beet fields, also spread to the industrial Midwest by the 1930s.

¹¹⁴ “Sugar Factory Men and Beet Field Workers Urged to Strike,” The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 11 November 1927: 1.

¹¹⁵ Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 158.

¹¹⁶ Vargas, 156.

On November 12, Judge J. Foster Symes of the US federal district court located in Denver agreed to hear the application for a writ of habeas corpus for eight of the



jailed IWW leaders, including Embree. Symes set the hearing for Friday, November 18. That same day, the largest crowd ever, which the Weld county sheriff estimated at one thousand men, women, and children, paraded inside the Columbine starting at 4:00 a.m. Again, they marched behind a flag bearer and a drummer, who, no doubt woke up the strikebreakers scheduled to go to work inside the camp in less than an hour.¹¹⁷

On Sunday, November 13, Wobblies held their biggest, and most visible mass rally to date in downtown Denver. (See the flyer for the meeting above.)¹¹⁸ Although the meeting was scheduled for Rev. Heist's Grace Community Church, so many people showed up, the overflow walked several blocks to hold a second meeting at the Greek Theater, part of the Civic Center complex sited between the state capitol and the Denver city government building. Frank Palmer spoke at Grace, and Adam Bell, a local northern IWW leader, spoke in the park. Over two thousand people

¹¹⁷ "Strikers Ignore State Police and Parade Inside Enclosure Columbine Mine early Today," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 12 November 1927: 1.

¹¹⁸ "Mass Protest Meeting" flyer, INR1300-7, CF&I archives.

attended the open-air meeting, as they heard speaker after speaker decry the massive violation of civil liberties going on in Colorado's coalfields.¹¹⁹

The Monday following the meetings, Wobbly paraders were back at the Columbine, and this time, the local Weld county sheriffs tried arresting the perceived ringleaders. The crowd once again swarmed around their car, blocked the gate that exited the compound, and took the would-be-arrestees out of the back seat, who then slipped back into the crowd.¹²⁰ Twice defying the local sheriffs seemed to be the last straw. The next day, Tuesday, November 15, Columbine mine officials told Governor Adams "that mine guards would shoot the first picketer who attempted to set foot on the property Wednesday morning."¹²¹ That Tuesday, state policeman Sam Lee "told newspaper men that the state police were going to make a radical change of policy in Weld county;" from now on, "the law enforcement officers were to cooperate with mine guards in attempting to keep picketers off the property of the Columbine."¹²² Law enforcement had been taken out of the hands of the local sheriffs and turned over to the newly commissioned state police, who less than two weeks earlier served as prohibition officers.

¹¹⁹ "Meetings of Strikers at Denver on Sunday When Speakers Denounced Gov. Adams for Using Guardsmen and Jailing I.W.W.," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 14 November 1927: 1.

¹²⁰ "Columbine Mine Closed: Attack on Deputies of Weld County by Picketers Wins," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 14 November 1927: 1; During the Weld County Coroner's Inquest, the first group to testify was the state police. They mostly told the same story. Following them, the local Weld County sheriffs testified, and it is clear from their testimony that they felt their authority had been usurped and that no violence had or would have taken place under their watch.

¹²¹ "Strikers Warned Shooting May Commence at Columbine," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 15 November 1927: 1.

¹²² Ibid.

By Wednesday, November 16, Governor Adams was clearly beginning to panic. Not only had his plan to end the strike failed, just as Governor Ammons had during the 1910-1914 strike, he was running out of money. At his fiscally austere urging, the state legislature had only allocated \$18,400 annually to fund an emergency state police force, and since November 4, he had already spent \$16,000. At that rate, he only had two days of funding left, since the new state police allocation did not start again until November 30.¹²³ Adams transferred twelve state police from the southern to the northern fields, and when the Columbine re-opened on Wednesday, a total of thirty-five armed men were inside, along with two machine guns, one mounted on the back of a truck, and the other mounted on top of the tippie.

The tippie, at the Columbine (as did they all during that era) resembled an old wooden oilrig. It straddled the underground mine opening, and when coalminers sent their coal to the surface, topmen sorted, cleaned, and loaded the coal before it was weighed, since coalminers were paid by the ton. One of their twenty-two strike demands was to replace the company check weighman, the man who signed off on each miner's weight, with a union man who would not cheat them on their tonnage. If the tippie were destroyed, the mine would shut down until it could be replaced. That was one reason why an Amazon suggesting the crowd destroy the tippie was such a terrifying suggestion to management, and why also the tippie was an excellent placement for a machine gun. For extra security, when the Columbine re-opened that Wednesday morning, a barbed-wire fence marked "high voltage" had also been built around the tippie. Another reason it made sense to mount a machine gun on top of

¹²³ "Gov. Adams Expected to Send Units of Troops to Mines," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 16 November 1927: 1.

the tippie was because it was the highest point in the camp. A shooter would be able to spot trouble inside the fence, but also outside the fence, on the surrounding plains. That morning, after the state police, extra guards, and machine guns had been installed at the Columbine, "Merle Vincent, vice-president and general manager of the Rocky Mountain Fuel company, said that every effort would be made to keep the mine open."¹²⁴

By Thursday, November 17, Governor Adams' police fund had dwindled to a few hundred dollars, and the IWW leaders' habeas corpus hearing was set for the next day. Adams instructed the southern coalfield sheriffs to file formal charges against the leaders, which would halt the habeas corpus hearings and keep the leaders in jail at least over the weekend.¹²⁵ On Friday, 750 men, women, and children were back at the Columbine again, conducting yet another mass rally inside the camp.¹²⁶

On Sunday, November 21, the Wobblies held their mass meeting in Boulder, and over one thousand people showed up, including college students from the University of Denver and the University of Colorado as well as local residents interested in strike.¹²⁷ Local coalminers and their families were especially heartened by this show of community support, since they had always felt that people in Boulder

¹²⁴ "Machine Gun and a Few Troopers Stood Off Picket at Columbine," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 16 November 1927: 1.

¹²⁵ "Troops Will be Ordered Out by Adams Thinks Mr. Swain," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 17 November 1927: 1.

¹²⁶ "Tho Machine Guns Were Aimed at Men I.W.W. Led Strikers Into the Columbine," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 18 November 1927: 1.

¹²⁷ "One Thousand Led by the I.W.W. Held Meeting Here Sunday," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 21 November 1927: 1.

“treated them like rats” because they worked in the coalmines.¹²⁸ The meeting lasted over three hours, with H.C. Duke delivering a real stem-winder, speaking for over half of the rally. With all the Colorado IWW organizers in jail, a frantic call had gone out in early November for any available Wobblies to come to Colorado. Duke arrived from California, where he had just gotten out of prison for helping to lead the 1923-4 San Pedro shipyard strikes, made famous by the physical as well as artistic involvement by Upton Sinclair.¹²⁹ Although Sinclair had not gone to jail, Duke did. Like Embree, he was yet another unrepentant Wobbly ready to resume his activities upon release.

After the Boulder rally, many of the striking coalminers, especially the young ones, apparently kept celebrating, which involved heavy drinking, in spite of prohibition. Maybe they knew the state’s prohibition officers were preoccupied in the coalfields, trying to break the strike, so they were not worried about getting caught like their buddy Ray Jacques had been in October.¹³⁰ The next day at the Columbine, Jacques was one of the six strikers who got shot and later died, suggesting that at least some of the conflict, in addition to the coal strike, also involved resentments and unsettled scores between the prohibition police—that Adams had just re-commissioned as strike police—and those they had arrested for liquor violations. Around midnight, the festive mood turned sour, as rumors on both sides began running rampant. Coalminers heard that uniformed strangers had come

¹²⁸ Joe (Cotton) Fletcher, Tape #1083 (no date)—transcribed, 8, Lafayette oral histories, Lafayette Public Library, Lafayette, Colorado.

¹²⁹ Archie Green, “Remembering Jack Fitch,” in *Torching the Fink Books and Other Essays on Vernacular Culture* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 174.

¹³⁰ “Jaques Fined \$100 and Pays up for Selling Booze,” The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 24 October 1927: 1.

banging on people's doors that had been active in the strike, and that their neighbors had simply disappeared into the night.¹³¹ State police heard that Wobblies were planning on breaking into the Columbine, so they sent south for even more state police reinforcements who arrived around 3:00 a.m., bringing steel helmets, tear gas, and .44 pistols with them.¹³² Families still living inside the coal camp swore they heard the guards and police having an all night drinking party.¹³³ Everybody, it seemed, was on edge, anticipating trouble, which arrived the next morning.

The next morning at dawn, an estimated five hundred people showed up at the gates of the Columbine. This morning was different from the others. There was no festive singing of "Solidarity Forever," and most of the women and children had stayed home. For the first time, the paraders found the gate to the Columbine complex locked. Inside the fence stood a phalanx of twenty state police wearing tin helmets, knee-high boots, and pistols strapped to their sides. There would be no parades today, Colonel Louis Scherf told the crowd at the gate. Yes, there would be, those in the front of the crowd replied. Scherf asked who their leaders were. We are all leaders, they said.¹³⁴ Then, accounts diverge.

¹³¹ Undated statement of John R. Lawson to Rev. A.A. Heist [September of 1928?], 11, JR Papers, 15-1; Testimony of Joe Beranek (the inquest mistakenly identifies him as Joe Veranek) at the Colorado Industrial Commission hearings, December 19-22, 1927, 41, JR Papers, 14-1.

¹³² Coroner's Inquest into the Deaths of John Eastenes and Nick Spanudakhis, November 22-23, 1927, Columbine Mine Massacre Collection (1927), 1-1, Archives, University of Colorado Boulder Libraries.

¹³³ Lawson to Heist, 11.

¹³⁴ At the Weld County inquest, the state police, county sheriffs, and volunteer witnesses from the crowd all agree on this. See pages 38, 79, 158, & 198.

Two days later, Scherf testified that the crowd had stormed through the gate, pushing down the fence. Scherf and other state police said the crowd was armed with knives and rocks, and they found themselves fighting for their lives. In spite of their many verbal warnings, the crowd backed them to the water tower, next to the tippie. Scherf yelled at them not to come any further, then he fired a warning shot at the ground, which only stopped the mob for a few seconds. He had no choice. He gave his men the order to open fire. As soon as the crowd fell back, his men stopped shooting, and when he was convinced it was safe, Scherf instructed one of his men to call for medical help.¹³⁵

Witnesses from the crowd offered a very different account. They said they had just wanted to march as usual at the Columbine, and they had a right to, since there was a post office and a school there. Scherf had asked them who their leader was, and they had yelled out that they were all leaders. After that, Scherf started insulting them, swearing at them, and threatening them, which he had no right to do. Adam Bell climbed up the fence, but then a state policeman pulled him over and beat him unconscious. That was why they had gone through the gate, to save Bell's life. They could not have thrown rocks, because there were none to throw. They did admit lobbing unexploded tear bombs back at the police who had thrown them in the first place. As repeatedly instructed throughout the strike, they had not carried weapons of any kind, "not even a knife."¹³⁶ They had not heard Scherf yell at them to stop, and

¹³⁵ Scherf's Weld County inquest testimony, 41.

¹³⁶ This exact quote repeatedly appears in coalminers' testimonies in both the Weld County and Huerfano County inquests. For example, when IWW leader Nemesio Edilla was interviewed during the inquest over the two men killed on January 12, 1928, in Walsenburg, he was asked if any Wobblies were armed. He replied, "Before the parade I

the police had attacked them with their fists and nightsticks. They only fought back in self-defense. The police showed shocking disregard for the American flag when they knocked down the flag bearer, broke the staff, and then trampled the flag. Somebody, maybe Jerry Davis, picked the flag up and kept marching. Then, the shooting started. The bullets came so fast, they could only have come from the machine guns. As they ran away, the shooting continued. Later, they returned with their own cars draped with white flags of surrender to pick up the dead and wounded bodies still on the ground. They took the worst to the local doctor in Erie then collected in the streets outside his office for the rest of the day, waiting to hear word of their condition. The doctor told them that two men—John Eastennes and Nick Spanandakis had died immediately. Later they found out that three more—Jerry Davies, Edward (Ray or Rene) Jacques, George Kovoitch had died by nightfall. Another—Mike Vidovich—lay dead by the end of the week. At least twenty wounded people had been taken to local hospitals, but after people heard Adam Bell had been arrested, not hospitalized, they got scared and went home instead of seeking treatment.¹³⁷

The violence on November 21, 1927, was soon known among the striking coalminers, their families, and their supporters as the Columbine Massacre. It was the turning point of the strike. By the time it took place, the IWW and its most important organizer, A.S. Embree, had already lost whatever control they had exercised over the direction of the strike. The Columbine Massacre forced Josephine Roche to act. Before the massacre, she mostly stayed in the background, allowing her

told the men not to carry nothing, not even a pocket knife,” quoted in “Notes Taken at Coroner’s Inquest Held January 16th, 1927 [sic, meant 1928],” INR 1300-21, 43, CF&I archives.

¹³⁷ Ibid., Weld County inquest testimony of Mrs. George Kubic, 175.

manager Merle Vincent to handle the RMFC's business. After the massacre, since the Columbine was an RMFC coalmine, Josephine Roche took active control of the RMFC. Anonymity was no longer a choice for Roche, the subject of the next two chapters, whose identity was that of a social reformer, advocating for the rights of the oppressed.

Chapter 3: Josephine Roche: Maternalist Reformer, 1886-1927

Josephine Roche (1886-1976) was a remarkable woman, yet she would be an unknown historical figure were it not for the Columbine Massacre, even though, ironically, she denied playing any role in it.¹ Before the strike, she identified herself as a social worker alleviating problems especially associated with women, children, and immigrants and especially relating to education, health, and working issues. Subsequent historians, most notably Molly Ladd-Taylor, have labeled such women maternalist reformers.² Before the 1927 Columbine Massacre, while Roche may have been interested in industrial democracy and coalmining policies, so many other issues—including juvenile delinquency, white slavery, and the Americanization of immigrants—interested her so much more. After the massacre, however, Roche changed the course of the strike and the course of her life as she began identifying herself as a coalmine operator.³ What makes her historically unique and significant is the way she combined those two identities—maternalist reformer and coalmine operator—the rest of her life.

This chapter will first examine the admittedly limited, yet overly flattering historiography surrounding Roche, then it will focus on her life before the

¹ Edward Costigan letter to Editor of *The Survey*, 12 April 1928, 6-11, Josephine Roche papers.

² Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 3 & 7-9; Todd Laughen, *The Gospel of Progressivism: Moral Reform and Labor War in Colorado, 1900-1930* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2010), 5.

³ Letter from Josephine Roche to Edward Keating, 8 October 1928, 4-5, Josephine Roche papers.

Columbine Massacre, showing how, in important ways, her maternalist background had prepared her well to take charge of the RMFC. In other ways, of course, it had not. To enter the social work field, Roche received an excellent education and in that process, developed life-long, influential friends, including several important mentors. Roche learned to write and speak for an educated public as she also honed her leadership skills. Learning the hard way, she began understanding how to navigate her way through tough political landscapes in New York City, Washington, D.C., Denver, and the state of Colorado. Most importantly, Roche mastered her relationship with the press. In other ways, especially understanding the fundamentals of the coal industry, Roche's maternalist reformer background left her woefully unprepared to run the RMFC after her parents' deaths in 1927 made her the largest individual stockholder in the company. That is probably why she had hired her trusted former Progressive ally Merle Vincent to manage the business for her. Yet after the Columbine Massacre, Roche could no longer leave the RMFC's management to Vincent alone. Perhaps the massacre tugged at her own, deeply held maternalist values, but negative publicity most certainly would have destroyed her stellar reputation. These threats compelled Roche to adopt a more hands-on role in the company's operations, a confluence of unusual events that led her to reinvent the RMFC as an experiment in industrial democracy.

Roche's story is important on several levels. First, she is the person who most determined the consequences of the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike. Second, Roche's actions before, during, and after the strike, as well as the subsequent historical interpretations of those actions, show how personal histories can (often

erroneously) shape bigger, national historical narratives. As she stepped onto a larger political stage—by 1934, FDR had appointed her Undersecretary to the Treasury, making her the second highest-ranking woman in Franklin D. Roosevelt's Cabinet after Frances Perkins, his Secretary of Labor—Roche had excellent reasons for reconstructing the history surrounding the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike to suit her own purposes. Perhaps she even believed her own version of events. As I will show in the next chapter, with help from the local and national press, as well as from UMW president John L. Lewis, Roche created a simplistic, self-promoting narrative that encouraged memories of Ludlow and discouraged a critical examination of the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, substantially contributing to historical narratives that describe 1920s workers as quiescent and 1930s workers as militant. Third, as I will show in Chapters 7 through 9, the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike initiated Roche's involvement with both the UMW and its president John L. Lewis, an association that shaped the future of the UMW as well as the entire American labor movement through her forced 1972 retirement from that organization.

Roche did such a magnificent job orchestrating her own as well as the 1927-1928 strike narratives, historians have so far presented her version of both. That is certainly a shame, because both the strike and Roche's role in it are much more interesting, complex, and representational of 1920s and early 1930s coal mining conflicts than they have been portrayed in the past. Ironically, that simplification has also diminished in historical accounts her substantial contributions to

significant governmental and labor policies, especially surrounding health care, that Roche helped create after 1927. Roche was a savvy, political insider, not a one-dimensional do-gooder, and I anticipate Robyn Muncy and Maria Montoya, who are currently working on projects about Roche, will challenge the rather flat historical portrayal she has received so far. Muncy is writing “a political biography of Josephine Roche,” which will analyze “America’s progressive reform tradition from the Progressive Era through the Great Society.”⁴ Montoya’s projected title, *Dreams of Wealth and Promises of Reform: John D. Rockefeller, Jr.’s and Josephine Roche’s Battle Over the Colorado Coal Fields*, will “examine these battles through the ideologies and labor practices of these two industrialists,” exploring the themes of “property, gender, and how people make their homes on the American Landscape.”⁵

Right now, there is only one biography of Josephine Roche, written by Elinor McGinn and published by the Colorado Historical Society. McGinn has said that the purpose of her book was to write a non-academic biography for Colorado history enthusiasts. McGinn also presents an hour-long performance as Roche for community events and schools, portraying Roche as a heroic feminist who consistently championed the rights of organized labor. One can view a video link of Ms. McGinn discussing Roche for the Josephine Commons (named for Josephine Roche) subsidized housing project in Lafayette, Colorado, which opened in 2012.⁶

⁴ “Robyn Muncy,” University of Maryland History Department, <http://www.history.umd.edu/Bio/muncy.html>, accessed 27 August 2011.

⁵ “Maria Montoya’s Research and Interests,” New York University, Arts and Sciences, History, <http://as.nyu.edu/object/histoy.faculty.montoya.interests>, accessed 27 August 2011.

⁶ Elinor McGinn, “Boulder County Department of Housing and Human Service: The Story of Josephine Aspinwall Roche,” 19 October 2012,

McGinn's admiration for Roche is clear from the book's title, *A Wide-Awake Woman: Josephine Roche in the Era of Reform*, as well as from some of the chapter titles, which include "Denver's Joan of Arc," and "Angel-Nurse of the Unfortunate."⁷

Most other sources that mention Roche also do so as admiringly as McGinn, but more briefly. For example, the following is the first sentence from Roche's 2011 Vassar alumna/i article (Roche completed her undergraduate degree there in 1908): "A tireless activist for rights of workers and children, Josephine Roche dedicated her life to proving that better living conditions were good business and that there were practical, effective ways to help people."⁸ That entry, however, incorrectly declared that the United Mine Workers, not the Industrial Workers of the World, led the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, a mistake corrected by 2013, suggesting scholarship about Roche and the strike are beginning to change.

In 1999, Denver's *Rocky Mountain News* ran an article about Roche as part of a publicity campaign intended to prod various philanthropic entities into donating to a proposed Colorado women's history museum. The museum never got built, perhaps because women's history, an offshoot of 1960s' multiculturalism, had already begun evolving into the more generalized, and less celebratory, gender history. However, women's history made great contributions, because it inspired historians to look for exceptional, and sometimes ordinary, women to research and

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4h8eXF4deU>, accessed 30 June 2013. This video clip was produced to celebrate the opening of the first phase of a 153-unit, affordable housing development for low-income seniors and families in Lafayette, Colorado.

⁷ Elinor McGinn, *A Wide-Awake Woman: Josephine Roche in the Era of Reform* (Denver: The Colorado Historical Society, 2002).

⁸ "Josephine Roche," *Vassar Encyclopedia, Alumnae/i of Distinction*, <http://vcencyclopedia.vassar.edu/alumni/josephine-roche.html>, accessed 20 July 2011 & 1 June 2013.

write about, since their stories had been ignored for so long. It was during the Denver Women's Museum campaign that I first heard about Roche. Wanting to know more about her sparked this entire research project, because she seemed so noble, as the article below makes clear:

Josephine Aspinwell (sic) Roche once described her only hobby as "humanity." But it was more a lifelong passion than idle pastime, a commitment that made her one of the most influential Denver women of the century. Roche spent much of her long life waging war against ignorance and injustice in government and business. She was the rarest of business executives in the 1920s and '30s—a coal mine owner who fought to improve conditions for miners and to negotiate with their union.⁹

By 1999, as the above article demonstrates, the almost sanctified historical depiction of Roche was complete, but that was not quite the case yet in the early 1930s. In 1931, a *Time* magazine article excerpted below shows how Roche was still in the process of expertly crafting her own story:

Unique among Colorado coal diggers is Rocky Mountain Fuel Co., second in production only to Rockefeller-owned Colorado Fuel and Iron Corp. Rocky Mountain is the only Colorado colliery to employ union labor. Last week Rocky Mountain became unique in another respect: 600 of its Union miners voted to go without half their wages for three months. Miss Josephine Roche, the company's 40-year-old, black-haired, thoroughly feminine president, gladly accepted their offer.¹⁰

As I will further explore in the next chapter, the *Time* article above allowed Roche to present her version of events taking place at the RMFC that Colorado

⁹ Tillie Fong, "Capitalist and Humanitarian: Coal Mine Owner Fought for Workers' Rights," The [Denver] *Rocky Mountain News*, 13 July 1999, <http://denver.rockymountainnews.com/millennium/0713mile.shtml>, accessed 21 August 2011.

¹⁰ "Rocky Mountain Gesture," *Time* magazine, 7 September 1931, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,742196-1,00.html>, accessed 21 August 2011.

newspapers did not print, probably because they knew it was not true. The article, one of many glowing articles printed between 1928 and 1932 in the national press, along with her archival materials, shows how Roche created a close working relationship with the national press that willingly cooperated with her to create an overwhelmingly positive, but extremely inaccurate narrative about her and the RMFC.¹¹ The *Time* journalist above compliantly presented only Roche's side of the story, showing that like today, many reporters functioned as mere stenographers to whomever had a handy, quote-filled press release available. The contents of the full story also show that Roche's narrative, largely self-created, already had many of its most important elements in place: the contrast of her father's anti-union stance to her pro-union position, the contrast of the progressive Roche to the reactionary Rockefeller (which tied into the memories of Ludlow), and the unique nature of her company's experiment in industrial democracy, which resulted in the utter devotion of her loyal workers to her and her company.

Most historical sources including Roche focus on histories of progressive women, Colorado, the New Deal, the UMW, or very occasionally, the Industrial Workers of the World. They unanimously present Roche as a maternalist reformer who did everything in her power to prevent the 1927 Columbine Massacre. For example, in *Once a Coal Miner: The Story of Colorado's Northern Field* (the only historical survey of Colorado's northern coalfields), Phyllis Smith writes that "Both Miss Roche and manager [Merle] Vincent strongly disapproved of the conditions

¹¹ Her archives provide repeated evidence of Roche sending articles out to national news sources between 1928 and 1932, including *The Survey*, *Collier's*, and *The Nation*, and *The Atlantic*. For one *Atlantic* article in 1930, Roche first wrote the story she wanted in the magazine, and wouldn't allow the editor to run it without her approval of his edits.

under which Rocky Mountain Fuel employees had to work, but until the heiress gained controlling shares in the firm, she and Vincent had to defer to more conservative attitudes, at least for a time.”¹²

Another account, written by Ronald McMahan, appears as a chapter in an *Industrial Workers of the World* anthology. McMahan and his research partner, Eric Margolis, both sociology doctoral students at the University of Colorado in Boulder in the 1970s, won several National Endowment for the Humanities grants and used that money to record and videotape wide-ranging interviews with “oldtimer” coalminers that occasionally included their involvement in the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike. (McMahan and Margolis will re-appear in Chapter 10 as they explore and co-create oral histories and memories of the strike.) McMahan’s account, as follows, is remarkably similar to Smith’s:

It is ironic that the major scene of violence occurred at the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company’s Columbine mine...Roche’s daughter had been educated in the East and had been openly sympathetic to the cause of unionism since the 1913-1914 strike...But the members of the board disagreed with her views, and before she had time to actually gain control of the company’s stock, the 1927 strike policy had been set. It was necessary to continue to operate the Columbine mine through the strike in order to prevent the company from going into receivership. However, Josephine was emphatic in her orders to the superintendent of the mine that picketing would be allowed and that the state and county law enforcement officers were not to take action against strikers on her property. She stated that she intended to avoid any acts that might provoke violence. But without her knowledge, the events at the Columbine were already out of control.¹³

¹² Phyllis Smith, *Once a Coal Miner: The Story of Colorado’s Northern Field* (Boulder, Colorado: Pruette Publishing Company, 1989), 179.

¹³ Ronald L. McMahan, “‘Rang-U-Tang’: The I.W.W. and the 1927 Colorado Coal Strike,” appearing in *At the Point of Production: The Local History of the I.W.W.*, edited by Joseph R. Conlin, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981), 202.

Roche's biographer McGinn adds that, "Shortly after joining the RMFC board in 1927, Roche had initiated steps to soften the company's anti-union stance," by convincing "the directors to appoint Merle Vincent as executive vice-president and general manager. Vincent, former head of the Colorado Bar Association and a former member of the Colorado Progressive Party, wanted to negotiate with the striking miners."¹⁴ Furthermore, "When the strike seemed imminent at the Columbine Mine...Vincent ordered the gates to be left open" and that there would be "no shooting, even though the mine be destroyed."¹⁵ As I will later show, that false assertion became the most-repeated fallacy about the massacre. Another writer even prophesized that "Had liberal Roche come to power sooner the tragedy could have been avoided because she had clearly broken ranks with the traditional industry and was dedicated to providing the best working conditions possible for her employees."¹⁶

So far, historical accounts about Roche and the Columbine Massacre are superficial, glorified, or just plain wrong. But before getting to her actions surrounding the Columbine Massacre in the next chapter and how she deftly suppressed knowledge of them, it is important first to acquire some basic biographical background about Roche, to understand the progressive, maternalist reformer identity that guided her behaviors before, during, and after the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike.

¹⁴ McGinn, 35.

¹⁵ Marjorie Hornbein, "Josephine Roche: Social Worker and Coal Operator," *The Colorado Magazine* 53 (summer 1976): 243-260, 251.

¹⁶ Jeanette G. Carrol, "Josephine Aspinwall Roche: Industrialist—Crusader—Humanitarian," <http://coloradowomeninhistory.org/contents/roche.html>, 3, accessed 8 September 2004.

Josephine Roche was born in the small town of Neligh, Nebraska, in 1886. Her father was born on a farm in Wisconsin and graduated from Wisconsin State Normal College, teaching school for a while before becoming a lawyer. His wife Ella was born in Maine, and like her future husband, also graduated from Wisconsin's teacher college and taught school. They moved to Neligh, where John established the First National Bank and dabbled in politics, serving in both houses of the state legislature (before it was unicameral). However, Neligh never boomed as the Roches must have hoped, and by 1892, the Chicago and Northwestern railroad stopped running through town. The couple moved from Neligh to Omaha, and in 1893, which in hindsight turned out to be a really bad year to start a business, John Roche began his next business venture as president of the London and Sioux City Finance Company. The disastrous economic depression that started that year, caused in part by over-speculation in the railroads (like the line to Neligh), didn't completely fade until the new century began. Combined with a devastating mid-western drought, Roche's new venture probably failed, which would help explain his next business in 1898, the Omaha Cattle Loan Company.¹⁷

Although it is unclear just how successful Roche was at that business, we do know that the Roches possessed enough wealth and harbored enough social ambition to send their only child to excellent private schools in Nebraska. Josephine graduated from Brownell Hall, an Episcopalian girls' school in Omaha, in 1904.¹⁸ The

¹⁷ "Fuel Company Head Dies at Home," *The Rocky Mountain News*, 14 January 1927: 9.

¹⁸ Elinor McGinn, *A Wide-Awake Woman: Josephine Roche and the Age of Reform* (Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 2002), 7.

following fall Roche entered Vassar, where she “debated with Qui Vive, visited slum settlements in Poughkeepsie, joined the basketball and track clubs and was a double major in Economics and Classics...[H]er yearbook quotation sums up her time at Vassar: she was ‘cheerful and happy in the prospect of having almost more to do that day than she could possibly accomplish.’”¹⁹ Roche was far from the only idealistic striver Nebraska produced during this era. Of course, there is the towering figure of William Jennings Bryan, but two other Nebraska women, Edith and Grace Abbott, attended graduate school at the University of Chicago and also became important maternalist reformers like their friend Josephine Roche.²⁰

After graduating from Vassar, Roche entered Columbia University in New York City, where she got her masters’ degree in 1910. Historians have explored this turn of the twentieth century generation of women’s college graduates, and as much as I would love to be able to focus specifically on Josephine Roche’s story and how she fit into that larger cohort of reforming women, I cannot.²¹ Roche left almost no personal records of her time in New York City, but she included a copy of her masters’ thesis (which I’ll examine later in this chapter) in her archival collection that helps explain her research interests as well as places her into historical context with her cohorts.

¹⁹ “Josephine Roche,” *Vassar Encyclopedia, Alumnae/i of Distinction*, <http://vcencyclopedia.vassar.edu/alumni/josephine-roche.html>, accessed July 20, 2011.

²⁰ For more on the Abbot sisters, see Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Endless Crusade: Women Social Scientists and Progressive Reform* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1990).

²¹ Rosalind Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Endless Crusade: Women Social Scientists and Progressive Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

Although Roche left little documentation about her New York City days, her friend Francis Perkins did.²² Because Perkins eventually served as Secretary of Labor under Franklin D. Roosevelt between 1933 and 1945, she has (deservedly) garnered more historical attention than Roche. Since Perkins and Roche lived, worked, and studied together in New York City's Greenwich Village for two years, both graduating in the same year as two students in a ten-person, Columbia University graduate school cohort, one might reasonably assume that they shared many similar experiences there, an assumption borne out by several nostalgic letters Roche and Perkins exchanged in 1960.²³ Therefore, I will examine Roche's personal life by contrasting it to Perkins', an imperfect comparison to be sure, but one that is as close as I can get to Roche's life in New York City before she moved to Denver in 1912.

In her fascinating book *American Moderns*, historian Christine Stansell argues that between 1890 and 1920, Greenwich Village became a bohemian magnet that attracted a fascinating and volatile variety of newcomers who created a new sense of identity and more importantly, modernity in American culture. Settlement house

²² Francis Perkins wrote her own account of her New Deal days in *The Roosevelt I Knew*, and there are also hours of oral interviews with Perkins archived and now available online at "Francis Perkins," Columbia University Libraries, Oral History Research Office, http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/digital/collections/nny/perkinsf/audio_transcript.html, accessed 21 November 2011.

²³ "Welfarer," *Time*, 26 November 1934, www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,882299,00html, accessed 28 February 2007; Letter from Josephine Roche to Francis Perkins, 22 July 1959, Josephine Roche to Francis Perkins, 14 April 1960, Francis Perkins to Josephine Roche 25 March 1959, 5-14 Josephine Roche papers.

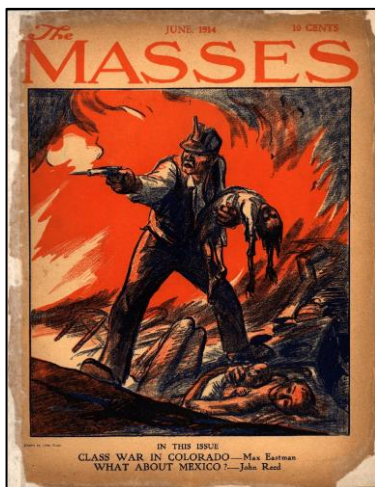
workers and progressive reformers like Perkins and Roche were very much a part of that scene. Not only did they live among working-class people in settlement houses, they also lived alongside Wobbly labor organizers, journalists, publishers, socialites, and artists who planned strikes, wrote, ate, drank, and smoked together, but mostly they talked, talked, and then talked some more with each other in a wide-open cultural exchange the United States wouldn't experience again until the 1960s.²⁴

Two Perkins biographers, George Martin and Kirsten Downey, describe Perkins' exciting life in Greenwich Village, filled not just with agitating and organizing on behalf of women, children, and immigrants, but also filled with art show openings, poetry and novel readings, and free flowing conversations.²⁵

Perkins' biographers both write that Sinclair Lewis, author of the 1920s' classics *Babbitt* and *Main Street*, fell madly in love with Perkins, but she refused to marry

him, even though they remained friends for life.

She talked politics with journalist John Reed, who not only rode with Pancho Villa in the Mexican Revolution, he also (along with Max Eastman) covered the 1914 Ludlow Massacre and reported the details of both for the left-wing magazine *The Masses*. Reed also wrote *Ten Days That Shook the*



World, the best-known American account of the earliest days of the Russian Revolution.

²⁴ Christine Stansell, *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000), 117.

²⁵ George Martin, *Madam Secretary: Frances Perkins* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976), 72-75; Downey, Chapter 3.

Stansell describes Mabel Dodge's living room salons that brought together people as diverse as IWW leader Big Bill Haywood and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, birth control pioneer Margaret Sanger, anarchist Emma Goldman, and visual artists such as Marcel Duchamp and John Sloan. Sloan is considered the most important painter of the Ashcan school of art, and in 1913, his paintings were part of the Armory Show that introduced modern art to New Yorkers. That same year he painted the backdrop for the 1913 Paterson Pageant described in Chapter 1, and in June of 1914, his illustration (seen above) illustrating the Ludlow Massacre appeared on the cover of *The Masses*. Dodge's salon especially welcomed writers of all kinds, and not just journalists, such as Reed and Walter Lippman, but also literary types such as Edna St. Vincent Millay, John Dos Passos, Eugene O'Neill, and Hutchins Hapgood.²⁶

In Hutchins Hapgood's 1939 autobiography, *A Victorian in the Modern World*, the serial adulterer and Greenwich Village fixture wrote that he always felt like a Midwestern Victorian trapped in a bohemian's body.²⁷ (Hutchins' other brother, Norman, also was a writer, and their far less exotic youngest brother, Charles, ran an Indiana canning company. Charles' only offspring, Powers Hapgood, worked for Josephine Roche after the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, and he is the subject of Chapters 5 and 6.) Unlike Hutchins Hapgood, though, Perkins and Roche really were Victorians. They valued their privacy far too much to ever write memoirs.²⁸ They never wore bobbed hair or short skirts, instead cultivating lifelong, matronly

²⁶ Stansell, see Chapter 3, "Intellectuals, Conversational Politics, and Free Speech."

²⁷ Hutchins Hapgood, *A Victorian in the Modern World* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1939), vii.

²⁸ Letter to Josephine Roche from Wenell Frederici from Howell, Soskin, Publishers, Inc., 18 February 1947, 3-4, Josephine Roche papers. Although Perkins wrote *The Roosevelt I Knew*, it was a political, not a personal book.

images.²⁹ Both women used the title “miss” and retained their maiden names, even though Perkins was married and Roche was divorced. Perkins married a man who, because of his unmanageable high and low mood swings, was in and out of psychiatric hospitals until his death in 1952. In 1920, Roche married writer Edward Hale Bierstadt, but they divorced in 1922. Although Roche left no personal records about her marriage, we know that Bierstadt worked for Roche in George Creel’s World War I Committee on Public Information (CPI), which is probably where they met, that Bierstadt’s great uncle was the famous landscape painter Albert Bierstadt, and that in the 1930s, he wrote scripts for the popular radio show *The Shadow*.³⁰ Bierstadt was the last man with whom Roche was ever publicly and romantically linked.

Both women were extremely adept at making influential friends who served them well in their futures, especially strong men. Perkins allied herself with New York governor and 1928 Democratic Presidential nominee Al Smith, future Senator Robert Wagner, and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Roche shared many of the same influential New York friends, and she also allied with Denver Progressives Edward Costigan, Merle Vincent, and Judge Ben Lindsey, as well as maintaining a strong, lifelong friendship with George Creel. After Costigan died in 1938, Roche seemed to shift her allegiance to John L. Lewis, which might indicate that Roche liked having a strong, male mentor in her life. Above all, personal loyalty seemed to hold the key to both of their relationships, although as Perkin’s abandonment of Smith after his

²⁹ Downey, 45.

³⁰ McGinn, 44; “Biography of Edward Hale Bierstadt,” *Jacket Quest*, <http://www.jacketquest.com/authors-j/366-biographies/5856-biography-of-edward-hale-bierstadt.html>, accessed 30 June 2013.

1928 presidential loss and as Roche's abandonment of Lindsey after the Columbine Massacre demonstrate, personal loyalties had their limits, especially if they stood in the way of professional advancement.

Although it was difficult for Perkins and Roche to build their influence in such a male-dominated world, the two of them belonged to a remarkable generation of women who graduated from women's colleges around the turn of the nineteenth century and their professional lives turned out to be far more successful than those of the next few generations of women who did not belong to their cohort. In their lifetimes, as well as in ours, the avenues of power were built in private, so Roche and Perkins often found themselves shut out from inner political circles where important decisions really got made. One reason for their success was creating their own inner circle of women who gained power, and they often spent their time cultivating close friendships with the wives of influential men with whom they worked, who were also extremely smart and also excluded from power, although as Eleanor Roosevelt—a friend of both Perkins and Roche—showed, sometimes a political wife could exert even more political power than appointed political officials.

As prominent women in the public eye, they were judged harshly, which probably led them both to shun the press unless they could control the story, which by the mid-1930s became increasingly difficult to do, comport themselves seriously, and guard their private lives. Any and everything they did was open to public scrutiny. Occasionally, Perkins drank enough hard liquor to raise eyebrows within FDR's inner circle, just as Roche's cigarette smoking damaged her politically when

she ran in the 1934 Democratic primary for Colorado governor.³¹ Both women were constantly held to a higher, more moral standard than the men with whom they worked.

It is unclear whether or not they suffered bearing the maternalist burden of moral authority that was their legacy from the progressive movement, the era that defined their identities. Influential historians, including Alice Kessler-Harris, Robyn Muncy, Peggy Pascoe, Linda Gordon, Eileen Boris, and Molly Ladd-Taylor, have brilliantly explored various aspects of this cohort of progressive women, showing how they created the modern welfare state and, in the process, expanded their own political power, too.³² Paradoxically, while valorizing traditional women's values of purity, piety, and social concern for women, children, and the poor, to a great extent, these maternalist reformers were also limiting the definitions of womanhood.³³ So while we can never really know what Perkins' and Roche's interior lives were like, their public personas represented remarkable continuity from the progressive era to their old age.

³¹ Downey, 318; McGinn, 92.

³² Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out-to-Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in America*, 20th Anniversary Ed., (New York: Oxford Press, 2003), Robyn Muncy, in the previously cited *The Female Dominion of Reform*, Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), Eileen Boris, *Home to Work: Motherhood and the Politics of Industrial Homework in the United State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), and Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Raising a Baby the Government Way: Mothers' Letters to the Children's Bureau, 1915-1932* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986), *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

³³ Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue*, xv.

The progressive movement, which is usually dated from the 1890s through the end of World War I, exhibited dual impulses: social reform and social control. Demonstrating this duality in Roche's formative years is important, because she exhibited both progressive impulses throughout her career. Since social reform and control depended not just upon advocating the moral high ground, but also upon experts, data, and scientific management, maternalistic progressive reformers did not always welcome or even advocate democratic participation. There is a broad, ongoing historical debate about who the progressives were and what they wanted, but entering that discussion is beyond the scope of this study. In general, though, historians agree that most progressives, middle class and newly urban, sought to regulate the excesses of big business and ameliorate shameful conditions for the poor (especially women, children, the poor, and new immigrants) by increasing the role of government (especially at the federal level). Progressives excelled at creating public pressure that led to new federal laws, agencies, commissions, and even four Constitutional amendments.

Maternalist reformers generated much of their political pressure through private organizations, such as the National Consumers' League (NCL). Both Perkins and Roche worked extensively in the NCL, and both cited the NCL's Florence Kelly as their primary role model.³⁴ The organization, whose membership peaked in 1916, exemplifies the social reform side of the progressive era.³⁵ Even though women dominated the organization, it always had a male president until Josephine Roche

³⁴ Downey, 12-13; McGinn, 103.

³⁵ Landon R.Y. Storrs, *Civilizing Capitalism: The National Consumers' League, Women's Activism, and Labor Standards in the New Deal* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 1 & 15.

became the first woman to head the organization in 1938. By that time, though, its most influential days had long past.³⁶ Among several goals, the NCL promoted minimum wage laws, safe working conditions, especially for women, the abolition of child labor, and ethical consumption. Historians Landon R.Y. Storrs, Lizabeth Cohen, and Dana Frank have documented the important influence women progressive reformers exercised in shaping the consumer movement and its subsequent impact on the expansion of government.³⁷ NCL's motto—"investigate, agitate, legislate"—summarized the methods and goals of a generation of maternalist reformers, including Josephine Roche.³⁸

Just as the National Consumers' League exemplified the social reform half of the progressive reform agenda, the white slavery campaign exemplified its evil twin, social control. White slavery was a euphemism for female prostitution, and it is a fascinating, juicy, historical topic. Although unexamined so far, Perkins and Roche both cut their political teeth within that movement whose goals often overlapped those of the NCL. The study of the white slavery movement includes not just the female progressive reformers who tried to abolish it, but also bigger, theoretical issues that swirl around sex, gender, race and racism, as well as local, state, and federal politics. All of those issues intersect around fear—fear of urbanization, immigration, the rise of women wage earners, crime, and the rise of a new social culture that former agrarian Victorians struggled to understand.

³⁶ Ibid., 25.

³⁷ Landon R.Y. Storrs, *Civilizing Capitalism*, Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), Dana Frank, *Purchasing Power: Consumer Organizing, Gender and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1919-1929* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 1999).

³⁸ Storrs, 15.

White slavery hysteria lasted from around 1908 to 1913, not coincidentally, the same time Progressivism was most politically potent, peaking in 1910 with the passage of the federal Mann Act, which outlawed transporting women across state lines for immoral purposes. Although social reformers like Jane Addams, Perkins, and Roche preferred the term “the social evil” to white slavery, their preference was too polite a phrase for a controversy that grabbed the reading public’s imaginations from the pages of popular muckraking magazines like *McClure’s*, the *Outlook*, and *Collier’s*, as well as from widely-circulated popular pamphlets like Dr. C.C. Quale’s sensationalistic, salaciously titled, 89-page *Thrilling Stories of White Slavery*.³⁹

As a term, white slavery is loaded enough to provide a lifetime of analysis. Considering that one of the few people ever prosecuted for violating the Mann Act was heavyweight boxer Jack Johnson, who documentary filmmaker Ken Burn’s shows us was convicted of violating the Mann Act for his crime of “unforgiveable blackness” (by living with a white woman), not by pimping, it is easy to make the argument that one of the central motivations behind the white slavery movement was the fear of miscegenation between black men and white women during the Jim Crow era.⁴⁰ That fear helps explain why Southern politicians supported a federal law that overrode the almost sacred Southern principle of state’s rights when they voted for the Mann Act’s passage.⁴¹ Several historians agree with Brian Donovan who

³⁹ Dr. C.C. Quale, *Thrilling Stories of White Slavery* (Chicago: Hamming Publishing Co., 1912), Google eBook, reprinted by the Sallie Bingham Center for Women’s History and Culture, accessed 20 August 2011.

⁴⁰ Ken Burns, “Unforgiveable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson,” PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) Paramount, DVD, 2005, 214 minutes.

⁴¹ Frederick K. Grittner, *White Slavery: Myth, Ideology, and American Law* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1990), 95.

argues that the white slavery movement played a “critical role in creating racial hierarchy and demarcating racial and ethnic boundaries” during the progressive era.⁴²

Interestingly, today when the word “segregation” gets used, most often it refers to racial segregation, but during the white slavery era, the word segregation referred to red-light districts, which almost every major city in America had, at least according to reformers. In segregated districts, prostitution was an open secret where the local police did not bother arresting either women prostitutes or their male customers (since male prostitution was never part of the panic) and where visiting businessmen knew where to go to have a good time. According to progressive reformers, local city boosters even touted red-light districts as tourist attractions. Progressives used their white slavery campaigns as the prime example of corrupt, symbiotic relationships between vice and boss-dominated city political machines that operated on graft and favors. Therefore, cleaning up the streets would clean up politics.

Frederick K. Grittner, in *White Slavery: Myth, Ideology, and American Law*, analyzes legal precedents the white slavery movement established, showing how the confluence of Chicago reformers who led the campaign to pass the federal Mann Act in 1910 were part of larger, progressive movement that increased the federal government’s power. Those Chicago reformers included Jane Addams and her Hull House associates, juvenile court workers, and various Chicago politicians, such as Representative James R. Mann, who wrote and sponsored the bill that bears his

⁴² Brian Donovan, *White Slave Crusades: Race, Gender, and Anti-Vice Activism, 1887-1917* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 2.

name. As he had previously done in the Mann-Elkins Act that regulated railroad rates and the Pure Food and Drug Act, Mann used the Constitutional interstate commerce clause to greatly expand federal control over what had previously been considered strictly state and local issues. Grittner convincingly argues that for the progressive reformers, it was a small legislative and philosophical step “[f]rom pure food to pure women.”⁴³

The newly created juvenile court workers not only collected data to support white slavers’ arguments (for example, Jane Addams dedicated her 1911 book, *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil*, to “the Juvenile Protective Association of Chicago, whose superintendent and field officers have collected much of the material for this book”), they also played active roles in trying to eliminate the causes of white slavery in the first place.⁴⁴ Although Chicago gets most of the historical credit for spearheading the anti-white slavery movement, parallel movements developed in other parts of the country at the same time to achieve the same purposes, including Denver. In both cities, the juvenile court and its employees were key to these reforms.

While Jane Addams was Chicago’s best-known progressive reformer, Judge Ben Lindsey was Denver’s. He built his national reputation by touring the Midwest as a featured speaker on the annual Redpath Chautauqua circuit (along with his good friends Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan), by serving as a highly visible member of the National Child Labor Committee, and by offering advice as an

⁴³ Ibid., 87.

⁴⁴ Jane Addams, *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912), vii. (This book was first published in 1911 by the S.S. McClure Company and the McClure Publications, Inc.)

expert on children in ghostwritten articles published in popular progressive era magazines.⁴⁵ Exploring the relationship between Lindsey and Roche from its beginning in 1907 to its end twenty years later will help show why and how Roche so suddenly switched her identity from maternalist social reformer to maternalist coal mine operator.

Roche began working for Lindsey's juvenile court in 1907 during summer vacations from college. According to Lindsey, all of Denver's progressive reforms sprang from the juvenile court movement, a system he claims to have founded in Denver (although the Chicago reformers begged to disagree) around the turn of the twentieth century.⁴⁶ Lindsey established the city's juvenile court system with considerable political help from Denver women's club types who consistently supported his efforts at the ballot box, since Colorado women had been able to vote as early as 1893. Lindsey was a little man (standing barely five feet tall and weighing in at under one hundred pounds) with an enormous ego who clearly rarely limited his reform efforts or his shameless self-promotion to the juvenile court. He was in the forefront of almost every Progressive and progressive reform possible from the early 1900s through his forced retirement in 1927.

⁴⁵ The National Child Labor Committee endeavored to end child labor and almost succeeded when it helped get the 1916 Owens-Keating Act passed. Edward Keating was a fellow Colorado progressive who served in the House of Representatives from 1913 to 1919. The Supreme Court held that forbidding child labor was unconstitutional, and the practice wasn't outlawed until 1938, with the Fair Labor Standards Act.

⁴⁶ Charles Larsen, *The Good Fight: The Remarkable Life and Times of Judge Ben Lindsey* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1972), 37-41

In 1912, the twenty-six year old Roche moved from New York City to Denver to work full-time in Lindsey's court. Roche had personal, as well as professional reasons for relocating to Denver. Her parents had moved to the Denver in 1907 when her father, John Roche, bought a half share of what in 1910 would be re-named the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company (RMFC). He not only co-owned the Colorado's third largest coal company (John D. Rockefeller, Jr.'s Colorado Fuel and Iron Company was the largest, followed by John Osgood's Victor-American Fuel Company), he eventually, by the 1920s, also served as RMFC's president and general manager.⁴⁷ John Roche was a civic-minded joiner who belonged to the Chamber of Commerce and "various Masonic bodies."⁴⁸ Josephine Roche's mother Ella was also active in the Denver community, which included belonging to the Denver Women's Club, the leading philanthropic group in the city and a major supporter of Judge Lindsey's juvenile court.⁴⁹ Whenever Josephine Roche was in Denver, she lived with her parents. Although difficult, trying to imagine what kind of relationship she and her parents shared becomes useful in light of the 1910-1914 Colorado coal strike and the adamantly anti-union caricature of her father that later emerged as a central element in Josephine Roche's biographical narrative after 1928.

At the same time Roche worked in Lindsey's juvenile court, she also worked with George Creel, who moved from Kansas City to Denver in 1911 (after Edward

⁴⁷ Letter from M.M. Rinn to Mr. E.E. Shumway, 23 October 1912, JR Papers, 11-9; Rocky Mountain Fuel Company Annual Report and Statement for Stockholders, 1920-1927, 13-4, Josephine Roche papers.

⁴⁸ "Fuel Company Head Dies at Home," *The Rocky Mountain News*, 14 January 1927: 9.

⁴⁹ Gail M. Beaton, "The Widening Sphere of Women's Lives: The Literary Study and Philanthropic Work of Six Women's Clubs in Denver, 1881-1945," *Women's Clubs of Denver: Essays in Colorado History*, No. 13, 1992 (Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 1993), 27.

Keating's resignation) to become the new, rabbleroxing editor of *The Rocky Mountain News*.⁵⁰ Although Denver had many competing newspapers, the two major ones were *The Rocky Mountain News*, the vehicle for Colorado's Democratic Party and the Republican's *Denver Post*. Creel, a lower-case progressive, allied himself with Denver's capital "P" Progressives, who included Roche, Edward Costigan, Merle Vincent, and Judge Lindsey. Using newspaper propaganda as well as old-fashioned political maneuvering (aided by the tumultuous, multi-party 1912 split among Republicans, Democrats, Progressives and Socialists), from 1911 to 1913, upper and lower-case progressives were able to take political control of Denver and also made huge inroads in the state legislature. Thanks to the newly passed initiative, Colorado's 1912 ballot had thirty-two measures on it, many drafted by Progressives like Costigan and Lindsey.⁵¹ Among other laws and state amendments, Colorado voters passed an eight-hour day for women and coal miners, workman's compensation, and mothers' pensions. As Progressives soon found out, however, getting laws passed was not the same as getting laws enforced.

Progressives even briefly convinced Denver voters to convert their strong mayor form of city government to a commission form, and the new, progressive-leaning commissioners appointed George Creel as Denver's new police chief. During his very brief (less than a year) tenure in office, Creel continued editing the *Rocky Mountain News*, and both positions allowed him and his supporters to crack down on laws that, although on the books, had gone largely unenforced, especially those

⁵⁰ Creel, 96-119.

⁵¹ Pat Pascoe, *Helen Ring Robinson: Colorado Senator and Suffragist* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2011), 44.

regarding prostitution. By February 1913, progressives claimed success in shutting down Denver's red-light district, and if Creel's description is accurate, it really was a cesspool that needed to be abolished. The following is how he described it:

Under [former mayor] Speer the infamous "crib system" had been tolerated and even encouraged. This was an artificial street lined both sides with cubicles in which half-naked women sat for sale beside a soiled bed and a dirty washbowl. When a customer mounted the short flight of steps, a corrugated shutter was pulled down. Every night the street was packed and jammed with milling crowds, men for the most part, but with a high percentage of veiled women, and even more distressingly, many teen-age boys and girls.⁵²

As the excerpt above shows, cleaning up the red-light district involved not just saving the prostitutes, but saving juveniles, too. Controlling public and private space as well as public and private behaviors was key to those reforms, so most progressives advocated closing saloons, a place where working-class men drank, socialized, and politicked, which corrupted the men and politics alike, progressive said. Since saloons also promoted drunkenness, and drunkenness led to crime, by 1916, Colorado progressives led the successful fight to pass statewide prohibition, three years before it was ratified as a federal Constitutional amendment.

While prohibition was aimed at men, as Kathy Peiss shows in *Cheap Amusements*, young working-class women's "pursuit of pleasure did not lead them to the traditional domain of workingmen, but to emergent forms of commercialized recreation, such as dance halls, amusement parks, and movie theatres."⁵³

Progressives believed that public amusements potentially led to juvenile

⁵² George Creel, *Rebel at Large: Recollections of Fifty Crowded Years* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1947), 104.

⁵³ Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 5.

delinquency and white slavery, especially for women. Creel explicitly made that connection when he wrote, “Believing that commercialized amusement had a very definite connection with commercialized vice, I appointed Josephine Roche as a special officer to ride herd on dance halls and skating rinks.”⁵⁴ Roche’s career didn’t last much longer than Creel’s, but she saved two file folders full of newspaper clippings in her archival collection about her brief, amusements’ inspector career.



In January of 1913, Roche officially became Denver’s first policewoman, even though she also continued working for Lindsey’s juvenile court, a typical arrangement for the nation’s first lady cops.⁵⁵ Even before she took office, Creel’s *Rocky Mountain News* ran a long, laudatory, and elaborately, colorfully

illustrated (above) story about Roche before she ever took the job, describing her role in helping to clean up New York City’s “hell’s kitchen,” and other information about her recent experiences.⁵⁶ Roche’s new “beat,” created just for her, included such “cheap amusements” as movie theaters, dance halls, amusement parks, skating rinks, and “wine parlors.” Although Roche’s policewoman career was short—she

⁵⁴ George Creel, *Rebel at Large: Recollections of Fifty Crowded Years* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1947), 105-106.

⁵⁵ Janis Appier, *Policing Women: The Sexual Politics of Law Enforcement and the LAPD* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 41-42.

⁵⁶ Alice Rohe, “Denver’s Petticoated Copper,” *The Sunday News* [Rocky Mountain News?], 1 December 1912, 10-5, Josephine Roche papers. I took the photo.

was officially fired in March, reinstated in May, but kept working for another department doing similar work for no pay until August—she certainly shook Denver up during her short stint in office.⁵⁷ Working closely with other progressive reformers, her job consisted of trying to prevent underage drinking and other behaviors that could lead to juvenile delinquency, which for girls (but not boys) was almost always associated with moral laxity, the first step on a slippery slope leading to white slavery.

Roche had been trying to correct moral laxity since her New York City days. In her 1910 Columbia University masters' thesis, Roche declared that "Delinquency is not synonymous with prostitution," yet the rest of her investigative study disputes that opening disclaimer.⁵⁸ Almost anything—poverty, the naiveté of young country girls arriving unsupervised in the city to work, immoral family dynamics, and lack of English skills—could lead a young woman into trouble. That especially included leaving home to pursue paid work.

Roche's 1910 dissertation—its structure, arguments, and even writing style—was remarkably similar to Jane Addams' 1911 white slavery book. While Addams and Roche were outraged at women's low pay, they emphasized that low pay alone did not necessarily lead to vice. Both reformers focused especially on the moral dangers factory and department store work posed for women. Factory work led to boredom, and boredom led to trouble. Although department store work was

⁵⁷ Ibid.; There are at least thirty articles describing the hiring, firing, reinstating, and working without pay in Roche's 10-5 archival file.

⁵⁸ Josephine Roche, "Economic Conditions in Relation to the Delinquency of Girls," Unpublished Masters' Thesis in Political Science, Columbia University, 1910, 10-4, 1, Josephine Roche papers.

not boring, those girls faced constant temptation, because they were surrounded by enticing, beautiful, consumer goods they could not afford given their paltry salaries. Also, unlike factories, where access to girls was limited, practically anybody could approach the department store workers as often as he wished and fill girls' naïve heads with salacious ways to make easy money. So whether from boredom (in factory work) or temptation (in department stores), paid jobs often encouraged girls to socialize, which could lead to trouble. Roche wrote, "We can safely say that at first an immoral life is seldom in the minds of these girls" who only want "the natural craving for a good time and attention, and accept invitations to dinner or the theatre with no thought of any more serious outcome."⁵⁹ However, accepting these invitations was dangerous, Roche wrote, because, "One by one the things at which she draws the line vanish, leaving in their place increasing tolerance toward overstepping the final, all-important line between honor and dishonor. Once the first step is taken, continuance is not hard."⁶⁰

The premise behind Roche's role as Denver's first policewoman was trying to prevent that "first step" toward immorality. By patrolling public amusements, she would stop trouble from occurring in the first place, an expansion of Lindsey's juvenile court model. And just as Denver's delinquents were sent to a reformatory in the countryside to remove them from unhealthy, urban influences (without a trial or a lawyer to represent them, something that didn't change until the 1967 Supreme Court decision *In re Gault*), Denver progressives not only wanted to shut down the

⁵⁹ Ibid., 28-29.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

red-light district, they wanted to establish a rural institution to rehabilitate prostitutes.⁶¹

Their plan, again in Creel's words, was to "take over a 266-acre farm owned by the city and equip it with hospitals and dormitories where Denver's human wreckage could be collected, treated, and sorted. Here treatment would be provided not only for disease, but for the rehabilitation of the drug fiends and the drunkards...handling all with regard for nothing but purely social considerations."⁶² However, the farm never came to pass. Although Creel and the progressives succeeded in driving visible prostitution out of downtown Denver, the public pushed back when it came to the hospital and all it entailed.⁶³

Although some Denver citizens, including many members of the city's women's clubs and health organizations, welcomed the hygienic and medical implications of the progressives' anti-prostitution campaign, overall, Denver's less well-heeled citizens, not to mention the politicians they had just recently displaced from office, hated the progressives and their self-righteous campaigns, which led some to ridicule Roche (see below) and attack Creel.⁶⁴ For example, one newspaper clipping in Roche's collection details an afternoon-long, heated shouting match between Commissioner Creel and the rest of the fire and police board over its new

⁶¹ "United States IN RE GAULT," The Oyez Project at IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law, accessed 26 October 26 2013, http://www.oyez.org/cases/1960-1969/1966/1966_116.

⁶² Creel, 105.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ I took this photo from Roche's clippings file, from *Denver Post* 19 November 1910; "Public Health Discussed by Rocky Mt. Association," *The Denver Times*, 31 January 1913, clipping file, 10-5, Josephine Roche papers.

red-light enforcement policies.⁶⁵ Another article documents a mother who had



resorted to filing a writ of habeas corpus for the release of her daughter who'd been arrested in the red-light district.

It seems that Roche had sworn out a vagrancy warrant on the daughter who was then taken to the county hospital and examined. Next, the girl was sent to the county jail, where her sister was also being held. Their 70-year-old mother then filed the lawsuit, apparently trying to get both daughters released.⁶⁶ While no further newspaper stories tell us whether her

lawsuit was successful or not, we have to wonder if these sisters were actually prostitutes, or if they just happened to be living near the red-light district with their old mother since rent was cheap there. After all, they had been plucked off the streets not on prostitution, but on vagrancy charges.

We know from later Creel newspaper articles what happened to the sisters next. They would have been tested (with or without their consent) for venereal diseases and held in jail until their test results came back. If they tested positive, they would be treated (again, with or without their consent), and if they tested

⁶⁵ "Creel After War of Words Becomes Minority Worker," *The Denver Republican*, 31 January 1913, clipping file, 10-5, Josephine Roche papers.

⁶⁶ "Seeks Habeas Corpus Writ for Girl Held Without Court Trial," *The Denver Republican*, 31 January 1913, clipping file, 10-5, Josephine Roche papers.

negative, they would be released. This process could take weeks. If the women had jobs, they would have lost them, and their reputations were probably lost as well.⁶⁷ None of the progressives at the time or even thirty years later, as Creel's later biography shows, expressed any qualms about violating these women's civil rights. So, although cleaning up the red-light district was one progressive reform most of the public seemed to agree with, no wonder people pushed back when it came to their prostitution hospital proposal.

Progressives did not limit their attacks to prostitution, either. In another newspaper article worded in a way clearly meant to bemuse rather than infuriate, Roche demanded that a theatre owner stop showing a Jesse James movie to young boys. Right at the moment with Bob Ford shot Jesse James in the back, "in came Miss Roche, whose duties include the inspection of picture theaters."⁶⁸ Roche said, "Hi there, Bob Ford, cut it out this minute. Do you hear me?" as she "pranced down the middle aisle giving orders as she advanced upon the desperadoes. She flashed her star and the desperadoes vanished from the stage. In their place appeared a sign. It read: 'The Wages of Sin is Death.'"⁶⁹ Roche stopped the movie and forbade the owner from showing it to children.

Progressives might have gotten away with such heavy-handed, moralistic actions if they only affected juveniles, prostitutes, blacks (an article in Roche's policewoman clippings' file indicated that most of the suspected prostitutes getting

⁶⁷ "George Creel Tells of Work to Wipe Out Vice in Denver and Warns of 'Redlight' Menace," *The Daily News*, 5 February 1913, 10-5, Josephine Roche papers.

⁶⁸ "Woman 'Cop' Dares Jesse James Gang in 'Movies' Lair," *The Denver Republican*, 8 January 1913, 10-5, Josephine Roche papers.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

arrested were, in fact, black), and the working-class.⁷⁰ However, Roche and her allies began expanding their reach to include almost every stratum of society.⁷¹

Anonymous complaints concerning the kinds of “wholesale ‘ragging’” (dancing), whist playing, and alcohol consumption that were going on “at a dance hall patronized by the well-to-do” prompted Roche to inspect the premises, to determine for herself if there were any violations she needed to address. The club owner was infuriated, telling a reporter that, “The police have no authority to declare what kind of dancing shall be allowed in my hall.” According to the article, residents were “quite aroused by the prospect of an officer of the law, whose business is usually among the lower dance halls of the city, invading their precincts.”⁷²

It only took three months of this kind of policing to drive Creel and Roche from office. In March, the fire and police boards forced Creel to leave his police commissioner position. Not only did he leave the job, he left Denver, never to return. With Creel out of the way, the same group that fired Creel then fired Roche, citing budgetary reasons for doing so. She sued, since her job, unlike Creel’s, was a civil service position and her terminators had not followed proper procedure for dismissing her. After getting fired, she rallied Denver’s clubwomen to her cause; they held mass rallies on her behalf, demanding that she be re-hired.⁷³ Her attorney, Edward Costigan, the Progressive candidate for Colorado governor, successfully

⁷⁰ “22 Women of Redlight District Sent to Jail,” *Rocky Mountain News*, 23 January 1913, 10-5, Josephine Roche papers..

⁷¹ “City Hall Busy Uplifting Moral Tone of Denver,” *The Rocky Mountain News*, 19 January 1913, 10-5, Josephine Roche papers.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ “Women Brand Ousting of Josephine Roche as Infamous Outrage,” *Denver Express*, 26 April 1913; “Mass Meeting to Urge Reinstatement of Josephine Roche,” *The Denver Times*, 29 April 1913; JR Papers, 10-5.

defended Roche's civil service complaint in court, but all he won on her behalf was a sort of procedural stay of execution until August 1. On that day, she resigned, knowing she would be fired anyway if she did not, and so ended Josephine Roche's brief policewoman stint.⁷⁴

I have examined Roche's brief policewoman career for several reasons: It helps explain her progressive reformer identity, it was important to her, and it demonstrates the overlap between the twin impulses of progressivism: social reform and social control. Since those two impulses were the same thing for Roche, as they were for many other progressive reformers, it would be a mistake to separate the two. Furthermore, if her archival collection serves as an accurate indicator, her policewoman career was extremely important to Roche. As an old woman no longer in the public eye, in 1971, five years before her death at the age of ninety, Josephine Roche painstakingly collected the materials for her own archival collection, all forty-one linear feet of it, then donated it to the University of Colorado at Boulder, the flagship university in the state where she had operated her company, the RMFC. She had carefully clipped, saved, mounted, dated, and organized newspaper articles from 1912 and 1913, that almost sixty years later fill two of the fattest folders in her collection.

In contrast, Roche kept only one print source tying her to the 1910-1914 Colorado long strike, a document she signed in her role as secretary of the

⁷⁴ "Josephine Roche Gets Her Old Job Back," *Denver Post*, 9 July 1913; "Resignation of Miss Roche is Loss to Denver, letter to the editor by Edward Costigan" *Denver Express*, 5 August 1913, 10-5, Josephine Roche papers.

Progressive Service, the education arm of the Colorado's Progressive Party.⁷⁵ Yet, whoever wrote Roche's archival biography only briefly mentioned her job as Denver's first policewoman but then, although there is no evidence in contemporary newspapers accounts or in Roche's archival records that supports this claim, wrote that after the 1914 Ludlow Massacre, "Josephine Roche immediately went to help the grieving families in Ludlow, and later organized a group of CF&I miner's women, accompanying them to New York to testify before the United States Industrial Relations commission."⁷⁶ The only place I have ever seen that information is in a 1932 *New York Times* story written by labor reporter Louis Stark, an article I will further examine in Chapter 7.

Although Roche might have been interested in labor issues during the progressive era, her archival records provide scant evidence documenting *how* interested she was. For example, in her 1910 Columbia masters' thesis, Roche wrote that she had based her study on interviews she had conducted with 26 social workers (like herself) and 150 young women that she met during the "shirt waist makers' strike, in which working as a co-striker I made friends with whom I could talk freely about work and living in New York."⁷⁷ That sentence, almost a

⁷⁵ Colorado Progressive Party papers, 10-7, Josephine Roche papers.

⁷⁶ "Guide to the Papers of Josephine Roche, 1886-1976," University of Colorado at Boulder University Libraries, Archives Department; The sources cited are cited in the article as follows: Louis Stark, "A Woman Unravels an Industrial Knot," *The New York Times Magazine*, 7 February 1932: 6; Marjorie Hornbein, "Josephine Roche: Social Worker and Coal Operator," *The Colorado Magazine*, no. 53: 250-252 [I previously cited this article, and it was published in 1976, the article's pages are 243-60]; and Alberta Pike, "Stirring Story of Josephine Roche's Career," *Labor*, 4 September 1934 (from Roche's own clipping file in the Western History Collection, Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

throwaway, is the only reference Roche made to organized labor in her entire thesis, which focused on economic causes leading to white slavery for young women. Yet, for the purposes of this study, it is important to place the briefly referenced shirtwaist strike in historical context.

Roche's thesis fieldwork took place during the "uprising of twenty thousand," when almost one-fifth of the New York City's garment workers walked out on strike. These progressive era New York City garment strikes, the Triangle fire, and the Protocol (sometimes called Protocols) of Peace comprise some of the most researched, analyzed, and seemingly pivotal moments in American labor history.⁷⁸ The strikes of mostly young, Russian immigrant, Jewish, female textile workers started in 1909 and continued through 1915; the 1910 Protocol and the tragic 1911 Triangle fire occurred within the context of those strikes. Both are considered turning points in labor history, and both occurred when Roche lived in New York City. The 1910 protocols were a direct response to the 1909 strike. The agreement between the Cloak, Suit and Skirt Manufacturers Protective Association and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union ended the 1910 strike.⁷⁹ Many prominent and not-so-prominent people helped draft the document, including the

⁷⁸ Elizabeth Ann Payne, *Reform, Labor and Feminism: Margaret Dreier Robins and the Women's Trade Union League* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

⁷⁹ "Protocol of Peace, 2 September 1910," original in The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, online finding aide at <http://americanjewisharchives.org/catalog/Record/vtls000013989/Description#tabnav>, accessed 8 July 2013.

Filenes of Boston (progressive department store owners who wanted to be a part of encouraging ethical consumption and production of clothing), the strikers and their leaders, middle and sometimes upper-class reforming women who joined the strike, and progressive lawyers, including Louis Marshall and Louis Brandeis, who is credited with drafting the complicated, legalistic document. Historian Joseph McCartin writes that the agreement became a model for future labor arrangements, because it established mechanisms that mandated worker representation in future labor agreements.⁸⁰

Richard A. Greenwald in his book, *The Triangle Fire, the Protocols of Peace, and Industrial Democracy in Progressive Era New York*, extends McCartin's analysis about the protocol by arguing that the 1910 protocol and the 1911 Triangle fire set into motion a budding labor bureaucracy that endeavored to achieve industrial democracy, which Greenwald defines as "an effort to square free market capitalism with democracy to provide a fair and just workplace" and led, almost directly, to the New Deal.⁸¹ Protocolism, "the form industrial democracy took in Progressive Era New York," Greenwald argues, "set the parameters for future discussions," since "New Deal labor policy took place within the shadow of Protocolism."⁸² Like most historians, Greenwald uses the progressive era militancy and reactions to it to set up the New Deal. Again, like most historians, in that process, he completely bypasses the 1920s.

⁸⁰ Joseph McCartin, *Labor's Great War: The Struggle for Industrial Democracy and the Origins of Modern American Labor Relations, 1912-1921* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 1997), 51.

⁸¹ Greenwald, 3.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 214.

The Protocol of Peace is famous, but the Triangle fire is one of the most infamous events in labor history, much like the Ludlow Massacre. Both deadly, and de-contextualized events still appear in most US History textbooks, while the events surrounding them, the 1909-1915 textile strikes and the 1910-1914 Colorado long strike, do not. The deaths of those 146 women in the Triangle fire (as well as the women and children who died at Ludlow) still capture our historical imaginations, and that reaction had to have been even more powerful during the progressive era, when maternalist reformers and their allies strove so tirelessly for reforms on women and children's behalf. As a Columbia graduate student, a member of the National Consumers' League, and probably also the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL), Roche's brief reference in her thesis tells us that she joined other, middle class women reformers in the early stages of the walkouts. It was probably during this time that Roche got to know Mary Dreier, the wealthy society lady and WTUL activist who turned the publicity tide during the strike after she landed in jail, alongside the working girls, for her strike activities. Yet, the only reason I know Roche and Dreier were friends is because Dreier later loaned Roche money in 1928 to keep the RMFC running.⁸³

Just as the 1914 Ludlow Massacre is the most, and sometimes only, remembered event from the 1910-1914 long strike in Colorado, historical accounts of the Triangle fire have proliferated long after memories of the strikes have faded. Muckraking journalists played an important role in keeping those stories in the public's eye. When a fire broke out on March 25, 1911, in the Triangle Shirtwaist

⁸³ Amalgamated Bank of New York statements, 17-1, Josephine Roche papers.

Building, most of the girls who died burned or suffocated because their exits had been blocked, but others leapt from the factory's ninth floor windows.⁸⁴ Photographers ran to the building, and front-page, horrifying photos of dead girls splayed on the sidewalk, along with photos of orderly arrayed, charred bodies awaiting identification in the city morgue outraged the city's residents in a visceral way that the massive strikes preceding the fire had not. Even today, there is an active Triangle Shirtwaist Coalition that maintains a robust organization continuing to honor the memories of those 146 victims. On the anniversary of the fire, volunteers draw chalk figures on the sidewalks outside the buildings where the girls lived in a ceremony that not only honors the fire victims, but also continues honoring them by advocating for expanded workers' rights, especially for women textile workers.⁸⁵

Although many reformers, including Frances Perkins, later remembered the Triangle fire as the turning point in their lives, Roche left little documentation of her reactions to the New York City textile strikes, the 1910 Protocol of Peace, the 1911 Triangle fire, or even the 1914 Ludlow Massacre, which occurred when she lived in Denver.⁸⁶ Instead, as these events transpired that later historians have deemed transformational, Roche was working and writing regarding juvenile delinquency, white slavery, and the economic and political connections between the two.

⁸⁴ Richard A. Greenwald, *The Triangle Fire, the Protocols of Peace, and Industrial Democracy in Progressive Era New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005), 131.

⁸⁵ Triangle Fire Coalition, <http://rememberthetrianglefire.org/>, access 8 July 2013.

⁸⁶ Greenwald, 144-145, 128, 191, 220.

Of course, Roche clearly purged what she donated to her archival collection, stripping it of almost anything either intimate or negative. She left almost nothing that would shed light on the relationship between her and her parents. That is certainly understandable, since it is hard to imagine what life must have been like for Josephine Roche who lived with her mother and father in the summers during the New York textile strikes and full time, starting in 1912, during the 1910-1914 Colorado coal strike. Although John D. Rockefeller, Jr., became the strike's most recognizable villain, symbolizing the uncaring, absentee owner who had no regard for his workers, the 1910-1914 long strike actually began in 1910 when John Roche and his partner at the RMFC refused to renew the UMW's contract at their company in the northern Colorado coalfields.⁸⁷ That put Josephine Roche in a tough position. Did the Roches talk about the coal strike at home? Did they argue? Did the family agree to disagree, avoiding any talk at all about labor unions and workers? If there was tension, Roche left no record of it. Instead, the correspondence she saved from her parents during the strike reflects a loving, protective, and doting relationship toward their daughter, an assessment she uncharacteristically and almost emotionally admits was true in a September of 1928 letter to one of her former mentors, Edward Keating.⁸⁸ Yet, by 1930, Roche actively began cultivating an image directly in contrast to her father's anti-union actions.

Roche not only lived with her parents during the long strike, she socialized with them, too, and alongside her mother, was actively involved with Denver

⁸⁷ Letter from M.M. Rinn to E.E. Shumway, President of RMFC, 23 October 1912, 11-9, Josephine Roche papers.

⁸⁸ Letter from Josephine Roche to Edward Keating, 8 October 1928, 4-5, Josephine Roche papers.

women's clubs. As Denver's first policewoman, Roche often spoke at their meetings, and as mentioned earlier, clubwomen rallied to her defense after she was fired in March. Following the Ludlow Massacre, a massive women's march paraded through the Denver streets, and although it was a cross-class alliance, much like those fostered during the New York City garment strikes, the Denver Women's Club had taken the lead in organizing the event. The march culminated on the steps of the state capitol building, demanding that the governor immediately wire President Woodrow Wilson to send federal troops to Colorado's embattled coalfields. The governor complied, the troops arrived, and the Ten-Day war ended.⁸⁹ Was Roche part of that group? Although I suspect so, her records are silent.

In May, the month after the Ludlow Massacre, Roche's juvenile court boss and mentor, Judge Ben Lindsey, made a spectacularly flamboyant train trip to New York City, via Chicago, Washington, D.C., and Oyster Bay, New York (to former President Teddy Roosevelt's home), holding rallies and press conferences along the way in all four cities.⁹⁰ According to newspaper accounts, Lindsey traveled with six women and two children: his wife; Mrs. Adolph Germer, "wife of one of the Colorado strike leaders"; Mrs. Lee Champion, "Chairman of the Relief Committee"; Mary Petrucci, whose children had died in the Ludlow Massacre; Mrs. M.H. Thomas and her two children, Rachael, aged 4, and Olga, aged 6, left a widow and orphans, respectively, because of strike; and Pearl Jolley [as the *New York Times* misspelled

⁸⁹ R. Todd Laugen, *The Gospel of Progressivism: Moral Reform and Labor War in Colorado, 1900-1930* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2010), 56.

⁹⁰ "Says Only Wilson Can Settle Strike," 20 May 1914; "Article 10—No Title," 21 May 1914; "Washington and Colorado," 24 May 1914, *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com.

her last name], a Red Cross volunteer, who was eager to tell the world that the state militia aimed at her insignia when she was in the field trying to help the wounded.⁹¹

Lindsey's trip created widespread publicity and controversy, generating over a dozen *New York Times* articles that criticized not only Lindsey's grandstanding trip but also Colorado's political anarchy. Contrary to contemporary historical narratives that do just the opposite, the *Times* condemned Lindsey and Colorado, but praised Rockefeller. *Times'* editors called Lindsey a demagogue from a state with such a weak government it needed the federal government to fix its problems. Condemning coal operators who "imported the cheapest and most ignorant and brutal laborers of Europe," men who thought nothing of using "their women and children" as "shields for rifle fire, or thrusting them into pits to suffocate," only one coal operator, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., whose company "has done much welfare work," rose above the Colorado coal operator fray for his forward-thinking employment practices.⁹²

Even though Rockefeller refused to meet with Lindsey's group, Lindsey's purported purpose for the trip, President Wilson very publicly agreed to do so, even holding one of the young children as he spoke to the press about his intention to keep federal troops in the field as long as necessary in Colorado.⁹³ Probably because Creel's close friend Frank Walsh presided over the federal industrial relations hearings being held in New York City, even though he was not supposed to testify, Lindsey dramatically rose from the audience and demanded to be heard. Walsh

⁹¹ "Threat of Militia Excites Colorado," 18 May 1914; "Article 10—No Title," 21 May 1914; and "Miner Threatens Rockefellers," 26 May 1914, *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com.

⁹² "Judge Lindsey's Activities," 27 May 1914, *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com.

⁹³ No Title, 24 May 1914, *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com.

allowed him to speak. If Roche had been a member of this extremely well publicized party, surely *The Times* would have noted it, and so would the Denver newspapers. They did not. Yet, the biographer who wrote the biographical introduction to Roche's papers wrote that Roche had helped plan and even accompanied Lindsey on this trip.

As previously mentioned, during the long strike, the only record in Roche's papers with her name on it is a document she signed as secretary of the education arm of the Colorado Progressive Party, entitled a "Report on the Industrial War in Colorado, and the Progressive Program Regarding It."⁹⁴ It appears to have been written in September of 1914, five months after the Ludlow Massacre. Attached to the document is an un-dated open letter addressed to Colorado's governor, crafted in response to a special session he had called in which he planned to ask legislators to vote for a special state bond that would help Colorado defray the costs of the recent strike. As would be the case through the late 1920s, such bonds were the only mechanism governors had in their limited political toolbox to fund the Colorado National Guard during strikes. Merle Vincent, who in the future would serve as Roche's manager at the RMFC and who chaired a group of Progressives serving in the Colorado legislature, wrote that letter. Not only was the proposed bond a waste of taxpayers' money, Vincent wrote, it was also immoral, since the state militia had acted, "as it had in times past, as the guard for the coal operators."⁹⁵

⁹⁴ "Report on the Industrial War in Colorado, and the Progressive Program Regarding It," 10-12, Josephine Roche papers.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

Significantly, Vincent's letter also contained specific recommendations on how Colorado could avoid future strike violence. Progressives recommended that the state legislature, to protect Colorado coalminers and Colorado consumers, "should have power to provide for immediate arbitration of the issues involved in the strike." Stapled to the document was a flyer that Progressives apparently had circulated by the thousands in December of 1913 detailing how their proposed arbitration board would function. The legislature would appoint a "mediation board of three, one representing labor, one employer, one to be selected by those two," which would "be given power of investigation, including power to subpoena witnesses and examine them under oath, examine books and accounts, etc." After investigating "every possible cause of dispute" between employers and employees, "This plan, if honestly carried out, will end the strike. It will do more: It will provide a method for preventing similar strikes. It is the only plan that has been offered that gives hope of a just solution."⁹⁶ In 1915, after the Ludlow Massacre, the Colorado state legislature created an industrial commission that looked almost identical to the plan the Progressives had proposed in 1913. Then, the political influence of the Progressives began to fade, and most of Colorado's Progressives, including Lindsey, Vincent, Costigan, and Roche, joined the Democrats and supported Woodrow Wilson in the 1916 presidential election.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Ibid., 11.

⁹⁷ Letter from Josephine Roche to Dr. Caroline Spencer, Secretary of the Colorado Women's Party, 23 October 1916, 6-7, Josephine Roche papers.



After the long strike ended in 1914, the United Mine Workers were, for all practical purposes, driven from the state. Although Progressives had put great faith in the newly instituted industrial relations commission to solve future labor disputes, their attentions, like everyone else's, turned to the war in Europe. In 1915, Roche left Denver to work briefly in London for the Belgian Relief Fund. (To the

above left is the photo on the Department of State document authorizing Roche to represent the United States in that program).⁹⁸ Upon her return, most of Roche's efforts focused on publicly speaking to community groups, sometimes as often as three times a day, to raise awareness, but more importantly funds, for the humanitarian mission.⁹⁹ Next, Roche wrote a report for the National Consumers' League, "Wage Earning Women and Girls in Baltimore: A Study of the Cost of Living in 1918," and Florence Kelley wrote its introduction. Kelley described the study as "one modest link in the world-wide chain of reports, official and otherwise, made in the past twenty years," documenting the low wages of women, and trying to combat

⁹⁸ Commission for Relief in Belgium, 1915-1916, JR Papers, 10-11. I took the photo.

⁹⁹ "Miss Roche Tells of Work of Feeding the Belgians," Rutland Vermont newspaper clipping, 27 March 1915, 10-11, Josephine Roche papers.

the myths (such as the “pin money fallacy”) that justified them.¹⁰⁰ As Kelley’s introduction made clear, Roche was still conducting maternalist work directly relating to her Columbia thesis topic.

Next, Roche moved to Washington, D.C. Although Roche had been actively involved in local and state politics in Denver, she greatly expanded the scope of her political and public relations’ experience when she moved to the nation’s capital to work for her old boss George Creel again, this time in the Committee on Public Information (CPI). CPI director George Creel later wrote that, “The loyalty of ‘our aliens,’ however splendid as it was, had in it nothing of the spontaneous or the accidental. Results were obtained only by hard, driving work,” which Roche directed.¹⁰¹ In 1918, few citizens understood the role the CPI played in generating pro-war propaganda, but historians since have shown how the agency’s work sometimes whipped up not just pro-war sentiment, but also wartime hysteria, the kind that led to the persecution of the IWW.¹⁰²

Roche said that she was not part of the Americanization efforts that tried to stamp out new immigrants’ cultural heritage, an attitude no doubt shaped by her settlement house work. The only woman to head a CPI department, Roche directed the Foreign Language Information Services (FLIS) division, coordinating and disseminating information to fourteen non-English speaking groups during the

¹⁰⁰ Josephine Roche, “Wage Earning Women and Girls in Baltimore: A Study of the Cost of Living in 1918” (New York: National Consumers’ League, 1918), 11, 10-12, Josephine Roche papers.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 184.

¹⁰² David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1980), 59-66.

Great War.¹⁰³ She released and coordinated information to 856 foreign press newspapers throughout the country as well as overseas, so it would be an understatement to point out that Roche learned how to effectively work with the press. She also organized the July 4, 1918, patriotic ceremonies in 33 US cities, in which immigrants professed allegiance to their new home country, a managerial feat demonstrating Roche's mastery of detail and delegation. However, in her final report about the FLIS, Roche wrote that the biggest problems new immigrants faced were finding good health care and figuring out how to complete their income taxes so they did not pay too much. Helping immigrants get good medical care and file their taxes correctly, Roche wrote, had done more to win hearts and minds than any newspapers articles or pageants could ever accomplish.¹⁰⁴

Congress defunded the CPI after the war, and between 1919 and 1923, she worked for a group that tried to provide the same kinds of services the FLIS had, but it could not find reliable funding.¹⁰⁵ Starting in 1923, Roche served as Director for the Editorial Division of the Children's Bureau, "the first female stronghold in the federal government."¹⁰⁶ Established in 1912, the bureau continued its progressive, white, middle-class maternalist mission throughout the 1920s.¹⁰⁷ Yet, just two years later, in 1925, Roche cut short her promising governmental career and returned to

¹⁰³ George Creel, *How We Advertised America* (New York: Arno Press, 1972; originally published in New York: Harper & Brothers, 1920), 191.

¹⁰⁴ *A Study of the Needs and Problems of the Foreign Born and of What is Being Done to Meet Them, With Suggestions for Further Work Which the Situation Calls For* (submitted to the Commonwealth Fund seeking contributions, [1919-1920], Box 11, Josephine Roche papers.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Muncy, 38.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Denver, moving in with her aging, sick parents and taking care of them until they died two years later, her father in January of 1927 and her mother in June that same year. In the meantime, Roche also got her old job back with Judge Lindsey in Denver's juvenile court.

Soon, she found herself embroiled in Lindsey's troubles. The Little Judge had always been controversial, but he now faced new kinds of opposition unique to the 1920s: the revived Ku Klux Klan, outraged citizens who opposed his stances on companionate marriage, and Denver government officials, who wanted to systematize the way the juvenile court operated. In 1924, Klan members or Klan-supported candidates won most elective offices being voted on that year in Colorado. The KKK ran a candidate against Lindsey, and the election resulted essentially in a tie. The disputed election stayed in the courts for the next three years.¹⁰⁸ However, by 1926, the Klan had shown that it could gain political power but not hold onto it, and KKK members and sympathizers were largely turned out of office, following one Klan political scandal after another. The Klan's downfall did not revive Lindsey's political career, because far more people than KKK members became troubled by what they saw as extreme deficits in Lindsey's moral character.

In 1927, Lindsey enraged not just the good people of Denver, but the entire nation as a result of an article he wrote for *Red Book* (back then, it was two words) magazine. During the progressive era, one reason Lindsey had become a nationally known figure was because he had written extensively for magazines such as the

¹⁰⁸ "Lindsey is Ousted as Denver Judge," *The New York Times*, 24 January 1927, www.nytimes.com.

Survey, the *Nation*, *Collier's*, *Harper's*, the *Outlook*, and *McClure's* on topics relating to child welfare. However, by the 1920s, the magazine industry had dramatically changed. If Lindsey wanted to keep getting published, he had to change his subject matter, which he did. He began writing almost exclusively for women's magazines. Filled with advertisements for the burgeoning cosmetics industry and articles about fashion, beauty, and movie stars, almost every issue contained "[s]tories about the (often sexual) misconduct of college youth," and other sex stories which became "a staple of journalism in the 1920s."¹⁰⁹

Lindsey's magazine articles not only conformed to these new expectations, he blazed new trails with his titillating articles about young people and sex that were so successful, he turned them into his 1925 bestselling book, *The Revolt of Modern Youth*.¹¹⁰ Buoyed with his success, Lindsey continued writing for *Red Book*, and these new articles went very well for him until February 1927. That was when the magazine published what Lindsey would later privately call the "fatal fifth" installment on a series about marriage.¹¹¹ In that article, Lindsey argued for a new form of marriage using a term he had coined called "Companionate Marriage." Under this new form of marriage, a couple could get married, practice birth control, and the wife could continue to work outside the home if she chose to. If for any reason the marriage did not work out, as long as there were no children, the couple could get a divorce simply by declaring they wanted one, with no alimony to the

¹⁰⁹ Beth Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 46.

¹¹⁰ Ben Lindsey and Wainwright Evans, *The Revolt of Modern Youth* (New York, NY: Boni and Liveright, 1925).

¹¹¹ Judge Ben Lindsey and Wainwright Evans, *The Companionate Marriage* (Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing Co., Inc., 1927, 1929), viii; "The Moral Revolt," *Red Book*, February 1927: 155.

wife involved. This was extremely controversial, because in 1927, most judges, except in states such as Nevada that specialized in quickie divorces, could only legally grant divorces if one party were proven to be at fault. (Divorce proceedings only ceased being adversarial in 1969 when California became the first state to institute “no-fault” divorce.¹¹²) Probably the most controversial aspect of Lindsey’s “fatal fifth” installment was not even companionate marriage, but the way he insulted organized religion when he wrote, “I have been receiving a good many letters of late asking me how I reconcile some of the views I am expressing in the articles with the Bible. I have one short and conclusive answer to that question. I don’t reconcile them with the Bible. Moreover, I don’t see why I should.”¹¹³ The outrage this article generated was swift and certain. Combined with changes in Colorado politics, Lindsey’s tenure as Denver’s juvenile judge was about to come crashing to an end.

In the summer of 1927, the Colorado Supreme Court, presided over by Judge Greely Whitford, ruled that not only had Lindsey lost the 1924 election, Lindsey also had to repay three years of back salary he had earned (and already spent) as judge while he fought his case in court.¹¹⁴ In 1912, during the long strike, Lindsey, and other Progressives had tried to get Whitford impeached over a restrictive injunction he judge issued that had landed sixteen northern coalfield UMW organizers,

¹¹² “No-fault Divorce: 10 Years Later, Some Virtues, Some Flaws,” *The New York Times*, 30 March 1979, www.nytimes.com.

¹¹³ Lindsey and Evans, p. 155.

¹¹⁴ Larsen, 200 & 227.

including Ed Doyle, in jail.¹¹⁵ The Progressive impeachment effort failed, and by 1927, Whitford had risen to the position of chief justice in Colorado's Supreme Court. Lindsey believed Whitford's ruling was political payback, and he was probably right.

Whitford further punished his old political nemesis Lindsey by ordering him to vacate his office immediately and turn the juvenile court records over to the new judge. Lindsey refused. Outraged, Josephine Roche wrote a press release, signed by all the juvenile court employees (including future Secretary of the Interior and Roche ally Oscar Chapman) defending Lindsey, who, for over a quarter of a century, had ceaselessly defended the interests of women and children and had "never for an instant weakened in his overwhelming task of championing human rights against property rights."¹¹⁶ Not only did Lindsey refuse to surrender the juvenile court records, Lindsey, his wife, and two court officers, ceremoniously gathered the records and burned them.¹¹⁷ Was one of those officers Roche? I don't know, but since she wrote their press release, I suspect she was. Then, at Roche's urging, all of Lindsey's employees quit, leaving the new juvenile judge without records and without anyone in the office knowing how the juvenile court functioned. The press releases got printed but produced no groundswell of support for Lindsey.

Even his old allies from the Ludlow days had deserted him. During the controversy, Roche had written *Collier's* editor William Chenery asking for his help

¹¹⁵ "Whitford, Tyrant, In Whom Is Not Drop of Warm Blood," The *Denver Post*, 11 April 1911: 1.

¹¹⁶ "Press release," 11 July 1927, Benjamin Barr Lindsey Papers, Box 74, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹¹⁷ Rupert Hughes, "Ben Lindsey's Holocaust," The *Denver Post*, 16 October 1927: 8.

in the Lindsey controversy. Immediately after the deaths at Ludlow, Chenery wrote a passionate editorial in the *Rocky Mountain News* that unmistakably defended the workers and condemned the state for the violence there. In fact, Chenery was the first person to use the term Ludlow Massacre.¹¹⁸ Yet Chenery's response to Roche showed that he had moved on, and he thought Roche should, too. He let Roche know that, although Lindsey had served a valuable purpose in his early years, he thought that Lindsey should have retired about twenty years earlier, and if a juvenile court couldn't function without the personality of one, specific individual, then maybe it deserved to die.¹¹⁹

Chenery, of course, was right. By 1927, the juvenile court had become a firmly established institution and it could function perfectly well, and probably even better, without Lindsey. No one was questioning whether or not the court's records were confidential (although Lindsey charged his enemies would use them for craven political purposes), but by burning the files, Lindsey clearly demonstrated that he believed the records were his personal property, not the state's. By the late 1920s, local, state, and federal governments were becoming professionalized and bureaucratized. Lindsey's moralistic antics that had been so effective during the progressive era no longer worked. His enemies, of which he still had plenty, successfully brought a disbarment case against him that Oscar Chapman fought in

¹¹⁸ Beshoar (1943), 187.

¹¹⁹ Letter from William Chenery to Josephine Roche, 15 July 1927, 2-9, Josephine Roche papers.

the courts for the next two years.¹²⁰ Lindsey not only lost his juvenile judgeship, the state Democrats deserted him, and he got disbarred, so he could not even practice law in the state of Colorado. Dejected and disheartened, Lindsey did what so many others before and since have done: He moved to California and reinvented himself. His legacies are still with us, since in California, he granted the first major celebrity divorce (between Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford), he established the nation's first family court, and he finally establishing companionate marriage.¹²¹ Today, it is called no-fault divorce.¹²²

Although Lindsey had to leave the state to start over, Roche changed the course of her life by staying in Colorado. June of 1927 must have been a traumatic month for Roche. Her mother died, only six months after her father's death. Her mentor, Judge Lindsey, lost his job, leading her to also quit the juvenile court. She helped convince all the other juvenile court's workers to quit, too, and she probably helped destroy the court's records, uncharacteristically emotional and futile gestures. Roche was now the sole heir to her parents' half of the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company. In August came the Sacco and Vanzetti walkout in the southern coalfields followed by the statewide IWW-led coal strike that began on October 18.

¹²⁰ Frank Hess, "Oral Interview with Oscar L. Chapman," Harry S. Truman Library & Museum, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/chapman7.htm#368>, accessed 13 August 2013.

¹²¹ "Mary Pickford Obtains Divorce in Surprise 3-Minute Hearing," *The New York Times*, 11 January 1935, www.nytimes.com; Elaine Tyler May, *Great Expectations: Marriage and Divorce in Post-Victorian America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 75-76. Elaine Tyler May wrote an entire chapter about the Pickford-Fairbanks idealized marriage and subsequent divorce, "For if their marriage symbolized anything, it was the ultimate realization—and subsequent failure—of the self-contained privatized home geared to personal happiness." (76)

¹²² "No-fault Divorce: 10 Years Later, Some Virtues, Some Flaws," *The New York Times*, 30 March 1979, www.nytimes.com.

By the time of the Columbine Massacre on November, 21, 1927, however, the Little Judge's troubles probably seemed a lifetime away.

In June, when Roche had written the letter on behalf of the entire group of juvenile court workers who resigned in a moralistic huff, she had praised Lindsey's lifetime regard for "people over property," but since the Columbine Massacre shootings occurred on RMFC property—her property—she had to figure out what that slogan really meant. Although she would always retain the basic values from her maternalistic reformer past, the Columbine Massacre forced Roche to change the course of her life. As her Denver policewoman and Committee on Public Information service proved, Roche was not afraid to be the first woman to do something, which now included being the first, and perhaps only woman coal operator in the United States. Through her extensive working experiences, she had already learned important skills that would help her in new career. Yet, on the edge of turning forty, for the first time in her life, Roche was truly on her own. Although she knew almost nothing about the coal industry, she started to learn. Fortunately, she was a quick study.

Chapter 4: Josephine Roche: Coalmine Operator, 1927-1932

In late August of 1928, nine months after the November 21, 1927, Columbine Massacre, Josephine Roche signed a contract between her company, the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company, and the United Mine Workers that took effect September 1, 1928.¹ Almost everything about that contract was unusual, including its lofty preamble, which let whoever might be interested know that the RMFC was about to embark upon an experiment in industrial democracy.² The methods Roche used to arrive at that contract—controlling the Columbine Massacre story in the local and national press, gaining legal and then financial control over the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company, and dividing the Industrial Workers of the World supporters by appealing to the memories of Ludlow—are the subjects of this chapter.

After Roche's father died in January of 1927, Roche continued working for her former Progressive, juvenile court mentor Judge Lindsey instead of taking over her father's position at the RMFC. In February, Roche hired Merle Vincent to represent her interests in the company.³ Roche appointed Vincent president, and Vincent also took over Jessie Northcutt's job as the RMFC's general counsel, a job for

¹ Rocky Mountain Annual Report and Statement: 1928, 13-4, Josephine Roche papers.

² She cites this in almost every document in 1928. For example, in letters exchanged between her and Bruce Bliven, editor of the *New Republic*, she insisted that he include the preamble with the principles in his article about the new 1928 UMW contract. In case he did not have enough room, she provided an abbreviated version of it. Letter from Bruce Bliven to Josephine Roche, 29 August 1928; Bliven to JR, 31 August 1928; JR to Bliven, 31 August 1928; JR to Bliven, 6 September 1928, 5-8, Josephine Roche papers.

³ Rocky Mountain Fuel Company Annual Report and Statement for Stockholders: 1928, 13-4, Josephine Roche papers.

which he was well qualified, since Vincent had just resigned as President of the State Bar Association to work for Roche. Northcutt and his anti-union stance dated back to the 1910-1914 long strike era, so letting him go was an obvious call. In the spring, after digging into the RMFC's finances, Vincent discovered that Walter Belk had been on the payroll since 1919, working as a spy for Roche's father. Belk had been one of the most notorious spies, perhaps even a gunman, during the long strike, so Belk got fired, too.⁴ After making those major changes, Vincent managed the company as he saw fit through the summer of 1927. Even after her mother died and Roche resigned from Lindsey's juvenile court in June, Roche made no additional moves to consolidate her control over the company. In August, the Sacco and Vanzetti sympathy strike took place in the southern fields—not in the northern fields where most of the RMFC properties were located—and Vincent, who since February also had served as Roche's spokesman, remained silent, since that walkout didn't directly affect the RMFC. However, as the strike began to affect the RMFC, Vincent was soon forced to speak to the press.

Roche and Vincent had two levels of the press to deal with: the local, Colorado newspapers, and eventually, national magazines. Although as I will show, at first there was some overlap between the two, their first concern was the local press. From October 18, 1927, to February 18, 1928, most of Colorado's coalminers walked out on strike, and for its duration, that story dominated the front pages of Denver's two largest dailies, *The Denver Post* and the *Rocky Mountain News*, as well as the two largest dailies in the two major strike fields, the Boulder *Daily Camera* in

⁴ In the Supreme Court of the State of Colorado, *The Rocky Mountain Fuel Company, a Corporation v. Walter Belk*, No. 12621, 1 July 1930, 13-3, Josephine Roche papers.

the north, and the *Pueblo Chieftan* in the south. Newspaper coverage in all four dailies was more alike than different, and they all showed definite bias against the striking coalminers until the Columbine Massacre somewhat shifted the tone of their coverage. Before the massacre, the papers' coverage was, by today's standards, strangely gleeful. They clearly opposed the IWW, the strike, the strikers, and their supporters, but after the massacre, newspapers gradually began tempering their coverage. Reporters rarely investigated the strike in depth, though, a superficiality that benefited Roche and the RMFC. The national magazines were even worse, because Roche was able to influence them even more. She desperately needed to exercise that influence, since most of the people she asked to invest in the company lived outside Colorado and they only read national sources.

By October 19, 1927, most of the state's coalmines were idle. Colorado newspapers covered Merle Vincent's statement delivered on behalf of all the state's coal operators that made the operators' position clear: Only the state's industrial commission, whose object was "to bring about peaceable and just settlements," had exclusive legal authority to investigate worker complaints, and the commission, "after investigating the action of the I.W.W. organizers in attempting to call a strike, reports that they do not represent the miners."⁵ However, indirectly alluding to the Walsenburg raid, Vincent said that it was "regrettable" that citizens had "seen fit to take the law into their own hands," which not only violated "law and order," but also undermined "confidence in our public officials and naturally invites resentment and encourages retaliatory acts of some kind. The lawlessness immediately aroused

⁵ "Merle D. Vincent for Operators Says Operators Will Obey Law and Strikers are Violating It," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 19 October 1927: 3.

widespread sympathy for the I.W.W. among miners who do not belong to the I.W.W. and oppose its methods.”⁶ Vincent emphasized that it was the operators’ “intention to observe the law” (which outlawed the strike and also picketing) and he hoped the striking coalminers would do the same.⁷

The next time Vincent spoke, what he had to say about the strike was imbedded within an October 28 *Denver Post* human-interest story. Its title clearly set up the article’s bifurcated premise: “Strikers Hear Rival Calls of Two Women: ‘Girl in Red’ Urges Them to Attack Mines, While Josephine Roche, Owner of the Fuel Company, Invites Them to Parley on Wages.”⁸ Whose appeal would be heeded, the article asked? The battle lines were clear, as seen in the following excerpt:

“Carry on!” shouts the Polish radical, Milka Sablicsh (sic), to the coal miners of the southern fields.

“Come let us confer together!” says the American, Josephine Roche, to the coal miners of the northern district.

Which will win? The contest is as clearly between two women as between striking miners and mine operators.⁹

Polish or American? Radical, 19-year old, strike leader or 40-year-old “college graduate, social worker”? A girl who’d never been heard from before and whose last name the newspapers couldn’t bother to spell correctly, or a woman “with a long record of public service and of personal fortitude”?¹⁰ Where would the battle be decided? In the Southern coalfields (which were implicitly militant, since that’s where the Ludlow Massacre had taken place) or in the northern (and

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Frances Wayne, “Strikers Hear Rival Calls of Two Women,” *The Denver Post*, 28 October 1927: 1.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

implicitly more conservative) coalfields? Although *The Post* clearly weighed in on Roche's side, the article apparently had no effect on the course of the strike, which continued escalating.

Strikers and their supporters would not have been influenced by the story, because it is highly doubtful they were even reading the *Denver Post*, *Rocky Mountain News*, the *Daily Camera*, or the *Pueblo Chieftan* for strike news, especially since the newspapers were so hostile toward their walkout. Although the IWW leaders such as Embree read those local dailies to see how the capitalist press was handling the strike, most strikers probably got their news from each other and from the IWW leaders at their daily mass meetings.¹¹ If they were going to read about the strike, they probably read the IWW's *Industrial Solidarity* (published in Chicago) or *The Industrial Worker* (published in Seattle). The two papers represented the two sides in the 1924 IWW schism that some historians argue had destroyed the Wobblies.¹² The 1927-1928 strike provides evidence that the feud between the two groups was beginning to fade. Both newspapers unconditionally supported the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike and leaders from the both areas arrived in Colorado to keep the strike going after its main leaders, such as Embree, were jailed.¹³

¹¹ Letter from A.K. Orr to A.S. Embree, 4 November 1927, INR 1299-3; Undated flyer for IWW mass meeting announcing it will also be a business meeting, INR 1300-7, CF&I archives.

¹² John S. Gambs does the most thorough job outlining the many reasons for the IWW split in Chapter IV, "The Sixteenth Convention and Schism," in *The Decline of the I. W. W.*

¹³ For example, Frank Delaney, an IWW propagandist, helped organize the strike. He arrived from the West Coast and co-authored a book with fellow workers Ed Rice, published by the IWW in 1927 (probably to raise defense funds in Colorado) entitled *The Bloodstained Trail* that included the Columbine Massacre. Lee Tulin, the Chicago IWW Secretary-Treasurer also came to Colorado to help with the strike, too.

The *Post's* feature article contrasting Sablich and Roche was the last during the strike to specifically mention Roche, but as the strike situation at the Columbine escalated, Vincent spoke to the press on RMFC's behalf several more times. Protestors began picketing the few mines that tried to stay open, and that included the Columbine, the largest RMFC coalmine. By early November, probably less than half of the Columbine's usual 350 coalminers were showing up for work, and starting a week before the massacre, on Monday, November 14, after picketing intensified, the number of men working dropped to seventy-five.¹⁴ After local sheriffs tried arresting a few of the "parade" leaders, for the second time in two weeks, the crowd swarmed the car, and the protestors escaped back into the crowd. The Columbine closed the next day, on Tuesday, November 15, the *Daily Camera* ran an all-capitalized, front-page headline that ominously predicted what happened six days later: "STRIKERS WARNED SHOOTING MAY COMMENCE AT COLUMBINE." The article's first sentence stated, "Officials of the Columbine mine near Lafayette today informed Gov. W.H. Adams that mine guards would shoot the first picketer who attempted to set foot on the property Wednesday morning."¹⁵

On Wednesday, November 16, the day the coalmine compound re-opened, it was militarized. Newspapers reported that the Columbine now had a machinegun

¹⁴ "Pickets Stationed by the Strikers at the Columbine" and "Thomas Annear Leaves for Boulder County to Compel Obedience to Law—He says Strike Illegal," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 19 October 1927: 1. In the article "Columbine and Black Diamond Miners Ignore I.W.W. Walkout," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 18 October 1927: 1, the estimate was 150 out of the usual 225 men worked. Immediately before the Columbine Massacre, Fred Peart, the Columbine mine superintendent, estimated that only 75 out of 250 coalminers were working, a number that seems more credible, but picketing probably reduced the numbers of men who worked, since that was its purpose; *Inquest*, 111.

¹⁵ "Strikers Warned Shooting May Commence at Columbine," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 15 November 1927: 1.

mounted on the tippie, surrounded by an electrified, barbed wire fence.¹⁶ Four airplanes, “one a bombing machine equipped also with a machine gun,” were taking turns flying over the Columbine. Ten days earlier, those same planes had buzzed a crowd of 3,000 people meeting at the Ludlow Monument, which, as intended, broke up the meeting when the terrified crowd ran into the nearby hills. When the mine re-opened, Columbine employees were visibly “displaying guns” inside the camp, joined by some (although it’s not clear how many) of the 132 men Governor Adams had recently deputized over the past few weeks. After describing the armed Columbine camp compound, the *Camera* quoted Vincent saying that every effort would be made to keep the mine open.¹⁷ The article also added, “If the military defense of the Columbine mine proves successful, other mines in the northern Colorado coal field will be opened.”¹⁸

To review, first, Vincent speaks for all the state’s coalmining operators, explaining why the strike is illegal. Next, he briefly appears in a feature story, obviously planted, highlighting how smart, reasonable, and American Roche was, contrasted to the uneducated, radical, un-American girl leading the strikers. Finally, by mid-November, the Columbine—the largest coalmine in the northern field and one of the few major coalmines in the state trying to stay open during the strike—had become an armed camp, complete with mounted machine guns, an electrified barbed wire fence, airplanes flying overhead (one armed with bombs), armed guards and state police, and a statement by Vincent that the company would do

¹⁶ “Machine Gun and a Few Troopers Stood Off Picket at Columbine,” The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 16 November 1927: 1.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

everything in its power to keep the mine open and if that effort proved successful, then all the other camps that had been closed down by strikers would soon re-open, too. Therefore, it seems clear that RMFC officials were cooperating with the other operators (or else there would have been no joint statement), at least one *Denver Post* reporter (or else there would have been no Roche feature story), and also the state police, since the company did not have the authority to fly airplanes overhead, bring in machine guns, or arm the state police inside the Columbine coal camp without the operators' permission.¹⁹ Unlike future historical accounts to the contrary, the RMFC management was not interested in negotiating with the striking coalminers at all. Instead, it was taking the hardest and most militaristic stance among all of Colorado's coal operators in the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike.

At dawn on Monday, November 21, 1927, twenty state police shot into a crowd of at least five hundred protestors at the Columbine, killing two immediately. Three more died by nightfall, and by week's end, a sixth striker lay dead. Between twenty to sixty people were also seriously wounded. Roche knew from personal experience how Progressives and labor leaders had demonized John D. Rockefeller, Jr., in the print media after the Ludlow Massacre, because she had been part of that smear campaign. Since the Columbine Massacre happened at a RMFC mine, she must have also known that what had happened to Rockefeller could happen to her. Fortunately, Roche had almost twenty years of experience dealing with the press. However, newspapers and magazines had changed dramatically since her

¹⁹ Meeting of Employees with Mr. Hair and Mr. Matteson, 3 November 1927, INR 1300-9, CF&I archives.

Progressive, Belgian Relief, Committee for Public Information, and Children's Bureau days. As her more recent experience with Judge Lindsey had demonstrated, Roche had to craft her story in a way that fit the 1920s' news cycle and readership. Within a month of the shooting, Roche was so successful, journalists and historians so far have accepted her version of events surrounding the Columbine Massacre.

The first thing Roche had to deal with was local newspaper coverage, which began shifting dramatically after the Columbine shootings. A few days following the shootings, newspapers continued valorizing the state police, but they also began printing sympathetic articles about the men and several women who'd been shot at the Columbine. Posed pictures of uniformed state police wearing arm slings had to look ridiculous next to the descriptive lists of those who had been killed or wounded that day at the coalmine: John Eastenes, a thirty-six-year-old father of six young children, now orphans, and husband to a now destitute wife; Raymond Jacques, a war veteran; and Jerry Davis, a local twenty-one year old striking coalminer who had been shot while carrying the American flag.²⁰

Boulder *Daily Camera* coverage changed the fastest, perhaps because it was the local paper for the victims. Before the massacre, its anti-strike coverage breathlessly focused on the strike's sensational aspects, especially its "amazons," who led mass picketing. After the massacre, the newspaper provided heartbreaking details about the victims. Jacques' brother, also a veteran, had been killed his first day back in the coalmines after returning from the war when a mule kicked him.²¹

²⁰ Testimony of Dr. Bixler, Weld County inquest, 9.

²¹ "Burial of Columbine Dead Began at Lafayette Today," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 23 November 1927: 1.

The Eastenes family was so destitute, churches began collecting donations for them, and a prominent Denver philanthropist even sent the widow a check for \$100 and offered to place her six children in Catholic orphanages.²² Georges Vidovitch was the last to die. He had been shot in both legs, causing doctors to try to save his life by amputating first one leg and then the other. In spite of their best efforts, he died of gangrene.²³ Like Jacques, Vidovitch had served in the Great War. In fact, the *Camera* reported, he had been the first man to volunteer from his hometown of Erie.²⁴ Both the American Legion and the Wobblies led the 6,000-strong funeral procession through Lafayette before burying him in an unmarked grave alongside four of the others shot and killed that day.²⁵ Only Jacques' family could afford a headstone, so they buried him in a family plot in nearby Louisville, a story newspapers also covered.

Within days, any hint of the newspapers' gleeful strike coverage disappeared. Because the shootings happened at the Columbine, an RMFC coalmine, as much as Roche wanted to control that story, the facts stood in her way. Fortunately for her, no real investigative journalism surrounded the massacre, so as she and Vincent began reconstructing their version of what had happened that morning at the Columbine, the press cooperated, repeating their press releases and conducting no

²² "Union Service Offering for Mrs. Eastenes," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 23 November 1927: 2; "Mullen Offers to Provide for Eastenes Orphans," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 28 November 1927: 3.

²³ Mike Vidovich, Boulder County Death Certificate, 29 November 1927, copy from the private collection of Beth and Jim Hutchison, Lafayette, Colorado.

²⁴ "Burial of Columbine Dead Began at Lafayette Today," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 23 November 1927: 1; "Another Miner At the Columbine Died From Shot by the Guard," The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 28 November 1927: 1.

²⁵ Strike Bulletin No. 5, 2 December 1927, INR 1300-9, CF&I archives.

independent investigations of their own. Over time, as with all good stories repeatedly told, Roche and Vincent may have even come to believe their version of events to be true. It is still not clear how much of that retelling involved wishful thinking, uncorrected silences, damaging innuendoes, and outright lies, but within a week after the massacre, the tide began to turn in their favor. Vincent's carefully worded press release a week after the massacre, which the *Rocky Mountain News* carried, made it clear that the RMFC had done everything it could to prevent the shootings that morning. As was the practice then, on November 23 and 24, the Weld County coroner conducted a two-day inquest over the bodies of the two men who had died immediately that morning, but the six-man coroner's jury held that their deaths were "not felonious," since they had been caused by invading private property after being warned not to enter, a decision that the press duly reported.²⁶ The outpouring of public sympathy for Eastenes and her children quickly faded locally, although as late as 1929, author Upton Sinclair wrote Roche inquiring about their financial status.²⁷ We cannot know if the family's situation tugged at Roche's conscience, a woman who before inheriting the RMFC had, above all, identified herself as a maternalist reformer. We do know that through her lawyers, Roche made sure that the RMFC never paid the widow or her six children a single cent, a story the progressive-era muckraking press would have had a field day with.²⁸

²⁶ Weld County inquest, 224.

²⁷ Letter from Upton Sinclair to Josephine Roche, 12 October 1929, 6-7, Josephine Roche papers.

²⁸ *Eastenes v. RMFC* (No. 12735), 73-4, Josephine Roche papers, stayed in the courts for over two years, but ultimately, the Eastenes family got nothing. Online records at the Colorado State Archives shows that Mrs. Eastenes got a paltry Mother's Pension (a reform passed during the progressive era) for a while from Boulder County, and IWW

Within a week, as the strike continued, the press had absolved Roche, Vincent, and the RMFC of any responsibility in the Columbine Massacre.

Two men played especially instrumental roles in turning Roche's version of the truth into the official record, the Reverend A.A. Heist and Frank Palmer. In 1926, Reverend A.A. Heist took over the lead ministry at downtown Denver's Grace Community Church, a Methodist congregation that demonstrated its faith in accordance with the social gospel movement. Heist ministered to his flock, and he also directed the Denver Labor College, which held classes at the church aimed at training future labor leaders.²⁹ Moving to Denver from Washington state, Heist had championed the IWW during their Pacific Northwest WWI-era persecution there. Far from damaging his career, his IWW advocacy resulted in his appointment as field secretary for the Methodist Federation for Social Service, the social justice contingent within the Methodist hierarchy.³⁰

During the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, Heist continued his IWW advocacy. Heist opened Grace Church for a mass IWW meeting in Denver eight days before the massacre. Serving as secretary-treasurer for strike relief, Heist handled

financial records published in their General Executive Board monthly budget reports show it sent the family a \$10 monthly stipend through 1933, when the union found itself with less than \$30 in its account.

²⁹ The other major labor colleges in the United States during the 1920s were Brookwood Labor College in Westchester, New York; the People's Work College in Duluth, Minnesota, a project run by Finnish immigrants and the IWW; and Commonwealth College in Mena, Arkansas. Heist was especially proud that among all those major labor colleges, the Denver Labor College was the only one that operated in a church.

³⁰ The Methodist Federation for Social Service, News Letter No. 3, 20 February 1923, 1910-1964, Reverend Aaron Allen Heist papers (hereafter referred to as Heist papers), Southern California Library for Social Studies, Los Angeles, California.

over \$15,000 in funds that poured in from all over the country, “when 50 cents was feeding a child a week.”³¹ Working with Ben Cherington at the University of Denver (DU), the Iliff Theological Seminary on the DU campus, as well as the University of Colorado at Boulder, Heist encouraged college students to join the strike movement.³² Not only did they help raise money for strike relief (even holding a Christmas party for strikers’ children), they also conducted academic fieldwork. Using a one hundred item questionnaire, they interviewed Governor Adams, coalmine operators, and at least 250 striking coalminers to try to understand and document the causes of the strike.³³ In January, Heist rented Denver Civic Center so he and the students could present their findings to the public.³⁴

Although I have not been able to find those student interviews, the CF&I archives has a transcript of the January presentation.³⁵ The student research project must have been fascinating. For example, Heist wrote that when the students

³¹ Frank L. Palmer, “National Leaders Honor Denver Minister,” undated editorial, no publication listed, Heist Papers. In the Heist Papers, there are several letters between Heist and Clarence Darrow, who served as the featured speaker at Grace Church on June 15, 1928, for a ceremony in which Heist was awarded a \$2,000 “purse” for upholding civil liberties during the strike. In an undated newspaper article, members of the committee that put the program together including Ben Cherrington, Mrs. Mabel Costigan (Edward Costigan’s wife), Earl Hoage (the president of the Colorado State Federation of Labor, representing AFL unions), John R. Lawson, Frank Palmer, and Josephine Roche.

³² Heist letter to Dr. Jerone Davis, Papers, 3 January 1928 letter (although it’s dated 1927, which was a mistake), Heist papers.

³³ “Colorado Students Back Up Strikers,” *Industrial Worker*, No. 49—Whole Number 477, 14 December 1927: 3, JR Papers, 5-1; Letter from Heist to Win (no last name), 13 December 1927; “Industrial Relations in the Coal Industry of Colorado,” *Information Service*, published by the Department of Research and Education, Federal Council of Churches, Vol. X, No. 11, 14 March 1931, 9, Heist papers.

³⁴ Letter from Heist to Rev. Gilbert S. Cox, 26 January 1928, Heist Papers.

³⁵ Program transcription of Rev. Heist’s and student’s reports, INR 1299-9, CF&I archives.

interviewed coalminers in CF&I's southern fields, the workers there had never even heard of the Rockefeller Plan that was supposed to be representing them.³⁶ Evidence shows that Cherington and the students made a concerted effort to talk to all sides involved in the strike. For example, on October 31, 1927, Cherington wrote to Vincent that he was "greatly pleased with the tone and content of your communication to the Industrial Commission as represented in the papers last week."³⁷ Heist referred to Vincent's appearance before the commission, asking for permission to raise wages for the strikers, clearly hoping higher wages would end the strike. Although the commission granted the request, the raise didn't work any better at stopping the strike than CF&I's earlier raise had, either, and the strike continued. After complimenting Vincent on his industrial commission testimony, Cherington then let Vincent know that he had "spent Friday and Saturday of last week at Walsenburg among the striking miners and with the I.W.W. leaders, some of whom are highly educated and extremely well informed."³⁸ To get a full picture of the strike, he asked for an interview with Vincent, so he could "learn more of the operator's problems in the Colorado coal industry."³⁹ Vincent wrote that he would be happy to discuss the problems raised by the strike with him, but "So far, in the Northern field, there is no evidence of a disposition to violence, and I have no

³⁶ Letter from Heist to Dr. Jerome Davis, 3 January 1928 letter (although it's dated 1927, that's a mistake), Heist Papers.

³⁷ Letter from Ben Cherington to Merle Vincent, 31 October 1927, 15-4, Josephine Roche papers.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

present apprehension that there will be.”⁴⁰ However, as shown in Chapter 2, Vincent was wrong, since just two days later, Governor Adams created, then unleashed the state police upon the strikers and their leaders. Judging from articles published in the IWW newspaper and from Cherington’s own remarks, unlike the governor or the state police, Cherington and his students treated the coalminers and Vincent with equal respect. Those interviews buoyed the coalminers’ morale, since strikers felt validated that college students wanted to know what they had to say.⁴¹

In September of 1927, Frank Palmer had just returned from an educational labor group tour visiting the USSR ten years after its revolution. Before his journey, Palmer edited the *Colorado Labor Advocate*, the AFL newspaper for the state. Even though he was not a Wobbly, Palmer spoke at IWW rallies and helped agitate on their behalf. Palmer taught classes and served on the board of directors of the Denver Labor College, which Heist directed. Both Heist and Palmer firmly supported the IWW, and although I am unsure about Palmer, Heist also deeply admired Vincent and Roche, as seen by a letter he wrote to Vincent a week after the Columbine Massacre. Heist congratulated Vincent on his statement that had appeared in that morning’s *Rocky Mountain News*. It was especially important, Heist noted, the article included Vincent’s statement “that you had previously expressed yourself as willing to close down the mine, rather than have any bloodshed.”⁴² (As already shown, Vincent had expressed no such sentiment in the major dailies, and

⁴⁰ Letter from Merle Vincent to Ben Cherington, 2 November 1927, 15-4, Josephine Roche papers.

⁴¹ “Colorado Students Back Up Strikers,” *Industrial Worker*, No. 49—Whole Number 477, 14 December 1927: 3, JR Papers, 5-1.

⁴² Letter from Heist to Merle Vincent, 28 November 1927, 15-2, Josephine Roche papers.

the RMFC management's actions preceding the massacre demonstrated that the only time the company closed the Columbine was to militarize it.) Rev. Heist also showed his favorable predisposition toward Vincent when he wrote, "I hope in the interests of future amicable relations between the miners and such fine spirited men as yourself, you will leave no stone unturned to fix the responsibility for the unnecessary killing by the state police."⁴³ In the same complimentary letter, Heist wrote he was pleased that the RMFC had "released" Ted Peart from RMFC employment.

A week after the Columbine Massacre, like the local press and the Weld County coroner's jury, Heist had already absolved the RMFC from any responsibility surrounding the shootings. On December 7, *The Nation*, an influential, liberal, national magazine, published Frank L. Palmer's story, "War in Colorado," and that article suddenly put Roche, Vincent, and the RMFC back on the defensive. Although *The New York Times* had published several short articles about the Colorado strike, its main coverage focused instead on the much bigger, ongoing, simultaneous UMW strike (that the UMW lost) in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio. So while the Colorado story had not gone completely national yet, *The Nation* article threatened to change that. More than any other source, Palmer's article began the historical reconstruction of the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike and the Columbine Massacre.⁴⁴

Palmer's article delivered an emotional, hard-hitting plea on the strikers' behalf. He contrasted the armed camp atmosphere inside the Columbine to the

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Frank L. Palmer, "War in Colorado," *The Nation*, vol. cxxv, no. 3257, 7 December 1927.

peaceful, unarmed strikers. Instead of a crazed, rock-throwing mob that the cornered guards had no choice but to shoot—the strike version widely reported in the newspapers—Palmer wrote that, “The guards had been ordered not to fire, yet they threw tear-gas bombs into the strikers’ ranks, infuriated them into throwing stones, and then killed them because they threw the stones...The casualties among the State police consisted of three men hit by stones or fists and one man who had his finger cut. The killed and seriously wounded were all strikers.”⁴⁵ Palmer also wrote about the appalling disregard of civil liberties directed toward the Wobblies. He reiterated and supported the IWW’s organizers’ logic regarding the protestors’ first amendment rights of speech and assembly where there were public schools and federal post offices. Describing the strike’s one-sided justice, Palmer included the October 17, 1927, Walsenburg businessmen’s attack on the IWW headquarters for which “Neither Mayor Pritchard nor any member of his mob has been arrested.”⁴⁶ Palmer sympathetically described the mass arrests of IWW leaders who were still being held without charges, and he also derided Thomas Annear (the chairman of the state industrial commission) for denying the IWW strike petition, even though the Wobblies had filed it legally.⁴⁷

As the above excerpts show, Palmer got a lot right about the Columbine Massacre, but he also got a lot wrong, which at first, infuriated Vincent and Roche. Soon, they must have realized that Palmer’s mistakes helped more than hurt them. Palmer inferred that Rockefeller and the CF&I, not Vincent, Roche, and the RMFC,

⁴⁵ Ibid., 623.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 624.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 623-4.

caused the Columbine Massacre, beginning with his opening sentence: “Colorado again has paid in blood for the dominance in its coal industry of John D. Rockefeller, Jr.” Palmer intimated that Rockefeller might have conspired to incite the Columbine Massacre so he could buy Roche’s RMFC shares on the cheap, and he blamed the Rockefeller Plan for causing the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, because, “The miners are controlled by the ‘plan’ and they know it. Real conditions are much the same as they were before 1913,” a reference to Colorado’s long strike.⁴⁸ Palmer’s article continued his comparisons to Ludlow—the word had already become shorthand for the strike itself—when he wrote that after Vincent became RMFC general manager,

He discharged Walter Belk, one of the most notorious gunmen of the Ludlow strike, from his position at the Columbine. Vincent took the position as general counsel which had been held by Judge Jesse G. Northcutt, the man largely responsible for the fighting in the 1913 strike; and he removed General Manager Peart. General Manager Peart’s son, Ted Peart, was still superintendent at the Columbine. The Pearts, both father and son, belong to the old Northcutt-Belk days. Merle Vincent, who had ordered the gates left open and the strikers given access to the property for their mass meetings, was not present on that fatal Monday morning. Ted Peart was; though he resigned his position on the following Friday.⁴⁹

Palmer must have used Rev. Heist as a source, because he repeated much of the same misinformation Heist had included in his letter to Merle Vincent a week after the Columbine Massacre. As seen above, just like Heist, Palmer referred to Ted Peart, but Fred Peart managed the Columbine. Like Heist, Palmer wrote that Vincent “had ordered the gates left open and the strikers given access to the property for

⁴⁸ Ibid., 623.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 624.

their mass meetings,” a statement apparently lifted directly from a press release Vincent made a week *after* the Columbine Massacre. As previously shown in this chapter, Vincent did not order the Columbine’s gates left open for mass meetings. Palmer’s biggest mistake, however, was when he wrote that Vincent “was not present on that fatal Monday morning,” although Peart was, but had since resigned. Therefore, Palmer implied that Vincent was blameless, the massacre was Peart’s fault, and Peart’s responsibility could be traced back to Ludlow.

Vincent *was* at the Columbine the morning of the massacre. According to Fred Peart’s testimony during the Weld County coroner’s inquest following the Columbine Massacre, Scherf had called him at 5:30 a.m. on November 21 to come to the Columbine. Scherf probably also called Vincent, because both Peart and Vincent arrived at the Columbine at the same time. Vincent remarked to Peart, “that was pretty good time we made”; “it is now,” he said, “ten minutes after six.”⁵⁰ Vincent asked Peart “ ‘if we ‘had any visitors that morning’; and I said ‘yes, I think so’. I drove the car right behind him, and when I got to that part of the road north, but inside of the gate...I could see a crowd coming in; it was a dark dusk, so I drove on right back again to the mine office, and I left the car by the [company] store, and walked over to the fence line that separates the store from the office of the mine proper,” and “at that time the crowd had broken over the gate.”⁵¹ Peart rushed into the Columbine office to call the governor, requesting that he send out the airplanes “to see if he could not scare or quiet them down,” but during his conversation, “I heard a lot of

⁵⁰ Weld County Coroner’s inquest, Peart’s testimony, 115.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 115.

shots fired...I heard the 6:30 whistle blow right in the middle of it. Thru all that noise I could not get the Governor to understand.”⁵²

Unlike Peart, for some reason, Vincent did not testify at the inquest. From Peart’s testimony, it appears that he and Vincent shared a comfortable working relationship with each other, yet that wasn’t enough to prevent Peart from getting “released” four days after the shootings. Peart’s testimony indicates that both he and Vincent seemed equally comfortable letting Col. Scherf, head of the state police, take charge of the situation that morning at the Columbine. Only after the shootings, by firing Peart, did Vincent and Roche try to create the impression that Peart had somehow given the order allowing the state police to defend the Columbine, an order that had led to the Columbine Massacre. Although Peart knew the governor well enough to call him directly as the shootings took place, Peart was only the Columbine’s general manager. He certainly did not have the authority to call for the troops. As previously noted, state police were only allowed inside a closed mining camp with the operators’ permission or by direct order of the governor.⁵³ Significantly, at no point had Vincent tried to intervene in any actions that took place the morning of the massacre. Neither Governor Adams nor Vincent ever took responsibility for calling the state police to the Columbine. But somehow, the order had been given.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Meeting of Employees with Mr. Hair and Mr. Matteson, 3 November 1927, INR 1300-9, CF&I archives.

In *The Order Has Been Carried Out: History, Memory, and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome*, Alessandro Portelli begins with an important event that Portelli remembered from his childhood during World War II. On the morning of March 25, 1944, a newspaper in Rome published, and his mother read aloud to him, a press release from the state news agency reporting that on March 23, “criminal elements,” identified as Communists, had thrown bombs at a German police column marching along the via Rasella, killing thirty-two Germans. To prevent future attacks “from these heartless bandits,” the Germans commanded that for every policeman who had been killed, ten Communists would be shot. Furthermore, “This order has already been carried out.”⁵⁴ Within twenty-four hours of the street bombings, Germans had retaliated by killing 335 Italian prisoners in an abandoned quarry, a massacre remembered as the Fosse Ardeatine.⁵⁵

Using newspapers, official documents, but especially oral histories, Portelli explores why the widely accepted historical narrative surrounding this event—that Germans implored the partisans responsible for the attacks to surrender, and only after they refused had the Germans retaliated at the Fosse Ardeatine—is still generally accepted among most Italian people, published in history books, and repeated in Italian tour guides and on the Internet.⁵⁶ Portelli writes that such an interpretation is a political distortion of memory, “perpetrated by the popular press, the media, the Church, and conservative political forces.”⁵⁷ It has become

⁵⁴ Alessandro Portelli, *The Order Has Been Carried Out: History, Memory, and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome* (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 1.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 2.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 12.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 3.

“commonsensical,” even though it is untrue.⁵⁸ Portelli explores how and why that historical reconstruction took place over time, a re-interpretation beginning for him with a newspaper press release that concluded with the sentence, “the order has been carried out,” a passive-voice construction that assigned no responsibility to whomever ordered the massacre.

Over time, Portelli writes, the historical narrative surrounding the Fosse Ardeatine massacre became decontextualized, generating its own boundaries of “acceptable reality”: nothing worth mentioning happened before the story began, and nothing happened after it ended.⁵⁹ Far from a single event, Portelli shows, both the attack and the subsequent massacre were part of a larger pattern of German dominance and Italian resistance taking place in Rome late in the war that, for complex reasons, none of its participants wanted to remember. Furthermore, memories of the massacre shifted after the war as conservatives needed to downplay the significant role Communists had played in the Italian resistance movement, and Italians were ashamed of their passive reaction to such savagery. Yet, although Romans needed to forget the specifics of the conflict, in 1970, when city police arrived to evict homeless families to clear the area for a new, middle-class housing development, both the police and the squatters began yelling at each other in language that evoked the Fosse Ardeatine massacre, showing that thirty years later, the memory of those events still served as the “symbolic yardstick for the violence of oppression.”⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Ibid., 5.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 12.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 236.

Portelli's analysis of the Fosse Ardeatine massacre yields important parallels worth considering regarding the Columbine Massacre. Like the Fosse Ardeatine, memories of the Columbine Massacre have become de-contextualized. Today, if the massacre is remembered at all, it remains an example of an interesting but anomalous incident in local history. In fact, the massacre is an example of a much larger uprising that swept the nation's coalfields throughout the 1920s and early 1930s. The commonsensical yet incorrect historical interpretation of the aftermath of the Fosse Ardeatine massacre blames the victims for not turning themselves in sooner, even though the order to kill them had already been given, and in fact, carried out. The interpretation of Josephine Roche as a beneficent, maternalist reformer who tried everything in her power to prevent the violence that day is simply not true. The dominant story that emerged from the massacre is that Roche invited the UMW to unionize her coalminers, while the context for that invitation has largely disappeared. Like the Fosse Ardeatine, such an historical interpretation becomes a political distortion of memory. The press, politicians, Roche, John L. Lewis, and the UMW helped create a historical narrative that served their political purposes.

Portelli writes that the Fosse Ardeatine massacre became a symbolic yardstick for the violence of oppression. So had the Ludlow Massacre. In 1927, that memory helped Vincent and Roche divert attention from their own responsibilities for the Columbine Massacre by evoking Ludlow instead. Both Heist and Palmer laid the blame for the massacre at the feet of Rockefeller, the CF&I, and any people who had been connected to Ludlow. Within the first two weeks of the massacre, Vincent

tried—weakly—to correct them. As the Ludlow memories began to appear, and it became clear the actual story would never surface, Vincent, Roche, and later Edward Costigan, began to encourage those anachronistic Ludlow evocations. Apparently, the blame for the Columbine Massacre was even hereditary, as seen in their firing of Fred Peart, son of George Peart.

George Peart was a longtime RMFC employee who had served as the company's general superintendent during the 1910-1914 long strike.⁶¹ During the ten-day war following Ludlow, the coalminers had armed themselves and established their military headquarters at Camp Beshoar, named after a local, sympathetic medical doctor whose son would later write the most "remembered" version of the strike, which I'll explore in Chapters 8 and 10. Word got out that the coalminer army was heading toward Forbes, a RMFC coalmining camp in the southern field, so Peart called the mine manager and warned him the coalminers were on their way, a phone call that allowed most of the camp's women and children the opportunity to evacuate.⁶² When the estimated one-hundred-and-fifty coalminers approached the camp early in the morning on April 29, day nine of the Ten-Day War following the Ludlow Massacre, Forbes mine guards fired machine guns at them. After forty-five minutes, though, the guards ran out of ammunition and the coalminers soon took over the town. By 10:00 am, the camp was burned to the ground and ten mine guards and strikebreakers lay dead. One Forbes survivor

⁶¹ Weld County Coroner's inquest, Fred L. Peart's testimony, 110.

⁶² Scott Martelle, *Blood Passion: The Ludlow Massacre and Class War in the American West* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 197-201.

later reported that an attacker had spared his life, probably because he was hiding, trying to protect his wife and child. As the armed coalminer released the terrified family, he coldly commanded them to “Remember Ludlow.”⁶³

In Roche’s archival records is a copy of Palmer’s *Nation* article, with the sections referring to her, Vincent, and the RMFC highlighted. Attached to the article are letters Palmer wrote to Roche in response to letters she’d written to the editors of *The Nation* protesting the article’s numerous mistakes. Although I don’t know the contents of Roche’s letters, Roche saved copies of Vincent’s letter that he sent to Palmer protesting the reporting errors he had made including the following: Rockefeller had *not* been trying to buy Roche’s RMFC stock and Vincent *had* been at the Columbine the morning of the shootings.⁶⁴ Vincent’s corrections were never printed in *The Nation*.

On December 13, Palmer responded to Roche, writing that he had gathered his information from “sources I had every reason to believe reliable,” but “it is the desire of the Nation and my desire to correct any mistakes in regard to the Rocky Mountain Fuel company,” so he asked if she and Vincent were available for an interview.⁶⁵ Apparently, Palmer, Roche, and Vincent set up a meeting to discuss the article, but on January 5, Palmer again wrote Roche saying, “I regret that I was

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Letter from Merle Vincent to Frank Palmer, undated [December, 1927?], 5-4, Josephine Roche papers.

⁶⁵ Letter from Frank L. Palmer to Josephine Roche, 13 December 1927, 15-3, Josephine Roche papers.

unable to keep my appointment with you on December 16; I was a prisoner at the Columbine. The humor of that situation was appealing, wasn't it?"⁶⁶

After his December 7 *Nation* article appeared, Palmer had spoken at an IWW rally on December 15, in Longmont, a farming town ten miles north of Lafayette and the Columbine. The strikers apparently chose a meeting place outside the strike zone, trying to escape martial law prohibitions on public meetings that had gone into effect after the Columbine Massacre. The state police broke up the meeting anyway, arrested Palmer, and held him captive for two weeks without ever bringing any charges against him.⁶⁷ According to Palmer's letter, he had been held prisoner at the Columbine itself, which makes some sense, since it had become the National Guard's headquarters, but it also shows just how bizarre the state's reaction had become during the strike, since there were no jail facilities there.⁶⁸

For reasons I will soon explore, Palmer never got a chance to correct his mistakes in *The Nation*, and by January, events were moving so fast that, although the Columbine Massacre finally prompted Colorado's industrial commissioners to begin holding hearings on the strike starting December 22, local reporters focused their efforts on covering new developments in the strike, including the industrial commissions hearings held from December through February. Through December

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ "Industrial Relations in the Coal Industry of Colorado," *Information Service*, Vol. X, No. 11, published by the Department of Research and Education, Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, 14 March 1931. The lawsuit was *The People of the United States of America ex rel Frank L. Palmer, W.H. Nesbit, Paul Seidler and Mike Sel Soglio v. William H. Adams, Governor of the State of Colorado, and Paul P. Newlon, Adjutant General of the State of Colorado*, 8-9, Heist Papers. The 1929 ACLU annual letter to members stated that it won the case.

⁶⁸ "Adams' Proclamation to be Posted," *The [Boulder] Daily Camera*, 25 November 1927: 1.

and early January, industrial commissioners had held their hearings in the northern fields, mostly in Denver.

On January 12, the Colorado Industrial Commission held hearings in Walsenburg, in the southern fields. Over five hundred Wobblies staged a parade from their southern headquarters' office in town to the courthouse a few blocks away, where the commissioners were meeting. Mayor Pritchard (the same mayor who had led the raid on the IWW headquarters on October 17) told Col. Scherf to break up the parade. Vastly outnumbered, the state police flanked the outside of the parade and tried turning the marchers away from the courthouse and toward the IWW building. People began to panic and peel away, but the police pursued some of them. Then, the state police started shooting into the IWW hall. Apparently a random bullet hit sixteen-year old Celestino Martinez, who had been watching the parade. A woman found the wounded boy, who had been shot in the back, hiding in her back yard. She ran to get the doctor, who delivered him to the hospital then took his statement before died. Another man, Clemente Chavez, died instantly. After chasing the Wobblies back to their hall, the state police shot into the building, hitting Chavez in the forehead and splashing his brains over the floor and two other nearby Wobblies. The same bullet that killed Chavez tore into Pete Verbich's shoulder.⁶⁹

The next day, the Huerfano County coroner in Walsenburg conducted an inquest over the bodies of Martinez and Chavez, and it differed starkly from November's Weld County inquest following the Columbine Massacre. The Weld County proceedings ran 221 pages and of the thirty-nine people who testified, most

⁶⁹ "Notes Taken at the Coroner's Inquest Held January 16th, 1927," 1-6, 29, & 49, INR 1300-21, CF&I archives.

represented the state. The only witness from the crowd of striking miners and their supporters had to volunteer after all the other testimony was done, and the coroner provided no translators for them, although several struggled with English. Also, the coroner and the Weld County district attorney did not allow the IWW attorney to cross-examine the witnesses. In Walsenburg, because of the seriousness of the situation, the coroner asked the district attorney to conduct the coroner's jury, and he also allowed the jurors to ask questions of the witnesses, which they very pointedly did. The proceedings are 74 pages long, and most of the witnesses who testified were in the crowd or in the IWW hall. For example, Pete Verbich testified. Translators were provided and many of the witnesses had Hispanic last names, whereas none of the Weld County witnesses did. Most importantly, the northern coalfield jury found nothing felonious had occurred at the Columbine on November 21, 1927, but the southern coalfield jury decided that the state police were completely at fault. The shootings had been "unprovoked," and the state police's actions had demonstrated a "total disregard for human life."⁷⁰ Although no criminal charges were ever filed against the state police, for the first time in Colorado history, the state police, not the workers, were blamed for labor violence.

Colorado's industrial commissioners ended their hearings on February 18, 1928 and not coincidentally, the same day, the IWW declared the strike over, since "the strike hearing was a sort of defense move in the first place" that was orchestrated to change the general public's attitude toward the strike and keep

⁷⁰ "Verdict of Jury," Ibid.

strikers spirits up as the strike wore on.⁷¹ From November of 1927 until March of 1928, Vincent had done a great job representing the public face of the RMFC, a role he played because Roche had been in New York City, frantically trying to find investors for her troubled company. One of the several rich, influential people she had convinced to loan her money had been Oswald Garrison Villard, the editor and publisher of *The Nation*, which probably explains why Frank Palmer never got a chance to correct his mistakes about the Columbine Massacre or write any further articles about the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike. Printing anything negative about Vincent, Roche, or the RMFC—even corrections—would have damaged Villard's chances of ever getting paid back.

At the time of the Columbine Massacre, Roche owned more individual shares in the RMFC than anyone else, but the company was not entirely hers. After the massacre, Roche suddenly undertook an aggressive campaign to gain complete legal and financial control of the RMFC, which she achieved by March of 1928. When Vincent went digging through the books and found that John Roche had kept Walter Belk on the payroll as a spy since 1919, Vincent also discovered other unpleasant financial surprises, too. The RMFC was unprofitable and had not paid dividends since 1913. (It never would.) The RMFC probably kept the Columbine, the

⁷¹ Tom Connors report to the IWW GEB, 15 July 1929 #26, Box 8 (these reports are arranged chronologically), IWW archives.

company's largest and newest mine, open during the strike because, relatively speaking, it was the company's cash cow.⁷²

The RMFC was hardly alone in its unprofitability. Described during the 1920s as a "sick" industry, the entire United States' coal industry tried everything possible—especially mechanization—to return to the profitability it experienced during World War I. The 1928 map from Roche's archives (below), printed in *The*



Mining Congress Journal, shows the major United States bituminous coalfields. The dark areas were the most mechanized.⁷³ As the map shows, like other Colorado coal companies, the RMFC had not kept up with technology. At the RMFC, most coal was still picked by hand, although the RMFC had bought a few undercutting machines

⁷² "Josephine Roche seeks U.S. Loans to Pay Off Lewis," *The Denver Post*, 29 September 1949: 1, 17-4, Josephine Roche papers.

⁷³ "Figure 1—Tonnage of Bituminous Coal Loaded by Machines," reprinted from *The Mining Congress Journal*, June 1929, 7-1, Josephine Roche papers. I took the photo.

that sliced coal underground. Their machine's operators, sometimes college graduates who wanted to work their way up in the mining business, literally contributed to undercutting not just coal, but also to undercutting the wages and status of underground miners who had formerly been considered the elites in the industry.⁷⁴ Increasingly in the 1920s, underground miners found themselves in a similar situation to the topmen: They were being treated like unskilled workers.

Roche believed that if she modernized the RMFC and ran it efficiently using the principles of scientific management (which included rationalizing its employment policies), the RMFC would again start turning a profit. But to do that, she needed complete control of the company. She called upon another former Progressive mentor, Edward Costigan, an excellent attorney, to help her get it. Costigan represented long strike UMW organizer and hero John R. Lawson during Lawson's murder trial. Although the jury found Lawson guilty, Costigan continued appealing his case, eventually getting Lawson's conviction overturned. Costigan ran for Colorado governor twice as a Progressive candidate, losing both times, but the prominence he gained through those campaigns, his testimony before the US Industrial Commission about the long strike, and his Lawson defense led to his appointment as a charter representative on the US Tariff Commission.

Near and dear to Progressive's hearts, tariff reform's promises had not been fulfilled. After serving on the tariff commission until 1928, Costigan discovered that

⁷⁴ Testimony of James Allander before the Colorado Industrial Commission hearings, 20 December 1927, 240-241, 254-256; Testimony of William E. Bain before the Colorado Industrial Commission hearings 20 December 1927, 258-284, 288; Testimony of George Parker before the Colorado Industrial Commission hearings, 21 December 1927, 236-241; Testimony of Roy Morton before the Colorado Industrial Commission hearings, 31 December 1927, 402-404; 14-1, Josephine Roche papers.

instead of the commissioners exercising the authority to “scientifically adjust, amend and revise the tariff schedules,” the commission ran rife with political maneuvering.⁷⁵ Costigan’s term was set to expire in 1928, and since the commission’s non-partisan intent, he believed, had been turned into a mockery, he returned to Colorado and helped Roche gain legal control of the RMFC.⁷⁶ Serving as the new RMFC general counsel, Costigan brought a suit that argued the following: Before he had died in 1922, John Roche’s former partner, Horace Bennett, had written a note to Roche signing over the majority of his individual shares to him. Costigan offered as evidence the undated note, an almost indecipherable squiggle on a piece of paper, and then procured handwriting experts and Roche’s secretary (who by then was Josephine Roche’s secretary) to testify that the writing on the note had, in fact, been John Roche’s. The case went all the way to the Colorado Supreme Court. Bennett’s daughter, who like Roche had also inherited her father’s share of the RMFC, vigorously fought Costigan, but the RMFC prevailed, and Roche gained majority control of the RMFC. Bennett’s heirs were out, Roche was in, but the RMFC shares, worth virtually nothing monetarily, awarded Roche nothing more than company control, which is what she had sought with the lawsuit.⁷⁷

Now that she legally controlled the majority of the RMFC’s votes, Roche had to find money to modernize. Unfortunately, Roche said no local banks would loan her or the RMFC money. Roche wrote future investors that she believed a Colorado

⁷⁵ Colin B. Goodykoontz, ed., *Papers of Edward P. Costigan Relating to the Progressive Movement in Colorado, 1902-1917* (Boulder: University of Colorado, 1941), 145.

⁷⁶ “Costigan, Resigning, Hits Tariff Board and President,” *The New York Times*, 15 May 1928, www.nytimes.com.

⁷⁷ Supreme Court of Colorado: No. 12268—*Brown and Glanagan v. the Estate of John J. Roche, Deceased*, 73-4, Josephine Roche papers.

conspiracy was afoot to deprive her and her company of operating capital, because her progressive policies stood in such sharp contrast to her father's, and because everybody in the state cowered before John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and his company, the CF&I.

Roche's attitude toward Rockefeller, Jr., seemed based on three considerations: First, she blamed him for the Ludlow Massacre. US Industrial Commissioner chairman Frank Walsh did a masterful job of vilifying Rockefeller, Jr., during the hearings he chaired after the Ludlow Massacre. Second, like most former Progressives, she hated his father. Walsh's treatment of Rockefeller, Jr., looked merciful compared to the condemnation Rockefeller, Sr., had heaped upon him following the publication of Ida Tarbell's groundbreaking 1904 exposé, *The History of the Standard Oil Company*. Tarbell's investigative journalism shone such a bright light on Rockefeller's ruthless business practices, the book influenced an entire generation of Progressives, including, it would seem, Josephine Roche. Tarbell's book helped establish investigative (pejoratively called "muckraking") journalism, and it also applied pressure on the US Justice Department, to use the Sherman Anti-Trust Act to break up Standard Oil into smaller companies in 1911. Third, even if the first or second reasons were not completely valid, Roche followed her friend Edward Keating's advice and consciously contrasted herself and the RMFC to Rockefeller and the CF&I, because he thought it would sway public opinion, especially because she was a woman.⁷⁸ A series of Keating letters to Roche in 1930

⁷⁸ Letter from Edward Keating to Josephine Roche, 1 June 1930, Letter from Edward Keating to Josephine Roche, 6 March 1931, 4-5, Josephine Roche papers.

advised Roche to establish herself as a foil to Rockefeller. She followed his advice, and it seems to have worked then and even now.

Although Roche expressed the belief that local banks would not loan her money because of her progressive policies, a more likely reason is that such loans would have been really terrible investments. Denied locally and strapped for cash, Roche turned to the Amalgamated Bank of Chicago, started in 1922 by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, a union comprised of mostly female textile workers. As she established her banking business with the Chicago bank, Roche also set up a meeting with the Amalgamated union president, Sidney Hillman, to talk about the future of the RMFC. Unfortunately, although Roche wrote Hillman that, "Your work has furnished so much help to us in what we have been doing," it is impossible to tell from their carefully worded correspondence what they discussed.⁷⁹ The Amalgamated bank offered to establish a \$125,000 line of credit for the RMFC, but only if Roche were able to raise \$125,000 in personal collateral first.⁸⁰

Roche feverously set about getting personal loans to establish her collateral, and most of the cash came from a veritable who's who of rich, liberal, and powerful New Yorkers that Roche must have gotten to know well enough to ask for money when she lived in the city. Her investors included Pauline Goldmark, Evelyn Preston, Mary Dreier, Caroline O'Day, and Oswald Garrison Villard. Goldmark was Louis Brandeis' sister-in-law, and it was mostly she who compiled the information in the

⁷⁹ Letter from Josephine Roche to Sidney Hillman, 23 January 1929; additional letters include Sidney Hillman to Josephine Roche, 26 January 1929, Josephine Roche to Sidney Hillman, 20 February 1929, and Sidney Hillman to Josephine Roche, 21 February 1929, 1-5, Josephine Roche papers.

⁸⁰ The series of letters between Josephine Roche and Amalgamated vice president, Jacob Potofsky, run from 1928 to 1931, Josephine Roche papers, 1-5.

famous, groundbreaking Brandeis Brief used in the 1908 *Muller v. Oregon* case before the Supreme Court. Often described as two pages of law and a hundred pages of statistics about women's health, education, and earnings, the brief was the first to rely upon social science rather than legal precedents as evidence in a court case. Evelyn Preston had a distinguished, liberal political career on her own, but she also bankrolled the ACLU after she married one of its co-founders, Roger Baldwin. (As Chapter 6 will show, she was also a good friend to Powers Hapgood.) Mary Dreier's 1909 arrest during the uprising of twenty thousand in New York City has been claimed to have changed the entire course of the walkout, since unlike most of the strikers also getting arrested, she was a rich, influential, society woman who as president of the Women's Trade Union League, helped lead a cross-class alliance between the strikers and other women like herself (and Roche), that helped bring attention to, and legitimize the strike.⁸¹ Caroline O'Day was New York state's only female representative in its House of Representatives throughout the 1930s, and she was also a close friend that Frances Perkins and Perkin's daughter could depend upon for solace and even a place to live during the several mental breakdowns of Perkin's husband.⁸² Roche kept few letters with the women listed above, but she kept a ten-year span of correspondence from Villard.

Like the rest of Roche's investors, Villard lived in New York City. Like his father and maternal grandfather, William Lloyd Garrison (the radical abolitionist and publisher of *The Liberator*), Oswald Garrison Villard was a journalist. While

⁸¹ Ann Schofield, "Mary Dreier, 1876-1963," in *To Do and to Be* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997), 50; Greenwald, 37-38;

⁸² Downey, 286, 301-302, 358.

fighting in the Civil War turned Villard into a pacifist, his own father's money from railroad and General Electric investments allowed Villard to pursue his writing and social reformer passions. In 1909, along with Florence Kelley, W.E.B. DuBois, and Ida Wells, Villard founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Villard joined with Jane Addams and Arthur Garfield Hays as a key figure in the Citizen's National Committee for Sacco and Vanzetti.⁸³ Those represented just two of the many organizations to which Villard contributed his name, time, money, passion, and space in *The Nation*.

In 1927, Villard edited and published *The Nation*, and the influential liberal magazine ran articles that reflected his passions. He opposed lynching, the Ku Klux Klan, anti-immigrant campaigns, and militarism. He supported expanded civil liberties (along with his good friend, Roger Baldwin), a new trial for Sacco and Vanzetti (for example, the article following Palmer's "War on Colorado" article was entitled, "A Sacco Revolver Expert Revealed"), and organized labor. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that *The Nation* would publish Palmer's article. However, Roche's friendship with Villard complicated Palmer's follow-up to his "War on Colorado." It seems reasonable to assume that since Roche persuaded Villard to loan her \$35,000, she probably persuaded him to stop running negative stories about the Columbine Massacre, the 1927-1928 Colorado strike, and the RMFC.

Within a month of the Columbine Massacre, Roche seemed to have won over the press, both local and national, and she did not have to worry about Palmer anymore, because she had gone over his head, straight to Villard. When the strike

⁸³ D. Joy Humes, *Oswald Garrison Villard: Liberal of the 1920's* (Binghamton, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1960), 55.

ended, for the most part, so did the stories about it. By March, Roche had legal control of the RMFC and she was well on her way to establishing an RMFC line of credit at Chicago's Amalgamated bank, backed by collateral from her New York City investors. The press, the bank, and her friends all exhibited faith in Roche's good intentions to run the RMFC based on progressive, scientific principles, which included rationalizing the company's labor policies. Roche said she wanted to embark upon a grand experiment in industrial democracy, which included entering into a collective bargaining agreement between the RMFC and any organization the miners chose, so long as the union was affiliated with the AFL. Here was the catch: The *only* coalminers' union in the AFL was the UMW. The coalminers had chosen to affiliate not with the UMW, essentially dead in the state since Ludlow, but with the IWW, an organization that denounced, on principle, collective bargaining and contracts. Since the Wobblies were still strong among Colorado's coalminers, Roche still had a big problem she needed to solve.

Roche had not won the coalminers over, and Heist and Palmer, still allies, did not completely support her, either. On March 18, 1928, Vincent announced that Roche had gained financial control of the RMFC and would be willing to negotiate—with any AFL-affiliated union.⁸⁴ Anticipating the announcement, Palmer wrote to Roche on March 14, expressing his hope that her plan “will mean a new day in the

⁸⁴ “Rocky Mt. Fuel Co. Announces Liberal Policy,” The [Denver] *Rocky Mountain News*, 19 March 1928: 1.

coal fields.”⁸⁵ He also encouraged Vincent to use Rev. Heist’s Open Forum (a speaker series he and Heist sponsored at Grace Church) to elaborate on their new labor policies. Then Palmer obsequiously closed his letter, “I hope that any feeling over that article has been dispelled and that you will find it possible to grant this request” for an announcement for *The Nation*.⁸⁶ When he wrote that letter, it is not clear whether Palmer yet knew that Roche no longer needed Palmer’s cooperation regarding articles in *The Nation*. On March 20, after the announcement, Palmer again wrote Roche, the final letter from Palmer in her papers. His terse communication showed none of his previous letter’s conciliatory tone. Palmer asked Roche for a full copy of her recent press statement, and “If the statement does not include your policy in regard to dealing with the I.W.W., I should like a statement on that, too.”⁸⁷

Before Roche’s March press release, an undated IWW flyer written by A.S. Embree with the title “Nailing a Lie!” circulated in the coalfields. It referred to a meeting that had taken place among Roche, Vincent, Costigan, Embree and three other IWW coalminers, “to see if some understanding could be reached between the company and its employees.”⁸⁸ In that flyer, a UMW organizer was quoted as claiming that “the Rocky Mountain Fuel Co. had offered to sign a contract with the I.W.W. and that A.S. Embree, I.W.W. organizer, has refused to sign.”⁸⁹ Embree’s

⁸⁵ Letter from Frank Palmer to Josephine Roche, 14 March 1928, 15-3, Josephine Roche papers.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Letter from Frank Palmer to Josephine Roche, 20 March 1928, Palmer to Roche, 15-3.

⁸⁸ “Nailing a Lie!,” IWW flyer circulated in the strike fields, 15-2, Josephine Roche papers.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

response, in that same flyer, was this: Even if there had been an offer, he didn't have the authority to negotiate anything without his men's approval.⁹⁰ This flyer presents a tantalizing scenario. Had Roche really offered to sign a contract with the IWW? If so, what if Embree had signed it? By 1937, the year he joined Mine Mill, Embree would have jumped at such a contract, yet in 1928, that kind of offer seemed beyond consideration for a Wobbly like Embree who disdained any kind of signed labor contract. Did Embree's 1928 IWW-inspired philosophical rigidity contribute to the Wobblies' inability to consolidate their spectacular gains during the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike?

By the end of March, Embree faced new problems, too. Although the various Wobbly factions had united during the strike, after the strike, they started attacking each other again. Arriving during this critical month, fellow worker Fred Thompson began attacking Embree (an attack covered in Chapter 9), so the IWW's members inability to stop fighting among themselves also began chipping away at the tremendous gains it had achieved during the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, quashing not just the revival of the IWW, but any hope of an alternative coalmining organization coalescing to oppose the UMW and John L. Lewis.

Sometime during March of 1928, Roche hired John Lawson, the hero of the Ludlow strike, as the general manager and co-vice president for the RMFC. Of all the smart moves Roche made following the Columbine Massacre, hiring Lawson was her most brilliant. Lawson was still a near-mythological figure from the long strike, and no one could deny the sacrifices he had made for coalminers and their families,

⁹⁰ Ibid.

although some tried. IWW organizers, especially Embree, began attacking Lawson as nothing more than a has-been, a labor leader who had once been great but who had sold out and lost whatever credibility he had ever possessed when he went to work for the state of Colorado as a mining inspector in 1927. Going to work for Roche and the RMFC only further demonstrated Lawson's capitulation.⁹¹

The IWW's attack on Lawson attack was simply too much for Heist, who jumped to Lawson's defense.⁹² In August and September of 1928, after it was clear that the RMFC and UMW contract was a sure thing, Heist and Embree exchanged a series of extremely bitter and very public attacks and counter-attacks in Denver's *Rocky Mountain News* and the IWW's *Industrial Worker*. By hiring Lawson, Roche effectively robbed the Wobblies of Heist's support, and when Heist cast his lot with Roche camp, the Wobblies lost more than just Heist. They also lost the support of the organizations he headed that supported the IWW, which included the Denver Labor College (where Lawson began working), the student activists at DU, Grace Community Church, and the ACLU.

By the time Roche formally signed a contract on behalf of the RMFC with the UMW that took effect on September 1, 1928, even though Wobblies and their supporters did not completely disappear from Colorado's coalfields, they were increasingly irrelevant. Under the terms of a *new*, not a renewed UMW contract, RMFC coalminers had received a pay raise, perhaps the only miners in the country to do so until the beginning of the New Deal. The RMFC also operated under a closed

⁹¹ Letter from Rev. A.A. Heist to editor of *Industrial Worker* referring to "John Lawson, Proletarian" article published 25 August 1928, 28 August 1928, Josephine Roche papers, 15-2.

⁹² Ibid.

shop agreement, which meant *only* UMW coalminers could work at the company. The 1928 contract between the RMFC and the UMW was even more remarkable, considering that the UMW had just lost the 1927-1928 UMW strike president John L. Lewis had led in Ohio, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania. Everywhere except Colorado, it seemed, the UMW was in steep decline.

However, the situation was much more dire in Colorado than Roche's rosy press releases indicated. The next two chapters are about Powers Hapgood, and his story will help demonstrate Roche's continued efforts to gain a more positive financial and public relations' status (since they were linked) for her and the RMFC, the UMW power struggles in the 1920s, John L. Lewis' rise to power during that decade, and how all those inter-related factors led Hapgood to move to Colorado in January of 1929 to work for Roche and the RMFC until 1930.

Chapter 5:
Powers Hapgood:
Trying to Democratize the UMW from Within, 1899-1927

With an uncanny ubiquity and aura of innocence, Powers Hapgood (1899-1949) moved through the tumultuous labor history of the 1920s and 1930s like Forrest Gump sailed through the sixties. Repeatedly appearing at significant moments in the organized labor movement across the nation, Hapgood retained a certain naiveté, consistently representing himself as the wronged innocent (even when he wasn't) surrounded by schemers less well intentioned than he. No matter how much he tried to live the life of a regular working-class stiff, his privileged connections preceded and followed him everywhere he went, providing him career choices in ways the real working class could never achieve. Yet Hapgood's elite background is good news for historians, since he left voluminous archival records of his exploits to his home state's flagship university, housed in the Lilly Library at Indiana University in Bloomington.

As a hopeful participant, ubiquitous bystander, and prolific chronicler, Powers Hapgood helps demonstrate the changes that transpired in the nation's coalfields in the 1920s and early 1930s. Throughout the decade, Hapgood dreamed of literally and symbolically paying his dues as a rank-and-file coalminer, honing his skills as an organizer, then rising through the ranks to a leadership position within the United Mine Workers, an organization he believed embodied the highest ideals of the working class. Hapgood never achieved his career goal, however, because UMW President John L. Lewis used the 1920s to consolidate his power. That meant Lewis not only ruthlessly crushed UMW districts that dared defy him, he also

destroyed any leaders or potential leaders—such as Hapgood—who had their own personal followings or who demonstrated backbone, charisma, or independence. Ironically, Lewis' consolidation of power was only possible because the UMW's power and membership precipitously declined throughout the decade. Also ironically, by the mid-1920s, when Lewis claimed the UMW represented the highest ideals of industrial democracy, he increasingly turned the UMW into an undemocratically run organization. It stayed that way at least until the 1970s, a decade after Lewis' resignation. That lack of UMW democracy produced long-range effects, not just within the union, but for the entire US labor movement.

This chapter traces Hapgood's involvement with the 1920s coalfields, the UMW, Lewis, and anti-Lewis insurgency movements that began first in Colorado, shifted to Kansas, and spread to Pennsylvania. The next chapter, also about Powers Hapgood, will focus on his life after Lewis expelled him from the UMW in 1927. Although Hapgood did not participate in the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, he moved to Colorado and worked for Josephine Roche and the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company (RMFC) in January of 1929, five months after she signed a contract between her company and the United Mine Workers (UMW). While Hapgood only stayed in Colorado a little over a year, that was a critical time in the fledgling RMFC's history. Hapgood wrote prolifically about his experiences, leaving behind documentation that helps show how Roche was trying to structure not just her company, but also her company's narrative.

While Hapgood was rarely the most self-reflective man in the room—in fact, his naiveté is often stunning, which is part of his charm—his 1920s and 1930s

experiences provide an excellent case study illustrating how the failed UMW policies of the 1920s helped lead to 1930s labor strategies. Most important, this two-decade period in Hapgood's life lays bare the philosophical and pragmatic promises and failures regarding industrial democracy circulating in elite circles at that time. Industrial democracy, probably the most significant concept bridging the progressive and New Deal eras, was a principle to which Lewis, and especially Roche, her allies, and Hapgood swore absolute fealty. However, first at the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company and then at his father's Columbia Canning Company, Powers Hapgood discovered a powerful truth: Industrial democracy was not very democratic. This realization became the turning point in Hapgood's life, a painful personal epiphany that explains how he, and others like him who also became disillusioned with the hypocrisy underpinning industrial democracy "experiments," helped change the trajectory of the American labor movement, helping lead to the rise of the CIO by the mid-1930s.

Unlike A.S. Embree and Josephine Roche, the other two biographical historical actors so far in this dissertation, Powers Hapgood already has an academic biographer, Robert Bussel, who wrote *From Harvard to the Ranks of Labor: Powers Hapgood and the American Working Class*. Since he has an entire life story to tell, Bussel spends less than three pages on Hapgood's time in Colorado.¹ Expanding on those experiences will help show how Hapgood came to reject his idealistic attitudes toward industrial democracy and adopt more confrontational, militant, yet

¹ Robert Bussel, *From Harvard to the Ranks of Labor: Powers Hapgood and the American Working Class* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 108-110.

at the same time, pragmatic attitudes toward labor organizing. Before he came to Colorado, it is necessary to understand first, his family background (but only briefly, since Bussel has already done this so well), and second, his love-hate relationship with the United Mine Workers.

Powers Hapgood was born in 1899 in Chicago, Illinois, and when a small boy, the family moved to Indianapolis, Indiana. The family's wealth and servants provided his mother Eleanor free time to dote on Powers, to preside over the Public Health Nursing Association, and to work with the local YMCA.² Powers' father, William Hapgood, Jr., owned the Columbia Conserve Canning Company in Indianapolis, a business William's wealthy father, William Hapgood, Sr., financially supported from its founding in 1903 until his death in 1917.³ When William, Sr., died that year, he bequeathed the CCC's stock to Jr., and Jr.'s two older, more famous brothers: Norman and Hutchins Hapgood. Norman penned muckraking articles during the progressive era and eventually edited both *Collier's* and *Harper's* magazines. Hutchins mostly wrote novels, although he is better known today among historians as a serial adulterer who, in the teens and twenties, cast his professional lot and his potential gene pool with the bohemian Greenwich Village crowd.

Hutchins Hapgood's autobiography, *A Victorian in the Modern World*, describes his family's privileged life in Alton, Illinois, where "I knew from my childhood that the abolitionist [Elijah] Lovejoy was murdered in this town. Nothing

² Ibid., 8.

³ Ibid., 4-5.

so exciting has happened there since.”⁴ Norman and Hutchins could hardly wait to leave the Midwest they found so stultifying, but their youngest brother William followed in their father’s footsteps, presiding over a small midwestern manufacturing business. These divergent career paths caused a great deal of squabbling and reconciliation among the brothers. As an adult, Powers often self-righteously inserted himself into their fraternal conflicts, stirring the pot, something at which he excelled, regardless of the endeavor he pursued. As Powers Hapgood later found out, though, when it came to the family business, his father’s fraternal bonds sometimes outweighed his devotion to his son.

Hapgood recollected an idyllic upbringing, although his prickly, often strained adult relationship with his father challenges those early childhood memories. Like his father and uncles, he went to public schools, then attended Phillips Academy, followed by Harvard.⁵ Except for sports, university life for Powers was a slog. During his college days, World War I raged around him, and although he said he wanted to enlist, he never did; perhaps his parents, whom he still obeyed, objected. Between junior and senior years, he took a break to hobo in the West, so he could see for himself what working-class life looked like. During his travels, he wrote his parents daily, assuring them of his safety, and he always carried traveler’s checks, using them when life got too tough.⁶

⁴ Hutchins Hapgood, *A Victorian in the Modern World* (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1939), 49.

⁵ Bussel, 10.

⁶ Powers Hapgood’s 1919-30 March 1920 diary, 111, Powers Hapgood papers, The Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

Although that kind of hobo experience for a young man of means wasn't exactly groundbreaking, Hapgood did help blaze that trail. For example, when Oxford University graduate and future CIO newsletter editor Len DeCaux decided he, too, needed to understand the working class, he recalled that his mentor, Frank Anderson, "suggested I do like Powers Hapgood, a Harvard man who'd wanted to become integrated in the labor movement. DeCaux continued, "Young, strong, adventurous, Hapgood broke away by 'bumming around the country.' Going from one labor job to another, he ended up as a coal miner."⁷ Although the last time Hapgood mined coal was in 1930, in Colorado, for Roche's company, the power and romance of Hapgood's coalmining working class persona shone brightly enough in DeCaux's memory for him to include it in his autobiography, published in 1970.

DeCaux, Anderson, and Hapgood could easily have led lives of leisure. Instead, they chose to become manly men, nothing like the "pink-faced, soft-handed, lankily awkward...too academic, unpractical, work-shy," socialists [who couldn't tell] a "nut from a bolt" that DeCaux had disdainfully encountered at Oxford.⁸ It was Hapgood who first instructed DeCaux how to beat his way across the country. First, Hapgood advised, DeCaux should "go to the Bowery and get a railroad job agent to ship me out as a gandydancer (track laborer). After this much start westward, I could start hopping the freights."⁹ Next, Anderson advised DeCaux to trade in his suits for a blue work shirt and a pair of overalls, but he should mess them up first, so

⁷ Len DeCaux, *Labor Radical: From the Wobblies to CIO* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), 34.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

they didn't look new.¹⁰ DeCaux also remembered that "Anderson and Hapgood had told me a sack of Bull Durham tobacco and cigarette papers would make me popular on the road."¹¹ Understandably, Hapgood's advice to DeCaux reflected very different, and much rougher kinds of experiences from the ones he chose to share with his parents in his letters home.

Like DeCaux and Anderson, Hapgood first encountered the IWW while riding the rails west. The Wobblies, many of them itinerant workers, could not afford train fares, so they often jumped aboard moving trains. Employers and train companies maintained an informal agreement allowing such cheap transportation, but some "bulls" (railroad police), were more sadistic than others. After rooting out hoboes, they sometimes literally threw them off moving trains, oftentimes beating them up first. Therefore, Wobblies did some of their best recruiting on train cars out of necessity; Wobs could not allow just anybody ride the rails, because they desperately needed each other for protection. They forged bonds of brotherhood from their shared harsh travel conditions, their work, their boarding houses, their "jungles" where they camped at night next to the train tracks, and their urban flophouses, usually located in high-crime, red-light districts, near train stations, where IWW organizers like Embree soapboxed for recruits.

In urban railroad hubs—where workers congregated between jobs, between seasons, or between train trips—the Wobblies often used the same recruitment strategies evangelical groups employed to convert the itinerant workers, not to Christianity, but to the IWW. The Salvation Army, which Wobblies called the

¹⁰ Ibid., 35.

¹¹ Ibid., 43.

Starvation Army, offered clean, safe places to sleep at night if the workers would lay off the booze, straighten up and fly right, and maybe even find Jesus. Wobblies competed head to head with them, often setting up their soapboxes directly across from Salvation Army brass bands. Appropriating American Protestants' most popular songs, IWW songwriters like Joe Hill changed the lyrics to suit their recruitment purposes. For example, Hill's lyrics to "Preacher and the Slave" (sung to the tune "In the Sweet Bye and Bye") encouraged workers to get what they deserved in this lifetime, not to wait for their "pie in the sky, bye and bye."¹² Like the Christian Scientists, Wobblies also established reading rooms, but instead of books written or inspired by Mary Baker Eddy, promising redemption through faith and healthy living, the IWW filled their bookshelves with tomes by Karl Marx, Jack London, and the latest copies of *Industrial Solidarity*, the IWW newspaper.

Young Hapgood surprisingly discovered the Wobblies he met were not wild-eyed monsters, as they had been portrayed during the World War I red scare. Instead, he met well read, thoughtful Wobblies eager to talk about big ideas surrounding labor. Although they tried recruiting him, Hapgood did not join, because he disagreed with the philosophy stated in their IWW preamble. Not for a second did he believe the blanket statement that the working class and the employing class had nothing in common. After all, his own father's canning

¹² Ed Ward, "The Preacher and the Slave," *Get Up, Stand Up: The Story of Pop Music and Protest*, Posted September 2005, Produced by Thirteen/WNET New York, 2005 Educational Broadcasting Corporation, PBS, http://222.pbs.org/wnet/getupstndup/music_preacher1.html, accessed 6 October 2012.

company, fast becoming a national model of industrial democracy, was proving just how wrongheaded that oppositional philosophy could be.¹³

Powers Hapgood's westward journey included a pilgrimage to southern Colorado, so he could observe the Rockefeller Plan in action. Although only fifteen years old when the 1914 Ludlow Massacre occurred, the event was enshrined enough in his imagination that he included on his itinerary the coalfields where the earlier battles had taken place. Hapgood's informal investigation convinced him that, although the coalminers who worked under the Rockefeller Plan in Colorado had better housing, education, and working conditions than most UMW coalminers he had worked among, the UMW miners felt a greater sense of personal autonomy in their lives.

These contradictory findings motivated Hapgood to write one of his first magazine articles, "Paternalism vs. Unionism in Mining Camps," published in the May 4, 1921, issue of *The Nation*.¹⁴ It is impossible to know how much Hapgood's research drew upon reality and how much was formed from romantic notions about the working class, whose members, he believed, were most fully represented in the United Mine Workers. Hapgood consummated his love affair on October 26, 1920, at Bear Creek, Montana, when he was initiated into the UMW.¹⁵ Much like a secret fraternal association, the UMW initiation ceremony included swearing a solemn oath binding him to all UMW coalminers in life, work, and death.

¹³ Mary Donovan Hapgood, 1912-1948. Powers Hapgood's early journals are in her papers, and he made this reference on 5 October 1920.

¹⁴ Bussel, 27.

¹⁵ Bussel, 24.

Hapgood's magazine article extolling the UMW's virtues was published the same year he graduated from Harvard, in 1921.¹⁶ Instead of expanding that article for his senior thesis, Hapgood instead wrote "The Works Council Movement in the United States," which, like the Rockefeller Plan, explored ideas swirling around elite circles at the time relating to industrial democracy.¹⁷ Most labor historians today, with the exception of Jonathan Rees, have discounted the idea that the Rockefeller Plan had ever been anything other than a brazenly opportunistic company union meant to suppress workers' rights.¹⁸ However, when the plan first began operating in 1915, Progressives like Josephine Roche, Edward Costigan, and Merle Vincent viewed its architects, Mackenzie King and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., as sincere reformers promoting civilized labor practices. The Rockefeller Plan contained many elements from the works council movement, but it was only one of many cooperative labor-worker models proposed during the progressive era. Elements of those various plans eventually made their way into United States and British federal government policies during World War I.

During the war, the United States War Labor Board pursued an official policy of cooperation among the federal government, business, and organized labor (but only with AFL unions). Unlike Great Britain, the United States did not call these cooperative agreements work councils, although they served similar purposes. In

¹⁶ Robert Bussel writes that Hapgood graduated from Harvard in 1920, but according to the answer on 9 October 2012 from an email query I sent to the Harvard Research Staff, he graduated in 1921. Their source is the *Quinquennial Catalog of Harvard University, 1636-1930*. That means his six-month hobo experience occurred between his junior and senior years, not after he graduated, which changes Hapgood's career trajectory a bit.

¹⁷ Bussel, 19.

¹⁸

the US, the initiative to continue cooperative labor practices dissolved after the war, in part, because of the 1917 Russian Revolution. Conservatives believed that homegrown (and immigrant) American Communists were hell-bent on overthrowing the US government as the Russians just had, and the national 1919 strike wave was proof of their intentions. In response, the federal government not only initiated a post-war red scare, it also abandoned its cooperative attitude toward organized labor. That governmental policy shift provided business owners a patriotic rationale to also break their wartime promises to organized labor. Conversely, reactions to the Russian Revolution *increased* Great Britain's cooperative efforts with organized labor after the war. In 1919, the British federal government expanded the Whitley Councils, an informal name for the work councils formed during the war to increase cooperation among the federal government, management, and labor. Those boards eventually led to the nationalization of major industries, like coal, and they also helped create the conditions that led to the ascendancy of the Labour Party in the early 1920s.

When the US federal government officially discontinued its wartime collaborative models in industrial democracy, reformers were forced to look to the private sector for guidance and inspiration. One much-touted company experimenting in industrial democracy included Filene's, the Boston-based department store involved in shaping the 1914 Protocols of Peace after the "uprising of twenty thousand" strikes in New York City's textile manufacturing industries (described in Chapter 4). Another was the Nash Cash Register (NCR) Company in Cincinnati, run by "Golden Rule" Nash, whose devout social gospel

Christian faith guided his relationship with his employees. William P. Hapgood's Columbia Conserve Canning (CCC) Company, which Powers Hapgood's father (and his supporters) simply called "the experiment," also served as an exemplary 1920s' model for industrial democracy. Hapgood's highly seasonal enterprise (picking, processing, and canning tomatoes for soup) never employed more than 300 people during the peak season in late summer and early fall, and most of the year, it only employed about 100 full-time workers. In spite of its small size, the way William Hapgood attempted to run his company became what W. Jett Lauck gushingly called, "probably the most complete and perfect illustration of direct industrial democracy which exists today."¹⁹

That laudatory pronouncement appears in Lauck's 1926 book, *Political and Industrial Democracy, 1776-1926*, a book that provided multiple definitions for industrial democracy, explored companies trying to practice it, and assessed their various levels of success. Lauck explained that most businesses as well as radical labor organizations (like the IWW) were equally hostile to true industrial democracy. Most employers opposed harmonious relationships with their employees and eschewed labor contracts because they "believe that ownership in industry is supreme, superseding all other rights, and that this is the only authority recognizable in industry."²⁰ At the same time, radical workers' organizations also opposed collective bargaining and contracts, because they believed both constituted

¹⁹ W. Jett Lauck, *Political and Industrial Democracy, 1776-1926* (New York, NY: Funk and Wagnalls, 1926), 286.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 120.

wage slavery. Furthermore, “They preach class war and class struggle. They are opposed to the existing social order, to what they term ‘capitalism,’ and pretend to look forward to the time when capitalism will be destroyed and the rule of the proletariat will be substituted in its place.”²¹ Lauck argued that the only way to avoid “these two extremes” was by promoting “modern trade unionism,” whose representatives sought fairly negotiated contracts that would reduce strikes and conflict in the workplace.²² That would be true industrial democracy.

W. Jett Lauck, like many others in this study, is another historical figure helping bridge the progressive and New Deal eras. Historian Leon Fink writes that although a little known historical figure today, “labor journalists of the mid-thirties and early forties credited Lauck with having a major influence on labor’s political agenda, including at least contributing authorship to the pathbreaking Section 7A of the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA),” as well as serving as the “CIO’s ‘one-man brain trust.’”²³ After majoring in economics at Washington and Lee University, as well as doing some graduate work at the University of Chicago, Lauck got his start as an organized labor advocate during the progressive era. From 1913 to 1915, he advised the US Commission on Industrial Relations, whose most famous investigation was the 1910-1914 Colorado coal strike, a showy inquiry held in response to the bloody Ludlow Massacre. During World War I, Lauck served as the War Labor Board’s secretary, and after the war, he published prolifically.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Leon Fink, “The People’s Strategist: W. Jett Lauck and the Panacea of Plenty,” in *Progressive Intellectuals and the Dilemmas of Democratic Commitment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 215.

As Political and Industrial Democracy, 1776-1926 shows, Lauck helped lead efforts to promote industrial democracy in the 1920s. Lauck not only published his own books, he even more successfully promulgated his ideas through John L. Lewis. From 1919 to 1939, Lauck served as Lewis' chief economic advisor, publicist, and ghostwriter.²⁴ In 1925, the year before he wrote his own book about industrial democracy, Lauck ghostwrote Lewis' only book, *The Miners' Fight for American Standards*.²⁵ That book presents several important themes to which Lewis adhered, not just in the 1920s (the decade when coal began its long decline), but also throughout his over forty-year UMW leadership tenure.

As the title makes clear, the general theme running throughout the Lewis book was this: No group represented patriotic American values more completely than the United Mine Workers of America. The year the book was published, 100% Americanism still ran rampant throughout the country, perhaps an unintended consequence from the Great War. In 1918, the Committee for Public Information had coined the term to help whip up patriotic war fervor. Their rallying cry proved so successful that after the war, not only did the recently revived Ku Klux Klan appropriate the 100% Americanism as its own official slogan, so did politicians and business owners. The KKK reached its national membership peak in 1925, the year Lewis' book was published, and a year earlier, a majority of legislators, in a collective xenophobic fit, passed the 1924 National Origins Act. That law reduced immigration from southern and eastern Europe (but not from Mexico) to a trickle.

²⁴ Ibid., 216.

²⁵ Melvyn Dubofsky and Warren Van Tine, *John L. Lewis, A Biography*, abridged edition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 103.

Jumping on the Americanism bandwagon, employers created American Plans, preemptive efforts to keep workers so happy they wouldn't join labor unions. Some companies, like General Electric, designed elaborate corporate welfare programs, including stock options, health insurance, and pensions. Others, like Rockefeller's CF&I, created employee representation plans, which AFL style labor unions derisively labeled company unions. Still others, like most coal companies, used patriotic rhetoric but continued subduing their employees the old-fashioned way, through heavy-handed coercion, which included using spies, threats, injunctions, scab labor, intimidation, private police, and friendly politicians and courts.

Besides equating the UMW with Americanism, the Lewis and Lauck book also explores reasons why coal, by the 1920s, was considered a "sick" industry. Some of those reasons included coal overproduction leading to oversupply, unscientific management of most coalmines, and less emphasized, increased competition from other energy sources like natural gas. As coal operators degenerated into cutthroat competition with each other, they began cutting wages simply to stay in business, something they could only successfully do in the increasingly non-union coalfields. Lewis wrote the primary problem in the nation's coalfields was "The primitive serfdom of the non-union fields is holding back the unionized areas."²⁶

Lewis wanted to reduce the number of coalfields to reduce the supply of coal. One way to do that was shutting down non-union coalmines. That logic helps explain why Lewis did not support the non-union coalminers who joined the official

²⁶ Lewis, 48.

UMW strike Lewis declared on April 21, 1922. While the strike was going on, however, Lewis was more than happy to rhetorically use the almost 100% coalminers' walkout as a bargaining tool to pressure coal operators to the table who still adhered to UMW contracts that were about to expire.²⁷ Lewis' public praise, yet meager support, for non-union strikes sent mixed messages to the non-union striking coalminers, who needed to believe Lewis wanted them to win their principle demand: union recognition.

That 1922 strike started the year after Hapgood graduated from Harvard, and he helped lead it. Although he could have gone to work for his father's much publicized and much admired company, Hapgood chose not to. Working from contacts supplied through his Uncle Norman, Hapgood spent several months after graduation interviewing various prominent people—including Ray Stannard Baker, Louis Brandeis, Frank Tannenbaum, Scott Nearing, and Roger Baldwin, among others—about potential career choices. Baldwin, who headed the future American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), became a close friend and mentor, but the most important person Hapgood met during that period was John Brophy.

In the foreword to Brophy's 1964 autobiography, *A Miner's Life*, Walter P. Reuther and James B. Carey (two AFL-CIO giants who, respectively, headed the United Auto Workers and Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers' unions at the time of the book's publication) wrote, "As CIO's director, John was one of those responsible for bringing industrial democracy to millions of American workers. He

²⁷ "Lewis Calls Strike 100% Effective," *The New York Times*, 6 April 1922, www.nytimes.com.

gave sorely needed advice to many of us who now lead the unions he helped to build.”²⁸ They wrote that Brophy knew what advice to give, because the CIO (which merged with the AFL in 1955) originated from the organizational know-how and financial backing of the United Mine Workers. From the progressive era through the 1920s, Brophy cut his organizational teeth during many of the UMW’s most bitter struggles, including internal organizational struggles against future CIO president John L. Lewis. Again quoting from the foreword, “As the CIO’s first—and only—full-time director, he was in the forefront of every organizing campaign that made national headlines during the last six years of the 1930s.”²⁹ Through his connections to John Brophy, so was Powers Hapgood.

In July of 1921, Brophy asked Hapgood if he were willing to get a job mining coal in the non-union coalfields of Pennsylvania and write about his experiences. Powers agreed. Powers soon did more than write. He agitated and organized. In his autobiography, Brophy remembers Powers as a “very nice, unaffected boy” who was “sincere, friendly, and courageous to the point of foolhardiness.”³⁰ Hapgood demonstrated those qualities over the next two years as he helped lead a strike in Somerset and Cambria counties in Pennsylvania, funded less by the UMW than by the district itself, and eventually, by rich friends of Hapgood’s, including Roger Baldwin and through him (because he sat on its board), the Garland Fund.³¹

In Mildren Dallen Beik’s *The Miners of Windber: The Struggles of New Immigrants for Unionization, 1890-1930s*, the 1921-1923 strike that Hapgood helped

²⁸ John Brophy, *A Miner’s Life* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), vii.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, v.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 185.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 186.

lead served as the empowering turning point for that mostly first-generation immigrant coalmining community.³² Beik agrees with one of the central arguments in this dissertation: The 1920s was *not* a quiescent era for workers. The Pennsylvania coalminers' militancy throughout the decade helps demonstrate that. Even though they did not unionize until the 1930s, they walked out on two major strikes in the 1920s. Both coincided with UMW walkouts.

In many ways, Hapgood's mentor Brophy was a fairly typical coalminer, but in other ways, he was not. His parents had emigrated from Ireland and he had gone to work in the coalmines as a young boy, yet he was extremely bright and ambitious. Those qualities led him, in April of 1921, to join other leading labor organizers as well as New York City-based intellectuals in forming Brookwood Labor College in Westchester County, New York. The founders' idea was to create a residential college for other smart, eager labor leaders who could come to Brookwood and study English, economics, history, drama, political science, and other disciplines. Those students would then take what they learned back to their communities and form a cadre of educated, informed labor leaders who would do nothing less than change the world.

There were at least four major labor colleges during the 1920s. Radical Finns and Wobblies combined their efforts to run the Work People's College in Duluth, Minnesota. Utopians started a communal colony in Louisiana, then migrated north to establish Commonwealth College in Mena, Arkansas. Denver Labor College held

³² Mildred Allen Beik, *The Miners of Windber: The Struggles of New Immigrants for Unionization, 1890s-1930s* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996, 1998).

its classes in Grace Methodist Church in Denver, Colorado. However, Brookwood was the most well known. The twenties brought an explosion in public and private colleges and universities throughout the United States, because ideas about what constituted a formal college degree had not yet standardized, but that experimental nature of worker education quickly faded. By the 1930s, these labor colleges diminished to the point of extinction, since none of them offered college diplomas that would do their graduates any good in the job market.³³

As Brookwood formed, employers across the country began breaking their labor union contracts, even within the strongly unionized anthracite and lesser-organized bituminous mines in the Central Competitive Fields (CCF) of western Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana. That was why Lewis had called a nationwide strike of UMW coalminers in April of 1922. Starting as early as 1917, in his role as UMW District 2 President, John Brophy repeatedly asked UMW President Lewis to send organizers to the central Pennsylvania coalmining region. Lewis always declined, even during the heyday of World War I organizing, and he continued ignoring Brophy's requests during the post-war strike, too.³⁴ Surprisingly (to the operators, anyway, and perhaps even to Lewis), non-union coalminers in Pennsylvania and all across the country joined the 1922 UMW walkout.

That walkout included the non-unionized Colorado coalminers, even though Colorado's last remaining UMW contract had expired in 1921 and had not been renewed. John Lawson and Ed Doyle, the leaders and heroes of the 1910-1914 long

³³ Surprisingly little has been written about these labor colleges. The only monograph on any of the colleges I have found is William H. Cobb, *Radical Education in the South: Commonwealth College, 1922-1940* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 245.

strike and the UMW District 15 leaders, had negotiated that agreement in 1917.³⁵ What had been their reward for squeezing that limited union victory out of the UMW defeat after the 1910-1914 strike? As he began rising in power, Lewis' political machinations drove them from the UMW—forever—beginning the process in 1917 and finishing them off in 1918. Not coincidentally, 1918 was also the year that UMW officials, including Lewis, dedicated the just-completed Ludlow Monument erected at the site of the Ludlow Massacre. As the poster below shows, Mother Jones was not there. Lawson and Doyle were also conspicuously absent from the ceremony.³⁶ Not coincidentally, those who participated in the 1918 dedication were the very men who orchestrated Lawson and Doyle's ouster from the UMW just a year earlier.

The historiography surrounding the UMW is surprisingly limited, and for good reason, the history of the union is often conflated with the history of Lewis. The best source on both is a Lewis biography by Melvyn Dubofsky and Warren Van Tine, which provides a fascinating narrative showing how Lewis took over UMW coalmining districts throughout the 1920s and in the process, consolidated his power. He called these districts "provisional" although there was nothing temporary about their leadership, which Lewis always chose. Dubofsky and Van Tine use Alexander Howatt's ouster in Kansas as their primary 1920s example, but few

³⁵ Testimony of B.M. Snodgrass, Colorado Industrial Commission hearings, 6 February 1928, 3,444-3,449, Josephine Roche Papers, 14-3; Letter from O.F. Nigro to Edward Doyle, 30 March 1927, Edward P. Doyle papers, 1-2, Western History Collection, Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado.

³⁶ "Dedication: Unveiling of the Ludlow Monument" poster, INR 1299-2, CF&I archives.

readers realize that the UMW reorganization process was first exercised not in Kansas, but in Colorado following the Ludlow Massacre.

The UMW takeover of Colorado's District 15 began only after the massive publicity surrounding the 1913-1914 phase of the long strike and the Ludlow Massacre began to subside. In 1914, Max Eastman and John Reed had covered the strike and the massacre for *The Masses*. In 1915, the newly formed US Industrial Relations Commission held widely publicized hearings about the strike, chaired by Frank Walsh. Yet, by 1917, with the ongoing war in Europe, the publicity surrounding the Ludlow Massacre had died enough that the UMW executive board was able to send a little-noticed letter to District 15 UMW officers in Colorado that established Lewis' blueprint for creating provisional districts. The letter informed members that on February 15, 1917, "the international organization will assume full control of the affairs of our union in your district."³⁷ Henceforth, the newly declared executive board policy would apply to "all non-supporting and partially organized districts under the jurisdiction of the United Mine Workers of America." The letter further promised, "When we have thoroughly organized your district and permanently established our union, we shall call a convention and restore the autonomy of your district." Until that time, the board placed its own loyalists in the offices of district president (removing Lawson) and secretary (removing Doyle). Furthermore, "The international vice-president and other members of the committee on organization, representing the international executive board, will personally direct the organizing campaign in your district. We do not desire any

³⁷ J.C. Manual to E.L. Doyle, 14 February 1917, 1-2, Doyle papers.

local strikes while we are conducting this campaign, believing that better and more lasting results will be attained by proceeding along sound, constructive lines.”³⁸ John P. White, President, Frank J. Hayes, Vice President, and William Green, Secretary-Treasurer signed the letter. Ironically, of course, District 15 was broke because of the 1910-1914 strike, which the UMW executive board had initiated.

Even though he was not yet UMW president, Lewis orchestrated the takeover.³⁹ In 1917, Lewis insinuated himself into power, first as a UMW statistician and by summer, as business manager of the UMW *Journal*, a position that allowed him to begin praising his own accomplishments.⁴⁰ Lewis’ rise was taking place at “a particularly opportune moment in trade union history,” since he soon became a member of the wartime coal production committee’s labor delegation.⁴¹ The UMW’s newfound respectability and federal government partnership required the labor union to quickly distance itself from its not-so-recent militant past that included the Colorado strike, the Ludlow Massacre, and the kind of UMW leadership epitomized by Doyle, Lawson, and Mother Jones. In October of 1917, UMW President John White resigned, and vice president Frank Hayes assumed the presidency. Lewis was named vice president. However, apparently Hayes drank so much he couldn’t function, and by 1918, Lewis unofficially took over as acting UMW President. By

³⁸ Manual to Doyle, 14 February 1917, Doyle papers.

³⁹ Melvyn Dubofsky and Warren Van Tine, *John L. Lewis: A Biography* (New York, NY: Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Co., 1977), 35.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 34 & 36.

1920, Lewis was officially named president, all without ever yet having stood for election.⁴²

In 1917, the District 15 members tried to resist the Lewis takeover. In February, they refused to pay their dues to any other entity except their locals, until a time when “the men we legally elected” (Lawson and Doyle), were placed back into their leadership positions.⁴³ That same month, the southern coalfield coalminers headquartered around Ludlow requested Doyle and Lawson attend their next meeting, so they could try to coordinate a bigger meeting among all the locals to confer about what was going on and to develop a strategy resisting the national takeover.

J.C. Manual, president of the Ludlow UMW local, was one of the chief organizers resisting the UMW’s takeover of District 15. The letters he wrote to Doyle document some of the tactics the UMW used to appropriate District 15. The most classic example involved throwing out the votes from a particularly pro-Lawson and Doyle local for bogus rules infractions. In another example, the UMW executive board offered Manual a job working for the newly reorganized district, probably because he had such close ties to Doyle and Lawson (which would have legitimized the takeover in the members’ eyes) and because he spoke and wrote well in both English and Spanish. Manual declined, however, because his local would “not stand for it.”⁴⁴ By May, another UMW member wrote Doyle, letting him know that there had been “a lot of rangling [sic] in our meetings of late about the actions of our Fake

⁴² Ibid., 38 & 39.

⁴³ J.C. Manual to E.L. Doyle, 25 February 1917, 1-2, Doyle papers.

⁴⁴ J.C. Manual to E.L. Doyle, 17 March 1917, 1-2, Doyle papers.

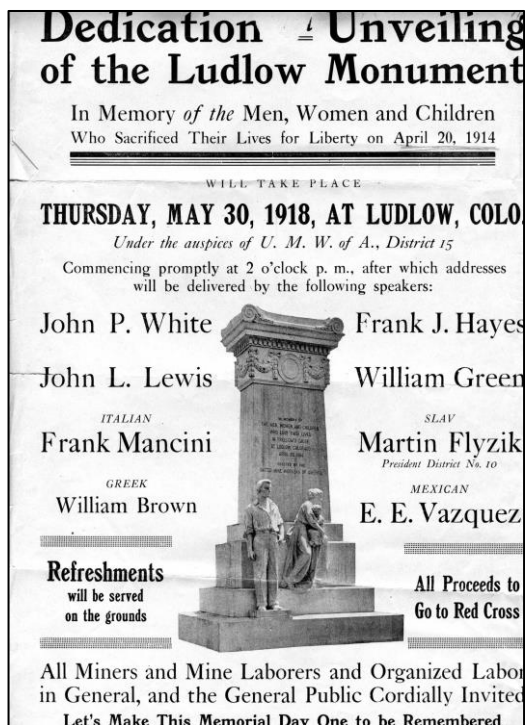
Dist. Officers and if there isn't some more made soon we are going to lose more than ½ our members.”⁴⁵ The author of the letter could not believe that the UMW officials would risk losing members over its new, centralized policies, but that was exactly what happened.

Almost a year after the UMW headquarters began the process, with Lewis acting as unofficial head of the UMW, the takeover of District 15 was complete. After the International UMW leaders “reorganized” District 15, it had, as promised in February of 1917, held elections. However, Lawson “lost” to the reorganizers’ handpicked candidate. Lawson filed a complaint before the State Labor Board, over which he presided, charging the election had been fraudulent. However, Lawson soon discovered that the national UMW leaders had gotten to them, too. By March 1, 1918, John Lawson wrote a letter to the Executive Board of the Colorado State Federation of Labor, resigning as president of that organization, which represented all the state’s AFL unions. In his letter, printed as a handbill intended for widespread distribution, he specifically protested the way the Indianapolis UMW leaders had “packed the convention of the State Federation of Labor held in the City of Boulder, August, 1917, with organizers and paid delegates in a disgraceful attempt to gain control of the state labor movement,” dominating the convention through “forged signatures [and] stuffed ballot boxes.”⁴⁶ Lawson dramatically vowed to “unfurl the flag of truth to light the path of men who are groping in the darkness of an autocracy

⁴⁵ Bruce O'Dell to E.L. Doyle, 24 May 1917, 1-2, Doyle papers.

⁴⁶ John R. Lawson to the Executive Board of the Colorado State Federation of Labor, 1 March 1918, John R. Lawson papers, Western History Collection, Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado. This letter was printed in a one-page form, obviously to be mass distributed throughout the state.

permitted to exist in an organization for which so many men and their families have made innumerable sacrifices in the efforts to maintain the real principle of unionism and exemplify the true meaning of the words Brotherhood of Man” by forming a new union for Colorado coalminers knowing with “full knowledge that the International organization of the United Mine Workers of America will use its full power and influence to crush the new union and myself personally.”⁴⁷ Lawson was right. Lewis and the UMW crushed him and Doyle, the new union’s president and secretary-treasurer, respectively. Both were expelled from the UMW—forever.



Two months after Lawson wrote his resignation letter, leaders from the UMW executive board dedicated the Ludlow Monument. Purely coincidentally, Mackenzie King, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and both their wives also happened to be in Colorado, inspecting the CF&I camps. Rockefeller and King had come to the state to see how the employee representative plan was working and what the coalmining

camps looked like since CF&I had infused over \$250,000 into improving them since 1915. Apparently, everywhere the two couples visited, “King was told that because

⁴⁷ Ibid.

of the attractive living conditions and good pay, C.F. & I. was a preferred company to work for among Colorado miners.”⁴⁸

On the foursome’s first day in the southern Colorado coalfields, Mrs. Rockefeller insisted the party drive by the site of the Ludlow Massacre. They were stunned to see a massive, shrouded structure, which they were told was a monument that would be unveiled on Memorial Day. Since the public was invited to attend the ceremony, King urged Rockefeller to do so and to even prepare a speech. That day, when the party drove to the ceremony they found at least a thousand people there, the ceremony well underway, and Lewis speaking on a podium erected for the occasion. UMW President Frank Hayes saw them, introduced himself, and asked Rockefeller if he planned to speak. Rockefeller answered yes, but Hayes reportedly told Rockefeller that, although he personally thought a speech from Rockefeller would be a good idea, he was unsure how the crowd might react. He urged Rockefeller to demure, Rockefeller took Hayes’ advice, and the four of them drove away, with most of the crowd never knowing that the man blamed for the Ludlow Massacre and the co-authors of the Rockefeller Plan had even been there.⁴⁹ That 1918 Ludlow ceremony was a far cry from the annual commemorations that had marked the massacre between 1915 and 1917, held on April 20, the anniversary of the Ludlow Massacre. At those ceremonies, “crowds gathered at the site, speeches were made, a band played, and Lawson or someone else dropped a bunch of flowers

⁴⁸ Howard M. Gitelman, *Legacy of the Ludlow Massacre: A Chapter in American Industrial Relations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 241.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 241-243.

into the death pit.”⁵⁰ In 1918, Lawson, Doyle, and Mother Jones were not present, and the ceremony was moved to Memorial Day, a holiday begun to mourn the Civil War dead. By changing the date of the ceremony, by quickly constructing the monument, and by carefully orchestrating who spoke and who did not and who was even invited to attend, the dedication very publicly demonstrated to the Colorado coalminers who was now in charge, not just of the UMW in the state but also of the memories of Ludlow.⁵¹

Although commemoration ceremonies would be held at the Ludlow Monument each Memorial Day for years to follow, after the 1921 UMW contract and after the failure of the 1922 strike, there would be no more UMW contracts in Colorado until August of 1928, when Josephine Roche, in reaction to the 1927-1928 IWW-led coal strike and the Columbine Massacre that occurred on her company’s property, negotiated a contract with the formerly powerful UMW. The union had grown so weak that in 1924, the year before the IWW began organizing in Colorado’s southern fields, Lewis’ handpicked crony Frank Hefferly wrote the following in a letter to his boss: “As you are doubtless aware, the organization in District Fifteen has dwindled away until it might safely be said that even the district

⁵⁰ Reese Papanikolas, *Buried Unsung: Louis Tikas the Ludlow Massacre* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 246.

⁵¹ For a fascinating analysis of why labor memorials are rarely constructed and when they are, they get built many years after the events they commemorate, see the section “Martyrs without Memorials: The Rise of American Labor,” in Chapter 9, “Invisible and Shadowed Pasts,” in Kenneth E. Foote, *Shadowed Ground: America’s Landscape of Violence and Tragedy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997, revised ed., 2003).

organization, to say nothing of the local unions, has practically ceased to function.”⁵²

That UMW absence allowed the IWW to fill the void.

After officially becoming UMW President in 1920, Lewis accelerated the process he first successfully implemented in Colorado. As Dubofsky and Van Tine write, during the twenties,

the power of the international [UMW] and of John L. Lewis expanded as the districts lost members, income, and power. Ironically, then, Lewis achieved undiluted authority to negotiate binding national agreements with employers only as the number of union members he represented declined at a rapidly accelerating rate. Put simply, Lewis’s personal power in the UMW during the 1920s rose in proportion to the decline in his union’s actual strength and influence.⁵³

Instead of detailing every fallen union leader in every district that Lewis took over, Dubofsky and Van Tine let Kansas’ Alex Howat serve as their primary illustrative example, showing how Lewis successfully usurped this strong, wildly popular District 14 President, who, “at his best, exemplified the militancy, flavor, and courage of rank-and-file miners.”⁵⁴

Colorado and Kansas shared many common characteristics, so it makes sense that Lewis began his UMW takeover in these two states. Charismatic, militant UMW organizers led the coalminers in both, and state legislatures responded to their militancy the same way. First in Colorado in 1915, next in Kansas in 1920, legislatures created state industrial commissions, the only two in the nation.

⁵² Frank Hefferly to John L. Lewis, December 19, 1924, Box 2, Folder 2-15, Frank and Fred K. Hefferly Papers, Archives, University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries.

⁵³ Melvyn Dubofsky and Warren Van Tine, *John L. Lewis: A Biography* (New York, NY: Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Co., Inc., 1977), 113.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 113.

Although Kansas called its structure a court, both entities acted as mandatory organized labor arbitration boards. Their commissions also shared a similar goal: eliminating industrial conflict. However, the arbitration mechanisms both states' commissions required made it almost legally impossible for workers to go on strike.

Even though Kansas' industrial court had been designed specifically to thwart Howat's repeated wildcat strikes, he refused to abide by its rules. Before and after the Kansas law passed, Howat condoned, encouraged, or led wildcat (unauthorized by headquarters) strikes, often getting sent to jail for his efforts. Whenever he landed in jail, coalminers walked off the job in support of Howat. So, while labor leaders like Lewis "ingratiated themselves with operators and politicians, Howat gloried in the role of class warrior, the man who would risk prison before selling out workers to their employer or public officials."⁵⁵ Not only did Kansas forbid wildcat strikes, so did Lewis. Howat ignored them both, with equal contempt.

In 1919, 1920, and 1921, Howat led the Kansas coalminers out on strike. In response to the 1919 strike, Kansas legislators created the Kansas industrial court in 1920. When the Kansas industrial commission commanded Howat to testify before that court regarding the 1920 walkout, he refused. He also filed a lawsuit, claiming the industrial court was unconstitutional. As Howat's lawsuit began winding its way through the court system, his refusal to recognize the industrial court's authority again landed him in jail. Again, his men walked out. In September of 1921, Howat led his men out on strike, got jailed again, and you can guess the rest.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 117.

By 1922, Howat's case arrived at the Supreme Court. Chief Justice, former President William Taft, wanted to hear the case, but said since the case had been "disposed of in the State courts on principles of general and not Federal law," the court had no choice but to dismiss it.⁵⁶

Even though Lewis also hated the Colorado and Kansas industrial commissions, he thought they should be obeyed, and on October 14, 1921, Lewis ousted Howat from his District 14 presidency and put the entire district under UMW national control, charging Howat with insubordination both to the Kansas law and UMW directives. Lewis told reporters that all loyal Kansas coalminers should recognize the provisional district leadership he had put in place. Howat told reporters that Lewis should go to hell.⁵⁷ Instead of going to hell, Lewis sent one of his top lieutenants, Van Bittner, to run the district. Bittner's statements went even further than had Lewis' public directives. Bittner stated he was prepared to suspend the UMW memberships of the 4,000 striking coalminers who continued to support Howat by staying out on strike.⁵⁸

Facing Bittner's threats and the Kansas industrial court's prohibition against the walkout, striking Kansas coalminers' wives organized themselves into a Women's Army, which raided mines where scabs were working. They beat the strikebreakers and pelted them with rocks. At first, local police were "quiescent"

⁵⁶ "Howat Pleas Fail in Supreme Court," *The New York Times*, 14 March 1922, www.nytimes.com.

⁵⁷ "Lewis Ousts Howat for Outlaw Strike," *The New York Times*, 14 October 1921, www.nytimes.com.

⁵⁸ "Miners Stand by Howat," *The New York Times*, 16 November 1921, www.nytimes.com.

toward the women, but that deference did not last.⁵⁹ As the Women's Army grew, so did local police response. By December, the Women's Army, which newspapers began calling an "army of Amazons," had grown to several thousand women. One woman later recalled she had been one of a crowd of 7,000 women who marched to the jail in Girard, Kansas, where Howat was being held prisoner.⁶⁰ The *New York Times* reported that the crowd assembled outside of town, marched into town behind American flags and banners, paraded several times around the town square, then marched to the jail, raucously demanding to see Howat. The sympathetic sheriff, who had allowed Howat "all the privileges and comforts he wanted," stood next to Howat as he addressed the crowd for over an hour. During the speech, Howat apparently called the Kansas governor, among other things, a skunk.

The sheriff's solidarity with Howat was understandable, since Girard was a hotbed of radicalism. The leading Socialist newspaper in the United States, *The Appeal to Reason*, was published there, and Mother Jones frequently visited the area, helping to consolidate militancy among not just the coalminers, but also Mine Mill zinc and lead miners working in that same quadrant of the state.⁶¹ The crowd, the speech, and the sheriff's friendly reactions to both forced the sheriff to resign before higher ups in the state removed him. The day after the speech, Howat was transferred to a jail in nearby Pittsburgh, a notoriously anti-union town that for

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Letter from Powers Hapgood to Mary Donovan Hapgood, 12 June 1930, Powers Hapgood papers, Box 5, June 1930 folder. Since Powers Hapgood's papers are arranged chronologically, I will only cite the letters by dates, not folder and box numbers.

⁶¹ Gorn, *Mother Jones*, 67-68, 237.

years provided most of the strikebreakers to Colorado.⁶² The *New York Times* reported that in Pittsburgh, Howat was treated like any other prisoner.⁶³ Within the week, probably afraid the Amazons would march on the jail as they had in Girard, the Pittsburgh sheriff “frantically assembled a deputized force of one thousand men and recruited veterans who stockpiled rifles and guns in a local hotel.”⁶⁴ Three troops of National Guard cavalry arrived and fanned out to quell the radical rumblings in local coalmining communities. Forty-nine women were arrested and charged with unlawful assembly, disturbing the peace, and assault. Unlike the striking men who’d gotten arrested and whose bonds had been set at \$200, the women’s bonds were set at \$750.⁶⁵

Colorado and Kansas were not the only states with militant coalmining women. That same month, in Wheeling, West Virginia, coal operators declared they would be shutting down all the union coalmines and re-opening them as open shop (non-union) mines. When operators tried reopening one of the state’s largest coalmines, only twenty out of two hundred miners showed up for work, and women

⁶² Jarod Roll, “White, American, Non-Union: Making Sense of Missouri’s Notorious Strikebreaking Miners,” unpublished paper delivered on 6 June 2013 at the Labor and Working-Class History Association Meeting in New York City.

⁶³ “‘Martyrdom’ Tires Howat,” *The New York Times*, 17 April 1920, www.nytimes.com.

⁶⁴ Ann Schofield, “An ‘Army of Amazons’” *The Language of Protest in a Kansas Mining Community, 1921-1922*, *American Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 5 (Winter, 1985), www.jstor.org, 6 January 2005, 686.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*; In the spring of 2010, I visited the Big Brutus museum in West Mineral, Kansas, located where Howat’s UMW stronghold was, near Girard. Big Brutus was the largest coal shovel in the world, and there is also a small coalmining museum there. Inside the museum is an article about the “march of the Amazons,” but there is no mention whatsoever of Alexander Howat. There is, however, a big photograph and adulatory exhibit on John L. Lewis.

pelted those twenty with rocks.⁶⁶ Mother Jones was there, still on the payroll of the UMW, and still organizing militant women.⁶⁷

It is not clear whether or not militants, such as those in Colorado, Kansas, and West Virginia were better than non-militants at mobilizing women into labor conflicts. However, militants mobilizing women with such relish conflicted with the image Lewis was trying to create for the newly respectable and patriotic UMW. Mother Jones, who for years organized not just men, but also their wives and children, hated Lewis and the direction he was taking the UMW. Mother Jones' biographer Elliot Gorn writes, "She mocked his self-importance, referred to him as 'the general Jesus of the movement' and 'an empty piece of human slime,'" and she predicted in 1919, "If the organization ever gets into the hands of this fellow that is the end of the miners."⁶⁸ Although the UMW kept Mother Jones on their payroll during the last decade of her life in the 1920s, Mother Jones' role in the controversial and violent West Virginia strike, added to the infirmities of old age, essentially removed her from the labor movement in general, and the UMW in particular. Additionally, Lewis demanded absolute personal loyalty, which Mother Jones refused to give. Furthermore, Lewis did not especially care for women on his staff, especially Mother Jones, who publicly mocked him and called him spineless.⁶⁹

The end of Mother Jones' career, which peaked during the 1910-1914 Colorado coal strike, coincided with the rise of Lewis'. Apparently, the brand of

⁶⁶ This article has no title, but it appears online beneath "Kansas Troops out to Guard Workers," *The New York Times*, 15 December 1921, www.nytimes.com.

⁶⁷ Gorn, 268-273.

⁶⁸ Gorn, *Mother Jones*, 249.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 269.

UMW unionism Lewis advocated applied to patriotic men only. As the 1918 dedication of the Ludlow Memorial made clear, the Lewis-led UMW had no place for labor leaders like Lawson, Doyle, or Mother Jones, much less their followers. During the long strike in Colorado, women and children played important, vital roles, which included harassing scabs and leading parades (and inviting attacks) to arouse public support. However, under Lewis' leadership, as the Ludlow Monument made clear, from now on, coalminers' wives and their children were to serve a new, valuable public relations purpose: They became symbols of helpless, exploited victims. Even as American women were gaining the right to vote and expanded social freedom, responsible unionism and industrial democracy— concepts Lewis conflated with 100% Americanism—were fast becoming male-dominated concepts.

The animosity between Howat (another Mother Jones ally) and Lewis led to a showdown at the February 18, 1922, UMW convention, held at in Indianapolis, Indiana, site of the UMW headquarters. By this time, Lewis wasn't just being challenged in Kansas, he was also being challenged by UMW rival Frank Farrington in southern Illinois, Lewis' childhood stomping grounds. Farrington's people had sent money, supplies, and food to Howat's supporters in Kansas after the District 14 takeover, and at the convention, the Howat and Farrington factions united against Lewis. The *New York Times* reported that, "Stormy scenes, verging on rioting, marked the taking of the roll call in the question of whether Lewis should be upheld

in his ruling that Howat had no right to bring the Kansas situation and his ousting before the convention.”⁷⁰

The insurgents were able to overrule Lewis’ ruling from the podium and force Howat’s expulsion and District 14’s takeover to a roll call vote, slated as the final business item at the convention. Before the vote was taken, Lewis made his case before the convention: The UMW members’ best interests could *only* be protected by honoring the “sanctity of the contract.”⁷¹ He warned that if other militant UMW leaders followed Howat’s undisciplined example, no operators would ever agree to sign binding contracts with the UMW. Of course, Lewis made a valid point. If nothing else, Lewis was usually a political realist and almost always a political opportunist. He was also a masterful speaker and a ruthless Machiavellian when it came to exercising political power. As the votes were tallied, Howat forces had mustered 1,866 votes to Lewis’ 1,959, with 150 absentee votes hanging in the balance.⁷² When those votes were calculated, Lewis won. Was the election fraudulent? Probably, but since he controlled the votes of districts like Colorado where he had installed his loyalists, Lewis held the advantage, which he consolidated over the following thirty-eight years he presided over the UMW.

During the vote, John Brophy, Powers Hapgood’s mentor and District 2 President from central Pennsylvania, stunned conventioners when he broke ranks and sided with the Howat faction. Had Brophy been more scheming or politically

⁷⁰ “Lewis Beats Howat by Narrow Margin,” *The New York Times*, 18 February 1922, www.nytimes.com.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

astute, he would have either mounted a united Pennsylvania challenge to Lewis, which would have defeated him, or voted for Lewis, to stay in his good graces. Voting against Lewis probably sealed the outcome of the ongoing Pennsylvania strike and Brophy's political future in the UMW. In 1923, Brophy called off the Pennsylvania strike after it became clear that support from the national union would never arrive. The central Pennsylvania coalminers had gained neither union recognition nor a new contract. Operators immediately began cutting wages, and coalminers began drifting away from the field, moving to cities where their job prospects were brighter.

When Hapgood joined the UMW in 1920, he did so believing the labor organization represented the best hope for the labor movement in the United States. Even traveling through Colorado's southern coalfields after Lewis' District 15 takeover, he remained optimistic about the UMW's future. In 1922, Hapgood helped lead the Pennsylvania strike in which coalminers' primary demand was union recognition. That same year he saw Brophy break ranks with Lewis when he sided with Howat at the 1922 UMW convention and then in 1923, he saw the Pennsylvania strike disintegrate, at least in part, from lack of UMW support.

In spite of all he had seen, Hapgood still clung to his idealized notions of the UMW. However, after the Pennsylvania defeat, Hapgood did something no regular rank-and-file coalminer could ever have done. He licked his wounds and reassessed his life—overseas. Going abroad for a year, he visiting England, Wales, Germany, and the Soviet Union. His was a working vacation, and he easily made friends everywhere he went, especially among the unionized coalminers he worked

among.⁷³ When he got back to the states, he tried selling his diary to various publishers, but he got no takers. In 1925, he abruptly stopped keeping a diary.⁷⁴

Upon his return, Hapgood was demoralized to see how much the central Pennsylvania coalfields had deteriorated during his absence. He once again reunited with his mentor, this time to directly challenge Lewis in a movement they would call Save Our Union. Hapgood and Brophy blamed Lewis' misguided leadership for the decline of the UMW, not just in Pennsylvania, but also throughout the country. For Brophy, Howat's expulsion and the lack of UMW support in the Pennsylvania strike represented just two specific examples Lewis' failed leadership.

Brophy had ideological reasons to oppose Lewis, too. In 1921, when Lewis challenged Samuel Gompers for president of the AFL (and lost), probably to gain support among the AFL's left wing, Lewis announced that he favored nationalization of the coalmines. Lewis then appointed Brophy, who strongly supported nationalization, to a UMW committee to study the question. By 1925, however, it was clear to Brophy that Lewis had only supported nationalization when Lewis thought it helped him politically. By the mid-1920s, Lewis not only buried Brophy's committee work and abandoned his previous nationalization stance, he actively cultivated his relationship with Republican Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover.⁷⁵ Not only had Lewis abandoned coal nationalization, Brophy disdainfully wrote in his 1964 autobiography that in the 1920s, Lewis' "economic and political

⁷³ See Chapter Four, " 'Round the World Underground," in Bussel.

⁷⁴ Powers Hapgood's papers contain the diaries he kept between 1 January 1915 and 15 June 1925.

⁷⁵ Brophy, 207.

thinking was, if anything, to the right of Hoover's."⁷⁶ It was Hoover who recommended that Lewis negotiate a long-term UMW contract, which Lewis did in 1924; that three-year agreement created the "Jacksonville Scale," a guaranteed wage for UMW coalminers. Almost immediately, however, operators began breaking the agreement.

Lewis' goals included reducing the nation's coal supply, mechanizing and rationalizing the operation of coalmines, and cooperating (as much as possible) with operators and Republican politicians. With Lauck as his guide, Lewis increased public relations' efforts to portray the UMW as a patriotic organization whose goal was to negotiate a decent enough wage and safe enough working conditions that a hard-working coalminer could support his family. Above all else, Lewis considered the UMW contracts in the Central Competitive Field (CCF)—consisting of Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, and western (not central) Pennsylvania—the bedrock of any current or future UMW agreements. In the late 1800s, the CCF had been the first, major victory for the UMW, and those fields had provided almost half of the nation's coal. When CCF operators threatened to cancel their contracts, that had been the line in the sand Lewis wouldn't cross, which had led to the April 1, 1922 strike that lasted 130 days and resulted only in operators who already had UMW contracts renewing what they'd had before the strike began.⁷⁷

Brophy advocated a very different vision for the UMW—nationalizing coal, organizing the unorganized, and advocating worker education—and in 1926, with

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Maier B. Fox, *United We Stand: The United Mine Workers of America, 1890-1990* (no city: United Mine Workers of America, 1990), 237, 239.

that vision as his platform, Brophy decided to challenge Lewis for the UMW presidency, with Hapgood serving as his campaign manager. The two men hoped they could cobble together enough support among rank-and-file coalminers, since the officers were too scared to openly support Brophy, under the Save Our Union platform to make Brophy a viable candidate.⁷⁸

Brophy believed that organizing the unorganized was tied to looking beyond the Central Competitive Fields for UMW members. By the 1920s, the percentage of CCF coal had dropped to under forty percent of the nation's total, as new, and increasingly non-unionized coalfields opened.⁷⁹ Instead of relying on the CCF, Brophy thought that new coalfields should be organized by recruiting the nation's unorganized coalminers. He knew it could be done, because the strike he and Hapgood led in Pennsylvania even now remains the largest in UMW history; over half a million miners joined.⁸⁰ Other unorganized coalminers, such as those in Colorado, had eagerly joined the strike, too, and their primary demand had been union recognition. In West Virginia, coalminers' militancy led to the Battle of Blair Mountain, in which an estimated 10,000 striking miners fought in defiance of anti-union repression.⁸¹ After Blair Mountain, Lewis sent Van Bitner from Kansas to West Virginia to help "reorganize" the coalminers there.

By 1922, however, newspaper reports describing outbreaks of violence changed the trajectory of the strike. Public opinion shifted after Illinois strikers, in

⁷⁸ Ibid., 216.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 237.

⁸⁰ Bussel, 45.

⁸¹ For a well-written book on this topic, read Robert Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain: The Story of America's Largest Labor Uprising* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2004).

what came to be the Herrin Massacre, brutally killed twenty scabs, guards, and bosses.⁸² Throughout the strike, Lewis sent mixed signals to the unorganized coalminers, including those in Pennsylvania, and Brophy blamed Lewis for not organizing and channeling coalminer militancy. When Lewis signed an agreement ending the strike that only included CCF coalminers who already worked under UMW contracts, Brophy suspected Lewis had never really intended to organize the unorganized coalminers at all.

Brophy believed organization could be achieved through building local leadership at the grassroots level and then further educating workers at places like Brookwood. Brophy didn't believe non-union coalmines caused low wages and bad working conditions since employers, if allowed, would always try to drive down wages. Unlike Lewis, who said he was both pro-business and a registered Republican, Brophy had little faith that free market principles or supply and demand could fix the "sick" coal industry. Although he comfortably worked with left-leaning Democrats, Socialists, and Communists (something by the late 1940s he denied doing), Brophy thought the US should follow Great Britain's example by forming an independent labor party and nationalizing coal.

Lewis used Brophy's Save Our Union platform to paint him as a communist. He couldn't attack Brophy directly, because Brophy—devoutly Catholic, deeply principled, personally moral—was beyond reproach. He was also wildly popular among the rank-and-file. Therefore, Lewis attacked Powers Hapgood at the 1926 AFL convention preceding the UMW convention, alleging that Hapgood (and others)

⁸² Maier, 240.

had duped Brophy as part of a “‘Bolshevik Plot’ to take over American labor.”⁸³ To prove Hapgood was leading Brophy astray and plotting to conspire with communists, Lewis read aloud a letter that Albert Coyle, a graduate of Yale Divinity School and editor of *The Locomotive Engineers’ Journal*, had sent to Hapgood. Although Hapgood claimed he never got the letter, whether he did or not was really beside the point.

The letter proposed progressive (code word for anti-UMW insurgents) coalminers everywhere should start a newspaper called *The National Miner* that would be outside the reach of the official UMW newspaper Lewis controlled. Oscar Ameringer, editor of *The Illinois Miner* (which supported Brophy’s campaign), would launch the newspaper, and his assistant editor would be Vern M. Smith, “who used to edit *Industrial Solidarity*, and has gone steadily to the Left until now he is one of Jay’s best friends.”⁸⁴ The letter also said that if Brophy won the UMW Presidency, *The National Miner* would merge with the *United Mine Workers’ Journal*, and Hapgood would become the editor. The purpose of the letter was to get Hapgood’s permission to use his name on the masthead of the proposed newspaper.

The Coyle letter showed that Hapgood was working with Communists. Vern Smith was the Wobbly who got fired as *Industrial Solidarity* editor in 1926, accused of deliberately planting CP articles in the IWW newspaper. Remember that A.S. Embree briefly replaced Smith as editor in the summer of 1926, but the IWW Executive Board fired him, too, for inadvertently letting CP-leaning news articles

⁸³ Brophy, 217.

⁸⁴ “Red Plot on Labor Moves Federation to Spurn Soviet,” *The New York Times*, 13 October 1926, www.nytimes.com.

slip into the newspaper's pages, as well. Smith's and Embree's firings demonstrate that in 1926, the Wobblies running the General Executive Board in Chicago were probably more anti-communist than even Lewis and the AFL.

The Jay referred to in the letter was Jay Lovestone, a prominent member and rising star of the American Communist Party. American Communists already had split into two major warring factions, but sub-factions within those factions battled each other constantly over their paltry 10,000 members. After Lenin's 1924 death caused a post-revolutionary power vacuum that various people, including Trotsky and Stalin, positioned themselves to fill, the fortunes of Communists all over the world were linked to the political machinations of whomever was dominating the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) at the time. In the 1920s, that caused the constant ebb and flow of membership and leadership in the American Communist Party. For example, Leon Trotsky was driven from the party in January of 1927, and since James Cannon (the head of the International Labor Defense) was a Trotskyite, that meant that soon, Cannon was out, too, as well as his adherents.

Lewis not only read the Coyle letter to the AFL convention, he also accused Communists of trying to "bore from within" and take over AFL unions. The convention also voted down a resolution recognizing the USSR, as well as expressing "[u]nanimous disapproval of the proposal to send a labor mission to Soviet Russia."⁸⁵ "Boring from within" was, in fact, an official policy American communists were following at the time (which changed after Stalin took power), and according to Lovestone's biographer, Lovestone *had* concocted the entire plan of sending a

⁸⁵ "Red Plot on Labor Moves Federation to Spurn Soviet," *The New York Times*.

labor delegation to the USSR, thinking their report on conditions there would help speed diplomatic recognition in the US.⁸⁶ After the trip was denounced at the convention, mainstream US labor leaders refused (or were afraid) to go, but a full delegation of second-tier labor leaders, including Albert Coyle, future FDR “brain truster” Rex Tugwell, John Brophy, and Frank Palmer, happily took the trip in August of 1927.

During the trip, sandwiched between meetings with Trotsky and Stalin, Brophy, James Maurer (former President of Pennsylvania’s State Federation of Labor and a prominent Socialist Party member), and Frank Palmer visited Big Bill Haywood in Moscow. Brophy wrote in his diary that they talked over old times with Haywood, catching him up on news about common acquaintances they knew from Denver. Haywood denied recently published accounts in US newspapers quoting him as criticizing the USSR. Haywood told them he was keeping himself busy writing his memoirs. Sure, he missed his friends, his daughters, and his grandchildren, but other than missing them, he didn’t miss anything else about the United States and he much preferred living in the Soviet Union, a country with a future.⁸⁷ When Palmer returned, Colorado newspapers reported that he’d met with Haywood and Palmer’s immediate and active role in the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike fueled rumors that

⁸⁶ Ted Morgan, *A Covert Life: Jay Lovestone, Communist, Anti-Communist, and Spymaster* (New York, NY: Random House, 1999), 57-60.

⁸⁷ Diary entry 6 September 1928, labor delegation trip to USSR, 29-4, John Brophy Papers, Series 3, Box 29, Subseries 3.2, 30-4, The American Catholic History Research Center and University Archives, The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.

Haywood had funneled money from the Soviet Union through Mexico to finance the walkout.⁸⁸

Lewis did such an effective job redbaiting Brophy through Hapgood, officially, he won the UMW presidential election in a landslide. Many years later, when Lovestone asked Lewis who had really won, Lewis supposedly laughed and replied that Brophy had.⁸⁹ At the next UMW convention, Brophy and Hapgood returned to the convention floor, armed with signed affidavits they claimed positively proved Lewis had stolen the earlier election. By then, even though many of the UMW members were highly sympathetic to the Save Our Union movement (including the new UMW members from Colorado), Brophy's challenge went nowhere. That shows how much Lewis' control had tightened over the UMW in just six years. In 1922, Howat had been able to successfully challenge Lewis from the audience, even though he didn't gain reinstatement in the UMW.

At the UMW convention, when Hapgood repeatedly tried to gain recognition to protest the vote, not only did Lewis, who chaired the meeting, not allow Hapgood or any other insurgents to speak, Lewis' goons beat him up on the convention floor. When Hapgood still refused to shut up, Lewis' enforcers surprised him in his hotel room and beat him again even worse.⁹⁰ Because of his outspokenness, moral

⁸⁸ Hazel Alice Glenny, "A History of Labor Disputes in the Northern Colorado Coal Mining Fields with Emphasis on the 1927-1928 Strike," unpublished thesis, University of Colorado, 1938; In a lengthy footnote, Glenny cited an editorial in *The Pueblo Star Journal*, 21 October 1927: 4 that asserted this information.

⁸⁹ Morgan, 65.

⁹⁰ Dubofsky and Van Tine's Lewis biography (129-130) and Busell's biography (93-94) of Hapgood provide accounts of Hapgood's beating at the 1928 convention.

righteousness, and moral stance against Lewis, but more importantly, because of the beatings, Hapgood became a primary symbol of anti-Lewis resistance.

Following the convention, Lewis expelled both Brophy and Hapgood from the UMW, so both found it impossible to get jobs of any kind in union coalmines. When Hapgood joined the UMW in 1920, he had hoped that by gaining the required five years experience, he would be qualified to run, and perhaps get elected a UMW officer. He and John Brophy had tried to reform the UMW from within, but their efforts had failed, and not only that, both Brophy, but especially Hapgood, became targets of Lewis' wrath. The Harvard graduate had wanted to dedicate his life to the cause of organized labor in general and specifically to the UMW, but Lewis had shattered his dreams and ambitions.

In 1927, Hapgood was adrift, so he began casting about for something meaningful to do with his life. His first stop would be Boston. In August, he headed to the metropolis where he had lived as a Harvard undergraduate to contribute his organizing efforts toward an even more quixotic cause than reforming the UMW from within. In dedicating his efforts toward freeing Sacco and Vanzetti, a new chapter of his life was about to begin.

Chapter 6:
Powers Hapgood:
The Trouble with Industrial Democracy, 1927-1935

Powers Hapgood moved to Boston in August of 1927, and immediately immersed himself into the Sacco and Vanzetti fray. That month, Boston police arrested him four separate times with his last arrest taking place on August 22, the day before Sacco and Vanzetti were scheduled for execution. That day, either he acted so unhinged or the Boston police reacted so oppressively (or both), Hapgood was delivered not to jail, but to the Boston Psychopathic Hospital, where he was kept on a twenty-four hour lockdown. By the time ACLU attorney Arthur Garfield Hays arranged for Hapgood's release the following day, Sacco and Vanzetti were dead.

At Hapgood's trial for inciting a riot, Hays used Hapgood's hospital record that included testimony from the Boston police describing Hapgood's behavior on August 22, 1927, to show Hapgood had never been insane. Policed described Hapgood as an irresponsible, obnoxious, disagreeable, foolish, and disorderly "bare headed youth," who had been arrested for "leading a group of women into dangerous places," after being warned to stop.¹ As soon as officers approached him, however, Hapgood suddenly stood "non-resistant, silent, [and] stolid," adopting a "blank, far away expression," passively allowing the officers to handcuff him and lead him away. When the probation officer who interviewed Hapgood as a pre-condition to his release asked why he had come to Boston, Hapgood calmly replied

¹ Boston Psychopathic Hospital Report on Power Hapgood, n.d., [22 or 23 August 22 1928], Powers Hapgood Papers.

that “he believed Sacco and Vanzetti were innocent and he was willing to do or suffer in their behalf.”²

In 1927, Hapgood was “willing to do or suffer” for Sacco and Vanzetti because he could no longer do or suffer on behalf of the nation’s unorganized coalminers or the UMW. Since Lewis had expelled Hapgood and his mentor John Brophy, neither could find jobs in any UMW coalmines, and while Lewis disdained them both, he especially targeted Hapgood for his wrath. Yet by 1935, Lewis had resurrected both Brophy’s and Hapgood’s labor organizing careers. Why? To answer that question, it is necessary to explore what Hapgood did after Lewis expelled him from the UMW in 1927 until Lewis rehired him as a CIO organizer in 1935. He spent a year-and-a-half of that time in Colorado. What led Hapgood to Colorado and why did he leave? Why did Hapgood go to work for his father’s company just six months after leaving Colorado, a move he had resisted all his adult life? How did Hapgood’s experiences at his father’s canning company become the turning point in his life, and how did the personal crisis that followed affect the trajectory of the 1930s’ labor movement?

Between 1927 and 1935, Powers Hapgood learned several important lessons that help answer those questions, lessons that carried significant implications for his future in the US labor movement. First, he would have no career in organized labor unless Lewis willed it so. Second, factionalized unions, no matter how righteous their cause, couldn’t win workers’ rights. Third, industrial democracy “experiments,” as practiced at Roche’s RMFC and his own father’s canning company, did not provide legitimate models of industrial democracy. By 1935, not only had

² Ibid.

Hapgood hit rock bottom personally, he had come to the realization that only unified *organized* labor unions could achieve workers' rights. Hapgood decided that he could contribute more to the labor movement by submitting to Lewis' undemocratic power than by continuing, "to do and suffer" on behalf of noble but ultimately unwinnable causes.

Hapgood had not learned any of those lessons yet when he arrived in Boston in August of 1927 to fight on Sacco and Vanzetti's behalf. Like Colorado's coalminers, as well as sympathizers all over the world, Hapgood had believed that if enough people protested, Sacco and Vanzetti's lives might be spared. When they were executed on August 23, 1927, their deaths had saddened people all over the world, but some were far more disheartened and distraught than others. Hapgood and Mary Donovan, the secretary of the Sacco and Vanzetti Defense Committee, were definitely part of the distraught group. The two had been thrown together organizing August's Boston protests, and they had been arrested together, as well. The intense emotions they shared after the martyrs' deaths, as well as their close contract as they prepared for and faced their trials together in the four months following the executions, drew them together as a couple. They fell in love, even though Donovan was ten years older than Hapgood. On his twenty-eighth birthday, on December 28, 1927, Hapgood and Donovan got married in a civil ceremony in New York City.

They hardly lived happily ever after, but they did love each other, staying together until Hapgood's early death in 1949. From their letters, it seems as if their

happiest years as a couple took place between 1929 and 1930, when they lived in Colorado. While there are many reasons why the Hapgoods might have come to Colorado, exploring some of their possible motivations and some of the prime suspects who did or might have asked them to move explains as much about Hapgood's state of mind as it does the state of the UMW in the late 1920s and early 1930s and Josephine Roche's earliest attempts to create an experiment in industrial democracy at the RMFC.

A.S. Embree suggested that the Hapgoods to come to Colorado. Shortly after both he and Mary had been cleared of all criminal charges associated with their Sacco and Vanzetti arrests, Hapgood met Embree on December 22, 1927. Perhaps feeling a sense of relief after their final acquittal, Hapgood chaired a meeting in New York City about ongoing insurgent coal strikes in the Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Colorado coalfields.³ That was where he met Embree.

Hapgood wrote a long letter to Mary about the IWW representatives from Colorado who spoke at the meeting. He described Milka Sablich as "a very fine young girl, daughter of a Slavish miner, who helped bring out miner after miner on strike in Colorado."⁴ Although she was "only 19 and never away from home before, she has wonderful poise, and she speaks well and simply." Her friend, "wife of a strike coal cutter, where personal friends were killed at the Columbine Mine, spoke very well about the strike and dramatically described the murders of the Columbine

³ Letter from Powers Hapgood to Mary Donovan, 23 December 1927, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁴ Ibid.

mine.” However, Hapgood reserved his highest praise for A.S. Embree, about whom he wrote the following:

Embree, the organizer, is a fine man. The meeting was organized by communists, and the local Wobblies didn’t cooperate much. Embree, a member of the Executive of the I.W.W., told his followers there must be better cooperation and agreed with me that it was a crime for the various class conscious groups not to combine in the fight against capitalists and labor fakers who are sucking the life blood out of the labor movement. He was high in his praise of the work of communists and the I.L.D. in Colorado and refuses to make plans for his speaking tour except in cooperation with Jim Cannon. I was much surprised at him. He is one of the least sectarian and most tolerant and understanding of the temperaments of differing radical elements that I know. If there were more really broad leaders like him, concerned and interested not at all in personal conflict but only in the class war, the working class would make more progress.

Embree told me a lot about the south-western coal fields. When he heard I had been planning to go to Colorado before the strike, he said that another good place to help was just across the line in New Mexico. There are about the same number of coal miners there as in Colorado and they are more concentrated—11,000 in four towns. The miners work everyday, so jobs can be had. The I.W.W. intends to strike New Mexico as soon as they finish with Colorado, and anyone already there can be of help. After New Mexico they intend to organize the coal camps of Utah and after that those of Oklahoma. Wouldn’t it be wonderful, darling, to help and go through all that together? Do you think we could ever go so far? I don’t know any place to help more than there.⁵

Embree was dreaming big, but so was Hapgood. They both hated Lewis and wanted to organize the unorganized coalfields. Hapgood had already exhibited a romance with the West in his earlier hobo travels between his junior and senior years at Harvard. His letter makes it clear that the West still provided a strong pull, especially the idea of starting a new life there with Mary.

⁵ Ibid.

Six days after chairing the meeting, he and Mary got married. Although their shared commitment to Sacco and Vanzetti initially brought them together, Hapgood was probably also drawn to Donovan because she came from a real working class background, one more authentic than Hapgood's self-created working class identity. Raised in an Irish-Catholic working class family in Massachusetts, the deeply ambitious Donovan worked her way through the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. After graduating, took a job working as an inspector for the state of Massachusetts, monitoring adherence to their newly passed wage and workday regulations for women and children. Her next job was in Boston, organizing on behalf of the Stenographers, Bookkeepers, Accountants, and Office Employees Union. That union asked her to resign, however, because Donovan spent so much of her time on the Sacco and Vanzetti cause, which, according to Hapgood, left her even more time to work on their defense.⁶ So active was she in the Socialist Party, state leaders nominated Donovan as their 1928 candidate for Massachusetts' governor.

The couple received a substantial amount of wedding cash, and because of their spartan ways (and occasional checks from Hapgood's parents), they were able to live on that money over the following year. The cash gave them the means to continue crusading—together—on social causes in which they passionately believed: spreading the ideas of the Socialist Party, letting the general public know about the injustices that led to the deaths of Sacco and Vanzetti, and promoting fair wages, better working conditions, and a democratic labor union for coalminers.

⁶ Letter from Powers Hapgood to his parents, 4 September 1927, Powers Hapgood papers.

In early February, the Hapgoods departed for the Pennsylvania coalfields, where a coal strike was raging. It began in 1927, concurrent with the official UMW strike Lewis declared on April 1 after the Jacksonville Agreement expired. Once again, as they had in the early 1920s, unofficial strikes broke out among the unorganized coalminers, including the IWW strike in Colorado and “insurgent” (non-UMW) strikes in Ohio and Pennsylvania. In Pennsylvania’s anthracite fields, the strike turned violent fast, as UMW loyalists and insurgents openly battled each other for control over coalminers’ hearts, minds, and dues. By 1928, Pennsylvania insurgents had revived the Save Our Union movement. At first, Brophy allied himself with the insurgents, but as the situation careened out of control, Brophy had the good sense to distance himself from this newer union reform iteration. Hapgood, however, once again threw himself into the thick of the turmoil.

At least five people were murdered during this Pennsylvania strike. One rival faction represented District 1, Lewis-endorsed anthracite coalminers whose coalfields encompassed the area between Scranton and Wilkes-Barre. The insurgent, Lewis-hating, bituminous coalmining challengers were headquartered in Pittston, southwest of Wilkes-Barre. In January of 1928, the conflict turned deadly when a Pittston union treasurer was shot to death walking home from a union meeting. His killers were never caught.⁷ Tensions continued to mount after two UMW men, one a local officer, were shot and killed on February 16. Sam Bonito, the president of the rival Pittston union, was arrested, along with Steve Mendola and Adam Mokeski, since they had accompanied Bonito to the UMW office where the

⁷ “Mine Union Leaders are Slain in Feud,” *The New York Times*, 17 February 1928, www.nytimes.com.

shootings took place. Later that day, a UMW miner was found slain, “his throat cut from ear to ear,” and two days later, insurgent coalminer Sam Greco was shot, but he lived.⁸

Hapgood headed the defense committee for Bonita, Mendola, and Mokeski. The ACLU paid for the attorneys, but the ILD and its newspaper, *The Labor Defender*, generated most of the publicity about the case. That year, 1928, the Bonita-Mendola-Mokeski case competed for ILD headlines with anything relating to Sacco and Vanzetti, Tom Mooney, the United States invasion of Nicaragua, the death of Big Bill Haywood, and the cases generated from the Pennsylvania and Colorado coal strikes. (The December *Labor Defender* even ran a photo of Embree and Sablich taken during their east coast fundraising foray.) As the three men’s cases awaited trial, Hapgood’s friends, insurgent leaders Alex Campbell, father of seven, and Peter Reilly, only twenty-six years old, were ambushed on February 29, 1928 while driving to Campbell’s house. So many bullets sprayed the men that Reilly was decapitated and Campbell’s body was nearly unidentifiable.⁹ Once again, their killers were never caught.

A local judge banned public assembly after “angry muttering and audible threats of reprisal and retaliation” arose “from a crowd of nearly 10,000 miners and their families as the body of Alexander Campbell, one of the local victims in the local mine union warfare, was lowered into a grave.”¹⁰ Although Roger Baldwin tried

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ “Two More Killed in Mine Union Feud,” *The New York Times*, 29 February 1928, www.nytimes.com.

¹⁰ “Loud Threats Made at Dead Miner’s Grave,” *The New York Times*, 3 March 1928, www.nytimes.com.

negotiating with local officials for a speaking permit for the insurgents, the judge refused to grant one. In silent protest, Hapgood, Mary Donovan Hapgood, and insurgent mine leader Pete Lichta silently paraded back and forth in front of the hall they had already rented for their meeting. All three wore black armbands. Hapgood's read, "We Mourn Free Speech," and Donovan's and Lichta's read, "Civil Liberty." Local police arrested them, charged them with inciting a riot, and the judge set their bail at \$1,000.¹¹

Newspapers all across the country covered their arrests, and after Hapgood's parents read about them in their local Indianapolis papers, they worriedly wrote their son, offering to pay his and Mary's (but not Lichta's) bail.¹² Hapgood promptly wrote back, telling his folks to keep their money and not to worry. He was right. Soon, as usual, ACLU connections came through, and by March 9, all three were released on bond.¹³ In April, when the three appeared before the court, they were acquitted, since the judge instructed the jury it would be impossible to convict them of inciting a riot since there had been no riot.¹⁴

The legal situation did not bode as well for Sam Bonita. On March 14, Bonita, Mendola, and Moleski were indicted. Although charges against Mendola and Moleski were dropped, on April 15, after forty-four hours of deliberation, Sam Bonita was

¹¹ "Powers Hapgood Jailed in Mine Row," *The New York Times*, 5 March 1928, www.nytimes.com.

¹² Telegram from William Hapgood to Powers Hapgood, 5 March 1928, Powers Hapgood Papers.

¹³ Telegram from Roger Baldwin to Powers Hapgood, 5 March 1928, Powers Hapgood Papers.

¹⁴ "Hapgoods Acquitted of Inciting Coal Riot," *The New York Times*, 13 April 1938, www.nytimes.com.

found guilty of voluntary manslaughter and sentenced to prison.¹⁵ By June, pressured by the bad publicity, the local coal miners, and even Lewis himself, the Pennsylvania UMW District 1 president resigned, and a new president, more sympathetic to the plight of the insurgent Pittston coalminers, was elected in his place, a small, yet substantial victory for the rebels. Less than a week after Bonita's sentencing, the miners went back to work, having won little more than a new leader who pledged not to actively oppose them. Soon, remnants of the insurgents turned toward the Communists, and yet another movement trying to dislodge Lewis began. This time, instead of trying to reform the UMW from within, in line with the new policies being dictated by Stalin from Moscow, American Communists formed their own alternative coalmining union, the National Miners Union.

After all the violence and no successes, on July 19, 1928, Lewis called the national strike off. The *New York Times* headline captured the outcome of the thirteen-month walkout: "Miners Abandon Jacksonville Scale: Union Leaves to the Districts the Rights to Settle with Coal Operators." The strike destroyed any last trace of unity in the coalfields, and since each district was now "free" to negotiate its own contracts, the coalminers' race to the bottom on wages and work conditions began in earnest. Colorado, for a few years, proved the only exception to this decline. Unlike the 1922 settlement, nobody could interpret the 1927-1928 strike as anything less than a complete and total failure for Lewis and the UMW.

The same day Lewis ended the strike, Pennsylvania insurgent coalminer Tony Minerich wrote a letter to his friend Hapgood, trying to convince him to

¹⁵ "Mine Union Leader Guilty of Killing," *The New York Times*, 15 April 1928, *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com.

support the new Pennsylvania coalminer union he had decided to form. Also, in the same letter, he urged Hapgood to move to Colorado. Minerich wrote, "The Colorado boy's [sic] want you to go out there and help them in their fight. They had a talk with rev. Hite or Hist or some name like that and he wants you to go there."¹⁶ Minerich advised, "Powers you must come back into some mining district. I don't care which one but one of them you must work in. You are too well known and liked to stay in Indianapolis," which was not only his childhood home, but also the place where Hapgood often went to visit his parents and lick his wounds.¹⁷ Hapgood asked Brophy what he thought about Minerich's letter. Brophy advised Hapgood not to join the new union, because Communists dominated it, which made it "condemned to futility from the start."¹⁸ Hapgood immediately wrote Minerich back, letting him know he had decided not to support the new union. However, he would attend their kick-off convention in early September, but strictly as an observer.

In August of 1928, Hapgood and Donovan returned to Boston from Indianapolis to lead a Sacco and Vanzetti commemoration ceremony. That same month, the UMW showed signs of life when Josephine Roche's Rocky Mountain Fuel Company signed a contract with the beleaguered union. To point out that it was one of the few new contracts the UMW would gain until 1933 hardly does justice to how much that single victory must have meant to Lewis, who in July, faced nothing but defeats and failed policies. Starting with that 1928 contract, Josephine Roche and John L. Lewis formed a personal and professional bond that lasted Lewis' entire life,

¹⁶ Letter from Anthony Minerich to Powers Hapgood, 19 June 1928, Powers Hapgood papers.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Letter from John Brophy to Powers Hapgood, 20 June 1928, Powers Hapgood papers.

probably because, at both of their darkest hours, they had been able to salvage a limited victory with each other's help.

Frank Palmer wrote Hapgood on September 5, 1928, about the situation in Colorado. He was responding to a letter Hapgood had sent him, asking him specific questions about the new UMW contract at the RMFC, the newly forming Communist coalminers' union's chances of success in Colorado, and Hapgood's personal prospects in Colorado. Although Hapgood's correspondence makes it tough to tell how well Hapgood and Palmer knew each other, Palmer had accompanied Hapgood's mentor John Brophy on the 1927 American Trade Union Delegation trip to the Soviet Union. Upon their return, Hapgood served as the master of ceremonies when the group presented their findings at Madison Square Garden in New York City, and they certainly would have met there even if they hadn't already gotten to know each other previously.¹⁹ However they met, Hapgood knew Palmer well enough to write him for advice, which Palmer gladly provided.

Palmer not only answered all of Hapgood's questions, he offered nothing but encouragement to Hapgood. Palmer believed that, although Colorado coalminers had lost faith in the UMW after "John R. Lawson was robbed of the election as district president," and that their "confidence has never been fully restored," it was also unfair for radicals to label the newly constituted UMW at the RMFC a company union, which both the Communist and IWW newspapers were doing.²⁰ Although the

¹⁹ The delegation also reported its findings in the book, *Russia After Ten Years: Report of the American Trade Union Delegation to the Soviet Union* (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1927).

²⁰ Letter from Frank Palmer to Powers Hapgood, 5 September 1928, Powers Hapgood papers.

company union label was not completely unwarranted, since Roche had largely dictated the terms of the contract, at the same time, Palmer made clear that Roche's recognition of the UMW represented "a radical step in Colorado, there being no other operator going even that far."²¹ The contract had created a closed shop agreement, which meant only UMW members could work at RMFC coalmines.²² That was a victory for organized labor not just in Colorado, but elsewhere in the country, too.

Palmer also expressed his opinion that "If there were a new union, the coal camps would be divided into three groups instead of two; the wobblies are still here and making a desperate effort to survive; the UMWA will soon have 1,000 members in the RM [RMFC] and that will give it a foothold from which it will gather more." Palmer added, "If the new union could get a powerful enough start to make the Colorado miners believe that here was a movement that was going to swing things and be a real power, they might climb aboard the band wagon gladly to escape the battle between the IWW and the UMWA. But that seems rather too much for even its best friends to expect. Or is it?"²³

Palmer let Hapgood know, "So far as you personally are concerned, there are plenty of independent mines in which work can be obtained so that the attitude of the RM [RMFC] would not be final. I doubt whether they would keep you out of their mines, though. That would be a bit strong, and would jar a lot of liberals who are now strong for them." Palmer also answered Hapgood's question about

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

whether I still think you ought to come. I do, enthusiastically. I have a place of service open to you with a group of young folks (where you will not be 'reachable' thru the Lewis machine) that is the most hopeful group I know about anywhere, but which seriously needs just the leadership that you can give. I am delighted to see that you are thinking of settling down in Colorado. I believe here is the opportunity for doing, rather slowly I'll admit the things that you folks will want to do with your lives. The field is small enough so that it can be encompassed; a given task can be accomplished. I am strong for your coming just as soon as possible.²⁴

Palmer enthusiastically encouraged Hapgood to move to Colorado, a sentiment he reiterated with his handwritten "Hurry on out here!" at the bottom of the letter.²⁵ Palmer's letter had the desired effect on Hapgood, because it prompted him to write to Mary, "I do hope we can go to Colorado—for quiet work, and study, and rest. Perhaps I will be far more useful to the movement in the end than agitating for a new union."²⁶

Four days after Palmer wrote his letter, Hapgood went to Pittsburgh to observe the new coalminers' union convention, which was "broken up by a combination of Lewis thugs and policemen before it even got started."²⁷ The *New York Times* reported that the street fight in front of the convention hall resulted in six badly wounded men, one critically, and a stunning 122 arrests.²⁸ Since Hapgood was neither a UMW member nor an insurgent, his new outsider status plunged him even deeper into despair. He wrote to Mary, "I feel so out of things. From one who

²⁴ Letter from Frank Palmer to Powers Hapgood, 5 September 1928, Powers Hapgood papers.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Letter from Powers to Mary Donovan Hapgood, 8 September 1928, Powers Hapgood papers.

²⁷ Letter from Powers Hapgood to Mary Hapgood Donovan, 9 September 1928, Powers Hapgood papers.

²⁸ "Six Miners Injured in Riot over Lewis," The *New York Times*, 10 September 1928, www.nytimes.com.

used to be in the forefront of everything in the coal fields, I'm now considered dead."²⁹

The Hapgoods spent the fall campaigning on Mary's Socialist Party candidacy for the governorship of Massachusetts, perhaps more out of obligation than passion or political efficacy. In what should have been the heat of the campaign season, by October 5, they had already made up their minds to move to Colorado.³⁰ After the election, the couple stayed with her extended family in North Brookfield, Massachusetts, to help take care of Mary's ailing father. They went next to Indianapolis, visiting Powers' parents, working on the Hapgood farm, attending Socialist Party meetings, and undergoing extensive and expensive dental work completed by his parents' dentist and paid for by Hapgood's parents before driving their Whippet to Colorado.

Mary Donovan and Powers Hapgood arrived in Denver, Colorado on January 4, 1929. They did not know it, but they were about to experience the happiest year of their married lives, safely cocooned within Josephine Roche's maternalistic version of industrial democracy. However, even with Roche's blessings and contrary to the opinion Frank Palmer had expressed to Hapgood in September of 1928, Powers and Mary Hapgood soon discovered they were not outside John L. Lewis' reach at all.

In no time at all, the newlyweds were warmly welcomed. Even before finding a place to live, Hapgood spoke at Rev. Heist's Grace Church and the couple accepted

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Letter from Powers Hapgood to Mary Donovan Hapgood, 5 October 1929, Powers Hapgood papers.

several invitations to dine at Josephine Roche's apartment. If Roche imported Hapgood to continue healing divisions within the Denver reformer labor community and to recast her own, as well as the RMFC's image after the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, Hapgood's first week in Denver shows her strategy was working as evidenced in the long, newsy letters Hapgood wrote to his parents describing the discussion-filled evenings he and Mary spent lingering over dinner in Roche's apartment. Those letters continued throughout the couple's year-and-a-half in Colorado, providing a window into both Hapgood's, and Roche's, frame of mind during that period between January of 1929 and the summer of 1930, when the Hapgoods left Colorado for good. On these evenings, Roche usually invited an intimate, yet slowly expanding, circle of friends. Joining the circle of her former Progressive Denver friends, such as the Edward Costigans (as Hapgood referred to them), the John Lawsons (the man Hapgood admired most), and Merle Vincent (whose wife rarely joined the group), included the recent addition of the Ben Cheringtons. Costigan served as the RMFC's attorney, Vincent its president, Lawson its vice president, and Cherington headed the social research group at the University of Denver.

Just three days after their Denver arrival, Hapgood wrote a four-page letter to his father describing their first evening at Roche's: "The subject of conversation most of the evening was the Sacco and Vanzetti case, in which they all were much interested. We admire and like them all very much."³¹ One has to wonder if Hapgoods' hosts were actually interested in the case or gently patronizing the new

³¹ Letter from Powers Hapgood to his father, 9 January 1929, Powers Hapgood papers.

arrivals by engaging them in one of their favorite topics. Hapgood let his father know,

I have said nothing to them about a job, beyond telling John Lawson some days ago that I was looking for one and hoped to get it in one of the Rocky Mountain Fuel Co's mines. They evidently thought it best not to give me one through the main office, and I believe they were right. I have tried about seventeen mines and finally today, got a job at the Industrial Mine at Superior, which is one of the Rocky Mountain Fuel Co's mines. I start work tomorrow on the night shift (from 4 p.m. to 12 Midnight).³²

After a week of living in a downtown Denver hotel, the couple moved to Lafayette, the northern headquarters for the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, into a small, miner's cottage near the center of town. They shared the house with the Richards, an older couple who often left town for extended periods. When the Richards were home, they needed help around the house, which the young couple helped provide. No doubt the Hapgoods' rent for half the house and the garage in back helped the Richards financially, too, since the old man was probably too feeble to work in the coalmines anymore.³³

After getting established with a new house and a new job, Hapgood sent a letter to his father, writing that "The mine doesn't work very often, only one day so far this week, but when it does run I can make more than in most of the other mines I've worked in." ³⁴ Although the UMW contract brought above average wages to the RMFC coalminers, it had not fixed the problem of unreliable work. All kinds of work conditions made for spotty work schedules in the coalmines, from the weather (if it

³² Ibid.

³³ Check receipts for Powers and Mary Donovan Hapgood for the month of February of 1928 show they paid \$9.25 for half the house and garage rent, Powers Hapgood papers.

³⁴ Letter from Powers Hapgood to parents, 16 January 1929, Powers Hapgood papers.

was warm, people did not need coal), to geology (sometimes the miners hit a coal seam that was unworkable, so they would have to strike out in a different direction underground), or to technology (machines broke down, work spaces needed to be constructed, new openings had to be dynamited and then reinforced with timbered tunnels, etc.). In the 1920s, coalminers fought hard for a living wage, but they also fought for a steady work schedule. A high daily rate meant little if a miner only worked one to three days a week, six months out of the year.

Hapgood wrote, "Everytime we telephone or see Miss Roche about anything she urges us to stay with her for supper. Sunday night we had supper with her and again last night (Tuesday)." ³⁵ In the first two weeks in Colorado, not only did the couple frequently call Roche, they had already dined with her on at least four occasions. During one of these dinners, Roche implored Mary to work for her, "making a scrap book from back numbers of the *Survey, Nation, New Republic, and Colorado Labor Advocate*. This, of course, can be done at home, but Miss Roche offered Mary \$50 a week and handed her an envelope with \$100 for two week work in advance." ³⁶ Although Mary protested, insisting she would be glad to do it for nothing, "Roche insisted." Hapgood added, "I think later on, when the health and medical plans that she is working on for the miners' families become more advanced, she will want Mary to help her with that." ³⁷ Since even under the new UMW contract, coalminers only earned \$7 a day, Mary would be earning more than

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

Hapgood. Clearly, Roche was subsidizing the Hapgoods, but they seemed too naïve to notice.

Hapgood thought Roche, Vincent, Costigan, Cherington, but especially Lawson were all wonderful people. Lawson appealed to Hapgood for the same reason he appealed to almost all the local coalminers: He remained the legendary hero of the 1910-1914 strike. Hapgood reminded his father that Lawson “was framed up and convicted of murder in the 1914 strike. John Lawson’s speech to the court is very fine,” and “I’m enclosing a copy of it given us by Miss Roche.”³⁸ Interestingly, Roche still had printed handbills of that ten-year-old speech to distribute. Costigan wrote it for Lawson to deliver at the sentencing phase of Lawson’s 1917 murder trial.³⁹ Although the jury convicted Lawson, he never suffered the fate of Tom Mooney, who maintained a lively correspondence with Mary Donovan Hapgood, or Warren Billings, both convicted and sentenced to death, a sentence President Wilson commuted to life the same year as Lawson’s trial. Unlike the lawyers for Mooney and Billings or later for the IWWs, Costigan combined his social outrage with legal savvy, so he knew better than to rely exclusively upon Lawson’s speech to sway the jury. After Lawson’s conviction, Costigan appealed the verdict on a legal technicality that resulted in Lawson’s acquittal. Lawson literally owed Costigan his life, but he also owed Roche for salvaging a career that Lewis had nearly destroyed.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Roche wrote that Costigan had written Lawson’s speech, “John R. Lawson’s Reply to Judge Hillyer, July 12, 1915, Trinidad, Colorado,” 12-5, Josephine Roche papers.

Hapgood clearly worshipped Lawson, but Lawson's relationship to Hapgood is more ambiguous. Hapgood admired Lawson as the militant UMW leader who had led one of the most famous strikes in US history. Probably even more significant for Hapgood, Lewis had kicked them both out of the UMW.⁴⁰ Powers and Mary had become personally acquainted with Lawson and his wife Olive over the many dinners at Roche's, where one might imagine Lawson regaling the Hapgoods with stories from the long strike. In a letter to his father, Hapgood described Lawson as a "big, serious, kindly man" who "happened to meet Mary and me in the company store the other day and told Miss Roche later on, 'I saw our children in Lafayette today.'"⁴¹

What a tantalizing comment! At the risk of blowing it completely out of proportion, consider its implications. The whole concept of company stores—along with company housing, churches, schools, etc.—was fraught with negative, paternalistic history. The Ludlow coalminers and their families lived in tents that the UMW had provided, shipping them west from the West Virginia strike, when CF&I evicted them from their company housing after the strike started. Numerous strikes in the past had been waged not just for union recognition, but also for the rights of coalminers and their families to shop anywhere they chose using money, not company scrip redeemable only in over-priced company stores. Yet company stores like the RMFC's in Lafayette still existed. They were convenient and would extend credit to miners like Hapgood who had not been paid yet or who found themselves short on cash until pay day, a common occurrence.

⁴⁰ Letter from Powers Hapgood to his parents, 16 January 1928, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁴¹ Ibid.

We cannot know what tone Lawson used when telling Roche he had seen “our children” in the RMFC company store or the tone Roche used when relaying Lawson’s comment to Hapgood, but Hapgood seemed to employ a purely informational tone when relating the anecdote to his father. So, in spite of their ages, marital status, and experiences since college, the people who liked, admired, socialized with, and even employed Powers and Mary Donovan Hapgood did not consider them fully adult yet. Furthermore, the Hapgoods did not seem to mind, perhaps showing just how utterly enthralled they were being part of Roche’s maternalistic version of industrial democracy.

In Powers Hapgood’s papers, there are several letters urging him to move to Colorado, yet there is no saved correspondence between him and Roche asking him to move, although her behavior after the Hapgoods arrived makes it clear that she had wanted them to come. Roche had several compelling reasons for the Hapgoods’ presence at the RMFC. She still desperately needed money, and after the 1929 stock market crash, her New York City connections seemed to dry up, even though she still promoted the RMFC as an experiment in industrial democracy. William Hapgood, Jr., Powers Hapgood’s father, had been calling the way he ran his company “the experiment” for years, too, and he had very publicly been urging others to follow his example. Perhaps the elder Hapgood believed Roche was following in his footsteps when on October 25, 1929, the Columbia Conserve Canning company

loaned the RMFC \$20,000.⁴² By making such a huge loan to Roche's UMW-contracted RMFC, was he also trying to buy a safe haven for his troubled son?

Hapgood's father wasn't Roche's only influential donor who might have been looking out for Powers. Hapgood's good friend Evelyn Preston had also loaned a lot of money to Roche. Preston had also given money to Hapgood's mentor John Brophy both to write—although he hadn't written anything yet—and to establish a labor college in Pittsburgh, which failed.⁴³ Although Powers Hapgood maintained a close friendship with Roger Baldwin, the director of the Civil Liberties Union (and Preston's money financed that organization, too), he was even closer to Evelyn Preston. He had spent many pleasurable weekends at various Preston country estates and she clearly delighted in his company.⁴⁴

How rich was Preston? Rich enough, apparently, to defy social customs when she got pregnant and had a baby outside of marriage. She had told Powers that Steve Rauschenbusch, a well connected, but married man, was the father, and as soon as he had arranged a divorce, they would marry. They did wed after the baby was born, and Evelyn soon had another son. However, Evie (as her friends called her) and Steve rarely lived together, Preston never change her last name to Rauschenbusch, and their relationship was as unconventional as that between Baldwin and his wife. Circumstantial evidence suggests Baldwin fathered Preston's two boys, but

⁴² In footnote 21 to chapter 6, Bussel writes the following: "Columbia Conserve not only provided Rocky Mountain Fuel with moral support but even granted Josephine Roche a \$20,000 interest-free loan in 1929 to assist the company through a lean period. See Minutes, Special Business Council Meeting, October 25, 1929, CCC Papers."

⁴³ Letter from John Brophy to the American Fund for Public Service, Inc., 30 April 1928, John Brophy papers, 1-3.

⁴⁴ Letters from Powers Hapgood to his parents, 10 July 1927 & 17 July 1927, Powers Hapgood papers.

Hapgood, the guileless innocent as always, never suspected any such thing, even when he, Baldwin, and Preston spent long, leisurely weekends together without either of their spouses, when she “vanished to an apartment in the East Side when she became pregnant and lived there without anyone except a few intimates knowing anything about it,” and when she, incredibly, named her firstborn son Roger Baldwin⁴⁵ Since Hapgood was close to Preston and Baldwin, had either, or both, asked Roche to hire Hapgood?

Hiring Hapgood also potentially solved another thorny problem for Roche. Baldwin and Hapgood had been friends since 1921. Baldwin’s ACLU had encouraged Hapgood to serve, repeatedly, as a test case for the organization’s lawsuits, starting with the 1922 Pennsylvania strike, through the 1927 Sacco and Vanzetti protests, and as late as the 1928 insurgent coalminer strike in Pennsylvania. In 1927, through its Colorado representative, Rev. A.A. Heist, the ACLU had brought a series of lawsuits surrounding the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike and the Columbine Massacre. The ACLU represented Frank Palmer and others jailed without charges after the massacre, and it had won that important case. Yet, in 1929, after many letters exchanged between Roche and Baldwin, after Costigan met with Baldwin personally, and after Baldwin wrote the Denver ACLU attorney requesting he reconsider including the RMFC in its lawsuits (and then sending a copy of that letter to Roche), the ACLU withdrew as a plaintiff from the rest of the over twenty-one pending lawsuits.⁴⁶ So while there is no smoking gun linking the withdrawal of these

⁴⁵ Letter from Powers Hapgood to his parents, 29 June 1930, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁴⁶ “21 New Strike Death Suits Being Drawn,” The [Denver] Rocky Mountain News, 1 November 1928, 15-2, Josephine Roche Papers; Letter from Roger Baldwin to Josephine

lawsuits to Roche's hiring of Hapgood, the timing is, at the very least, interesting to consider. Had Roche hired Hapgood to halt the ACLU lawsuits? If so, it worked.

Powers Hapgood also brought important influence among the coalminers to Roche's RMFC, something Gerry Allander, who mined coal in nearby Frederick, a mining town ten miles from Lafayette, understood very well. Allander enthusiastically participated in the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, served as a delegate to the 1928 National Miners Union coalminers' convention that Lewis thugs had broken up, and had recently suffered expulsion from the Communist Party since he was a James Cannon acolyte (and Cannon and his followers had just been expelled for being Trotskyites). When Allander first heard Hapgood was coming to Colorado, he concluded that "if the R.M.F. [RMFC] openly and publicly invites Hapgood to work in its pits it is a clever maneuver to further disintegrate the organizational independence of the Colorado miners."⁴⁷ Was Allander's analysis correct? Hapgood was famous, he had openly and famously defied Lewis (and received terrible beatings for it), and he, as well as Mary (who was also famous in her own right), had fought passionately on behalf of Sacco and Vanzetti. Roche knew that the 1927-1928 strike began as a Sacco and Vanzetti walkout and that the coalminers still distrusted the Lewis Machine. Hiring Hapgood, whose desire, above all else, was reinstitution into the UMW, could help settle lingering suspicions and

Roche 20 October 1928, Telegram from Josephine Roche to Roger Baldwin, 29 October 1928, Telegram from Josephine Roche to Roger Baldwin, 29 October 1928, Telegram from Josephine Roche to Roger Baldwin, 2 November 1928, Letter from Roger Baldwin to Josephine Roche 30 October 1928, Telegram from Roger Baldwin to Josephine Roche 7 November 1928, Letter from Roger Baldwin to Fred Caldwell (IWW/ACLU attorney), 14 November 1928, 15-9, Josephine Roche papers.

⁴⁷ Letter from Gerry Allard to Powers Hapgood, 19 February 1929, Powers Hapgood papers.

realign conflicting loyalties among the miners. If Hapgood wholeheartedly supported the RMFC and the UMW, maybe they should, too. Hapgood could defuse and confuse the radicals who had united during the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike. In summary, hiring Hapgood bolstered Roche's reputation as a social reformer intent upon instituting her own experiment in industrial democracy, it satisfied several key, liberal donors who had loaned Roche money to help keep her company afloat, and it may have halted the ACLU lawsuits that plagued the RMFC. Perhaps Josephine Roche's hiring of Powers Hapgood was as brilliant as hiring John Lawson.

Over long dinners, Roche, Vincent, Costigan, and Lawson made the Hapgoods their confidants, discussing the many problems facing the RMFC. One of those problems included what to do with the Wobblies who had gone on strike, now that the RMFC was operating under a strictly closed shop arrangement with the UMW. The Roche group convincingly persuaded the Hapgoods that they were "remarkably understanding and anxious to do the right thing," but

Often they are faced with the problem of doing what appears to be and is an injustice to an individual in order to do justice to the whole group. For instance a few Mexican I.W.W.s who were active in the last strike here haven't been able to get work because their places had been filled by old natives who had been black-listed from the strikes of 1915 and 1922. There certainly is no discrimination, however, even though some of the men affected think there is, and "quite naturally think so" in the words of Mr. Vincent.⁴⁸

The remaining Wobblies charged that Vincent openly fired them, even in highly visible situations. For example, early in September of 1928, less than a month after the UMW contract went into effect, the IWW newspaper *Industrial Worker*

⁴⁸ Letter from Powers Hapgood to his parents, 16 January 1928, Powers Hapgood papers.

claimed that although Charles Metz, a Wobbly, had been democratically elected as the Columbine's checkweighman, Merle Vincent had fired him and replaced him with a UMW member.⁴⁹ As the letter Hapgood wrote to his father shows, many of the fired, or non-RMFC-hired coalminers were also Mexican-Americans, a group that had comprised over half of the striking coalminers. One of the most radical features of the 1927-1928 strike had been the unity among the striking "white" coalminers, the Mexican-American coalminers, and the Mexican immigrant beet workers, an alliance that threatened both the coalmine operators and the large agricultural interests throughout the state. Although difficult to prove, coalminers believed that the Mexicans were being brought to the beet fields to undermine their already tenuous jobs in the mines. Both beet work and coal mining were seasonal: They worked half the year, but they worked different halves. If Mexicans would pick beets in the spring and summer and mine coal in the fall and winter, both the large agricultural and coal mining interests could get cheap labor year around.⁵⁰ That was one reason why the Mexican contract workers going out on strike with the IWW coalminers so terrified employers. Although Vincent claimed he only wanted to do the right thing by re-hiring back blacklisted during earlier strikes, employment records at the RMFC were incomplete, so it is highly unlikely any kind of reliable seniority list was available on which to make hiring decisions. It seems far more

⁴⁹ "Warning to Colorado Miners," *Industrial Worker*, 1 September 1928: 1, Josephine Roche papers.

⁵⁰ Local historian and Lafayette Historical Museum tour guide Beth Hutchinson swears that her brother, who worked for Great Western Sugar, told her it was "common knowledge" that both the sugar and coal interests hoped Mexican contract labor would provide cheap, seasonal labor for both industries. I have looked, but not found, any written evidence of such agreements, although they certainly sound plausible.

likely that the RMFC systematically used mandatory membership in the UMW to weed out Mexican-Americans and former Wobblies, all under the banner of fairness. And Hapgood bought it.

Perhaps it was the potential of being allowed back into the UMW that convinced Hapgood to move to Colorado. However, by early February, a mere month after Powers Hapgood's arrival, trouble was afoot. Through the UMW grapevine, Lewis heard that the RMFC had hired Hapgood, and he was not happy about it. Hapgood wrote Brophy, asking his advice. Brophy advised Hapgood to keep a low profile and let Lewis make the first move. Hapgood appears not to have followed Brophy's advice, since on February 13, 1929, the *Denver Post* ran a lengthy feature article, accompanied with photos, about Powers and Mary. The photo collage captions read as follows:

"Here's your lunch," says the first woman candidate for governor of Massachusetts to her Harvard graduate husband, and the picture at the bottom shows that the said husband grins a happy reply and is all ready for a night's work digging coal. The gubernatorial candidate is Mary Donovan Hapgood and her husband is Powers Hapgood, scion of a famous literary family. They are living in Lafayette and Hapgood is working as an ordinary miner at Superior, Colo. At the upper left is a glimpse of the little frame house which the Hapgoods occupy with another family. In the center is a closeup of the miner member of the family who is devoting his life to the union labor movement. At the right is the Industrial mine, where he works alongside a couple of Mexicans, and Irishman, two Frenchmen, among others.⁵¹

So much for maintaining a low profile. Whoever initiated the story, if Lewis had been applying quiet pressure on Roche to fire Hapgood, Lewis would now have to do so publicly. Even without the story, however, Hapgood was hard to miss. He

⁵¹ L.A. Chapin, "Hapgood, Son of Rich Canner, Works in Mine," *The Denver Post*, 13 February 1929, Powers Hapgood papers.

spoke frequently to local civic organizations and student groups at the University of Colorado in Boulder and he became a veritable regular on the podium at Grace Church.⁵² Clearly, the Hapgoods were publicity hounds, and Hapgood's background, as well as the couple's involvement with the Sacco and Vanzetti case, made it hard for them to disappear, even if they had wanted to. However, it is not entirely clear how hard they tried.

Apparently in late February Hapgood wrote the UMW International office headquarters in Indianapolis, requesting that the executive board reinstate his membership, since he had been mining for two months in a UMW coalmine. The executive board answered no, then it further expounded, in measured yet vicious detail, upon the many reasons why Hapgood's membership was still being denied: Hapgood had been involved with almost every serious insurgent and dual movement against the UMW; his protestations of being a loyal UMW member rang hollow; and furthermore, there were plenty of real, unemployed, and loyal UMW coalminers who needed to work more than Powers Hapgood, "a man of means."⁵³

Once again, Hapgood wrote Brophy for advice on how to respond. Brophy replied that since "All Lewis understands is power," all the "non-essential personal matters" that had been dragged into the letter were only meant to appeal "to the prejudice and suspicion of the average run of miners. I would advise that you reduce your reply to these personal matters to a minimum and that you devote your main

⁵² Powers Hapgood wrote his parents at least twice a week, and in almost every letter he mentions that he has been a speaker somewhere, usually at Grace Church, but also at the University of Denver, the University of Colorado, or at local meetings.

⁵³ Letter from Thos. Kennedy, Sec-Treas., UMWA, to Powers Hapgood, 9 March 1929, Powers Hapgood papers.

work to a statement of the progressive program and policy, which of course includes a devastating criticism of the Lewis policy.”⁵⁴ Once again, Hapgood ignored Brophy’s sound advice. On legal-sized paper, Hapgood wrote a seven-page, single-space response, refuting, point-by-point, in excruciating detail, each of the charges against him.⁵⁵

On the one hand, in March of 1929, Hapgood was very unhappy because the UMW had refused to reinstate him. On the other, he and Mary were very happy in Lafayette. In spite of her terrible nausea, they turned downright giddy when they discovered the reason for it. Mary was pregnant and due in October.⁵⁶ Josephine Roche chose the doctor and hospital Mary should use, and Mary gratefully took her advice.⁵⁷ During her pregnancy, Powers was home often. Most coalminers were upset when they did not work, because it meant no money or food on the table, but not Powers. When the mine was not working, he and Mary stayed home and read to each other and talked about their future plans.⁵⁸ Both faithfully wrote letters daily to their friends and family and received them in kind.

One of Mary’s many correspondents included Mary Gallagher, who served as the secretary-treasurer of the Tom Mooney Molders’ (Mooney had been a member of the molders’ union) Defense Committee. Gallagher wrote Donovan on March 23, the very day Donovan had found out she was pregnant, asking her to “tell the good

⁵⁴ Letter from John Brophy to Powers Hapgood, 18 March 1929, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁵⁵ Letter from Powers Hapgood to the Members of the International Executive Board, United Mine Workers of America, 30 March 1929, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁵⁶ Letter from Powers Hapgood to William Hapgood, 23 March 1929, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁵⁷ Letter from Powers Hapgood to his parents, 30 July 1928, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁵⁸ Letter from Powers Hapgood to his mother, 19 March 1929, Powers Hapgood papers.

people of Lafayette that their old friend Byron Kitto is still a bed patient in the Sanitarium in Duarte, California and is not progressing as well as we would like to see.”⁵⁹ Later, as an old woman providing an oral interview to a University of California, Berkeley, oral history project, Gallagher recalled that she had been by Kitto’s bedside when, at only thirty-one years of age, he died of tuberculosis, which she said he contracted in the terrible jail conditions during the Colorado strike. After his 1931 death, Gallagher arranged for some of Kitto’s ashes to be sent to Lafayette, where they were sprinkled over the unmarked graves of four of the five victims—Jerry Davis, Nick Spanudakhis, John Eastenes, and Frank Kovich—of the Columbine Massacre. The fifth victim, Ray Jacques, had been buried separately near family members in a nearby family plot in the Louisville cemetery. In a very different kind of memorial, the locals say that Ray’s mother kept her son’s bloody, bullet-ridden overalls hanging on her back laundry porch the rest of her life.⁶⁰

Besides keeping up with their correspondence, the Hapgoods socialized often. They drove to Denver for dinner at Roche’s apartment, and sometimes, the Roche crowd dined with the Hapgoods in their modest miner’s cottage. Their landlords, the Richards, often left for weeks at a time and in their absence, they encouraged the younger couple to make use of the entire house, including their good china, when they hosted evenings with the Roche crowd that they called “‘family’

⁵⁹ Letter from Mary E. Gallagher to Mary Donovan Hapgood, 23 March 1929, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁶⁰ Beth Hutchinson related this story during one of her many volunteer stints at the Lafayette Historical Society.

parties.”⁶¹ The Hapgoods also occasionally socialized with the local miners and their families. Mary baked pies for the neighborhood children, especially two Mexican-American girls down the street whose widowed father left them alone while he worked in the mines.⁶² The Baptist preacher stopped by sometimes, unsuccessfully trying to persuade the atheistic Hapgoods to come to church.⁶³ When notable speakers passed through Denver, Powers and Mary went to hear them, and because of their own fame, socialized with them, too. In spite of not being able to re-join the UMW, which probably had been one of the main reasons Hapgood moved to Colorado, living in Lafayette turned out to be the happiest time in Powers and Mary’s lives.

When Merle Vincent heard that the UMW had denied Hapgood’s reinstatement request, he asked Hapgood to quietly resign at the RMFC-owned Industrial coalmine.⁶⁴ Instead of following Brophy’s advice—forcing Lewis to go public with his reasons—Hapgood complied with Vincent’s request.⁶⁵ Within the week, Hapgood got a new job mining coal for a nearby, non-union, non-RMFC coalmine. Hapgood’s new status actually benefitted Roche, since it provided

⁶¹ Letter from Powers Hapgood to Eleanor Hapgood, 23 March 1928, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁶² Letter from Powers Hapgood to Eleanor Hapgood, no date [April 1929?]; Letter from Mary Donovan Hapgood to Eleanor Hapgood, 16 February 1928, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Letter from Powers Hapgood to Eleanor Hapgood, 13 March 1928, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁶⁵ Letter from John Brophy to Powers Hapgood, 3 February 1929, Powers Hapgood papers.

Hapgood stronger legal standing to bring a petition before the state's industrial commission on behalf of the non-union northern coalminers.⁶⁶

Roche understood that she could not continue to be the only unionized mine operator in the northern Colorado coalfields. Therefore, guided by the advice and cooperation from the newly active UMW officers in Colorado and friendly faces on both the State Federation of Labor and two of the three Colorado industrial commissioners, the RMFC orchestrated a hearing scheduled for April of 1930 before the state industrial commission. Supposedly spontaneously and entirely on their own (although everybody involved in the process knew otherwise), non-union coalminers working in the northern fields presented a petition before the state industrial commission, requesting that their wages be equalized with the men who worked at the RMFC.⁶⁷ Hapgood would be a star witness, and he spent much of his free time preparing his testimony, since "a good deal is expected of me by my friends," which included Lawson, Vincent, and Roche.⁶⁸

The hearings were held on April 23, 1929, with Hapgood, Merle Vincent, and Percy Tetlow, a UMW official and Lewis loyalist, providing most of the testimony.⁶⁹ Hapgood testified that the pay and working conditions were far superior in the UMW mines at the RMFC to those in the non-union mines, and he should know, since he had worked in both. If the RMFC could afford to pay its workers a union wage and still run a profitable business, he testified, so could its competitors. After his

⁶⁶ Letter from Powers Hapgood to William Hapgood, 23 March 1929, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Letter from Mary Donovan Hapgood to Eleanor Hapgood, 25 April 1929, Powers Hapgood papers.

prepared remarks, Hapgood conversed a long time with Tetlow, and Mary optimistically thought he had made a “good impression” with him.⁷⁰

Since the mines closed when the weather turned warm, immediately after his testimony, Powers and Mary drove to her father’s house in Massachusetts where they stayed for two months to give Mary’s sister a well-deserved break from taking care of their housebound father.⁷¹ They planted a garden, played with the many dogs on the farm (Hapgood loved dogs), and visited with family and friends. They also continued writing letters, trying to further the fortunes of the RMFC that had been so good to them. For example, Norman Thomas, head of the Socialist Party as well as an activist in the League for Industrial Democracy, wrote Hapgood, “I failed to get any money for Miss Roche out of the American [the Garland] Fund, much to my sorrow, but I think she was pretty successful elsewhere.”⁷²

From North Brookfield, they drove to Indianapolis to visit Hapgood’s parents, and while there, Hapgood made a personal visit to the UMW headquarters. Apparently, he asked to speak personally to Lewis. The receptionist said Lewis was not there, but she delivered Hapgood’s personal letter to him.⁷³ By the time the Hapgoods had returned to the Richards’ house in Lafayette in the fall, the beginning of coalmining season, Lewis’ reply awaited them. After carefully reviewing Hapgood’s letter (the single-spaced, point-by-point, seven-page refutation he had written in response to the executive board letter denying his UMW reinstatement in

⁷⁰ Letter from Mary Donovan Hapgood to Eleanor Hapgood, 25 April 1929, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Letter from Norman Thomas to Powers Hapgood, 3 June 1929, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁷³ Letter from John L. Lewis to Powers Hapgood, 29 June 1929, Powers Hapgood papers.

March), and after speaking (as Hapgood had requested) to Percy Tetlow, the UMW executive board still stood by its earlier decision denying his reinstatement.⁷⁴

As Hapgood continued his quest for UMW membership, the relationship between Hapgood and Brophy changed. Hapgood stopped asking his mentor for advice. Brophy had given up trying to write or run a labor college for a living (both pursuits financed by Evelyn Preston). Flat broke, Brophy needed a job to support his family, so he took Powers up on his standing offer, and he went to work for Powers' father, William Hapgood, Jr., at the Columbia Conserve in October of 1929. Brophy was so broke, Powers even paid his way to Indianapolis, something for which Brophy thanked him profusely. Brophy wrote Hapgood that his check had arrived when he was down to his last dime, and "I'll consider it a loan, unless I find I can't pay it back."⁷⁵ In Indianapolis, Brophy would be joining several other Hapgood friends, including Mary's brother Dan, who already worked at the CCC. Although Hapgood readily arranged jobs for his friends and in-laws, he still showed no propensity to work for his father, and even as he arranged for Brophy's job, he returned to Lafayette, Colorado.

Hapgood's April testimony before Colorado's industrial commission, testimony in which Roche had placed so much faith, had proved futile. In a split decision, two of the three industrial commissioners agreed with Roche, Vincent, Tetlow, and Hapgood. Their award stated that the operators of the coalmines where coalminers had brought forth petitions (that Hapgood had gathered) "shall allow the

⁷⁴ Letter from John L. Lewis to Powers Hapgood, 20 September 1929, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁷⁵ Letter from John Brophy to Powers Hapgood, 29 October 1929, Powers Hapgood papers.

right of collective bargaining, pay the same wage scale, and grant the working conditions now in force in the mines of the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company.”⁷⁶ However, the award was not worth the paper it was written on. As Roche wrote to Edward Keating, “None of the operators have granted their miners our wage scale nor have they shown the slightest interest in the commission’s award.” The “commission cannot enforce” its award, she wrote, demonstrating that a decision in the operators’ favor got “vigorously enforced against striking miners,” but was “ignored” by the operators when it “favored the miners.”⁷⁷

Perhaps because there was no longer any benefit to Hapgood working in a non-union coalmine, the RMFC re-hired Hapgood, but this time, for the professional side of the coalmining business. To learn more about that aspect of coalmining, Hapgood began taking a correspondence course, which he passed in March of 1930.⁷⁸ That certificate officially qualified him to do the work he was already performing as a surveyor and assistant engineer at the RMFC. Even in his new, professional role, Hapgood wanted to stay active in the labor movement, so he sought information on how he could form a local union of the Engineers, Architects,

⁷⁶ *In the Matter of the Employes (1929 spelling) of the Centennial Mine, Employes, vs. the Operators of the Centennial Mine, State of Colorado, s.s., Before the Industrial commission of Colorado, File No. 1406, Findings and Award, 5*, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁷⁷ Telegram from Josephine Roche to Edward Keating, 3 August 1929, Josephine Roche papers, 4-1.

⁷⁸ Letter from Mary Donovan Hapgood to Powers Hapgood, 10 March 1930, Powers Hapgood papers.

and Draftsmen in Colorado.⁷⁹ By February of 1930, he was back in the labor union movement again, this time as president of the new local he had just formed.⁸⁰

Learning the professional side of the mining business helped Hapgood broaden his perspective about all aspects of coalmining, and he thoroughly enjoyed his work. Most of all, he loved being a new father. In October, Mary gave birth to a daughter, who they named Mary Barta (after Bartolomeo Vanzetti) Hapgood.

Powers' mother hated the name Barta, but Roche, who sent both mother and baby a dozen roses each, told the happy couple she thought it was a delightful name.⁸¹

Hapgood was so uncharacteristically giddy, on the day Barta was born, he wrote his mother a silly, lighthearted letter as if it were written by baby Barta.⁸² Yet, this happiness would not last.

Hapgood's coalmining friends kept goading him to abandon his professional, contented, homebody Lafayette existence and come join them in their newest efforts to dislodge Lewis. This time, it was not the Pennsylvania Communists who wanted him to come work with them, but the discontented Lewis haters in Illinois, Lewis' home state. They had hatched an interesting plan. It seemed that after the wake of the 1929 stock market crash, Lewis had violated the UMW's constitutional rules by not holding a convention. Although it is likely the dwindling number of UMW coalminers could not have afforded to attend such a convention even if Lewis had

⁷⁹ Letter from C. L. Rosemund to Powers Hapgood, 25 November 1929, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁸⁰ Letter from Oscar Ameringer to Powers Hapgood, 21 February 1930, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁸¹ Letter from Powers Hapgood to Eleanor Hapgood 30 July 1929; Telegram from Powers Hapgood to Elizabeth Donovan, 22 October 1929, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁸² Telegram from Powers Hapgood to Elizabeth Donovan, 22 October 1929; Letter from Powers Hapgood to Eleanor Hapgood, 23 October 1929, Powers Hapgood papers.

convened it, the insurgents saw an opening. They argued that by not calling the convention, Lewis had violated the UMW's bylaws; therefore, the UMW no longer legally existed. Since they were going to hold a convention in 1930, they would become the new UMW.

The Illinois insurgents were giving Lewis a taste of his own medicine. Lewis had perfected similar letter-rather-than-spirit-of-the-law types of maneuvers to expel potential UMW rivals such as Lawson, Doyle, Brophy, and Hapgood before he appropriated their districts. In a move they must have relished, the Illinois miners planned on using Lewis' rules' violation as a means to reconstitute a new, improved UMW under the leadership of none other than the expelled UMW Kansas leader Alexander Howat.

Although Hapgood was happy with his Colorado life, he continued corresponding with the Illinois insurgents. After struggling over his decision for several months, Hapgood decided to attend the new miners' convention in March of 1930. Once there, all his reservations about joining the new insurgent group seemed to melt away. That was not true for Brophy, who also attended. Brophy left as soon as the group voted to include former UMW Illinois leader Frank Farrington and his followers, since Brophy considered Farrington as corrupt and despicable as Lewis.

Not only did Hapgood attend the convention, he immediately joined the movement. That Howat would be the new president was a forgone conclusion, but various friends urged Hapgood to run for vice president. His opponent, Adolf

Germer, trounced him in the vote, leaving Hapgood feeling somewhat “chagrined.”⁸³ Former UMW stalwart John Walker won the Secretary-Treasurer spot, and the new union tapped Hapgood to write the new union’s constitution.⁸⁴ The leadership also asked Hapgood to become a paid organizer for them, and on March 17, 1930, Powers accepted the position of organizer for the newly constituted United Mine Workers of America headquartered in Springfield, Illinois. The next day, the new organization reinstated Hapgood’s (non-Lewis) UMW membership.⁸⁵ In keeping with their claim to legitimacy, the new UMW letterhead logo informing Hapgood of his newly reinstated status looked indistinguishable from Lewis’ Indianapolis UMW logo.

Hapgood immediately started sending pathetic letters home, writing Mary that he just wanted to be home with her and “Bartabug.” He wrote as if he had no choice, expressing sentiments such as, “I can’t stand the thought of being an organizer, but it seems to be expected of me and I don’t know what else to do.”⁸⁶ Howat told Hapgood he could organize either in Pennsylvania or the northern Colorado coalfields, so he could rejoin his family. But as much as he said he wanted to be with his family, Hapgood chose not to organize in Colorado, perhaps because that would be undercutting Roche and his other new friends there.⁸⁷

⁸³ Letter from Powers Hapgood to Mary Donovan Hapgood, Saturday night [18 March 1930?], Powers Hapgood papers.

⁸⁴ Letter from Powers Hapgood to Mary Donovan Hapgood, n.d. March 1930, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁸⁵ Letter certifying Powers Hapgood was reinstated in the new UMA, 18 March 1930, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁸⁶ Letter from Powers Hapgood to Mary Donovan Hapgood, 16 March 1930, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Although at first, Howat had told Hapgood he could work in Pennsylvania, where he had organized throughout the twenties and still had strong ties, Howat reneged and asked Hapgood to stay in Illinois where he was needed most. Hapgood found himself trying to convince UMW members in Illinois, the last Lewis stronghold, to switch allegiances to the new UMW. Although most of the time that involved missionary work, since Lewis' men controlled most public places, another way he tried organizing was by appealing directly to the mine operators, by explaining the details of the "Roche" plan, which he urged them to adopt.⁸⁸ He also tried another novel strategy: He bought radio time, and delivered his new UMW message to the coalminers' homes, to men who were afraid to be seen in public and open-air meetings. Hapgood said it was the most effective thing he had done as an organizer.⁸⁹

Even though Mary had acted neutrally when Hapgood asked her if he should leave Lafayette and join the new miners' group, she soon made it clear that she was unhappy with Hapgood's decision. The reason she gave him was that the new organization, because it embraced Frank Farrar, the former Illinois UMW kingpin wheeler-dealer, was potentially as corrupt as the old UMW it professed to replace. "It would be tragic," Mary wrote to Powers, "if you found that you had given up everything in Colorado to try to work with a gang no better than Lewis's."⁹⁰ Although Farrar's inclusion was the same reason Brophy had walked out of the

⁸⁸ Letter from Powers Hapgood to his father, 12 June 1930, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁸⁹ Letters from Powers Hapgood to Mary Donovan Hapgood, 5 May 1930 & 7 May 1930, Power Hapgood papers.

⁹⁰ Letter from Mary Donovan Hapgood to Powers Hapgood, 23 April 1930, Powers Hapgood papers.

March of 1930 foundational convention, too, the reasons she did not share probably had to do with being left home alone with a six-month-old baby.⁹¹ They had been so happy together in Lafayette, and now, their future together was uncertain.

Hapgood found his Illinois work among the infighting UMW factions so unrewarding that Howat sent him to Kentucky, where a spontaneous coalminers' walkout was in progress. Sometime during that strike, he brought home to Mary a baby boy, just months older than Barta, to join their family. By then, Mary was back living at the family farm in Massachusetts, where she had returned for her father's funeral. Hapgood never wrote about the desperate circumstances that must have prompted Hapgood to take the child away from his mother in Kentucky, but it took several, anxious years for the adoption of their second child, who they named Donovan, to be finalized.⁹²

Unlike Barta's first six months, when he was home every day, Hapgood missed most of baby Donovan's infancy. In fact, he missed most of Barta and Donovan's childhoods, since, from 1930 onward, he was almost always traveling as an organizer. This new arrangement frustrated Mary. She missed her husband and she knew Hapgood was working hard for the causes they both believed in, but she wanted to work for them, too. On August 15, 1930, Mary wrote Powers, "It's three years since you said to me, 'My name's Powers Hapgood—Is there anything I can

⁹¹ Letters from Powers Hapgood to Mary Donovan Hapgood, 13 March 1930 & 14 March 1930, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁹² Letter from Powers Hapgood to Mr. J.H. Switzer (in Paducah, Kentucky), 13 November 1933, Powers Hapgood papers.

do?”⁹³ Now with two young children at home, living once again on her family’s Massachusetts farm and her husband away from her and the children for almost a year, Mary wrote to Powers, “I want to be doing some work for the working class movement,” and that “somehow or other I must do some work beside wash diapers and cook food for my beautiful baby.”⁹⁴ Throughout the next decade, Hapgood was gone more than he was home, and Mary found her own career ambitions cut off. By the mid-1930s, Powers began a torrid affair with fellow CIO organizer Rose Pesotta, a relationship that further strained his and Mary’s already less than idyllic marriage.

Not only was their marriage beginning to show cracks, after organizing in Kentucky, in 1930 Hapgood returned to the same Pennsylvania coalfields where he and Mary had “honeymooned” after they first got married and what he found in Pittston broke his heart. There was almost no organization of any kind—UMW, CP, or insurgent—left at all. Sam Bonita still languished in prison.⁹⁵ When Hapgood visited Alex Campbell’s widow and their many children, he was shocked to find their desperate, destitute existence.⁹⁶ Perhaps now that he had children of his own, he was beginning to understand the terrible cost of Campbell’s insurgent activism in a way he had not been able to in 1928.

By the end of that summer of 1930, Hapgood felt he could not return to Colorado. Maybe he believed he had burned his bridges there after abandoning Roche’s overwhelming assistance and hospitality. The increasingly violent fights

⁹³ Letter from Mary Donovan Hapgood to Powers Hapgood, 15 August 1930, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Letter from Powers Hapgood to Mary Donovan Hapgood, 21 May 1930, Powers Hapgood papers.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

between the two UMW factions in southern Illinois disgusted him. Those men should have been trying to organize the unorganized, not battling each other over the last shreds of coalmining union membership left in the country. Activism in Pennsylvania was dead, and the all-too-real consequences of his earlier militancy there haunted him.

In 1931, the Illinois Supreme Court decided that Lewis held the legitimate claim to the UMW franchise, but the court also proclaimed that Lewis' men had to stop harassing his opponents.⁹⁷ Throughout the rest of the decade, the war between the two Illinois factions continued and the Illinois insurgents renamed their organization the Progressive Miners Union. The two factions fought over everything, it seemed, even Mother Jones. When she died in 1930, the insurgents, not the UMW, buried her. Even though thousands of her former UMW allies, including Lawson and Doyle, attended her funeral, Lewis' UMW seemed all-too-eager to forget her and her militant legacy. Hapgood did not wait for the 1931 court decision to make his withdrawal from the new UMW official. He quit in the summer of 1930, less than six months after he joined.

Hapgood, now a married father of two young children, had finally run out of options. He returned to Indianapolis once more, this time with his tail between his legs, to fulfill what seemed to be his fate: working for his father's canning company. He joined the men for whom he had already gotten jobs, including the newest arrival from Denver, Reverend A.A. Heist. Grace Church and its dwindling congregants no

⁹⁷ Letter from Agnes Weick to Mary and Powers Hapgood, 19 February 1931, Powers Hapgood papers.

longer desired Heist's services and apparently the church was dying.⁹⁸ The proliferation of automobiles allowed Denver's population to move away from the center of downtown Denver to its edges.⁹⁹ At the same time, the Great Depression began depriving the church of its donors' tithes. Grace's richest benefactors, including "John Evans, wealthy Denver financier, withdrew his membership and contributions because of Heist's attitude." Since Evans and a few other wealthy donors "increasingly subsidized the church's budget, and now that they paid the bills, they could—and did—force the " 'ranting red reverend'" out of Denver.¹⁰⁰

Trying to put the best face on his forced resignation, Rev. A.A. Heist joined the other militant misfits who had migrated to William Hapgood's CCC. Brophy, Dan Donovan, and Hapgood all worked in sales. Heist headed the CCC's Social Service Department that was supposed to run worker education, even though most CCC employees exhibited little desire to participate in educational programs after their workday ended.¹⁰¹

The CCC produced at least thirty varieties of canned soup, but as the depression deepened, canned soup sales plummeted. Throughout the 1920s, the CCC had sold its soups as generics to local grocers, who then put their own store brand labels on the cans. As Lizabeth Cohen has so brilliantly shown in *Making a*

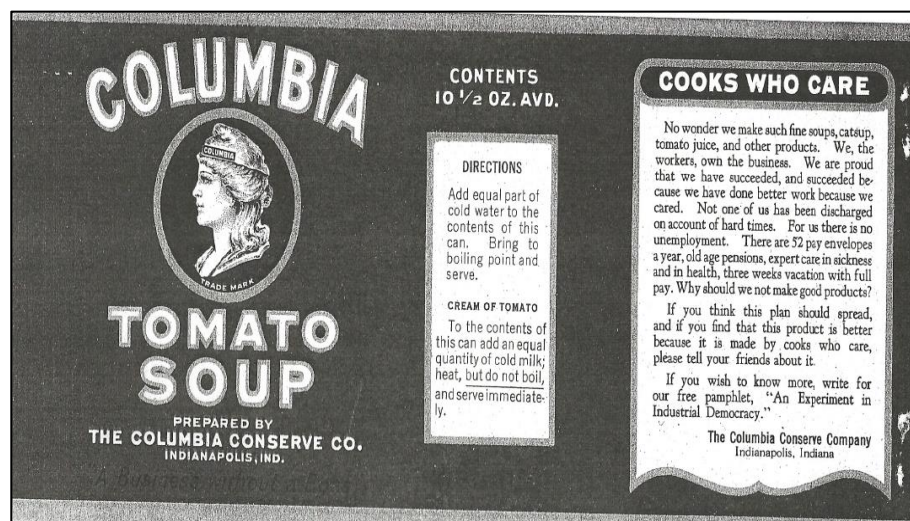
⁹⁸ Webb Waldron, "A Church for All People," condensed from *The Christian Herald*, April 1942, Grace Community Church Clipping File, Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado.

⁹⁹ Martin Rist, "A Short History of Evans Chapel," *The Westerners* (Denver: The Denver Westerners, Inc., 1970), 98.

¹⁰⁰ "A.A. Heist May Lose Denver Pastorate," *The Denver Post*, 14 September 1930: 1, Heist papers.

¹⁰¹ Pamphlet entitled "Social Service Department: The Columbia Conserve Co.," no date [1931?], Heist papers; William P. Hapgood, *An Experiment in Industrial Democracy: The Results of Fourteen Years of Self-Government* (Indianapolis: n.p., 1930), 38-40.

New Deal, by the 1930s, supermarkets—exemplifying a new, fast expanding, national, mass culture—began replacing local grocery stores.¹⁰² Brand-name supermarket chains stocked their aisles with brand-name products, such as Campbell's Soup, which emerged as the CCC's primary competitor in the early 1930s.¹⁰³ Even though most soups tasted the same, William Hapgood decided that if he wanted to remain competitive, he needed to market the CCC soups under its own brand name. To compete against the Campbell's distinct red and white logo, the CCC designed a label that included information about the CCC's employment practices on its label, as shown below.¹⁰⁴



Like other struggling capitalists reacting to the growth of a national marketplace during the Great Depression, William Hapgood tried to differentiate his product, hoping to prop up plummeting sales. In addition to starting his own label,

¹⁰² Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: University Press, 1990), 106-120.

¹⁰³ For a book about the rise and relative fall of Campbell's Soup, see Daniel Sidorick, *Condensed Capitalism: Campbell Soup and the Pursuit of Cheap Production in the Twentieth Century* (Ithaca: ILR Press, an imprint of Cornell University Press, 2009).

¹⁰⁴ Black and white copy of Columbia Conserve Co. soup label (original is in color and is red and white), John Brophy papers, 29-6.

to further promote ethical consumption, William Hapgood also expanded his outside sales force, which included Donovan, Brophy, and especially Powers Hapgood, charging them with traveling across the country to give speeches to local community groups about the CCC and to trying to convince grocers to stock the CCC brand. At the same time William Hapgood tried to market his soups as an ethical consumer choice, even though coal was a local, not a national product, Roche tried the same ethical consumption strategy within the state of Colorado. Perhaps recalling the ethical consumption ideas from her progressive National Consumers' League days, Roche advertised RMFC coal in Denver newspapers, emphasizing that *unionized* workers produced RMFC coal, and she also sent RMFC coalminers door-to-door as her own type of sales force.¹⁰⁵ Unlike Hapgood and Roche, Rockefeller did not try the ethical consumption appeal, instead devising the brand name Diavolo for CF&I coal, hoping, perhaps, to achieve name recognition for the superior southern coal his mines produced, unlike the RMFC's lower grade lignite coal.¹⁰⁶ Neither brand names nor ethical sales pitches saved Hapgood, Roche, or Rockefeller. Most people did not have money, and they were not inclined to buy anything they did not have to, brand names or not.

Ironically, even though the CCC sales force toured the country singing the praises of the CCC's progressive labor practices, William Hapgood refused to include the salesmen in his company's highly touted democratic work council, insisting instead that all sales operations were to remain under his direct supervision. Since 1931, CCC workers had officially comprised 51% of the stockholders at CCC, and the

¹⁰⁵ Newspaper ads for the RMFC, no date [1930?], 17-4, Josephine Roche papers.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

work council, whose members (theoretically, at least) included all salaried employees interested enough to show up for meetings served as the CCC's decision-making body. The council decided who qualified as an hourly or salaried employee and what employees' pay rates would be. Although seasonal employees worked for fixed hourly rates, salaried employees earned a predictable wage all year long, an amazing accomplishment for an industry even more seasonal than coalmining. A married man with a family made more than a single man, and a woman with children or other relatives to support made more than a single woman. However, all men made more than all women.¹⁰⁷ Industrial democracy had its gender-bound limits.

By the time Donovan, Brophy, Heist, and Powers Hapgood all convened at the CCC in the summer of 1930, business was down, way down. Neither the new labels nor the aggressive outside sales' strategies had helped. Budget cuts had to be made. Hapgood's friends charged that those cuts were not being made fairly or by the work council. Brophy argued that sending salesmen on the road was an unproductive use of the CCC's money that could be better used to prop up the workers' declining wages. Furthermore, he did not shrink from making his position well known among all the company's workers. Even more disturbing, Brophy charged that the entire work council was just a sham, since William Hapgood sat in on all its meetings, and the council members mostly followed the elder Hapgood's lead, voting the way he wanted them to. Brophy suggested the best way for workers

¹⁰⁷ William Hapgood, *An Experiment in Industrial Democracy* (reprint of former pamphlet with footnotes calling attention to current changes), reprinted in *The American Utopian Adventure: The Columbia Conserve Company, Series Two* (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1975), 28.

to democratically control of the decision-making process at the CCC would be to form a union, then bargain collectively with Hapgood over wages and work conditions.

William Hapgood not only completely disagreed with Brophy's assessment, he viewed the newcomers (including Heist) who allied with Brophy as ungrateful upstarts bent on destroying the harmony within his big, happy CCC family of workers. However, other workers at the CCC began to listen to Brophy and the other complainers, and before William knew it, he began getting outvoted at meetings, something that had never happened before. Powers tried to float above the fray developing between his father and his mentor, the two men he admired most in the world. Probably to avoid the escalating conflict, in 1931, Hapgood increased his time on the road promoting the CCC, and in 1932, he took a sabbatical to run as the Socialist Party candidate for governor of Indiana. He lost, badly, and when he finally returned to the CCC, the company roiled in full-scale revolt.¹⁰⁸ Then, an interesting thing happened.

In December of 1932, Powers Hapgood almost died in a shooting incident. Contemporary newspaper accounts reported that Hapgood had accidentally shot himself in the abdomen when target shooting with a friend. Robert Busell offers a darker version of the shooting, cryptically arguing that evidence suggests Hapgood was preparing himself in case of an imminent, armed, revolutionary, fascist uprising in the United States.¹⁰⁹ I would like to suggest two, more believable scenarios. The first is that Hapgood accidentally shot himself because he was either drunk or

¹⁰⁸ Busell, 122.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 121.

drugged. Part of Hapgood's quest for manliness within the working class world meant he had learned to hang out in speakeasies (a necessity for organizing, he wrote Mary), matching other workers drink for drink.¹¹⁰ He drank too much, but a heartbreaking letter he wrote suggests that his struggle with alcohol was even more complicated than he understood. On one of his many frustrating organizing trips for the reformed UMW, he wrote Mary that he had just gotten a new prescription for Seconal, a new, perfectly safe, non-habit forming drug that had awarded him his first night of over five hours sleep in as long as he could remember. Seconal was wonderful, because he no longer would be forced to drink himself to sleep, which he knew was not good for him.¹¹¹ To escape the conflict at the CCC, was Hapgood further descending into alcohol and drug use? A second possible scenario I am suggesting is somewhat related to the first: Hapgood might have tried to commit suicide. Although with a friend when the shooting happened, his friend offered no eyewitness testimony, and newspaper stories stated that Hapgood had shot himself. Had he done so on purpose, in a way that might look accidental?

Whether Hapgood's shooting was accidental or not, he almost died, which again conveniently removed him from the escalating conflict between the Brophy group and William Hapgood. Three months after the shooting, by the time Hapgood's health improved enough for him to return to work, he refused to align with either side; both his father and Brophy interpreted that neutrality as betrayal. Then, "Uncle Hutch," as Hapgood still referred to him, who along with the third

¹¹⁰ Letter from Powers Hapgood to Mary Donovan Hapgood, 21 April 1930, Powers Hapgood papers; Bussel, 26 & 147.

¹¹¹ Letters from Powers Hapgood to Mary Donovan Hapgood, 14 July 1936, "Tuesday night" [July 1936?], Powers Hapgood papers.

brother Norman, co-owned large shares of CCC stock, arrived from New York City and told the CCC board that if it did not fire the Brophy gang, William would resign from the company. Threatened and chastised by this emotional and financial ultimatum, the board relented and fired the rebels.¹¹² Still, the controversy was not over. Because the CCC had staked its reputation on operating as the epitome of industrial democracy, the board hired four, well-respected industrial democracy “experts” to make an investigation of both side’s charges and countercharges and issue a report of their findings, by which both sides agreed to be bound. The report not only aired the CCC’s dirty laundry for the world to see, it also, for the most part, agreed with Brophy.¹¹³

William Hapgood dug in his heels. He not only refused to consider the group’s recommendations, he wrote first, a pamphlet, and next, a book, explaining the CCC conflict from his point of view. However, by the time he self-published his book in 1934, few people really cared about what he had to say. His time, his ideas, and his grand schemes for industrial democracy in the workplace had passed. Although employer-initiated industrial democracy had seemed like a good idea at the time—in the post-World War I, privatized 1920s—its actual practice, exemplified by William Hapgood’s CCC, showed that it really had never been very democratic after all. Apparently, even his own son thought it was a sham.

¹¹² William P. Hapgood, *The Columbia Conserve Company: An Experiment in Workers’ Management and Ownership* (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1975), reprint of 1934 privately printed edition, 78-80.

¹¹³ “Documentary Data Concerning the Report of The Committee of Four, and Correspondence from Interested Friends Concerning this Matter and Other Problems with which The Columbia Conserve Company has Dealt,” in *The Columbia Conserve Company*, Part Three (B), Appendix.

Intellectuals, like W. Jett Lauck, and Progressives and progressives, like Josephine Roche, who had held such high hopes for industrial democracy in the 1920s had been disappointed before. During the progressive era, as thoughtful and sincere reformers, they had hoped that both employee representation plans and industrial commissions could solve the nation's labor problems. However, by the 1920s, both failed to live up to their promises. The Rockefeller Plan and the Colorado and Kansas state industrial commissions provided evidence of that. In the 1920s, another promising idea—industrial democracy in the workplace as practiced by enlightened employers—had captured reformers' imaginations. Since the federal government, business, organized labor triumvirate had collapsed after World War I, the privatized industrial democracy experiments of men like William Hapgood seemed like the best alternative possible within the 1920s political and economic climate. However, by the early 1930s, it was clear that model of industrial democracy provided no panacea for labor problems, either.

When Brophy finally quit the CCC, he correctly charged that the company had never offered more than a thin "veneer" of industrial democracy.¹¹⁴ The same could be said about Josephine Roche's RMFC industrial "experiment," even after she contracted with the UMW. After signing a contract with the UMW in 1928, Roche tried a variety of strategies to make her experiment work, including petitioning the Colorado industrial commission on behalf of the non-unionized northern Colorado coalminers, to try to get their wages raised to the same level as her UMW employees. Powers Hapgood had gathered most of the signatures for that petition,

¹¹⁴ John Brophy, unpublished, undated article about the Columbia Canning Company, 4, 17-29, John Brophy papers.

and he also testified at the hearings. Even though two of the three commissioners agreed with the petitioners' arguments, they had had no enforcement power to back their decision and Roche's competitors continued to pay whatever they wanted to. Furthermore, Hapgood's assistance at those hearings had not won his reinstatement into the UMW. Even before working for his father, had Powers Hapgood already begun to doubt the viability of industrial democracy experiments? Could that be why he left the RMFC to organize on behalf of the reorganized UMW? From his letters, it is impossible to tell, but could his disillusionment with the utopian promises of industrial democracy have begun even before he returned to Indiana to work for his father? That might explain why he left Roche's RMFC to organize on behalf of the newly constituted UMW. For sure, Powers Hapgood's experiences at his father's company ended forever his faith in paternalistic "experiments" in industrial democracy. The experience also ruptured his paternalistic relationship with his father. Like Roche after the Columbine Massacre, he had reached a turning point in his life, even though he was unsure where his new path would lead.

By 1931, Roche could no longer compete with non-unionized, northern Colorado coal operators or even with those in the southern field working under the Rockefeller Plan. In 1931, just a year after Hapgood testified before the Colorado industrial commission, the RMFC officially petitioned the same industrial commission. This time it asked the commissioners to approve a wage decrease at the RMFC. Out of 600 RMFC coalminers, 143 men, none with Hispanic names, signed a petition "voluntarily" postponing "one-half the wages due us in August, September

and October, 1931,” and also promised, “we will all enlist as coal salesmen to market the coal we mine.”¹¹⁵ When Walt Celinski, whose father had organized for the IWW during the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, refused to sign, as an old man he remembered that the local community had been ostracized as a radical.¹¹⁶

With that petition, Roche’s mines now operated much like the Rockefeller’s CF&I mines had in the 1920s, when its employee representation plan representatives coerced coalminers to sign petitions that were then presented before the industrial commission, a democratic charade that resulted in coalminers’ wages dropping three separate times during the decade. The men signed because they knew what would happen to them if they refused. That kind of coercion and the lowered wages that followed had been contributing causes to the 1927-1928 strike. Just as it had throughout the 1920s, the state industrial commission approved the 1931 RMFC operator’s (but not coalminers’) request. Their wages were lowered, and soon, miners began “sharing” their jobs, to avoid layoffs. Although the RMFC coalminers still belonged to the UMW, those union dues must have only added to their financial misery. Clearly Roche was calling the shots at the RMFC, not the UMW.

None of that negative information made its way into the glowing 1931 news stories that ran in national publications such as *Time* magazine extolling the humanitarian, voluntary job-sharing program she had just instituted to try to save the jobs of all the men at her RMFC coalmines. The article stated that 600 RMFC

¹¹⁵ Petition, 17-10, Josephine Roche papers.

¹¹⁶ Oral interview with Walt Celinski, May 1976, Lafayette Public Library, Lafayette, Colorado.

coalminers “voted to go without pay for three months,” and that Roche had “gladly accepted their offer.”¹¹⁷ Roche had to keep up appearances, and she did a much better job of feeding positive news stories to the Eastern press, as she called it, than to local newspapers that often declined to publish the press releases she sent them, probably because they knew such stories were not true.

Roche continued her masterful dealings with the Eastern press in 1931 when she let Oswald Garrison Villard’s son, Hilgard, play coalminer between his junior and senior years at Yale. By hiring Hilgard, Roche apparently killed two birds with one stone: She gained favorable press coverage *and* stopped Villard’s requests for loan repayment. Just as she warmly welcomed Powers Hapgood at the RMFC just months after the \$20,000 interest-free loan Hapgood’s father had made to her company, in the summer of 1931, Roche enthusiastically welcomed Hilgard at the RMFC. Following the stock market crash, in which Villard lost much of his money, Villard’s letters to Roche requesting her repayment of the \$35,000 he had loaned her in 1928 became increasingly anxious and pointed.¹¹⁸ Although by 1930, the tone of Villard’s financial queries softened after Costigan got elected to the US Senate, after his son’s 1931 Colorado summer playing coalminer, Villard stopped asking for repayment altogether.

In May of 1931, Villard wrote Roche asking if Hilgard could spend two months at the RMFC. Villard promised, “He does not want to go out and be merely

¹¹⁷ “Rocky Mountain Gesture,” *Time* magazine, 7 September 1931, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,742196-1,00.html>, accessed 21 August 2011.

¹¹⁸ Letters from Oswald Garrison Villard to Josephine Roche, 8 October 1929, 10 February 1930, 18 February 1930, 26 June 1930, & 25 July 1930, Josephine Roche papers, 5-3.

the gilded young gentleman from the East sight-seeing and having a good time. He would like really to get into the labor situation. In other words, he wants a job.”¹¹⁹ Roche replied immediately. Even though summer was the slack season for coal and she was in the midst of her much-touted “job-sharing” program, Roche assured Villard there would be plenty for Hilgard to do. For example, “in talking with Mr. Lawson and Mr. Vincent today we all thought that your son might find it interesting to go with our Chief Engineer on some underground surveying and other general engineering work he will be doing.”¹²⁰ After that, he could tour other RMFC coalmines in the southern fields and near Gunnison and get a chance to meet and talk with some coalminers and sit in on some of their union meetings. This plan delighted Villard, who immediately accepted Roche’s offer for Hilgard’s summer vacation. He also let Roche know, “I told him that he must assemble material while he is there for at least two articles on your experiment thus bringing it up to date. One of these articles should be for the *Nation* and the other for a magazine like *Harper’s*. In that way he might be able to be of real service to you in return for all your kindness.”¹²¹

After Hilgard’s delightful summer, not only did Villard’s pleas for repayment cease, Villard also ran positive articles and updates about the RMFC in *The Nation*. Roche and Hilgard Villard began exchanging friendly letters, too. In 1932 he returned to Yale for his senior year and wrote the following to Roche: “You’ll be

¹¹⁹ Letter from Oswald Garrison Villard to Josephine Roche, 3 May 1931, 5-3, Josephine Roche papers.

¹²⁰ Letter from Josephine Roche to Oswald Garrison Villard, 12 May 1931, 5-3, Josephine Roche papers.

¹²¹ Letter from Oswald Garrison Villard to Josephine Roche, 18 May 1931, 5-3, Josephine Roche papers.

interested to know that the day before yesterday I heard William Hapgood speak on the work of the Columbia Conserve Co. I hope to be able to meet him tomorrow. He mentioned you as one whom he felt was following in his path! Certainly you both, in the language of the sociologist, have created the variations without which progress is impossible. It only remains for them to be adopted!" Then he apologized for not having written his articles about the RMFC yet, but he promised he would. He closed with, "My only hope is that it may help in spreading the news of what you have accomplished. Again thank Merle and John for their part in my so-completely successful summer [in which I gained] first hand knowledge of your unique experiment."¹²²

When Hilgard heard the elder Hapgood speak, the rupture at his company was well underway, and in 1931, the same summer Roche instituted her "job sharing" program at the RMFC, Hapgood instituted the same policy at the CCC. Like Roche, he also promoted it as a humanitarian measure and tried to spin the bad news as best he could, even as the Brophy faction back in Indianapolis attempted to un-do the policy. As much positive press as their efforts received, the sad truth was that no individual humanitarian fixes could begin to address the severe problems of the depression. By 1931, no other coal companies in Colorado had followed Roche's lead and contracted with the UMW. CF&I still clung to its own, increasingly ineffectual employee representation plan, a plan in which Rockefeller lost interest after the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike.¹²³ In response to depressed conditions in

¹²² Letter from Hilgard Villard to Josephine Roche, no date [1931 or 1932], JR Papers, 5-4.

¹²³ Rees, 182.

the coal industry, Rockefeller changed course. He modernized and streamlined the company's operations, a process that led CF&I to close twenty-one of its twenty-seven southern coalmines.¹²⁴ But coal was not unique. Across every economic sector, production was high and wages were low. There was no end in sight to the cutthroat competition between the coal operators that only made conditions increasingly dire.

After the Brophy-William Hapgood schism, Powers Hapgood either left or was forced out of his father's company. The friendly letters that often included checks from his parents stopped. Hapgood tried organizing for a variety of other organizations, with the most significant his brief organizing stint for the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union (STFU), the revolutionary bi-racial union that attempted to organize not just tenant farmers, but also even more destitute sharecroppers. Although Hapgood had worked in rough situations before, nothing prepared him for what he found in Tennessee and Arkansas, where the value of a black person's life was approximately zero. He knew the planters would kill the blacks trying to organize without even blinking, and he soon realized they would not hesitate to kill him, not just because he was working with black sharecroppers, but also because he was Yankee.¹²⁵

Hapgood tried getting Norman Thomas to reach out to Roosevelt through sympathetic White House insiders, such as Rex Tugwell (but not, interestingly,

¹²⁴ H. Lee Scamehorn, *Mill & Mine: The CF&I in the Twentieth Century* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 128.

¹²⁵ Letters from Powers Hapgood to Mary Donovan Hapgood, 3 June 1935, 12 June 1935 Powers Hapgood papers.

Josephine Roche), imploring him to do something, anything, to support the STFU's organizing efforts.¹²⁶ Hapgood quickly learned the many limits of the New Deal's labor policies, because FDR did not dare ruffle Southern politicians' feathers. He depended upon their Democratic votes to get New Deal legislation through both houses. Apparently, Roosevelt was "perfectly aware of the entire situation, even to details," but if he tried to do anything about it, "it will merely turn southern senators and representatives away from their own pet schemes which they think are more important than Arkansas [where most of the STFU violence was taking place]."¹²⁷ Once again, Hapgood was disgusted, disillusioned, broke, and for the first time, really scared. What would become of him? How would he support his family? What was happening to the country?

By 1934, Powers Hapgood once more drifted back to his father's CCC, which was suffering even harder times than during his tenure there. This time, Hapgood was not rehired for sales. He could not even get a salaried job inside the canning factory. Instead, he was forced to take an hourly job, probably working in the fields picking tomatoes, the lowest job at the CCC.¹²⁸ We cannot know whether Hapgood chose that job as penance or whether his father was punishing him for his previous betrayal, because after he left the CCC in 1931, the letters between him and his parents stopped, and of course, there would be no need to write them when he and his family lived on their farm. The only paper trail between Powers Hapgood and his

¹²⁶ Letter from Powers Hapgood to Howard (cannot read last name), 17 April 1935, Powers Hapgood papers.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Bussel, 137.

parents in 1935 consists of formal loan notes that his parents extended to him that they both signed.

At what must have been the lowest point in Hapgood's life, John Brophy asked Hapgood if he might like to come and do some work with him. Their former enemy, John L. Lewis, had hired Brophy in 1933 to investigate coalminer insurgencies in Illinois. Perhaps after his loyalty had been thoroughly vetted, Lewis reinstated Brophy's UMW membership and expanded his duties surrounding new strategies to organize the unorganized.¹²⁹ Brophy needed assistants and he insisted on hiring men he trusted, which led Lewis to approve hiring both Adolph Germer and Powers Hapgood, two more bitter Lewis enemies who had both received vicious beatings from Lewis goons, Hapgood in 1927 and Germer in 1930 when he tried organizing the reformed UMW.¹³⁰ Hapgood jumped at the chance, becoming the third person (first was Brophy, second was Adolf Germer) to go on the CIO payroll. Just as Hapgood had rescued Brophy in 1930, Brophy was now rescuing Hapgood. By 1935, Brophy, Germer, and Hapgood joined their former enemy John L. Lewis in leading the rise of the CIO.

¹²⁹ Letter from John Brophy to John L. Lewis, 31 December 1933, Brophy papers, 2-7.

¹³⁰ Joseph E. Finley, *The Corrupt Kingdom: The Rise and Fall of The United Mine Workers* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 73.

Chapter 7: Triumphalist Labor Narratives: From the New Deal to World War II

Journalists write the first draft of history, or so the saying goes. *New York Times* labor reporter Louis Stark and former Denver newspaperman-turned-biographer Barron B. Beshoar prove just how much journalists' initial versions of history can influence subsequent historical drafts, too. Starting in the early 1930s, Stark reported on labor issues for the *Times* from Washington, D.C., and he continued focusing on labor stories until the day he died in 1954.¹ Stark's stories shaped public perceptions of labor issues for his contemporaries and also for future historians, especially during the 1930s and especially regarding the New Deal. One such story includes a 1932 feature article about Josephine Roche that helped sanctify her reputation. In that article, Stark implicitly argued that Roche represented the ideal coal mine operator and that *only* the United Mine Workers could bring order to the nation's chaotic coal fields, a position that helped shape New Deal labor policies for the next decade.

Although both Stark and Beshoar earned their livings as journalists, what they wrote was more different than alike. Stark helped define the field of labor reporting for the prestigious *New York Times*, while Beshoar worked for Denver's far less regarded *Rocky Mountain News*. Stark wrote national labor stories, while Beshoar covered the Colorado state legislature.² Stark was the consummate insider, whose contacts with major figures in the national labor movement often provided

¹ "Louis Stark," *The New York Times*, 18 May 1954, www.nytimes.com.

² "Obituary: Barron B. Beshoar," *Tri-County Obituaries*, www.kmitch.com/Pueblo/obits/bes-bik.html, accessed 18 November 2010.

him with news scoops other reporters only dreamed of getting.³ When Beshoar left journalism in the early 1940s to work for the War Manpower Commission in Denver, he worked alongside John R. Lawson, the leader of the 1910-1914 Colorado coal strike, a happy coincidence that led him to write his 1942 book, *Out of the Depths: The Story of John R. Lawson a Labor Leader*.⁴ While Stark is known for covering breaking news and writing about news with which he had little personal connection, in *Out of the Depths*, Beshoar focused on events he had witnessed as a young boy growing up in southern Colorado during the 1910-1914 strike. Here is what Stark and Beshoar had in common, though: They both remembered Ludlow and forgot the Columbine, and their writing helped contribute to a dominant labor history narrative that has done the same.

Journalists alone, of course, did not create that dominant narrative. Personal and institutional memories contributed, too. Furthermore, I am not arguing that the New Deal wasn't a turning point for organized labor, because, of course, it was. However, New Deal labor impacts varied widely by region, industry, and other variables that are beyond the scope of this study. I have little to add to the already excellent histories showing how New Deal programs probably were not as helpful toward women, minorities, and Southern agriculture as they might have been. For the purposes of this dissertation, however, the pertinent questions are why people as diverse as Roche, Hapgood, and Embree had their own, deeply personal reasons

³ David Witwer, "The Heyday of the Labor Beat," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Summer 2010), 17; Barron B. Beshoar, *Out of the Depths: The Story of John R. Lawson, a Labor Leader* (Denver: The Colorado Labor Historical Committee of the Denver Trades and Labor Assembly, 1943), xi.

⁴ Interview with Barron B. Beshoar, 06228-1, 7, The Colorado Coal Collection, Archives, University of Colorado Boulder Libraries.

to forget the 1920s and reinvent themselves (and their pasts) in the 1930s, reasons also shared by labor unions such as the UMW and Mine Mill. These strategies of forgetting generated consequences for the interpretation of labor in this era writ broadly.

In the previous six chapters, comparative biographies of A.S. Embree, Josephine Roche, and Powers Hapgood demonstrate brief but remarkable intersections related to the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike. Their stories reveal that labor histories omitting the 1920s from the master narrative of American labor history—and that includes most of them—are wrong. Clearly, the 1920s was not a quiescent decade for labor, especially in the coalfields, so how did such a narrative ever get constructed? What sources, both written and oral, have historians used to write their histories? What has been remembered and what has been forgotten? Why have historians remembered Ludlow but forgotten the Columbine?

As the stories from Stark and Beshoar show, those memory choices began not long after the Columbine Massacre. The historical narrative that privileges the triumph of organized labor, relying as it does upon the great men, great deeds version of history, tends to highlight the contributions of historical actors such as Franklin D. Roosevelt and John L. Lewis and his all powerful UMW. Such approaches necessarily leave little room for the messy, militant labor conflicts such as the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike that helped lead to the rise of organized labor in the 1930s. That decade saw legal precedents established for workers to join labor unions, but only in World War II did most industrial workers do so in overwhelming numbers. Tracing this expansion of organized labor in the thirties and its

consolidation in the forties and fifties are beyond the scope of this study. This chapter establishes instead the origins of a process of memory and forgetting that began to write the 1920s out of the story altogether—a process that took hold both in the ongoing lives of Roche, Hapgood, and Embree, and in the work of Louis Stark and Barron B. Beshoar. Personal revisions and journalistic versions contributed to the construction of a triumphalist labor narrative in the 1930s and the early 1940s, during World War II.

To explore why the twenties, in general, and the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, specifically, have been omitted from most labor histories, let me first define what I mean by the dominant labor narrative. Here this term indicates the story of American labor that still appears in most US History textbooks and general labor history surveys, a story whose scope begins with the progressive era and ends with the legislative and organizational victories—symbolized by the rise of the CIO—of the 1930s. Sometimes those stories continue on to the 1955 merger of the AFL and CIO. The “great men, great deeds” labor history narrative goes something like this: Violent labor conflicts, epitomized by the 1910-1914 Colorado coal strike resulting in the Ludlow Massacre, expressed the raw class hatred between workers and their corporate masters during the aughts and the teens. The powers of the state usually aligned against workers, although that began to change with progressive reforms. During World War I, the federal government, business, and labor adopted a short-lived collaborative relationship but abandoned it after the post-war red scare and 1919 strike wave, resulting in a pro-business, quiescent 1920s decade for organized

labor. The devastating effects of the Great Depression led to the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932. Workers' passions spontaneously reignited with the advent of the New Deal in 1933, led by John L. Lewis' fearless and innovative leadership in revitalizing the UMW that year; the 1935 Wagner Act; federal government support, led by FDR; and the rise of the CIO between 1935 and 1937. These developments paved the way for the unionization of most industries during World War II. Although some historians periodize the rise of the CIO from 1933 to 1941, although that doesn't substantially change the narrative much.⁵ In spite of cold war setbacks, including the anti-union 1947 Taft-Hartley Act, the 1955 AFL and CIO merger epitomized the successful, de-radicalized coalition forged as it had been briefly during World War I (only more successfully this time) among government, business, and organized labor that only unraveled after manufacturing ceased driving the American economy.

In the narrative above, Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1932 landslide victory over Republican incumbent Herbert Hoover officially marks the rise of organized labor. FDR demonstrated a new attitude toward labor with the National Industrial Recovery Act, which he signed on June 16, 1933, awarding him broad executive authority to establish industrial codes for the nation's key industries, including coal. FDR appointed boards charged with writing industrial codes to do two things: limit production, since over-production was believed to be the major cause of the depression, and benefit both industry and labor. Industry would be exempt from the

⁵ Michael Goldfield and Amy Bromsen, "The Changing Landscape of US Unions in Historical and Theoretical Perspective," *The Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 16 (2013), <http://polisci.annualreviews.org>, 233, accessed 1 July 2013.

Sherman Anti-Trust Act, but in return, under its groundbreaking 7(a) clause, workers were guaranteed the right to join labor organizations and to bargain collectively.

Between the NIRA's passage in the spring of 1933 and the code hearings, scheduled to begin in late summer, the AFL mounted an all-out worker organization effort, to strengthen its bargaining position before the hearings started. John L. Lewis and the UMW worked with special intensity in that two-month interim. According to almost all labor histories, this was when Lewis emptied the UMW's treasury (of course, there was not much to empty) and sent organizers all across the country to tell the coalminers, "The President [not specifying whether he meant the USA or UMW president] wants you to join a union." Lewis' gamble paid off, and men flocked to the UMW. When the coal code hearings began on August 9, 1933, Lewis presented to coal operators an organizational fait accompli, the operators folded, and on September 21, the NIRA coal code was signed. According to Louis Stark of *The New York Times*, "Never before in the history of labor relations in the United States, it was said, has a wage agreement unionizing 350,000 men ever been signed at one conference." Stark further reported, "The wage agreement assures that practically 95 per cent or more of the nation's tonnage will be union-mined coal."⁶ A new day dawned, not just for Lewis and the UMW, but for all industrial labor in America.

⁶ Louis Stark, "Wage Pact Signed for 340,000 Miners in Non-Union Field," *The New York Times*, 22 September 1933, www.nytimes.com.

Clearly John L. Lewis is one of the most important historical actors central to the master labor narrative, since he is credited with both the UMW coalminer unionization of 1933, inspiring the unionization surge that followed, and the founding of the CIO in 1935. However, if Lewis had been completely successful in his 1933 UMW drive, he would not have needed to start the CIO two years later, when the CIO targeted for organization steel and automobiles, two major coal consumers. Since previously unorganized coalminers flocking to the UMW in 1933 is central to this tale, what evidence supports this assertion?

For years, UMW record keeping was less than fastidious, so it is not clear if the UMW ever calculated or compiled accurate statistics from its 1933 membership drive. In the 1920s (and perhaps later, too) the organization had a history of downright fraudulent record keeping, not just concerning membership figures but also regarding election returns, since the two were linked. For example, John Brophy claimed, probably correctly, that he lost the 1926 UMW Presidency after “shadow” (non-active) and provisional districts overwhelmingly voted for Lewis. Provisional districts were those taken over by the UMW headquarters, a practice, as I have shown, that began in Colorado in 1917. Throughout the 1920s, Lewis increasingly took over districts he claimed were no longer self-supporting, creating even more provisional districts. The primary reason such districts would have been unable to support themselves, however, would have been declining membership. These contradictions suggest that UMW record keeping was poor, fraudulent, or both, and historians have yet to substantiate whether the numbers of newly

recruited UMW members reported by the UMW in 1933 were accurate.⁷ That lack of reliable statistical evidence and the willingness of historians seemingly to accept the UMW's own numbers has affected the construction of the historical narrative of the 1933 revitalization of the UMW.

Michael Goldfield argues that the Lewis-led, 1933 UMW revival is a myth, a story so often repeated by prominent historians but little examined by scholars afterward that it has been accepted as fact. Goldfield's archival research—which examined telegrams exchanged between Lewis and his UMW field officers in the summer of 1933—does not support the official UMW story. Goldfield acknowledges that many coalminers, especially in the South, organized that summer, but they

⁷ Two very helpful sources strongly suggest that the narrative arguing a 1933 UMW-led membership surge that led the way to increased US union membership is not accurate. In the first source, William M. Boal constructed a model to calculate paid-up UMW membership, taking into consideration many of the self-reporting and statistical errors such calculations entailed. As you'll see, the biggest drop in Colorado UMW memberships came in 1923, after the failed 1921-1922 UMW strike. William M. Boal, "New Estimates of Paid-up Membership in the United Mine Workers, 1902-1929, by State and Province," *Labor History*, Vol. 47, No. 4, November 2006: 537-546. Here are the union density figures for Colorado: 1912-1913: 7.1%, 1914-1915: 4.4%, 1916-1917: 25.6%, 1918-1919: 22%, 1920-1921: 27.4%, 1923: 3.5%, 1926: 1.8%, 1929: 4.6% (545). Here is another extremely important source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Table E-1: Membership of labor unions, 1897-1950," *Handbook of Labor Statistics: 1950*, 139, http://books.google.com/books?id=85-iQJAlk2gC&pg=PA139&dq=cio+membership+1945&hl=en&sa=X&ei=LQ8BUr_cPIWmyQH3v4GoBw&ved=0CCwQ6AEwADgK#v=onepage&q=cio%20membership%201945&f=false, accessed 5 August 2013. This source doesn't calculate UMW memberships, but it shows all US union memberships. According to this source (in thousands) here are some sample years: 1919: 4,046, 1920: 5,034, 1923: 3,629, 1925: 3,566, 1926: 3,592, 1927: 3,600, 1928: 3,587, 1929: 3,625, 1930: 3,632, 1931: 3,526, 1932: 3,226, 1933: 2,857, 1934: 3,259, 1935: 3,728, 1936: 4,164, 1937: 7,218, 1938: 8,265, 1939: 8,980, 1940: 8,944, 1941: 10,489, 1950: 16,00. Notice that 1933 is the lowest membership year, and that 1934 membership, after the supposed unionization surge led by the UMW in 1933, doesn't even bring membership levels to what they were in the late 1920s and early 1930s, years usually reported as the nadir in unionization. There's a surge after the CIO is created in 1935, but the real union membership jump occurs in 1941. By 1950, unionization is approaching its peak membership in US history.

organized themselves without help from the UMW. In fact, Goldfield's research shows that Lewis seemed almost "deaf" to the messages his field organizers were trying to convey to him.⁸

Louis Stark's 1933 reporting for the *New York Times* also supports Goldfield's argument, although it seems most readers have not read Stark carefully enough to discern the way Stark cautiously hedges Lewis' grand claims. Stark's reporting is important, because he and the *Times* have wielded a disproportionately influential impact on labor narratives, past and present. Since the *Times* published in the nation's largest city, it also follows that it also enjoyed one of the nation's largest circulations. The newspaper developed an excellent staff of journalists who collectively have won more Pulitzer prizes for their reporting than any other newspaper in the nation.⁹ Although today there can be no denying its liberal stance, the *Times* once carefully cultivated its identity as highly objective—a new concept for journalism in the late 1920s.¹⁰ In 1933, the *Times* did something novel: It stationed Stark (who later won a Pulitzer Prize) in Washington, D.C., to report on

⁸ Michael Goldfield, "The Myth of Section 7(a): How the Coal Miners Organized," unpublished draft of a paper presented at the 2013 Meeting of the Labor and Working Class History Association, New York City, June 6-8, 2013. (Goldfield provided me a written draft of his oral presentation, but stipulated I not quote from it.)

⁹ Of course, it's ironic that the esteemed Pulitzer Prize is named after Joseph Pulitzer, publisher of the *New York World*, a muckraking, sensationalist leader in progressive era yellow journalism. When Pulitzer died in 1917, he left a small fortune to Columbia University to establish a journalism school, but in return, the school had to name annual journalism prizes after him. Joining the ranks of other Janus-faced philanthropists such as Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller Sr. and Jr., Pulitzer successfully created an historical legacy that has outlived his own dubious journalistic past. Money and the influence that follows it go a long way in glossing over some of the unsavory spots in historical narratives.

¹⁰ George H. Douglas, *The Golden Age of the Newspaper* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999), 129.

labor policies, a beat he worked for two decades. Since the *Times* had such a large circulation, an excellent reputation for objectivity, and a reporter dedicated exclusively to the topic of labor, Stark's reporting has had an important influence not just on past labor histories, but current ones, too.¹¹ All newspapers, but especially *The New York Times*, have significant influence on how historical narratives are constructed.

On July 16, 1933, Louis Stark wrote, "The largest organizing machine in the history of the American labor movement is working night and day in a race against time to enroll a maximum number of the nation's employees in trade unions under protection of the collective bargaining clause of the National Industrial Relations Act."¹² Throughout his story, Stark repeatedly and carefully used the word "claim" when referring to numbers of workers recruited to labor unions. For example, he wrote, "With a gain of 300,000 claimed in the last two months by one union alone, the United Mine Workers of America, [AFL] leaders are confident that the movement now under way will beat all previous membership records." An article subhead reads, "Impossible to Estimate Gains," then employs quotes from organizers' letters as evidence that the AFL had organized rubber in Ohio, steel in Pennsylvania, and shoes in New England.¹³ Those claims, of course, turned out to be false, since rubber

¹¹ The online *Times* database is extremely easy to search, and its stories start in 1851, which is the main reason I have used so many *Times*' articles in this study for context and basic chronology. Colorado newspapers are incomplete, not indexed, and recorded on microfilm, a time-consuming and headache inducing medium. The relative ease with which I was able to do my research affects the sources I use, just as it does all historians.

¹² Louis Stark, "Labor in Big Drive 'Signs' Thousands: Largest Machine in A.F.L. History is Unionizing Under Recovery Act's Impetus," *The New York Times*, 16 July 1933, www.nytimes.com.

¹³ Ibid.

was unorganized until 1935 (under the leadership of Powers Hapgood and others), steel was unorganized until 1937, and the shoe industry in New England never was organized, even though the CIO sent Hapgood there in 1938 for that very purpose.

Stark wrote an article published on July 24, reporting on a coal convention held in Charleston, West Virginia, a “citadel of the non-union bituminous coal industry,” attended by “2,579 delegates said to represent [another careful, limiting verb choice] 160,000 freshly recruited members of the United Mine Workers of America.”¹⁴ He reported that, “As a result of the meeting today John L. Lewis, President of the United Mine Workers, will enter the hearings on the proposed coal codes in Washington two weeks hence and place upon the table the mandate to represent practically all the coal miners in the United States.”¹⁵ As all careful journalists do, Stark reported what people said, making no judgment as to the veracity of their statements. With that caveat in mind, Stark wrote that Van Bittner told the group, “It is not a question as to whether the men will organize,” since “They have organized. That is settled.”¹⁶

But was it really settled? Had the coalminers actually organized? Evidence does not unequivocally support that claim. Even if they had organized, what role had the UMW played? Setting unreliable UMW records and non-committal newspaper stories aside, there was substantial reporting covering anti-UMW insurgent

¹⁴ Louis Stark, “Soft-Coal Miners Rush to Aid Union: Delegates Representing 160,000 in Non-Union Mines Back Code Mandate to Lewis,” *The New York Times*, 24 July 1933, www.nytimes.com.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

coalminers strikes during the summer of 1933 in Oklahoma, Arkansas, Utah, New Mexico, Illinois, and Pennsylvania. Standard labor narratives claim that Lewis encouraged coalminers to stage walkouts preceding the coal code hearings, but he then commanded them to stop striking (and they obeyed) immediately before the hearings started, a brilliant strategy designed to maximize his bargaining power. As shown so far in this study, Lewis did not at all control those insurgents.

For argument's sake, let us assume insurgent coalminers really did join the UMW in 1933. Why would men who still felt betrayed by Lewis' actions in the 1920s suddenly switch allegiances and join the UMW? One argument is that coalminers, even though they distrusted Lewis, trusted FDR. For example, in his 1964 memoir, John Brophy wrote that the only problem organizers had during this 1933 interim period was having enough applications on hand for coalminers to sign.¹⁷ However, in 1933, Brophy wrote that Lewis had hired him that year to assess the strength of the Illinois and Pennsylvania insurgency movements, so concerning the 1933 UMW coalminer organization efforts, his memory seems faulty.¹⁸

There is another possibility why insurgent coalminers might have joined the UMW in 1933: The coal operators forced them to. Had Josephine Roche and the 1928 contract between the RMFC and the UMW established a model for other coal operator to follow? Did several large operators lead to the 1933 revitalization of the UMW? Some evidence supports that claim: In 1933, anti-Lewis insurgents controlled Pennsylvania and Illinois, two major coal producing states, which had been wracked

¹⁷ Brophy, 236.

¹⁸ Letter from John Brophy to John L. Lewis, 31 December 1933, 7-2, John Brophy papers.

with coalminer protests since 1921. Although Gifford Pinchot is better known today for establishing the forestry department during Teddy Roosevelt's presidency, he also served two, non-consecutive terms (1923-1927; 1930-1934) as Pennsylvania governor. As a Progressive, Pinchot supported Roosevelt's 1912 third party presidential bid, but by the 1920s, he had returned to the progressive wing of the Republican Party, making him more philosophically aligned with his friend Josephine Roche than with Pennsylvania's coal operators.¹⁹ In 1931, during a National Miners Union (NMU)-led strike, the Pittsburgh Terminal Company, Pennsylvania's second largest soft coal concern, asked Governor Pinchot to negotiate a settlement. Much like Roche's 1928 UMW agreement following the IWW strike, Pinchot helped broker a contract between the company and the UMW, which had played no part in the strike.²⁰

In Illinois, even though the Progressive Miners Union (PMU) probably represented most of the state's coalminers, as soon as its contract expired with the Illinois Coal Operators Association in the spring of 1933, PMU officials and the workers it represented were stunned to discover that instead of renewing that contract, the coal operators had surreptitiously, without a vote of the coalminers,

¹⁹ Roche must have known Pinchot, because she and Costigan shared the same friends and Pinchot and Costigan were close (as evidenced by correspondence between the two during the 1912 presidential campaign of Theodore Roosevelt, cited in the already cited Colin B. Goodykoontz book, *Papers of Edward P. Costigan Relating to the Progressive Movement in Colorado, 1902-1917*), and from personal correspondence on 4 April 1932 between Roche and Cornelia Pinchot about Pinchot's failed Congressional campaign that year (5-13, Josephine Roche papers), but I have no concrete proof from Roche's records that she advised Pinchot during the Pennsylvania coal strikes when he served as governor. However, I very strongly suspect she did and purged those records.

²⁰ James Gray Pope, "The Western Pennsylvania Coal Strike of 1933, Part II: Lawmaking from Above and the Demise of Democracy in the United Mine Workers," 44 *Labor History*, 255.

negotiated a two-year contract with Lewis and the UMW.²¹ By August of 1933, in Colorado, Pennsylvania, and Illinois, major coal operators who faced militant insurgency movements had signed contracts with the UMW, even though that organization had not represented any of those rebelling coalminers. Perhaps the Pennsylvania and Illinois operators followed Roche's lead and chose to sign contracts with the UMW, an organization they must have viewed as a rational alternative to the more radical organizations that led the miners in the coalfields.

Perhaps insurgent coalminers joined the UMW in 1933 because the UMW mounted a spectacularly successful organizing effort. Perhaps they trusted FDR. Perhaps they spontaneously organized themselves. Perhaps, however, they joined the UMW because their bosses, without including them in their negotiations, had already signed contracts on their behalf, in a move to defuse the radicals and their organizations that had successfully led insurgent strikes in those fields. Like the coalminers working for the RMFC, those workers soon fell into line, because, like their bosses, they too were tired of the constant battles. So, in spite of their mistrust of Lewis, they joined the UMW because it was better than no union at all.

Representing the UMW, Lewis arrived at the coal hearings held between August 9 and 13, 1933, armed with limited organizational victories in Colorado, Pennsylvania, Illinois and some of the southern coalfields in Kentucky and Tennessee. Stark's *New York Times* articles reported the UMW's own, probably overly optimistic membership figures. To un-careful readers, that made it appear

²¹ Ibid., 257.

Lewis and the UMW were in the midst of an unstoppable surge. Within this context, Josephine Roche testified on the last day of the coal hearings. Most of the people listening were probably already familiar with Roche because of an overwhelmingly positive profile, “A Woman Unravels an Industrial Knot,” Louis Stark had written about her in February of 1932.²² More than any source, that *New York Times* article began the historical construction of Saint Josephine.

Stark’s story began, after a brief introduction, with a quick mention of the Columbine Massacre, but explained that Roche could not have prevented it, since she did not own the majority of the company’s stock when it happened. As soon as she gained control of the RMFC, “her first step was to invite the miners to unionize her properties.” Next, she hired John R. Lawson as her manager, who had been freed of murder charges by the current Senator Costigan, “counsel for the miners in the sanguinary days of 1913-1914.” After Lawson, “slim, erect, evangelical in appearance,” won the suspicious coalminers’ trust, Roche and the RMFC miners signed a UMW contract that included “a declaration of principles that sounds like an industrial Magna Carta.”

Stark wrote that Roche had always fundamentally differed from her anti-union father who co-owned the RMFC, as illustrated by the following apocryphal anecdote: “A story is told to the effect that when she was 12 years old and her father refused her permission to go down into the mines ‘because it is dangerous,’ she asked, ‘If it is dangerous for me, why is it not just as dangerous for the men?’” Clearly, even though Roche’s archival papers include not a scrap of evidence to

²² Louis Stark, “A Woman Unravels an Industrial Knot,” *The New York Times*, 7 February 1932, www.nytimes.com.

support the following claims (of course, there were no Roche archives yet), it was Stark who wrote, “What apparently turned Miss Roche definitely in the direction of assisting the miners were the incidents at Ludlow.” After the massacre, “Miss Roche accompanied the wives and children of the slain miners to New York that she might be with them when they, in their turn, testified before the [US Industrial] commission.”²³ Although Roche briefly worked for Relief in Belgium, “her interest in the miners never wavered.” The labor history narrative that required remembering Ludlow but forgetting the Columbine had begun in earnest.

Roche was so tolerant, Stark wrote, that, “The firebrands of the old days of warfare, grateful to her for having put them back to work, are among her warmest supporters.” Everyone, including “Former Communists, I.W.W.’s and adherents of the American Federation of Labor work side by side and seem united in their loyalty to the principles in the agreement fostered by ‘Josephine.’” Even more important, RMFC wages were up, and so were coal sales. Stark’s big finish about “Miss Roche, the social worker become business woman,” concludes as follows: “She is determined that never again shall her company spend money for the instruments of industrial warfare. The miners have faith in her.”²⁴

Stark’s over-the-top 1932 article (as well as other, laudatory articles appearing in *Time* and *The Survey* that same year) could only have been written with information supplied by Roche. Why would Roche have fabricated such a myth about herself, and why would Stark and other journalists serve as her accomplices?

²³ Remember, the person who wrote the introduction to Roche’s archival papers included that fact, citing the Stark article.

²⁴ Ibid.

By this time, Roche and Lewis were already professional associates. Stark regarded Lewis as an invaluable, inside source for his labor reporting, so if Lewis had requested Stark write such a favorable article about Roche and it kept Lewis happy, what would the harm be?

Still, it is just as likely that Roche inspired the article entirely by herself. Charming, extremely intelligent, Roche certainly knew how to handle the press from her many years of experience gained as Denver's first lady cop; as a Progressive who helped demonize John D. Rockefeller, Jr., after the Ludlow Massacre; as a speaker raising funds on behalf of Belgian Relief; through her World War I work heading the Americanization efforts in George Creel's Committee on Public Information; as editor for the Children's Bureau in Washington, D.C.; and through her post-Columbine Massacre news coverage. Her good friend and mentor Edward Costigan had already won election to the Senate from Colorado, and she clearly had larger personal ambitions than operating a Colorado coal mine. Perhaps she was already planning her next political move—running in the Democratic primary for Colorado governor in 1934—which meant that Roche *had* to separate herself from the 1927 Columbine Massacre.

Who in 1932 would challenge Roche's version of her actions following the Ludlow Massacre? Certainly not her parents who had died in 1927. Although completely loyal to her father when he was alive, in death, Roche seemed willing to create an adamantly anti-union caricature of him to serve as a dramatic foil to her own independent, progressive, lifelong, deeply held, and pro-union (UMW style)

views toward labor.²⁵ In 1932, Judge Ben Lindsey found himself in no position to challenge Roche's Ludlow era version of the truth, either. The discredited, disbarred Lindsey was struggling to establish himself as a judge in his new home state of California, so for once, controversy was the last thing he was looking for then.²⁶

Perhaps Roche was not even lying about her post-Ludlow activism. Maybe she just kept her mouth shut and let other people fill in the post-Ludlow blanks as she had done earlier with Frank Palmer's December of 1927 story about the Columbine Massacre in *The Nation*. Even though most of what Palmer wrote favored Roche and the RMFC, especially the erroneous information that Vincent had not been at the Columbine the morning of the massacre, Roche had done everything in her power to change even the slightly damaging information printed about the strike, including going over Palmer's head directly to his publisher, Oswald Garrison Villard. Maybe Stark believed the overwhelmingly positive and mostly unfounded article he wrote profiling Roche in 1932 was accurate, although it is hard to imagine such a reputable reporter getting so much wrong.

Regardless of Roche's, Stark's, or perhaps even Lewis' motives, the *Times* article helped make Roche a well-known figure in the right policy making circles. In 1933, the year she testified before the NIRA coal hearings, like the years preceding it, the coal industry roiled with wage cuts, lockouts, strikes, riots, shootings, and turmoil. Roche and her experiment in industrial democracy seemed to offer a solution to the problems in the nation's coalfields that nobody else could. Ironically,

²⁵ Interestingly, Roche completely omitted her mother from her personal narrative re-construction.

²⁶ See Chapter 11, "Vindication, and New Crusades," in Charles Larsen, *The Good Fight: The Remarkable Life and Times of Judge Ben Lindsey*.

as will be shown in Chapters 7 and 8, when the *Times* published Stark's profile of Roche, the RMFC was desperately struggling to stay afloat financially, so the narrative arguing that the RMFC was a financial success was false, perhaps as untrue as the positive relationships she was building with her workers. However, in 1932, the supposed good news of Roche's coalmining experiment (since it included a new contract with the beleaguered and weakened UMW) also benefitted Lewis' reputation. With the Roche article, both Roche and Lewis could further their careers while also making the case that *only* UMW unionization offered a workable solution to the nation's coal crisis. Stark and the *Times* helped them make that argument, both at the time and for the future.

Not only did Stark's article about Roche deify her (and by association, Lewis, and the UMW), it also helped create the historical narrative that invoked the sacrifices at Ludlow but dismissed those from the Columbine as leading to labor reforms. Because of Progressive-era muckrakers, Frank Walsh's dramatic chairmanship of the US Industrial Commission hearings that crucified Rockefeller after Ludlow, as well as the UMW's own quick commemoration of the Ludlow Massacre in 1918, Ludlow's victims had achieved the status of labor martyrs. Roche and Lewis could not allow the Columbine Massacre victims to become labor martyrs, since they and their policies helped lead to the massacre.

By the time Roche continued making her own and Lewis' self-serving and pro-UMW cases when she testified at the 1933 coal code hearings, Stark's labor reporting for the *Times* had contributed to legitimizing their positions. During the three-day hearings, although various groups presented over twenty-seven different

codes they wanted the body to consider, Roche, “the only woman coal operator in the United States,” claimed only to speak for herself, although she symbolically spoke for progressive women everywhere when she argued that a national code not only would benefit labor and management, but more importantly, consumers.²⁷

Landon R.Y. Storrs writes that Roche successfully “persuaded a group of coal operators to compromise on the code’s labor provisions.”²⁸ However, it is more likely that when Roche spoke favorably about the UMW, that position put her at odds with most the country’s coal operators.

Roche’s UMW advocacy also put her at odds with the National Miners’ Union (NMU), the Progressive Miners’ Union (PMU), and the IWW. None of the non-UMW coalminer insurgent leaders (or perhaps members) wanted the UMW to gain exclusive bargaining rights for US coalminers in the NIRA coal code, but that was exactly what Lewis argued for during the code hearings, implying that only he and the UMW could bring stability to the nation’s tumultuous coalfields.²⁹ By September, the coal code was finalized and that same month, Lewis negotiated exclusive UMW bargaining rights with two major coal operator associations. Just as the Central Competitive Fields had formed the core of UMW agreements from the late 1800s through the 1920s, those newly negotiated agreements with several large companies formed the backbone of future UMW agreements throughout his UMW

²⁷ “NRA to Try to Fix Coal Code Terms,” *The New York Times*, 13 August 1933, www.nytimes.com.

²⁸ Landon R.Y. Storrs, *Civilizing Capitalism: The National Consumers’ League, Women’s Activism, and Labor Standards in the New Deal* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 100.

²⁹ “Lewis’s Plea for Miners at Coal Code Hearing,” *The New York Times*, 11 August 1933, www.nytimes.com.

tenure until Lewis resigned his presidency in 1960. The coal code agreement, as well as the new UMW contracts, represented a stunning victory for Lewis. The contracts included mandatory dues check offs, which immediately began refilling the UMW's depleted treasury. The UMW was back in business.

Roche also benefited from the publicity the 1933 coal code hearings generated back home. In 1934, Roche ran in the Democratic primary for governor in Colorado, and she still remains the only woman to run for that office in the state. Although she lost, her pro-FDR and New Deal platform led to FDR appointing her as undersecretary of the Treasury. After her former Columbia graduate school colleague, Francis Perkins, the nation's first woman cabinet officer who served as Secretary of Labor, Roche was the second highest-ranking female in the New Deal.

Almost as soon as the 1933 coal code had been finalized, however, the victories for Lewis and the UMW began slipping away. Smaller operators increasingly formed their own company unions and by 1935, union membership had dropped almost as low as before the 1933 hearings.³⁰ The Supreme Court in 1935 declared the entire National Recovery Administration (NRA) unconstitutional and so Congress passed the Wagner Act, which, unlike the NRA, unambiguously supported labor's right to organize and also explicitly forbade company unions. Some business owners adopted a holding pattern, while others—such as the

³⁰ Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Table E-1: Membership of labor unions, 1897-1950," *Handbook of Labor Statistics: 1950*, 139, http://books.google.com/books?id=85-iQJAIk2gC&pg=PA139&dq=cio+membership+1945&hl=en&sa=X&ei=LQ8BUr_cPIWmyQH3v4GoBw&ved=0CCwQ6AEwADgK#v=onepage&q=cio%20membership%201945&f=false, accessed 5 August 2013.

National Association for Manufacturers, the DuPonts, the Iron and Steel Institute, etc.—aggressively fought the newly formed unions, all while waiting to see if the Supreme Court would uphold the Wagner Act’s Constitutionality. (It did, in April of 1937.) The Wagner act, formally called the National Labor Relations Act, also created the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), legislation that threw almost every subsequent labor conflict into the courts, where labor conflicts remain today, if they are strong enough to make it to that stage. In that interim period—after the Court declared the NRA unconstitutional but before it upheld the Wagner Act’s Constitutionality (with FDR’s court packing scheme sandwiched between the two)—union organization slowed to a trickle, and Lewis, president of the largest union within the AFL, blamed AFL leadership.

Tensions within the AFL simmered below the surface during its 1934 convention but came to a full boil at the 1935 meeting during a floor debate concerning a jurisdictional grievance filed by the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers (IUMMSU, or Mine Mill). Mine Mill and the UMW shared several characteristics. They both organized miners industrially, their memberships had dwindled to a skeleton crew by the late-1920s, and they both launched massive organizational drives in 1933. The Mine Mill drive led to a widespread 1934 strike in Montana’s copper regions with the strikers’ principle demand being recognition of Mine Mill as their union.

The newly revived Mine Mill looked to its past to reinvent itself in the thirties. In 1916, the Western Federation of Miners had changed its name to Mine

Mill, in a move calculated to disassociate the organization from its radical past, an action its leadership deemed necessary for survival as the increasingly patriotic nation prepared to enter World War I. When it changed its name, the union had also changed its constitution, but in 1934, Mine Mill threw out its 1916 document and adopted, almost word-for-word, the militant 1907 preamble with its overt references to class conflict, as well as reclaiming the “old motto of both the WFM and the IWW, ‘an injury to one is an injury to all.’”³¹ Anaconda Copper refused to negotiate with the Mine Mill militants, instead sending company officials to New York City then on to Washington, D.C., to negotiate a strike settlement with the more conservative Metal Trades Department (a craft union whose members hadn’t led the walkout) and Labor Secretary Perkins, respectively.³² The resulting AFL-approved agreement infuriated Mine Mill members, organizers, and officers, so the union filed a formal jurisdictional complaint to the AFL executive board. That complaint surfaced on the floor of the 1935 AFL convention, and even though Lewis vigorously championed Mine Mill’s cause, the majority of delegates voted it down. During floor debates, tempers flared, and this was when Lewis delivered his famous punch to the jaw of Big Bill Hutcheson, president of the Carpenters’ Union.

Much has been written about this punch. Was it a sincere expression of manly indignity or a completely staged incident calculated to win over the radicals attending the convention? If the latter, it served its purpose. Len DeCaux wrote, “With this blow, Lewis hammered home one of the main points he had come to the

³¹ Vernon H. Jensen, *Nonferrous Metals Industry Unionism, 1932-1954: A Story of Leadership Controversy* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1954), 12.

³² *Ibid.*, 14-15.

convention to make—that AFL fakers were blocking a real union drive, and that he was ready to lead the workers in shoving them aside and getting down to the job. His was a calculated strategy, long thought out and much subtler than some of his bold crudities made it appear.”³³

Powers Hapgood’s biographer Robert Bussel wrote that John Brophy and Dan Donovan had orchestrated some “behind-the-scenes intercession” on Hapgood’s behalf, making it possible for him to attend that convention and witness Lewis’ punch. Apparently Hapgood was “‘completely swept up by this episode,’ and became convinced of Lewis’s commitment to build an industrial union movement.”³⁴ Hapgood later described the punch as a conversion experience so intense, he not only set aside his hatred for Lewis, he joined forces with Lewis to help lead the rise of the CIO.³⁵

If leaders like Hapgood needed to be won over, that means they were not fully supportive of Lewis or New Deal labor policies before the convention. Since Brophy had already joined forces with Lewis in 1933, it is doubtful that Hapgood’s attendance at the 1935 convention was a “behind-the-scenes” fluke. As Bussel well knows, before the punch, Brophy had already written Hapgood asking him if he would be interested in doing some work with him for Lewis. Lewis had a flair for drama, and he must have known that he epitomized everything insurgents like Hapgood had fought against throughout the 1920s. Lewis had to convince insurgents he had changed, that he had finally come over to their side. The punch

³³ DeCaux, 216-217.

³⁴ Bussel, 140.

³⁵ Ibid.

rewrote the past in a way that allowed for insurgents to make sense of the present—a present in which they would otherwise have come out the frustrated losers. As historians Daniel James, Alessandro Portelli, and psychologists such as Dan P. McAdams have shown, when enough personal narratives coalesce around a particular set of meanings, or lessons, to be drawn from the event, the process of telling and retellings creates a collective memory that eliminates events that don't support the moral to the story.³⁶ Since all good stories need a turning point, events leading up to the turning point became causes, and events afterward became results. In Hapgood's case (and he wasn't alone), the insurgent struggles of the twenties led to Lewis' punch—the turning point—that created the CIO and the organizational victories that followed.

The punch served as a turning point, not just in Powers Hapgood's personal labor history narrative, but also in the collective historical narrative, even when the punch itself is left out of the story, since the tumultuous 1935 AFL convention *did* lead to the forming of the CIO. After that convention, Lewis convened a group he said would study the problems surrounding industrial organization within the AFL and then issue a report back to the AFL executive board. The group, composed of eight separate unions, including Mine Mill and the UMW, called itself the Committee on Industrial Organization. By 1937, depending on one's viewpoint, the group either

³⁶ I have already cited James and Portelli, and Dan P. McAdams has written several books dealing with collective and individual memory and identity that have influenced my thinking, including *The Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of Self* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 1993); *The Redemptive Self: Stories Americans Live By* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006); and he was a co-editor along with Ruthellen Josselson & Amia Lieblich on *Up Close and Personal: The Teaching and Learning of Narrative Research* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2003).

withdrew from or was kicked out of the AFL, and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) was born, officially competing head-to-head with the AFL for members. Even before it became its own organizational entity, the two-year period between 1935 and 1937 is known as the rise of the CIO.

The rise of the CIO coincided with the Popular Front—when American communists were instructed from the USSR to fully cooperate with, not resist, the New Deal—and the further decline of the Industrial Workers of the World. However, old Wobblies like Embree and DeCaux gladly joined the CIO, because it mostly fulfilled their dreams: organizing previously unorganized industrial, not craft, workers. Communists, former Wobblies, and militants like Hapgood joined the CIO as organizers, because it represented more than a labor movement to them. It represented an intellectual, social, and cultural movement embodying their deepest aspirations. At the very least, many of those early CIO leaders hoped to achieve a more egalitarian society. Some may have even believed they were creating a workers' paradise.

The UMW bankrolled the entire CIO rise, since it was the only union of the original eight that had the money to do so, and it also contributed most of the CIO's paid organizers. Lewis first hired John Brophy in the fall of 1933, followed by Adolph Germer (who had helped lead the 1910-1914 Colorado coal strike and whose wife *did* accompany Lindsey on his post-Ludlow trip) then Powers Hapgood in 1935. All had led coalminer insurgency movements against Lewis: Brophy in Pennsylvania, Germer in Illinois, and Hapgood in both. Hapgood also had

connections with just about every other radical group or individual in the US trying to organize workers, especially among the Socialists and Communists.

Why did these three men, Lewis-haters all, agree to work for their bitter enemy? First, they were all dead broke and out of options. Also, the political climate had changed dramatically since FDR's election. Brophy, Germer, and Hapgood represented some of the best organizers the UMW had ever employed, a role Lewis' sycophants could never fill, so Lewis needed them as much as they needed him, since they had all come to realize that the only way they would ever get reinstated into the UMW—an organization to which they all held a deep, mystical attachment—was by submitting to Lewis' authority. While no labor insurgency movements had a hope of succeeding on their own, rebels could continue to divide the labor movement, which played into the hands of anti-labor forces. Finally, and most importantly, Brophy, Germer, and Hapgood, along with other former insurgents Lewis hired, all shared a common goal—organizing the unorganized—that Lewis had resisted throughout the twenties but now apparently shared.

The rise of the CIO, not coincidentally, coincided with FDR's 1936 presidential re-election campaign. Just as business owners had begun to reconnoiter after the 1933 code hearings, so had other conservatives who opposed the New Deal. Their organizational efforts did not match those of the CIO though, whose members played perhaps a decisive role in assuring Roosevelt's 1936 landslide victory. After the overwhelmingly victorious 1936 election for FDR and the

Democrats, the CIO re-focused its organizational energies on automobiles, the country's largest industry still operating on a non-union basis.

Historians agree that the 1930s' labor organization movement reached its peak in 1937 when the six-week long Flint, Michigan, sit-down strikes pressured General Motors (GM) to accept the United Auto Workers (UAW) as the sole bargaining agent for its employees. Powers Hapgood played a key role in that strike, which began on December 30, 1936. In January, GM appeared to have the upper hand, but on February 1, Hapgood helped devise and carry out a key diversion that proved a turning point in the strike. He and Roy Reuther (Walter Reuther's brother) led a small group of protestors to Fisher plant #9 in a feint that allowed strikers to occupy their actual target, Fisher plant #4. Soon, over three thousand men occupied #4, but GM authorities shut off the building's electricity. Before daylight, Reuther and Hapgood broke through a fence, crawled under idled train cars, slipped past the National Guard, and convinced somebody with the know-how to turn #4's power back on, which allowed the men to continue occupying the plant in spite of the frigid outside temperatures.³⁷ Reviving earlier labor struggle tactics, women played key organizational roles throughout the strike.³⁸ Although many conflicts had yet to be

³⁷ Bussel, 154; Nelson Lichtenstein, *Walter Reuther: The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 78-79.

³⁸ *With Babies and Banners: Story of the Women's Emergency Brigade*, directed by Loraine Gray, produced by the Woman's Labor History Film Project, 1978, is available on YouTube, which I accessed 2 September 2013. This documentary, first shown on Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) television, was nominated in 1979 for an Academy Award for best documentary. The film, directed and produced entirely by women, combines archival film footage and on-screen interviews with some of the women who led the Women's Emergency Brigade forty years earlier. This film provides further evidence of the role of identity politics and oral histories played in shaping labor narratives that I will explore in Chapter 10.

resolved between the two entities, on February 11, GM recognized the UAW as the sole bargaining agent for its workers and the sit-down strike ended, a resoundingly glorious victory for the CIO. Barbara S. Griffith argues that the Flint sit-down strike not only inspired workers to mobilize and unionize almost every key American industry, the tactical triumph also served as a transformational moment determining future CIO organizational strategy, which turned out to be both a positive and a negative outcome.³⁹

Perhaps wishing to avoid the uproar associated with the wave of sit-down strikes that spread immediately after Flint, in March of 1937 the United States Steel Corporation—Big Steel—signed a contract with the CIO’s Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC), headed by Philip Murray. In May, the Supreme Court upheld the Constitutionality of the Wagner Act. However, that same month the CIO also suffered its first major defeat in the Little Steel strikes. After Big Steel signed so easily, CIO officials and organizers hoped the smaller steel companies would fall in line, too. They didn’t, so SWOC called a strike in May. On May 30, an estimated 1,500 strikers and their families marched on the gates of Republic Steel on the South Side of Chicago, where at least 250 Chicago police stood guard. The crowd approached the gates, the police told them to stop, they kept marching, and the police opened fire, killing ten people and wounding perhaps 100 more.

That violence came to be called the Memorial Day Massacre, and it caused a sharp break between FDR and Lewis. FDR said the nation’s attitude toward the ongoing steel strike could be expressed in the following quote from Shakespeare’s

³⁹ Barbara S. Griffith, *The Crisis of American Labor: Operation Dixie and the Defeat of the CIO* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 8-9.

Romeo and Juliet: “a plague on both your houses.”⁴⁰ This was the first time FDR allowed himself to be quoted in what up until that statement had been an informal White House press conference setting, and it was also the first time FDR had voiced public criticism of either strikes or strikers.⁴¹ Following so closely after the 1936 elections, which the CIO helped FDR win, Lewis’ retort, while not from Shakespeare, as was his usual speaking style, rang Shakespearian in both tone and diction. He said, “It ill behooves one who has supped at labor’s table and who has been sheltered in labor’s house to curse with equal fervor and fine impartiality both labor and its adversaries when they become locked in deadly embrace.”⁴²

The fallout from the Little Steel strike created a wound between FDR and Lewis that never fully healed. In 1940, still angry with Roosevelt, Lewis threw his support behind Republican candidate Wendell Wilkie and advised other CIO unions and their members to do the same. They did not, and Roosevelt won an unprecedented third term with a sizable majority. Lewis had threatened to resign from the CIO presidency if FDR won, and he surprised almost everyone when he kept his promise. He also led the UMW out of the CIO. The five-year era of Lewis forming and leading the CIO had just ended. Philip Murray—vice president of the UMW, president of SWOC, and representative of the “right wing” of the CIO—took

⁴⁰ “President Quotes: He Calls Labor Strife ‘A Plague on Both Their Houses,’” *The New York Times*, 30 June 1937, www.nytimes.com.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Brophy, 278.

over as the new CIO president, and he re-hired John Brophy (who Lewis had just fired) as one of his chief assistants.⁴³

Josephine Roche resigned as Undersecretary of the Treasury on September 14, 1937, the same month the CIO officially broke from the AFL. Since the president of the RMFC had just died, Roche said she needed to return to Colorado to take care of company business.⁴⁴ Roche served two years in the New Deal, from 1935 to 1937. During her New Deal career, Roche headed the public health program within the Treasury Department, presided over the National Youth Administration, and helped craft the Social Security Act. In Washington, D.C., Roche also worked alongside several trusted allies from Colorado's Progressive past, including Senator Edward Costigan, Merle Vincent, and Oscar Chapman, a colleague from Judge Lindsey's juvenile court.

In oral interviews conducted in 1973 and 1974 for the Truman Library, Chapman, who served as President Harry Truman's Secretary of the Interior, said that Roche had "resigned when Lewis broke with Roosevelt, because her first loyalty was to him. And that goes back to a historical, personal reasons; it wasn't just happen-so."⁴⁵ Because he thought Roche was "one of the most brilliant people, man or woman, that I had ever worked with,"⁴⁶ Chapman urged Truman to appoint

⁴³ Louis Stark, "John L. Lewis to Control C.I.O. Convention by Appointing Left Wing to its Committees," *The New York Times*, 12 November 1940, www.nytimes.com.

⁴⁴ "Miss Roche Resigns Her Post in Treasury: Will Resume Mine Presidency," *The New York Times*, 28 October 1937, www.nytimes.com.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ "Oral Interviews with Oscar L. Chapman," *Harry S. Truman Library and Museum*, www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/chapman.15.htm#867, accessed 29 December 2012.

Roche as Secretary of Labor, but Truman did not for two reasons: Francis Perkins had just served twelve years in that position, and he thought it unwise for another woman to fill that spot again; otherwise, it would evolve into a woman's Cabinet position, which he did not want. Chapman also believed "there was some feeling of opposition to her because of her strong loyalty to John Lewis," a loyalty that, in spite of her excellent record, seems to have precluded any future federal appointments for Roche.⁴⁷

After Roche left D.C., she moved back to Denver and assumed the presidency of the RMFC. In 1939, John Lawson resigned and in 1942 went to work for the War Labor Board in Denver, alongside Barron B. Beshoar. Beshoar had been a young boy during the 1910-1914 Colorado coal strike, and his father, a medical doctor, supported the coalminers during the strike, a highly unusual position for a doctor to take at that time and place. Lawson towered as such a mythical figure in those days that Beshoar, perhaps a little awestruck at working beside his boyhood hero, wrote a popular biography about Lawson first published in 1942 entitled *Out of the Depths: The Story of John R. Lawson, a Labor Leader*.

In spite of its subtitle, Beshoar's book focuses more on the long strike than on Lawson, and the information about Lawson, more hagiography than biography, essentially stops in 1918, the year the Colorado Supreme Court acquitted Lawson of murder and he resigned (under pressure, but for the greater good of all) from the UMW. The Ludlow Massacre serves as the turning point of the narrative: Everything in Lawson's life led up to it and then away from it. Beshoar briefly covers Lawson's

⁴⁷ Ibid.

post-Ludlow career in the book's last chapter, dispensing with the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike and Josephine Roche in a few paragraphs. After the IWW-led 1927 Sacco and Vanzetti strike, as he called it, Beshoar wrote that Roche, "a nationally known advocate of social and industrial reforms" hired Lawson, "who improved conditions in Rocky Mountain Fuel Co. mines with Miss Roche's enthusiastic backing."⁴⁸ Beshoar flatly declared, "Had he [Lawson] been with the Rocky Mountain Fuel Co. in 1927, the Columbine Mine killings would not have occurred."⁴⁹ Then, after updating the readers on all the main historical actors in his book, Beshoar concludes *Out of the Depths* with this final paragraph:

Peace reigns in the coal fields of Colorado. Thousands of begrimed men still tramp along the narrow canons [canyons] late each afternoon to their little homes. And below the canons, out on the wind-blown prairie, an imposing monument of granite, erected by the United Mine Workers of America, gleams in the last rays of the setting sun, a mute reminder of those who died at Ludlow that others might lift themselves out of the depths of poverty, industrial servitude and despair.⁵⁰

I own two copies of *Out of the Depths* printed fifteen years apart, one written in 1941 and reprinted in 1943 (already in its third printing) and the later version, judging by its foreword, apparently published sometime in the mid- to late-1950s. Although the book's narrative does not change, the historical lessons to be learned from the strike and the Ludlow Massacre did change over time. In both editions, Beshoar wrote in his introduction, "The record shows that the 1913-1914 strike was lost by the United Mine Workers, but in reality it was won," because public opinion, "which had been aroused as never before or since in an industrial dispute," forced

⁴⁸ Barron B. Beshoar, *Out of the Depths*, (1942), 365-6.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 367.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 370.

the state of Colorado to finally rein in the absolute power of the state's coal operators.⁵¹ The back cover of the 1943 version makes an even bigger claim, implying that the 1913-1914 strike and the Ludlow Massacre directly led to nationalizing of the National Guard and to federal collective bargaining rights for labor.⁵²

Different publishers printed the book over a decade apart and for different purposes. The 1943 book "was conceived by the Denver Trades and Labor Assembly in a praiseworthy desire to preserve an important chapter in United States and Colorado Labor history." A commercial printer in Denver published my newer *Out of the Depths*. A letter glued inside the book's front cover from the News Coordinator of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union, dated February 10, 1960, shows that the book was being distributed to union members so memories of Ludlow would help motivate them to hang tough in their ongoing labor dispute in Bayonne, New Jersey.⁵³ Although the two introductions remain mostly the same, in the more recent version Beshoar interjected his own memories of the strike, writing the following:

I am forever indebted to my own father, Dr. Ben Beshoar, who served as the United Mine Workers physician in Trinidad and Las Animas County during those turbulent and dangerous days. I have a vague, small boy recollection of riding in the back seat of a touring car while he drove, without lights, up the river at night to see a sick miner. And above Trinidad the night sky was filled with the white beams of search lights sweeping restlessly back and forth, seeking out striking miners, seeking out the young doctor at the wheel of his Overland car,

⁵¹ Barron B. Beshoar, *Out of the Depths* (Denver: Golden Bell Press, [1955-1959], x.

⁵² Barron B. Beshoar, *Out of the Depths: The Story of John R. Lawson, a Labor Leader* (Denver: The Colorado Labor Historical Committee of the Denver Trades and Labor Assembly, 1942, 1943).

⁵³ *Out of the Depths*, [1955-1959?].

seeking out the little boy in the back seat, the little boy who knew from his father's face that those hard lights were to be feared, but was completely unaware that behind those luminous eyes were Rockefeller machine guns that could and would spit death if the lights caught our movement on the bumpy road. And I have other recollections, some dim, some sharp, of cavalrymen with gleaming sabres herding the people along Main and Commercial streets in Trinidad, of militiamen searching our house for guns and dumping the contents of bureau drawers on the floor while my mother watched them with loathing and contempt, of miners with red handkerchiefs around their necks and rifles in their hands who hailed my father with jovial but foreign-sounding cries that sounded like 'Hello Doc Bee-shoo.'

In another scene, way back in the chambers of memory, I see my Uncle John sitting in the laboratory of his dental office in Trinidad, patiently instructing an Austrian miner, who spoke little English, in how to shoot out a CF&I searchlight with the beautiful hammerless Savage rifle he was graciously lending to the cause.⁵⁴

In Beshoar's early 1980s interviews with Eric Margolis and Ron McMahan for the Colorado Coal Project (explored in Chapter 10), Beshoar relates the same memories quoted above from his 1950s revised *Out of the Depths* introduction almost word for word. Most certainly, Beshoar lived through dramatic times, but his small boy memories also had such a personal impact because they featured his noble father and even his uncle, prominent members of the community who, unlike most, stood up for the coalminers and were almost worshipped for it. The coalminers even named their military tent headquarters Camp Beshoar. What five-year old boy wouldn't hold such a memory foremost in his mind, no matter how many years had passed?

Such memories serve several purposes beyond the legitimizing function of "I was there, too." Such "primal scenes" form "foundational myths of the self" that become "central to the narrator's 'process of individuation.'" Such remembered

⁵⁴ *Out of the Depths*, [1956-59], x-xi.

anecdotes over time turn into “morality plays” demonstrating why the individual has become the person he or she is.⁵⁵ Sometimes, such individual memories eventually become collective memories, helping explain why the Ludlow Massacre has been evoked as a cause directly leading to New Deal labor reforms.

Beshoar’s 1942 publishers directly drew that cause and effect relationship, yet the lessons to be learned from the 1913-1914 strike were also malleable enough to fit the times. For example, Beshoar wrote in his 1950s foreword, “There are lessons to be learned from the strife of the past, and there are warnings, too. In this day and in this time, when American institutions are under deadly assault from without, management and labor must realize they have common goals and common interests and that without the one, the other cannot survive.”⁵⁶ While *Out of the Depth’s* World War II-era publishers concluded that progressive-era workers’ sacrifices led to the federal government protecting organized labor’s rights to collective bargaining, the book’s cold war lesson was that labor and management needed to unite against outside (presumably Communist) threats.

Separated by a decade, those labor lessons drawn from the World War II and cold war editions of *Out of the Depths* could not have been more different. Furthermore, neither had much to do with the book’s contents, in which the noble coalminers battled the corrupt powers of the state. Beshoar focused his narrative almost exclusively on the 1913-1914, southern Colorado, violent phase of the strike. The Ludlow Massacre served as the book’s climax and it concluded at the Ludlow memorial (which I quoted above)—a strange ending indeed, since by 1918, the year

⁵⁵ Daniel James, *Doña María’s Story: Life, History, Memory, and Political Identity*, 172.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, xii.

the memorial was dedicated, John L. Lewis had run John Lawson out of the UMW. In 1942 and by the 1950s, in a book purportedly about Lawson, even mentioning Lewis' undemocratic ouster of Lawson and his undemocratically orchestrated UMW takeover of Colorado District 15 was already taboo. The Ludlow Massacre was only remembered as leading to workers' rights and a triumphant UMW. Beshoar's book helped its readers remember Ludlow, but it also helped erase the memories of the 1920s coalfields, the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, and Josephine Roche, who had revived Lawson's career.

Even as the memories and legacies of the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike began slipping farther and farther away in historical narratives that took their lead from Beshoar, the legacies from the strike still mattered, especially to its former participants. Roche's promising New Deal career began drawing to a close in 1937, if Oscar Chapman is to be believed, because of her close association with John L. Lewis, which began with the 1928 RMFC-UMW contract. However, as Roche's star began to fade, A.S. Embree's labor career (which had been destroyed because of the 1927-1928 strike) began to revive. After almost a decade of alternating between temporary jobs and WPA work, in 1937, A.S. Embree officially quit the IWW and joined Mine Mill, headquartered in Denver. In 1938, he became the first (and only) editor of the revived union's official newspaper, the *People's Press*, which ceased production at the end of that year, perhaps because the CIO officially became its own

entity at the end of 1938 and began publishing its own newsletter, edited by Len DeCaux.⁵⁷

Embree contributed a wealth of organizational experience to Mine Mill, but even more important, he embodied the union's institutional memory, having joined the Western Federation of Miners in 1899 and the WFM's offspring, the IWW, in 1905, the year it formed. Mine Mill officers later lionized Embree as an organizer "active in the Coeur d'Alenes and in the coal mining fields of Colorado, and he was involved in the struggle which led to the infamous Ludlow massacre."⁵⁸ Embree's mythic status also included his roles in the 1917 Bisbee deportation, the 1918 IWW trials, and the 1920 Anaconda Road Massacre in Butte, events for which Mine Mill could also claim some credit. His long association with Butte meant Embree knew the major Mine Mill leaders who had grown up there, including Reid Robinson, Mine Mill's president from 1937 to 1946.

Mine Mill's institutional memory—re-created beginning in 1933 and preserved in the Western Federation of Miners/Mine Mill archives housed at the University of Colorado in Boulder—omitted any mention of Embree's role in the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike. That is probably because the IWW—only—led the walkout. Even though the revitalized 1930s' Mine Mill traced its roots back to the WFM and the IWW, in 1927, Mine Mill was so weak, it could never have mounted any kind of strike, a painful reality of which it did not want to be reminded, even in its newly invigorated state. In re-inventing its militant past and celebrating its

⁵⁷ *The People's Press*, January 1938 through November 1938, Bound Volumes, WFM/IUMMSW, Archives, University of Colorado, Boulder.

⁵⁸ Solski and Smaller, 9.

former radical leaders, such as Embree, even Mine Mill remembered Ludlow but forgot the Columbine.

Although Embree symbolically represented Mine Mill's militant past, apparently Embree's worldview remained too radical for him to officially represent Mine Mill during World War II. Just as the IWW's General Executive Board in 1926 deemed Embree's politics too "unsophisticated" for him to be trusted editing the organization's official newspaper, Embree edited Mine Mill's newspaper for less than a year before union officers (which didn't include Embree), removed him from that position and sent him out into the field to organize. Embree adjusted his militancy to the times, although a series of letters housed in the Western Federation of Miners/Mine Mill archives also show the limits of his adaptability. Embree probably still believed that the working class and the employing class had nothing in common, but that did not stop him from helping to negotiate contracts between Mine Mill union members and management, an important acceptance of reality that Embree perhaps had been unable to bring himself to pursue in 1928 with Roche at the RMFC.

Sparks of Embree's former militancy surfaced on August 30, 1939. On that day in Silverton, Colorado, Thomas J. Noel writes that "the management of the Shenandoah-Dives Mine, then the biggest gold and silver producer" in the San Juan Mountains, "inspired a mob of 200 to charge into the union hall and break up a strike meeting. A.S. Embree, a former IWW organizer then working for the IUMMSW [Mine Mill], and the secretary of the Silverton local were forced into an automobile and deported. The mob took possession of the miners' union hall and its hospital in

the name of a company union.”⁵⁹ Unlike the Bisbee deportation, Mine Mill took its deportation case before federal government officials and won. NLRB hearings determined that not only had San Juan County commissioners colluded with mine operators when they paid “goons to escort the two union men out of town,” the labor board ordered the mining company to pay back the union dues it had collected over the past year, reinstate the seventy-eight blacklisted miners, and return the union hall and hospital to Mine Mill.⁶⁰

Two years later, on February 26, 1941, Reid Robinson wrote Embree a terse letter instructing him to return—immediately—to Denver from Perth Amboy, New Jersey.⁶¹ Clearly, Embree had done something terribly wrong, but Robinson carefully omitted any incriminating information in his letter. Five years earlier, Mine Mill had established a local in Perth Amboy after a post-Flint sit-down strike there in 1937. The city lies just a Staten Island ferry boat ride away from lower Manhattan and less than fifteen, easily driven miles from Elizabeth, New Jersey, where a 1,600 worker walkout was underway against Embree’s former Bisbee nemesis, Phelps Dodge (PD) Copper Products Corporation. Not Mine Mill, but another “left-wing” union—the International Council of United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers—led the strike. A few months after Embree’s mysterious recall, the strike was settled and PD signed a CIO contract. Although I cannot tell from the cryptic archival

⁵⁹ Thomas J. Noel, “William D. Haywood: ‘The Most Hated and Feared Figure in America,’” in Steve Grinstead and Ben Fogelberg, eds., *Western Voices: 125 Years of Colorado Writing* (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 2004), 178-179; Worth noting is that Mine Mill operated its own hospital, a practice the United Mine Workers, under Roche’s management, began emulating on a larger scale in the 1950s.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁶¹ Letter from Reid Robinson to A.S. Embree, 26 February 1941, 37-5, WFM/IUMMSW.

records what Embree did that led Mine Mill president Robinson to immediately recall him to the union's Denver headquarters, it had to have been extreme, or at least too extreme for the union to tolerate just two months after the United States had joined the Allied forces in World War II.

Upon his return to Denver, Embree organized the workers at the Globe smelter before his bosses sent him to nearby Wyoming to organize their smelter workers, too.⁶² In 1942, Embree organized Empire Zinc workers in western Colorado, and during that campaign, he got in hot water again, this time because of "Nick Raskovich, an old friend of mine who had been in the Silverton fight and before that in the Bisbee fight with me in 1917."⁶³ Raskovich put a gun in the glove compartment of a car that he and Embree were driving between local organizing meetings, but when a local sheriff arrested them, searched the car, and found the gun, Embree was released on bond, but Raskovich was not. The FBI kept Raskovich in jail, "as he had only first papers and they claimed he was an enemy alien." Embree argued that since "Nick has always been strong for the Union, I think we should arrange bond for him through the Int'l office."⁶⁴

Although Embree wrote several impassioned letters to Mine Mill officers trying to get help for his old friend, Embree's efforts were rebuffed. Reid's assistant let Embree know that his efforts on behalf of Raskovich "disturbed" them at headquarters; the union did not need to "tie ourselves too closely to this case," since

⁶² Letters from A.S. Embree to Howard Goddard, 30 July 1941, 1 August 1941, 4 August 1941, 6 October 1941, 10 October 1941, 18 October 1941, 37-5, WFM/IUMMSW.

⁶³ Letter to Bill (no last name) from A.S. Embree, 9 March 1942, 37-5, WFM/IUMMSW,

⁶⁴ Ibid.

it might “expose us to a great deal of undesirable criticism.”⁶⁵ Embree’s militancy made him a great organizer, but he valued personal relationships and loyalty over the niceties of positive public relations, a characteristic that endeared him to the workers he organized, but not to his bosses.

In the midst of this controversy, Embree’s pragmatic side surfaced. He quit writing letters advocating for Raskovich and wrote a personal letter to Reid Robinson, patriotically suggesting that Mine Mill build a destroyer. “You’ll think I’m nuts,” Embree wrote, but “One day’s pay donated by each member of the International will almost do it.” Not only would such a ship have “great advertising value,” Mine Mill could name it “after our pioneer Local—Butte No. 1,” a reference no doubt meant to appeal to their shared Butte backgrounds.⁶⁶ There is no evidence that Mine Mill ever built the destroyer or that the union helped Raskovich, although the patriotic appeal to Robinson may have deflected the organization’s irritation toward Embree. Or maybe not. Several weeks after the letter to Robinson, Embree wrote a breezy, apologetic cover letter for an expense report he was submitting late—again. Sixty-five years old at the time, Embree promised its bean counter recipients that he “Will try to do better as I grow up.”⁶⁷ Then, his letters to Reed stopped.

Embree’s Mine Mill correspondence shows that he understood, reluctantly, the wartime atmosphere in which the union was operating, an atmosphere that had changed dramatically since the union began its revitalization in 1933. Embree’s

⁶⁵ Letter from Allan D. McNeil to A.S. Embree, 17 March 1942, 37-5, WFM/IUMMSW.

⁶⁶ Letter from A.S. Embree to Reid Robinson, 12 March 1942, 37-5, WFM/Mine Mill.

⁶⁷ Letter from A.S. Embree to Mac (no last name), 27 March 1942, 37-5, WFM/Mine Mill.

militant background had been an asset when Mine Mill reinvented itself, when Lewis created the CIO, and when CIO unions won a series of breathtaking victories. However, his militancy turned into a liability for the union during World War II when such attitudes could easily be misconstrued as treasonous.

In a repeat from World War I, the federal government wanted desperately to avoid wartime strikes, so it partnered with organized labor and business, only this time more successfully. Although many of the legal mechanisms for labor organization had been put into place during the 1930s, only during World War II did most industrial workers join unions.⁶⁸ However, as the next chapter will show, soon after World War II ended, in another repeat from World War I, another red scare began, and it began ripping the CIO and Mine Mill apart.

The conflicted attitude that celebrated labor militancy in the past distrusted it in the present, an attitude that informed Barron Beshoar's *Out of the Depths*. The Beshoar book, to which I return in Chapter 10, is still a highly entertaining read, and even though subsequent historians have used it with caution, they have borrowed heavily from its narrative structure. Current historians, wittingly or not, have also overly relied upon newspaper accounts of the past to provide factual and basic narrative background for the eras they study. Louis Stark, labor reporter for The *New York Times*, especially influenced the 1930s labor history narrative for his

⁶⁸ Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Table E-1: Membership of labor unions, 1897-1950," *Handbook of Labor Statistics: 1950*, 139, http://books.google.com/books?id=85-iQJAIk2gC&pg=PA139&dq=cio+membership+1945&hl=en&sa=X&ei=LQ8BUr_cPIWmyQH3v4GoBw&ved=0CCwQ6AEwADgK#v=onepage&q=cio%20membership%201945&f=false, accessed 5 August 2013.

contemporary readers and for historians who, too readily, trusted his version of events. Both Stark and Beshoar, in the context of the rapidly shifting landscape of labor organizing in the 1930s and 40s, contributed to reshaping a narrative of the past that remembered Ludlow as a key turning point and forgot the Columbine.

Chapter 8:
The Fight, the Film, and the Fund:
The Legacies of Militance in the CIO, Mine Mill, and the
UMW in the Post-World War II Era

On April 20, 1949, in Bessemer, Alabama, the day before local steel workers voted whether to stick with Mine Mill representation or vote for the challengers the CIO's executive board backed, a fight so violent broke out between the leaders of the two unions, it sent Mine Mill Secretary-Treasurer Maurice Travis to the hospital. His broken bones healed and his knocked out teeth were replaced with false ones, but the CIO men led by Nick Zonarich—"a trouble-shooter for Mr. [Philip] Murray," president of the CIO—so damaged Travis' right eye that surgeons were forced to cut it out.¹

After a three-month convalescence, Travis had time to reflect on what to do next.² On August 15, wearing his new pirate-style black eye-patch as a badge of honor, Travis took the Taft-Hartley anti-Communist oath.³ On August 31, Travis appeared at a joint press conference alongside other CIO "left-leaning" (Communist, former Communist, or Communist-influenced) labor leaders. Over 1,550 of them had just met to confer, not solely about Travis' beating, but about how the beating

¹ Joseph A. Loftus, "Clashes Expected at CIO Conference," *The New York Times*, 12 May 1949, www.nytimes.com.

² Maurice Travis personal interview with Mike Hardwick, 3 August 1978 WFM/Mine Mill, Box #951, 203, University of Colorado, Boulder, Archives. (Although the first hundred plus pages of this interview seems to be a transcription of tape recordings Maurice Travis did by himself, speaking into a tape recorder, in the last half of the interview, Travis is speaking with someone named Mike Hardwick and Travis' wife, Una, is also included. Therefore, I'm not entirely clear what the circumstances or accurate dates of the interviews are.)

³ "Quits Communist Party, But Officer of Mine Mill Union Will 'Fight' for its Goals," *The New York Times*, 16 August 1949, www.nytimes.com.

symbolized everything that had gone wrong within the CIO after World War II. Although rumors had been running rampant that the leftists planned to form their own labor organization, instead, they announced their intentions to “remain in the CIO and fight all efforts to dislodge them.” Travis denounced the “aggressive and dictatorial” leadership of the CIO executive board, and attacked it for promoting “racism, intimidation, fear and violence” against him and Mine Mill in Bessemer, Alabama. It was time, Travis and the other labor leaders vowed, to return the CIO to its founding principles.⁴

Their goal was not to be. The “Bessemer incident,” as CIO officials euphemistically called it, turned into one of the main sparks leading to the expulsion of Mine Mill and other “left-leaning” unions from the CIO by 1950. When the CIO purged many of its most activist unions and effective organizers because of the post-WWII red scare, the trajectory of the US labor movement changed. Of course, other factors contributed too, including the growth of corporations, technological innovations, and civil rights battles fought by blacks and, to some extent, Mexican Americans. Following World War II, the greatest era for union growth in the United States, how did former labor militants remember, and also forget, their militant histories?

Some had nothing to forget, some chose to forget, others consciously based their organizing strategies on memories of the militant past, and still others channeled workers’ militancy for new and expanded benefits in the post-war

⁴ “Left-Wing Faction Will Not Quit CIO: Meeting on ‘Democracy and Autonomy’ Ends Rumors of Plan to Form New Unit,” *The New York Times*, 31 August 1949, www.nytimes.com.

workplace. After the war, a new generation of leaders and workers began rising within the organized labor movement. Since most of this new generation had never experienced the militant past that had achieved union gains in the workplace during the 1930s and early 1940s, they had no militant memories to forget. That was not true for the CIO's leaders, who consciously chose to downplay the organization's militant origins. After purging its left-wing leaders and unions by 1950, the CIO's leadership seemed eager to re-shape its reputation as responsible, patriotic, cooperative unionists. This transformation proved so successful that in 1955, the CIO merged with the AFL, its bitter rival in the militant 1930s. However, some union leaders, such as Maurice Travis and Clinton Jencks from Mine Mill, based their organizational tactics and goals on memories of Mine Mill's militant past, drawing their inspiration from the union's Western Federation of Miners and the Industrial Workers of the World origins. Still, union leaders, such as the UMW's John L. Lewis—who had essentially founded the CIO then left the organization in 1940, taking the UMW with him—re-directed coalminers' militancy for expanded post-war benefits, specifically toward gaining health care and defined pension plans. After five long years of militant strikes from 1945 to 1950, those milestones were achieved. Although Lewis drew upon his and the UMW's militant history for its institutional memory, starting in 1950, Lewis tried to forbid coalminer strikes, seamlessly and seemingly leading the UMW into a new era of affluence and security. Lewis was not alone, since other major labor leaders and their industrial unions followed a similar trajectory in an era that current critics charged "locked business

unionism and corporate power in a firm embrace.”⁵

To examine the changes in the US organized labor movement between 1945 and 1956—and how the memory of militant pasts played a role in these shifts—this chapter will briefly follow Powers Hapgood, who met his bitter end during this time, and Mine Mill, especially organizers and officers Maurice Travis and Clinton Jencks. Although neither Travis nor Jencks were well-known figures in the 1950s, today, Travis’ role in the labor movement has mostly been ignored, while Jencks’ contributions have experienced a historical revival. Again, reasons why one has been remembered and the other forgotten remain embedded in the construction of particular memory narratives around labor’s struggles and triumphs. This process also takes in John L. Lewis’ transformation from militant labor leader to corporate conciliator, all for the greater good of the UMW Welfare and Pension Fund, or so thought he and fellow Fund trustee, Josephine Roche. Hapgood, Travis and Jencks (who based their actions on the legacies of militant leader, such as A.S. Embree), Lewis, and Roche (working alongside Lewis) struggled to make sense of what role organized labor would play in post-World War II America, when the United States rose as a dominant world power and when a powerful red scare gripped both popular and political imaginations. In such a highly charged atmosphere, each had to deal with the present while also figuring out how to remember, or forget, labor’s militant past.

⁵ James L. Lorence, *The Suppression of Salt of the Earth: How Hollywood, Big Labor and Politicians Blacklisted a Movie in Cold War America* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 1.

After the excitement associated with the 1935-1937 rise of the CIO ebbed, Hapgood tried to be a good CIO soldier. Following the Flint sit-down strike, the CIO sent him to New England to organize shoe workers. Although Hapgood led several massive strikes, the shoe industry successfully resisted the CIO's organizing efforts. Next, the CIO sent Hapgood to California to settle a controversial maritime jurisdictional dispute, and that assignment made Hapgood painfully aware of his increasingly bureaucratic role within the organized labor movement. He longed for the dramatic days of the sit-down strikes, not the tedium of the office or the courtroom.

In September of 1941, Hapgood was appointed CIO director of Indiana.⁶ Just as only child Josephine Roche in 1925 left her promising Washington, D.C., career to take care of her dying parents in Denver, Powers Hapgood, the prodigal son if ever there was one, returned home to help take care of his ailing parents. Ironically, they outlived him. Hapgood served as a mostly faithful bureaucrat, although, according to Bussel, he also devoted at least some of his energies to fighting racism within the labor movement as well as well as offering moral support to the coalminers still trying to challenge Lewis' dictatorial UMW control. Apparently, Hapgood's brief infatuation with Lewis had its limits.

By March of 1948, Hapgood had been pressured to resign from the CIO. Officials said it was because of his drinking, which *was* out of control. Hapgood had been arrested for driving drunk twice in 1945 and 1946, and before that, he had

⁶ Bussel, 181.

even lost his license in the days when it was almost impossible to do so.⁷ However, he and Mary believed his resignation was more likely caused by his former and ongoing left-wing associations, which he had no qualms about defending within the increasingly anti-Communist CIO. On February 4, 1949, a month shy of turning fifty, eyewitnesses reported seeing Hapgood's car slowly drifting off the road and rolling to a stop in a private yard.⁸ Bussel writes that Hapgood died of a heart attack. His former lover and fellow labor organizer Rose Pesotta wrote that he "died of a broken heart."⁹ Mary Donovan Hapgood was indignant when all the CIO officials who had forced Hapgood to resign could not say enough good things about him at his funeral. When John Brophy closed the service for his long-time friend and former protégée by reciting the UMW funeral rites, apparently there had not been a dry eye in the house.¹⁰ Perhaps the attendees were crying as much for themselves as they were for Powers Hapgood and the idealism and activism he symbolized, both dead.

Although Brophy exhibited great tenderness toward Hapgood at his funeral, the two had not been close for at least a decade. Brophy probably supported Hapgood's CIO ouster, just as he enthusiastically supported the expulsion of the CIO's left-wing unions by 1950 and President Truman's increasingly hardline policies toward the Soviet Union. Many left-wing unionists opposed Truman's cold

⁷ Bussel, 192; Elaine Leeder, *The Gentle General: Rose Pesotta, Anarchist and Labor Organizer* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 135.

⁸ "Powers Hapgood, CIO Leader Dead," *The New York Times*, 5 February 1949, www.nytimes.com.

⁹ Leeder, 136.

¹⁰ Letter from Mary Donovan Hapgood to Liza and Eva (no last names), 10 February 1949, Mary Donovan Hapgood Papers, 1949-1983, The Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

war policies, but so did many non-Communist liberals, including Henry Wallace, the former director of the Agricultural Adjustment Agency (AAA) and FDR's vice-president from 1941-1945. Wallace challenged Truman for the 1948 Democratic presidential nomination, but lost. Bolting the party, Wallace ran for president as a Progressive, although supporting Wallace was often construed as tantamount to CP membership.

Truman had not been entirely sympathetic toward organized labor (as will be seen in his dealings with the UMW later in this chapter), but most labor leaders decided to stick with Truman and the Democrats. The 1946 mid-term elections had been a wake-up call. When Republican majorities won both Congressional houses, they promptly passed the 1947 Taft-Hartley act, an attempt to roll back New Deal labor reforms. Among its many provisions, Taft-Hartley required all union officers to swear a non-Communist affidavit, or else the unions they represented could not appear before the National Labor Relations Board in any capacity. Although Congress overrode Truman's veto of that bill, at least he tried to stop it, more than a Republican president might have done. In a political climate becoming increasingly hostile toward organized labor, in which both parties tried to out red-scare the other, most labor leaders decided to stick with Truman for strictly pragmatic rather than idealistic reasons.

Truman also faced another third-party splinter candidate from within the Democratic Party, as a result of his willingness to use executive powers to combat racism. For example, in 1948, Truman integrated the military by executive order. Although reacting to extreme pressure from A. Philip Randolph and his supporters,

including Rev. A.A. Heist, who by the late 1940s, was Southern California's ACLU director, Truman also believed it was the right thing to do, a decision that increased black voter support for him, but enraged many Southern whites.¹¹

Truman's actions prompted South Carolina's governor Strom Thurmond to splinter from the Democrats in 1948 and lead the State's Rights, or Dixiecrat Party. Although Wallace and Thurmond won approximately the same number of votes, Wallace carried no states, while Thurmond won four (and thirty-nine electoral votes, all in the deep South) in an election that demonstrated the unraveling New Deal Democratic coalition. CIO officials also came to understand the depths of racism and resistance to organized labor when they initiated Operation Dixie, their failed campaign to unionize the South. It is within the context of Operation Dixie that Mine Mill organizer Maurice Travis' beating took place.

Operation Dixie began in 1946. According to Robert Zieger, the Southern Organizing Campaign (its official name) set three main goals: unionizing the South's low-wage workers, protecting Northern CIO contract gains from "runaway" industries like textiles that had simply shifted operations south to avoid paying northern union wages, and transforming the southern political climate.¹² It failed to achieve any of those goals, perhaps because of faulty strategy. Zieger writes that Operation Dixie planned to slowly but surely win unionization votes, one

¹¹ Samuel Walker, *In Defense of American Liberties: A History of the ACLU* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 1990), 178.

¹² Robert Zieger, *The CIO, 1935-1955* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 227; Barbara S. Griffith, *The Crisis of American Labor: Operation Dixie and the Defeat of the CIO* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), xiii, 46.

organization at a time, while avoiding the “fiery rhetoric and provocative tactics of the 1930s” and attempting “to divert attention from racial matters.”¹³ Barbara Griffith disagrees, contending the campaign was doomed from the start because CIO leaders, consciously or not, modeled their Southern strategy on what had worked from 1935 to 1937, not realizing “the extent to which their strategies were tailored to a Northern, and pre-World War II society.”¹⁴ Griffith also argues that, just like the 1937 Flint sit-down strike, the CIO sought to create a Southern “transformational moment,” a symbolic event so powerful and inspiring, workers would continue fighting until organized.¹⁵ The CIO had to decide:

What role would there be for the CIO’s Communists and their allies who had built small but impressive enclaves of aggressive biracial unionism in Dixie? Relatedly, would SOC [Southern Organizing Campaign, the official CIO name for Operation Dixie] use the well-established militancy of black workers as the spearhead of the drive? Or would it marginalize blacks in hopes of attracting the white majority?¹⁶

Zeiger argues that CIO organizers decided to concentrate its efforts on organizing Southern, white, World War II veterans, in order to establish a respectable, patriotic presence in the region. Griffith contends the CIO funneled almost all its resources into trying to organize the predominantly white southern textile industry, whose workers were mostly poor, white women.¹⁷ However, both Zieger and Griffith agree that the CIO consciously avoided the CIO’s already

¹³ Zieger, 227.

¹⁴ Griffith, 16.

¹⁵ Griffith, 8, 169.

¹⁶ Zieger, 232-233.

¹⁷ Griffith, 25.

established biracial unions, such as the Food, Tobacco, Agricultural, and Allied Workers Union of America (FTA) and Mine Mill.

From its inception, therefore, the Southern CIO campaign was divided not only by conflicting racial constituencies but also by memories of failed textile organizing efforts between 1927 and 1934. CIO officers had to do some collective soul searching. Did it want to do the right thing, or did it want to succeed? In waffling, it did neither. Within a year, the textile efforts collapsed, and CIO leaders slashed the Operation Dixie budget in half, although the campaign officially limped on through 1953.¹⁸

CIO organizers soon discovered their textile efforts thwarted by the collective memories, even among those who had not participated, of the unsuccessful textile strikes that had swept the region beginning in 1927 and lasting through 1934.¹⁹ These strikes, of course, offer additional proof that 1920s workers were far from quiescent. Amid those militant strikes, the Communist-led 1929 Gastonia strike at the Loray Mills especially stands apart, because both the local police chief and strike leader Ella May Wiggins were shot and killed during the conflict.²⁰ Massive strikes periodically arose and got crushed, culminating in the 1934 general textile strike, “the largest industrywide strike in American history.”²¹

¹⁸ Griffith, 36, 43.

¹⁹ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, James Leloudis, Robert Korstad, Mary Murphy, Lu Ann Jones, and Christopher B. Daly, *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 212.

²⁰ For an excellent narrative of this strike, see John A. Salmond, *Gastonia, 1929: The Story of the Loray Mill Strike* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

²¹ *Ibid.*, 59.

Perhaps believing the promises contained within the newly created 1933 textile code, workers tried organizing one last time.

But once again, they were defeated. Textile strikers throughout the nation, but especially in the South, discovered the limits of New Deal support, just as Powers Hapgood had discovered them during his short organizing stint for the Southern Tenant Farmers Union. FDR was beholden to seniority-heavy southern Democrats, who, because they had no effective Republican challengers in the single-party region to unseat them, controlled key committee chairs in both houses, especially the Senate. The president needed them to pass New Deal programs, so throughout the 1930s, federal officials had to carefully balance just how much they could afford to challenge Southern class and racial hierarchies.²²

During Operation Dixie, CIO leaders strategically chose *not* to use the already strong CIO-affiliated biracial unions in the south—such as the Food and Tobacco Workers (FTA) and Mine Mill—as the cornerstone of its southern organizing campaign, not just because so many of its members were black, but probably because Communist organizers led both. While many non-Communist liberals also promoted racial equality, Communists' vigorous commitment to racial integration helps explain why both FTA and Mine Mill intentionally organized not just among blacks in the South, but also, as will be shown with Clinton Jencks, among Mexican Americans in the West.²³ Robin D.G. Kelley writes that in Alabama by 1934,

²² Janet Irons, *Testing the New Deal: The General Textile Strike of 1934 in the American South* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 9.

²³ For more on FTA organization among blacks and Hispanics, respectively, see Robert Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggles for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth Century South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press,

Communist organizers revitalized Mine Mill “almost exclusively with black support. More blacks were elected to leadership positions within Mine Mill than any other CIO union, and its policy of racial egalitarianism remained unmatched.”²⁴ Left-wing unions believed that labor rights were civil rights, and they led the way in pushing for both in the 1940s and 1950s, even when they were accused of being Communists for doing so.

In 1949, after the collapse of one campaign—southern organizing—and the escalation of another—red-baiting—CIO President Philip Murray, who doubled as president of the Steelworkers union, sponsored what can only be seen as a raid—an attempt to steal union members away from another, competing union—when Mine Mill’s contract at its Bessemer, Alabama, headquarters was set to expire. During the election campaign, both sides accused the other of stirring up racial hatred, although the evidence supports Mine Mill’s charges. The United Steelworkers of America had already granted charters to other secessionist, anti-Mine Mill unions similar to Bessemer’s Industrial Union, an all-white group led by former officials from the company union Mine Mill had replaced in 1934.²⁵ Mine Mill’s newspaper accused the CIO of encouraging “raiding, hoodlum-violence, the promotion of race hatred and discrimination and Company Unionism as part of its drive against our union,”

2003); Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987).

²⁴ Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 144-45.

²⁵ Vernon Jensen, *Nonferrous Metals Industry Unionism, 1932-1954* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1954), 235.

which made the CIO “ten times worse than the giant corporation we have to fight.”²⁶ The CIO had “stabbed us in the back,” and betrayed the very principles upon which “our labor movement” and “our democratic government itself is founded.”²⁷ After Travis’ beating, these accusations were the same that all left-wing unions hurled at the CIO’s leadership.

In the final weeks before the vote, Mine Mill sent secretary-treasurer Maurice Travis to Alabama. Travis charged that the Steelworkers, led by Nick Zonarich, colluded with the secessionists (even though the NLRB forbade them to, since it wasn’t officially a Steelworkers’ election) *and* the local Ku Klux Klan to intimidate Mine Mill supporters. Anti-Mine Mill men cruised in their cars around town, brazenly donning their KKK garb even in the daytime, constantly loitered in front of the Mine Mill office, called whites who supported Mine Mill “nigger lovers,” and burned crosses in the front yards of black Mine Mill workers. Such actions convinced Travis that racism, not Communism, motivated secessionists, since “Mine Mill had succeeded in eliminating dual toilet facilities, dual drinking fountains, and succeeded in upgrading Negro workers,” which had led to “some whites” being “deprived of key jobs because we were able to promote Negroes on the basis on seniority.”²⁸ However, the day of the election (and the day after Travis’ beating), Zonarich told a Birmingham, Alabama, reporter, “This fight has not been a fight between two labor unions. This fight has been between the United States

²⁶ Ibid., 237.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Maurice Travis personal interview with Mike Hardwick, 3 August 1978, Box #951, WFM/IUMMSW, 130.

Steelworkers of America and the Communist Party.”²⁹ Regardless of each union’s respective motivations, in 1949, race-baiting and red-baiting converged in Bessemer, Alabama.

The day before the election, both unions’ spokesmen had booked time in a local radio station for their final appeals to voters. The secessionists went first. Leaving the recording booth, the two groups traded insults, leading to a fight. An Industrial Union organizer later admitted that he had thrown the first punch at Travis, but he swore that was all he had done. It was such a minor scuffle, other Mine Mill officials neither fought back nor called the police. Travis claimed that eight to ten Steelworkers’ thugs, led by Zonarich, rushed into the studio, restrained the other two Mine Mill men with him (Mine Mill President Reid Robinson was on the air, but he cut the broadcast short when he heard the commotion outside the booth), while the rest beat the hell out of Travis, hitting him with “everything handy, including office furniture.”³⁰ After the attack, Travis said his front teeth were knocked out and his eyes were punched so hard, doctors removed one and barely saved the other. Mine Mill organizers never called the police, because they knew the cops were Klansmen and would do nothing about the attack, a claim the emerging black civil rights movement proved all too true. The final vote the next day was 2,696 for the Industrial Union and 2,233 for Mine Mill.³¹

²⁹ Craig Wooten, “The Vote on Mine Mills,” *Mountain of Memories: Preserving Voices of Birmingham’s Past*, University of Alabama, Birmingham, Department of History, <http://www.uab.edu/dcsprojects/red-mountain/mine-mills-union>, accessed 4 January 2013.

³⁰ Travis interview, 132.

³¹ Jensen, 238.

Even though she was pregnant and travel was difficult and expensive, Maurice Travis' wife drove from Denver to Alabama to be with her husband after the attack. She faithfully stayed by his side in the Birmingham hospital when her husband was so fearful of further attacks that between seventy to eighty black Mine Mill members stood silent, armed, round-the-clock armed guard outside the hospital (since they were not allowed inside the racially segregated facility) to protect him. She drove him to Chicago and literally stood by his side, helping to hold him down during the surgery in Chicago when eye specialists (for some reason, without anesthetic) removed his eye. After the surgery, Travis' wife drove her husband to the New Mexico ranch where he convalesced over the summer.³² Maurice Travis' wife was Una Travis, A.S. Embree's daughter.

Travis met Una in 1944 at the Mine Mill headquarters, where she worked as President Reid Robinson's secretary.³³ In a 1976 oral interview, Travis said "that all my life in the labor movement, I could rely upon Una to be a critic, which would never allow me to deviate too far in the direction of compromise," since whatever he did, "I always had it in mind that I would have to cope with Una's resistance to any kind of weakness or showing of weakness."³⁴ From Una and her parents, Travis said he had learned the history and sacrifices of Mine Mill, a legacy he tried hard to honor with his actions.

³² Ibid., 202-203.

³³ Travis interview, 187; No wonder Embree's 1944 letter had bypassed Robinson's personal assistant and got delivered straight to him. The Denver City Directory also shows that Una Travis worked alongside Constance Doyle, the daughter of Ed Doyle, John Lawson's fellow UMW organizer during the 1910-1914 long strike, who also served as a Mine Mill secretary.

³⁴ Travis interview, 198.

As other labor leaders, such as John Brophy, Philip Murray, and as we shall soon see, John L. Lewis, seemed eager to put the memories of past labor struggles in the 1920s and 1930s behind them, especially their associations with left-wing unionists, Mine Mill leaders such as Travis and Clinton Jencks drew upon the legacies of past struggles to inspire and guide their actions during the post-war period. Those legacies dated to the 1893 formation of the Western Federation of Miners, as well as to the 1905 origins of the IWW. With A.S. Embree for a father-in-law, Travis especially felt pressured to stay true to those labor organizations' militant, egalitarian ideals, whether they were entirely true or not.

The euphemistically dubbed "Bessemer incident" blew the simmering conflicts between Mine Mill and CIO officials out of their respective boardrooms and into the open. Mine Mill openly attacked Murray and other CIO officials with every verbal weapon at its disposal, rallying other left-leaning unions to join the attacks. The leftist onslaught prompted the CIO executive board to convene a closed session meeting on May 17, after which it released a public statement drawing a line in the sand: The left-wing unions could either support board policy or withdraw from the CIO.³⁵ The day after the CIO board's ultimatum, the Bessemer incident was the topic before a House of Representatives' Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) hearing. Even though FEPC took no action in further investigating the disputed election results or Travis' beating, the publicity from the hearings led to an even

³⁵ Jensen, 240-241.

greater public escalation of hostilities between the right and the left-wing CIO factions.³⁶

By July, the CIO executive board was getting squeezed from the right and the left. It turned right, reversed its previous non-compliance policy regarding the Taft-Hartley non-Communist oaths and then directed CIO leaders to promptly file their affidavits. Three weeks later, a non-contrite Maurice Travis resigned from the Communist Party, telling reporters he did so with “a great sense of indignation,” since “an American has as much right to be a Communist as he has to be a Republican, a Democrat, a Jew or a Catholic, or an Elk or a Mason.”³⁷ Invoking the past, Travis said he believed being a CP member had made him a better trade unionist, just as it had for Big Bill Haywood, who had also taken “the road to Communism.”³⁸ Then, Travis filed his affidavit.

But it was too little, too late. Taking an anti-Communist oath, especially when announcing he still planned to follow the party’s principles (as Travis had done) was no longer enough. Instead of bending to defuse political pressures on the CIO, the left-wing unions held a joint press conference in late August at which they announced it was *they* who upheld the true values of the CIO. However, not only did the left-wing unions lose their battle with the public, they lost their battle within the CIO, too.

By 1950, the CIO expelled Mine Mill and ten other left-wing unions, a move that cut the CIO by one million workers, about twenty percent of its total

³⁶ Ibid., 242-243.

³⁷ “Quits Communist Party, But Officer of Mine Mill Union Will Fight for its Goals,” *The New York Times*, 16 August 1949, www.nytimes.com.

³⁸ Jensen, 249.

membership.³⁹ Since CIO leaders said their problems were with Communist unions' leaders, not the members they represented, CIO leaders vowed to form new unions to represent the newly disaffiliated members. That never happened. Over the next few years, the expelled unions either retained, or in the case of Mine Mill, increased their membership, while the remaining CIO unions struggled to maintain the status quo.⁴⁰ By expelling its left-wing leaders, the CIO helped stop some of the red-baiting against it, but the organization also lost many, perhaps most, of its active and effective members and organizers. The purge certainly shifted the direction of the CIO, since many of the expelled leaders—inspired by idealists such as A.S. Embree—had viewed the organized labor movement as a means to transform society, not simply to win bread and butter issues for its members in the workplace. Eric Arneson writes that the CIO purge not only led to raids on red-baited, expelled unions and policies that essentially guaranteed the South would remain non-union, it also represented a “missed opportunity” to champion civil rights issues and put the US labor movement firmly behind cold war foreign policy, including support of the Korean and Vietnam wars.⁴¹ As I will show in the next chapter, since 1960s

³⁹ Zieger, 253; Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Table E-1: Membership of labor unions, 1897-1950,” *Handbook of Labor Statistics: 1950*, 139, http://books.google.com/books?id=85-iQJAIk2gC&pg=PA139&dq=cio+membership+1945&hl=en&sa=X&ei=LQ8BUr_cPIWmyQH3v4GoBw&ved=0CCwQ6AEwADgK#v=onepage&q=cio%20membership%201945&f=false, accessed 5 August 2013.

⁴⁰ Jensen, 270-71, 274-79.

⁴¹ Eric Arneson, ed., *Encyclopedia of U.S. and Working Class History*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: Routledge, 2007), 1246, <http://books.google.com/books?id=zEWsZ81Bd3YC&pg=PA1246&lpg=PA1246&dq=cio+expels+communists&source=bl&ots=zAY401m-EN&sig=Ts1cL5BIvS47VIT1YubaIY1->

protestors never remembered a time when organized labor had championed minority civil rights, opposed wars, or challenged the federal government or business, they rejected any possible alliances to further social change with organized labor, which they viewed as part of “the establishment.”

In 1950, the realists, not idealists, won the ideological battle over the future of the CIO, and the organization entered a period when instead of expanding its membership, it expanded member benefits, a strategy the AFL (and UMW) also adopted. After the CIO purged its leftists, by 1955, there were not enough philosophical differences between the two organizations to stand in the way of unification. Tired of fighting zero-sum jurisdictional battles with each other over members, in 1955, the CIO and the AFL merged, a merger also made possible after the deaths of AFL president William Green and CIO president Philip Murray. As the old guard died off, so did the memories of their old grudges and battles.

After Mine Mill got kicked out of the CIO, it hardly withered away, even increasing its membership throughout the 1950s. Mine Mill members gained good contracts, seemed to like their leaders, and most continued strongly supporting civil rights, not just for blacks, but also for Mexican Americans who comprised the majority of hard rock miners in the western United States. Most Mexican American miners still, as they had since the Bisbee deportation days, earned a Mexican wage, about half of what Anglo workers earned for the same work. They rarely got a chance to do the same work, however, since Mexican Americans were consistently

[MyQ&hl=en&sa=X&ei=nhIBUvWmC8nCyAGDnIDwBw&ved=0CF4Q6AEwCA#v=onepage&q=cio%20expels%20communists&f=false](#), accessed 5 August 2013.

relegated to the lowest skilled, dirtiest jobs around the mines regardless of their experience or seniority. Discrimination against Mexican Americans extended to their lives in and around the mining towns, too. Anglos got the best housing, while Mexican American families were assigned to small, un-insulated shacks, often without electricity or running water. Most of their children attended segregated, inferior schools. Mexican Americans in the Southwest endured treatment not unlike blacks in the South, although attention to their struggles against second-class citizenship remained virtually invisible on the national scene, despite a few labor leaders, such as A.S. Embree, who had been trying to bring attention to that discrimination for years.

On October 17, 1950, Mexican American copper miners working for Empire Zinc—the company Embree helped organize in the late 1930s and early 1940s—near Silver City, New Mexico, called a strike. Attempting to eliminate the Mexican wage, the Mine Mill organized action centered on the main strike demand calling for the company to reduce the number of job classifications.⁴² By June of 1951, a local judge issued an injunction that forbade striking miners from picketing. In response, strikers called a vote in which both the striking miners and their wives could cast equal ballots and the majority decided that women and children would take the men's place on the picket line, since the injunction did not apply to them.⁴³ In spite of increasing hostility toward the picketers, jail terms, and disruptions to family life,

⁴² Ellen R. Baker, *On Strike and On Film: Mexican American Families and Blacklisted Filmmakers in Cold War America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 2007), 1.

⁴³ Lorence, 29-30.

the women and children's daily pickets led to a favorable settlement for the miners in January of 1952.

During the strike, Mine Mill strike leader Clinton Jencks and his wife, Virginia, who was at least and perhaps even more active as her husband in organizing the strike and the pickets, took a brief vacation to the same northern New Mexico "dude ranch for radicals" at which Maurice Travis had convalesced after his beating. There, they met Paul and Sylvia Jarrico.⁴⁴ Paul Jarrico was one of the Hollywood Ten, so named because, on November 25, 1947, Jarrico and nine others in the film industry refused to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). Subsequently, the Hollywood filmmaking community blacklisted all ten, so by 1951, the ostracized Jarrico was forced to find work outside of the Hollywood system.

The stories Jencks told about the New Mexico strike fascinated the Jarricos, so they returned after the strike was settled to film a movie about the event. This 1954 film, *Salt of the Earth*, has captured the imagination of many fine historians, including Ellen R. Baker, James J. Lorence, and Ellen Schrecker.⁴⁵ These historians contextualize the strike and film almost exclusively within the confines of the post-World War II red scare, an interpretation that emphasizes change over continuity and, to a large extent, gives short shrift to Mine Mill's militant roots. Baker focuses on the Mexican American community, Lorence on how the film was blacklisted, and Schrecker on McCarthyism.

⁴⁴ Baker, 178.

⁴⁵ James J. Lorence, "Mexican American Workers, Clinton Jencks, and Mine-Mill Social Activism in the Southwest, 1945-1952," in Shelton Stromquist, ed., *Labor's Cold War: Local Politics in a Global Context* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

In Schrecker's book *Many are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America*, her penultimate chapter focuses on the strike and the film, but mostly on Clinton Jencks.⁴⁶ She writes, although "no single story can encompass every element of that repression" that she defines as McCarthyism, "that of Clinton Jencks comes close."⁴⁷ Schrecker broadly defines McCarthyism as "the most widespread and longest lasting wave of political repression in American history," a time lasting throughout the 1940s and 1950s in which "a broad coalition of politicians, bureaucrats, and other anticommunist activists hounded an entire generation of radicals and their associates, destroying lives, careers, and all the institutions that offered a left-wing alternative to mainstream politics and culture." These co-conspirators used "all the power of the state to turn dissent into disloyalty and, in the process drastically narrowed the spectrum of acceptable political debate."⁴⁸

What these historians consistently de-emphasize is Mine Mill, the union that hired and inspired Jencks, that led the strike, and that co-produced the film. Perhaps that is why they treat militancy among women, children, and Mexican Americans as unusual. It was not. From what we know about the militant strikes in previous decades, women's participation was a well-established practice. Strikes in which only white men protested were the anomaly, not the other way around. What is interesting is how quickly the non-militant, white, male, American perception of unionism that developed by 1950 became the new normal, the framework through which previous eras was understood.

⁴⁶ Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 310.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, xii.

Were the 1950s labor leaders embarrassed by their origins, or had they simply never known them? Did they want to forget how Mother Jones' 1893 mop and bucket brigades of militant women helped win the UMW's first major contract in the Central Competitive Fields? Although the women and children of the Ludlow Massacre were still sometimes memorialized as helpless victims (although their memories were not invoked on the thirty-fifth anniversary of Ludlow, the day of Travis' beating), did union members even know that the reason the Ludlow tent colony had been located near a train track was so women and children could verbally harass and throw rocks at disembarking, potential strikebreakers, in hopes of intimidating them to get back on the train? During the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, "amazons" often led the pickets and women, including Flaming Milka and the Rebel Girls, symbolized the strike. IWW organizers, including Embree, even created the Junior Wobblies during the strike, so children could also support the walkout. Women and their children were the primary strikers during the 1927-1934 textile strikes that began in the South and spread north, and they played key roles in the organized labor upheavals of the 1930s. Women's auxiliaries made the Flint sit-down strikes possible, and entire families had marched on the gates of Republic Steel in Chicago, leading to the 1937 Memorial Day Massacre. Also, the massive strikes Powers Hapgood led in the New England shoe factories were conducted almost exclusively by women. These examples of militancy among women and children were not unique or unusual.

Women and children had a long history of joining in militant labor organizing efforts, and so did people who were not always considered entirely white or

completely American. Most of the textile strikers in the uprising of 30,000 between 1909 and 1915 in New York City were young, Jewish women who had recently emigrated from Russia, and over thirty different nationalities and ethnicities comprised the majority of strikers during the 1910-1914 long strike in Colorado. During the Arizona copper strike that led to the Bisbee deportation, one of the principal strike demands had been equalizing topmen's wages, and most topmen were Mexican Americans. Mexican Americans probably comprised half or more of the striking workers during the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, and Mexican beet workers joined the strike, too.

So, what is surprising about the scholarship regarding the *Salt of the Earth* strike so far is not the fact that women, children, and Mexican Americans played militant roles in winning it. What is surprising is how quickly even historians had forgotten this pervasive style of unionism, constructing it as a "new" or unique development in labor history. Furthermore, instead of looking to the past for historical precedents to understand the strikers' actions, the emphasis has been on connections to the future, a kind of "forward spin," as journalists would call it, where the strike primarily appears to foreshadow women's and Mexican American political activism in the 1960s. That decade's protests, and rightly so, have been interpreted as emanating from identity politics, not collective labor struggles.

Clinton Jencks drew his inspiration for the *Salt of the Earth* strike not from a desire to inaugurate a new brand of civil rights activism, but from Mine Mill's militant legacy. Growing up in Colorado Springs and graduating from college at the University of Colorado in Boulder, Jencks had heard stories about Colorado's long

strike. He had also heard about and investigated for himself the histories of the WFM, the IWW, and Mine Mill. That militant, egalitarian legacy was why he joined Mine Mill in 1946, when he worked at the Globe Smelter in Denver, at the very facility Embree had organized during World War II.⁴⁹ He and his wife consciously reverted to a style of unionism that had been in practice far longer than the more buttoned-down style of labor protests that had only recently become the norm by 1950, a far different mode than later civil rights protests would employ.

Since Mine Mill linked its institutional memory to the WFM and the IWW, the organization also included a legacy of labor martyrdom. From Bill Haywood's trial for murder and the World War I red scare persecutions of the Wobblies and through the deaths the IWW's Joe Hill, Frank Little, and Wesley Everest (but not the miners killed during the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike), a proud tradition arose that celebrated militants who stood up to authorities and suffered as a result, a martyrdom that Jencks joined, then embraced, after the film *Salt of the Earth* wrapped. Controversy from the film drew the attention of federal prosecutors to Jencks, whom the federal government charged with perjury when taking his Taft-Hartley oath.

However, because of the well-documented suppression that led to *Salt of the Earth* effectively being banned, very few newspaper readers, filmgoers, or even union members (unless they belonged to Mine Mill) would have known about either the strike or the film, although some might have known about the perjury charges. In the 1950s, however, Travis, not Jencks, received a greater share of press

⁴⁹ "Abstract to the Clinton E. Jencks Collection," University of Colorado at Boulder, University Libraries, Archives.

attention. Again using the *New York Times* as a measure, the Travis beating warranted one story, in which CIO President Murray declares the incident inconsequential; the New Mexico strike appeared twice in the *Times*, both times because of the women's pickets; and even the general copper strike during which the New Mexico Empire Zinc strike occurred produced only seven articles. However, what happened to Travis in the courts interested the *Times* more. Between 1954 and 1966, Travis's many Taft-Hartley trials, convictions, appeals, and reversals (three of each) yielded twenty-eight *Times* articles. Jencks' cases, however, were only mentioned a few times. Although the *Times* gave the film a good review when it first appeared in 1954, *Salt of the Earth* only played in ten theatres over a two-month period before it quickly disappeared. Most viewers did not see the movie or hear about Jencks until its New York City re-release in 1965.⁵⁰

In Mine Mill history, the cases of Travis and Jencks are inextricably linked, since, in January of 1956, union officials pressured both men to resign "for the good and welfare of the union," which they did, reluctantly.⁵¹ The union probably could not afford to continue fighting their cases in court, and neither would agree to drop his case. Furthermore, Travis had freely admitted that he had belonged to the Communist Party, an admission that continued to damage Mine Mill. Although Jencks always denied it, he likely had been a CP member, too. Mine Mill officials might have hoped if the actual former Communists quit, federal prosecutors would leave the union alone, but they were wrong. The federal government continued

⁵⁰ Bosley Crowther, "'Salt of the Earth' Opens at the Grand: Filming Marked by Violence," *The New York Times*, 15 March 1954; "'Salt of the Earth' Back," *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com, 1 November 1965.

⁵¹ "Clinton Jencks Biographical Sketch," Clinton E. Jencks Collection, 6.

pursuing court cases against Mine Mill throughout the late 1950s and into the 1960s, and defense efforts continued depleting the union's treasury—federal harassment that contributed to the union's 1967 demise.⁵²

No longer defended by Mine Mill, a handful of dedicated lawyers—including Brigadier General Telford Taylor, the chief prosecutor during the Nuremberg Trials—who believed their clients' civil rights had been violated, continued defending Travis and Jencks.⁵³ Interestingly, the ACLU played no part in defending Travis, Jencks, or any other red-baited labor leaders. After Roger Baldwin voted to expel fellow ACLU co-founder Elizabeth Gurley Flynn from the organization in 1940 for her Communist Party membership, the organization laid low during the red scare, since it had no consistent, moral ground upon which to stand.⁵⁴ From World War II on, the organization increasingly turned away from defending workers—one of the primary reasons it had been founded—toward defending individual civil liberties, a trend that continues today.

Jencks' case was resolved first. His conviction had been based upon the testimony of Harvey Matusow, who in 1955 wrote an autobiographical book, *False Witness*, detailing how, as a professional anti-Communist witness, repeatedly lied under oath when testifying against Jencks and other accused communists. Even

⁵² There is no source that directly links federal prosecution to the demise of Mine Mill, however, logic clearly indicates it had to have been at least one cause leading to the union's decline. Long after federal prosecutions against other left-wing unions ceased, the federal government continued to bring additional lawsuits against Mine Mill, only stopping in 1967, when Mine Mill ceased to exist.

⁵³ Richard Severo, "Telford Taylor, Who Prosecuted Nazis at Nuremberg, is Dead at 90," *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com, 25 May 1998.

⁵⁴ Samuel Walker, *In Defense of American Liberties: A History of the ACLU* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), 155-157.

after Matusow's confessional book, the feds continued pursuing Jencks in the courts until 1957, when the Supreme Court held that Jencks' lawyers should have been allowed to view the original FBI reports that discredited Matusow's testimony. Even though denying it, that ruling led the FBI to drop most Taft-Hartley cases, since it didn't want to divulge its secret FBI sources.⁵⁵

Even after Jencks' important victory, the Justice Department continued pursuing Travis, and three different Travis cases went before the Supreme Court, although they set no precedents. Those cases, which stayed in the system for fifteen years, are too tangled to briefly summarize here. Although repeatedly found guilty on most charges, Travis never served jail time or paid any fines. Eventually, federal prosecutors dropped all its charges against Travis in 1967. They probably just gave up, since Travis had left the labor movement in 1956 and in 1967, the Steelworkers finally subsumed Mine Mill.

In 1967, the same year the federal government dropped its cases against Travis, "the University of Colorado took possession of 1,095 linear feet of WFM/IUMMSW records corralled by Clinton Jencks."⁵⁶ Jencks, "[t]hrough correspondence and field work," had been amassing those sources for years, and he donated them to his undergraduate alma mater the very year Mine Mill ceased to exist. Clearly, his efforts show that he deeply desired the union's legacies and memories to live on, and he got his wish. Historians re-discovered Jencks after *Salt*

⁵⁵ Anthony Lewis, "U.S. Aides Dispute Theory on Jencks," *The New York Times*, 2 January 1956, www.nytimes.com.

⁵⁶ Jencks Biographical Sketch, 8.

of the Earth became somewhat of a cult favorite among leftists, but also after Jencks established his own and the WFM/Mine Mill archives.

After losing several jobs because of his association with Communism, in 1959, Jencks enrolled at the University of California at Berkeley, earning a PhD in economics in 1964. He got a job teaching at San Diego State University, retiring as a full professor in 1986. During the time he taught, he also tirelessly amassed the WFM/Mine Mill collection. Included in those records is a long, transcribed, oral interview with Maurice Travis. Una only appears for a few pages, and her contributions seem to be accidental. Although the interviewer says he will later interview Una by herself, if that ever happened, the results are not in the archives.⁵⁷

In the mid-1970s, former Mine Mill union activist Mike Solski and several of his colleagues began looking for Travis. They were in the process of writing their own history of Mine Mill and nobody seemed to know what had ever become of him.⁵⁸ They found Maurice and Una Travis living quiet lives in suburban San Francisco. After being forced out of Mine Mill, the couple had moved to Fremont, California, to live near their children and grandchildren. Until retirement, Travis worked in restaurants and Una had been the executive secretary to the president of Jacuzzi Corporation. After declaring bankruptcy, Travis ended up working long enough for the Maritime union to earn a pension, which, combined with their Social Security, allowed them to live in a modest apartment near their daughter who

⁵⁷ Travis interview, 195.

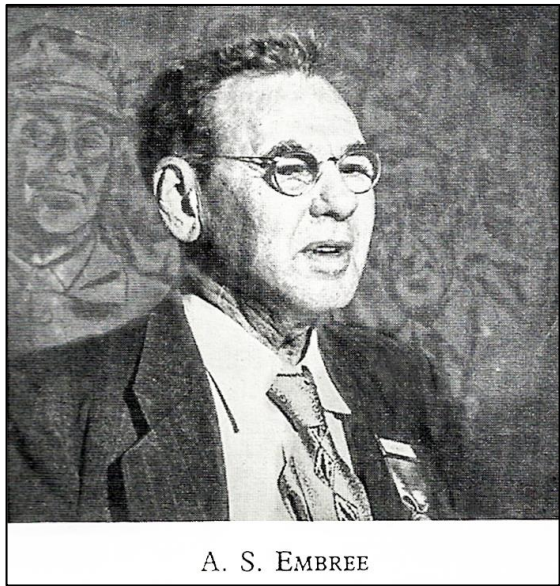
⁵⁸ Letters to Mike Solski from Maurice Travis, 12 June 1983 and 1 August 1983, Box 941, WFM/IUMMSW.

helped take care of their daily needs, since they were “enfeebled.”⁵⁹ Although graduate students at Berkeley had wanted to include Travis in their oral history project, after initially cooperating, Travis refused, because he felt that his interviewer had neither enough background about the labor movement nor would do the research he needed to learn. That was when, on his own, Travis made a series of seventeen audiocassette tapes that he entrusted to Solski, and another former Mine Mill employee also supplemented those tapes with his own interviews. Although both Una and Maurice Travis felt forgotten by the labor movement, the Travis interviews in the Mine Mill collection that Jencks amassed go a long way to correct that silence.⁶⁰

When Solski published his Mine Mill history in 1987, A.S. Embree was the first labor leader featured in the book. Embree’s long, militant career—from the WFM’s beginning in 1893 to the IWW’s founding in 1905, from his participation in Colorado’s long strike (invoking the memory of Ludlow), through his World War II involvement at Mine Mill (but omitting his IWW leadership in the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike)—set the tone for the entire narrative. Let us look at two photographs below from Solski’s book and see what we can make of them.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.



The above Embree photo accompanies Embree's profile in Solski's book.⁶¹ Look at the mural in the background and the commemorative ribbon Embree wears on his left lapel. Now look at the group photo.⁶² On the extreme left is Mike Solski and standing next to Solski on our right is Paul Robeson, followed by another Mine Mill union official and a friend of Robeson's. The four men appear to be standing in front of the same mural Embree has behind him, and the two Mine Mill union leaders are wearing the same commemorative ribbons on their left lapels as Embree wore in the photo above. Therefore, the photos must have been taken on the same occasion.

The date painted on the mural indicates it was painted specifically for this convention, held on February 27-29, 1956, in Sudbury, Ontario. But look at the symbol dominating the mural. The date at the bottom of the Mine Mill emblem is

⁶¹ Solski and Small, 9. It's been Photoshopped (by Rebecca Trainor Feeney) to bring out the mural in the background.

⁶² Ibid., 118.

1893, the founding date of the Western Federation of Miners, the union to which Mine Mill traced its origins. As Solski's introduction explains, Mine Mill's symbol was an amalgamation combining both WFM and IWW emblems, since the union's institutional memory traced its origins to both organizations. We know who Embree was, but why was Robeson there?

Paul Robeson, the son of a slave, Columbia law school graduate, and Broadway icon, got caught in the red scare's web for anti-racist comments he made in April of 1949 (the same month as Maurice Travis' beating in Alabama) at a peace conference in Paris. Newspapers quoted him making a statement declaring that since slaves had helped create the United States' wealth, their descendants deserved a share of it; that US foreign policy was comparable to Hitler's; and that it was folly to imagine "American negroes would go to war on behalf of those who have oppressed us for generations against a country [the Soviet Union] which in one generation has raised our people to the full dignity of mankind."⁶³ Outraged reaction began immediately and in an unprecedented move, the US State Department withdrew Robeson's passport until 1958. During most of that decade, Robeson only left the country twice, both times at the behest of Mine Mill, once in 1952, and again in 1956, when the above photograph was taken. Therefore, it appears that, a year after the release of *Salt of the Earth* and the same year that both Maurice Travis and Clinton Jencks were asked to resign from Mine Mill for their Taft-Hartley violations, militant Sudbury Mine Mill union officials were honoring two heroes: Paul Robeson and A.S. Embree.

⁶³ Martin Bauml Duberman, *Paul Robeson* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), 342.

After experiencing over a decade of anonymity following the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, Embree re-emerged as a reminder of the militant days of old—perhaps amplified by his daughter’s marriage to a man, Maurice Travis, who carried on Embree’s tradition of radical unionism. In 1953, graduate student Donald J. McClurg interviewed Embree about the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, signaling the beginning of renewed historical interest in the IWW. Mine Mill co-produced the 1954 film *Salt of the Earth*, documenting the challenge to the Mexican wage, an issue Embree had fought against since at least 1917, and at least hinting at the memory of women’s and children’s active participation in achieving a favorable strike settlement and in seeking social justice. Militant Canadian, but not American, Mine Mill leaders invited a native son, A.S. Embree, to participate in a remarkable commemoration event that honored Paul Robeson and him, perhaps because Embree had come to symbolize the militant memories on which at least some leaders and members of Mine Mill had built its present.

What is not clear, of course, was whether sharing the stage with Robeson provides any clues to Embree’s own relationship to Communism. Had he ever been a Communist? Did he embrace Communism in the 1920s or later, after he joined Mine Mill? My research suggests that it was unlikely that he was a CP member, just as it is equally unlikely that most Mine Mill leaders or members belonged to the CP, either, although that was a common allegation during the 1950s. Embree did, however, share many goals with Communists. He embraced militant labor politics and promoted equality for blacks, Mexican Americans, and others often bypassed by the American labor movement and society, in general. Much like Powers Hapgood,

Embree always denied he was a Communist, but he admired them and had no qualms about associating with them. Throughout his adult life, with missionary zeal, A.S. Embree worked as a labor leader in the WFM, IWW, and finally, Mine Mill to organize workers, because he believed that a militant, egalitarian labor movement could not only transform workers' lives, it could make the world a better place to live.

In 1957, Embree died. Although he was probably bitterly disappointed at the state of the American labor movement at that time, he was probably deeply satisfied at the way his life had turned out. *Now* is the time to remember the final sentence in Melvyn Dubofsky's IWW history, *We Shall be All*, written by A.S. Embree from his Arizona prison cell in 1917: "The end in view is well worth striving for, but in the struggle itself lies the happiness of the fighter."⁶⁴

Embree died in 1957 at the age of eighty. In 1946, John L. Lewis turned sixty-six. Lewis was growing old, and when he created the UMW Welfare and Retirement Fund in 1946, with the sixty-year-old Josephine Roche as its manager, he wanted to create a UMW legacy that would outlive his UMW presidency.⁶⁵ He certainly did, but not in the positive light he wished. The Fund transformed Lewis from a militant labor leader who saw himself as the defender of the working class to a corporate executive who sold out his own workers to keep the Fund afloat. Ironically, Lewis' transformation was only made possible by the militancy of UMW coalminers who staged almost constant strikes between 1946 and 1950 to get the Fund the way

⁶⁴ Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 484.

⁶⁵ Finley, 178-79.

Lewis wanted it. Yet, the creation of the Fund alone cannot be blamed for Lewis' seeming behavioral change after 1950, a subject to which I'll return in the next chapter. What Melvyn Dubofsky and Warren Van Tine saw as mostly a self-deluded shift in his personal and professional goals was perfectly consistent with the beliefs Lewis had been expressing since the 1920s on how the coal industry should function, a vision that encouraged closer UMW collaboration with coalmine operators and greater mechanization, a goal that he knew would result in fewer, but unionized (UMW, of course) coalminers.

Josephine Roche played a significant role in the UMW's post-war transformation. Roche resigned from the Treasury Department effective November 1, 1937, because her company's president had recently died and she said she needed to return to Colorado to help take care of loose ends, although her friend Oscar Chapman later remarked that he believed Roche had actually resigned because of the fallout between FDR and Lewis.⁶⁶ Once again, Roche assumed the RMFC presidency, an office she held until 1950 when she resigned to become one of three trustees to run the United Mine Workers Welfare and Retirement Fund (the Fund), which she had been managing since 1946. That was the same year she began managing the RMFC's bankruptcy, too.

Along the lines of Colorado's industrial commission that Progressives helped create after Ludlow, the Fund's structure established three trustees. One trustee represented the UMW, one represented the coal operators, and the third was supposed to be neutral, representing the public interest. From its inception to his

⁶⁶ Roche's letter of resignation, 14 September 1937, 6-5, Josephine Roche papers.

death in 1969, Lewis held the UMW trustee spot. From 1946 through 1950, several different people represented the coal operators and the public, but Lewis always found something unacceptable about them. Controversies over who the two non-Lewis trustees would be and how the Fund would be run resulted in official, unofficial, wildcat, and rolling UMW strikes that created upheaval in the coal fields from 1946 through 1950.

In 1950, Lewis finally got the Fund the way he wanted it and the UMW strikes stopped. Just like that. A federal judge issued a ruling that made it possible for the UMW to appoint the neutral trustee, and immediately, Lewis appointed Josephine Roche. Of course, Roche was hardly neutral. From 1950 to 1969, Roche always voted with Lewis.⁶⁷ That meant Lewis and Roche controlled the Fund. Although the Fund and the UMW were supposed to be governed and financed independently, Lewis controlled both and the coffers of the two organizations intermingled freely, largely because the coal operators' royalties were deposited into a Washington, D.C., bank that was UMW (and Lewis) controlled.⁶⁸

The roots of such financial "collaboration" between Roche and Lewis ran deeper than the Fund. When Roche had returned to Colorado in November of 1937, she presided over a financially troubled company. Contrary to the testimony offered before Colorado's industrial commission in 1930 (when Hapgood, Merle Vincent, and UMW loyalist Percy Tetlow testified), the overwhelmingly positive national press Roche and the RMFC received between 1928 through 1933, and Roche's 1933 coal code testimony, the RMFC had never been profitable since she gained control of

⁶⁷ Finley, 162; Dubofsky and Van Tine, 510; Mulcahy, 8-9.

⁶⁸ Dubofsky and Van Tine, 506

the company in 1928. She had believed that if she could apply principles of scientific management, which included increasing mechanization and rationalizing the company's labor policies, the RMFC would eventually quit losing money. Less than a year after gaining control of the company, the 1929 stock market crash symbolized the onset of the Great Depression, and the coal industry, which had never fully recovered from its post-World War I peak, slid even deeper into cutthroat competition and tumultuous labor conflicts. Rich, liberal friends (such as Oswald Garrison Villard) who had loaned Roche money in 1928 nervously began clamoring for repayment, something neither Roche nor the RMFC could do.

Although I cannot determine when the UMW started depositing funds into the RMFC's treasury, UMW historian Fox Maier writes that it began sometime in the early 1930s, before the 1933 beginning of the New Deal and the revitalization of the UMW.⁶⁹ Even though the UMW treasury was almost empty and there were fewer than 80,000 paying members, Lewis used those dues to prop up the RMFC. He could not permit the company to sink, since the RMFC exemplified what Lewis was arguing would save the coal industry. To make those loans to the RMFC, Lewis, Philip Murray, and Thomas Kennedy, the UMW's triumvirate of power since 1920, formed Lewmurken; the company name came from the first three letters of each man's name. Although the RMFC was the first recipient of Lewmurken loans, it would be far from the last.⁷⁰ Roche needed cash to modernize the RMFC, which meant introducing more mechanization and paying union salaries in a UMW closed

⁶⁹ Maier, 428.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 427-8.

shop, but since the RMFC was cash poor, Lewmurken accepted shares in the RMFC as collateral for its loans.⁷¹

Neither Roche's nor the RMFC's records show how much Lewmurken loaned to the RMFC, but it was at least \$1,451,104, and probably more.⁷² Most of the loans were probably personal loans to Roche, the RMFC's financial records are far from transparent, and UMW historians have acknowledged that the UMW's financial records were murky at best until 1959, when the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (better known as the Landrum-Griffith act) required all unions to standardize their accounting practices, so there may be no accurate way of knowing how much UMW cash flowed into the RMFC to keep the company afloat.⁷³ When the RMFC declared bankruptcy, there was no hope of the company ever paying back the loans, although the UMW kept them on their books for years.⁷⁴

After Roche returned to Colorado, Lewmurken's role in the RMFC increased even as the company's situation worsened. In 1939, Lewmurken forced the RMFC to accept an outside management company that it had chosen, which piqued the interest of *Time* magazine's business reporters. *Time* ran an unflattering article about the RMFC accompanied by an even more unflattering photo and description ("slight and greying") of Roche. No longer could Roche feed stories to *Time* or any other national magazine as she'd done from 1928 through 1933. Reporters had changed their craft and they, as well as the rest of the country, had dismissed their

⁷¹ Ibid., 427.

⁷² Finley, 168.

⁷³ Dubofsky and Van Tine, 507.

⁷⁴ Finley, 168.

infatuation with Roche and her experiment in industrial democracy.⁷⁵ Soon after the UMW took over the RMFC's management, Lawson resigned as RMFC vice president and board member, positions he had held since 1928, a coincidence the *Time* article pointed out.⁷⁶ Two years later, Lawson took a job in the World War II War Manpower Commission, where he worked alongside Barron B. Beshoar, whose 1942 biography of Lawson that became the most "remembered" account of the Ludlow strike.

In 1941, Oswald Garrison Villard wrote a letter to Roche congratulating her on being able to refinance her company and "get rid of those pesky loans."⁷⁷ By 1942, Lewmurken formally incorporated in Delaware, and that filing led the press, and then the public, to first learn of Lewmurken's existence, causing a brief blip in the news cycle that was far more preoccupied with World War II. That same year, after working together for over twenty years, Lewis and Murray bitterly parted ways. I suspect the fallout led Murray to leak the Lewmurkin stories, since after the stories broke, Murray denied ever having any knowledge of the corporation. Lewmurken continued as a very active corporation throughout the 1950s, although I am not sure when it dissolved—perhaps with the deaths of all three founders.⁷⁸

Even with the increased infusion of UMW money and expertise, the RMFC could not stave off bankruptcy. In 1945, it entered receivership, and in 1946, the

⁷⁵ Telegram from Lee Pressman to Josephine Roche, 1 October 1939, JR Papers, 5-13; *Time*, 10 July 1939: 51, JR Papers, 6-13; Letter from Josephine Roche to the editors of *Time*, 31 July 1939, 6-13, Josephine Roche papers.

⁷⁶ Letter from Josephine Roche to the editor of *Time*, 31 July 1939, 6-13, Josephine Roche papers.

⁷⁷ Letter from Oswald Garrison Villard to Josephine Roche, 19 September 1941, JR Papers, 5-3.

⁷⁸ Dubofsky and Van Tine, 506.

company's largest and most important RMFC property, the Columbine, closed. Most coalminers began abandoning coal towns as the work disappeared, but for those who stayed behind in the northern Colorado fields, many found jobs perhaps even more dangerous than coalmining: manufacturing plutonium triggers at nearby Rocky Flats when it opened in 1952.⁷⁹ From 1946 through 1950, Roche continued as RMFC president, where most of her job consisted of liquidating the company's assets, while she also managed the Fund. In 1950, Lewis named Roche the neutral trustee on the Fund.

When Roche's RMFC entered bankruptcy proceedings in 1945, most coalmines in the rest of the country were booming because of the increased demand for coal that the war generated. However, like the proverbial canary in the coalmine (the birds died from poisonous gasses before humans did, giving the coalminers a chance to escape), the RMFC's demise presaged changes that overtook the rest of the coal industry by the 1950s. When dealing with the federal government, Lewis and Roche had learned some important lessons from their experiences from 1917 through 1940. However, when dealing with coalminers and operators, both clung to the same scientific management principles that had guided their actions in the 1920s. Those beliefs—along with their well-intentioned efforts at social reform (that like Roche's earlier reform efforts, were combined with social control), their unwavering personal loyalty to each other (and to a handful of other longtime UMW insiders), and a refusal to practice the democratic half of industrial democracy—contributed to the decline of the UMW.

⁷⁹ Kristen Iverson, *Full Body Burden: Growing up in the Shadow of Rocky Flats* (New York, NY: Crown Publishing, 2012), 20.

Lewis was determined not to repeat the same mistakes he had made in World War I. When Lewis had been a rising labor leader during that war, he joined AFL president Samuel Gompers in completely supporting the war effort. The AFL had a free hand to organize within war industries, but in return, AFL leaders agreed to impose no-strike clauses in workers' contracts. AFL leaders such as Lewis hoped their patriotic cooperation during the war would lead to a greater role for organized labor (just for AFL unions, though) after the war. Instead, after the 1919 strike wave, the federal government and businesses crushed the AFL's wartime gains, and AFL membership plummeted throughout the decade.

In the 1940s, more was at stake. Any wartime compromises might erode the tremendous gains organized labor had made during the New Deal, something Lewis dared not risk. When coalminers' wages did not keep up with wartime inflation, Lewis led the UMW out on strike in 1941 and 1943, walkouts that incurred the wrath of FDR, with whom he had a contentious relationship since 1937, as well as newspaper editors and perhaps the American public, who deemed Lewis' actions unpatriotic. Willing to draw the ire of the nation throughout the war, and determined not to repeat his mistakes from World War I, Lewis defiantly played his role of militant class warrior to the hilt.⁸⁰

When World War II ended, the relationship between Lewis and President Harry Truman was even worse than the one between Lewis and FDR had been. From 1945 through 1950, conflicts between the executive branch and the UMW roiled as a result of some of the following: UMW strikes and strike threats; federal

⁸⁰Dubofsky and Van Tine, 390 & 465

government takeovers and threats of federal coalmine takeovers; proposed, passed (including Taft-Hartley), and failed legislation aimed at curtailing organized labor; failed and moderately successful UMW negotiations; and lawsuits, injunctions, and judgments. Those five tumultuous years are too complex to cover here, and that time period has already received substantial, thorough treatment in the previously cited Dubofsky and Van Tine Lewis biography and Maier Fox's history of the United Mine Workers. Richard P. Mulcahy's *A Social Contract for the Coal Fields: The Rise and Fall of the United Mine Workers of American Welfare and Retirement Fund* covers that 1946-1950 influence on the Fund's development, and as the title indicates, it also provides a history of the Fund itself.

Except for her ongoing friendship with Oscar Chapman, it is not clear how much influence Roche exercised on the day-to-day machinations between Lewis and Truman. She was overwhelmed enough trying to manage the RMFC's liquidation proceedings *and* establish a management structure for the Fund, the latter supposedly on a part-time basis.⁸¹ Of course, Truman was pretty busy, too, laying the foundations of the cold war. However, Roche's close relationship with Chapman must have played a crucial role in this period, since it provided Roche insider information Lewis could not have obtained otherwise.⁸² Beginning in the early 1920s, Roche and Chapman had worked alongside each other in Judge Ben Lindsey's juvenile court. Starting in 1927, Chapman joined Costigan's law firm and in 1930, he managed Costigan's 1930 Senate campaign. In 1932, Chapman also managed Billy

⁸¹ Letter from Josephine Roche to Mrs. Simkhovitch, 27 February 1948, 6-7, Josephine Roche papers.

⁸² Dubofsky and Van Tine, 471.

Adams' victorious 1932 re-election campaign for Colorado governor, showing there must not have been too many hard feelings about his actions during the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, once again demonstrating his competence and loyalty to the Democratic Party. In 1933, Chapman was appointed to the Department of the Interior, and although he served in "subordinate positions" for over seventeen years, apparently his influence outweighed his job titles, since his obituary described him as a "troubleshooter," a "key strategist for the Democratic Party during the Roosevelt and Truman Administrations," and "one of the shrewdest politicians of the century."⁸³ Coal fell under the authority of the Interior, so even as undersecretary, he influenced UMW negotiations. From 1949 through 1953, as Secretary of the Interior, Chapman helped form the nation's energy policies; his friendship with Roche and Lewis, yet his unquestionable loyalty to Truman, helped smooth the friction his predecessor, Julius Krug, had helped promulgate.

Lewis and former Interior Secretary Julius Krug established the framework for the Fund in 1946 when the nation's coalmines still fell under federal wartime control and the federal government, not coal operators, negotiated an end to the 1946 UMW strike. More often than not, however, Lewis and Krug butted heads. Lewis apparently considered "Krug the administrative villain," and after a March 25, 1947, Centralia, Kentucky, mine explosion killed 111 coalminers, Lewis accused Krug of "criminal negligence" in those deaths, since during the federal coalmine seizure, operators who freely violated safety standards had been allowed to keep

⁸³ "Oscar L. Chapman, 81: Aide to Presidents," *The New York Times*, 9 February 1978, www.nytimes.com.

running.⁸⁴ Lewis called for Krug's resignation, but Krug hung on until 1949, when Chapman replaced him.

The Fund structure that Krug and Lewis negotiated called for operators to donate five cents per ton of coal mined, called royalties, into the Fund.⁸⁵ Over time, the operator percentages paid into the royalties increased. As mentioned earlier, three trustees governed how that money got invested and disbursed, and they also established mechanisms for how the Fund would function. Since Roche managed the Fund, she created most of the governance mechanisms that eventually produced defined pensions for coalminers and survivor benefits for widows and orphans, as well as an innovative healthcare program that challenged the American Medical Association's model which argued that *only* "fee for service" could deliver quality health care.

Since her Progressive days, Roche had been passionately interested in the issue of health care and retirement programs. Progressives were the first to advocate not just the nationalization of public utilities, railroads, and natural resources (such as coal), they also promoted what today gets called nationalized health care. Although it was a measly measure, Colorado Progressives passed a Mother's Pension bill that provided a small payment to widows and destitute mothers. When Roche ran the Foreign Language Information Service for George Creel's Committee on Public Information during World War I, her final report listed

⁸⁴ Ibid., 471.

⁸⁵ Mulcahy, 8.

quality health care as the number one need among immigrants.⁸⁶ After the RMFC-UMW contract went into effect on September 1, 1928, one of Roche's first priorities was investigating group insurance programs for the coalminers.⁸⁷ In 1931, Colorado Democrats (and Roche was a party activist) passed a retirement program for public workers that pre-dated Social Security by four years. As a New Dealer, Roche not only helped design the Social Security act, she also chaired the interdepartmental task force charged with drafting proposed legislation that would provide health care to all Americans, although its final 1940 recommendations went nowhere, as FDR's attentions turned away from social reform toward the looming war in Europe and the Pacific.⁸⁸

In 1940, Lewis made his final break with FDR when he supported Republican presidential candidate Wendell Wilkie. Roche, a tireless and dedicated campaigner in the 1932 and 1936 Democratic elections, sat out the 1940 election, only accepting non-partisan speaking engagements.⁸⁹ Her refusal to stump for FDR might also have played a role in her committee's recommendations sinking like a stone. Politically, whether influenced by Lewis, disillusioned by what she had experienced first-hand

⁸⁶ Josephine Roche, *A Study of the Needs and Problems of the Foreign Born and of What is being done to Meet Them, With Suggestions for Further Work Which the Situation Calls For*, Box 11, Josephine Roche papers.

⁸⁷ Letter from Edward Keating to Josephine Roche, 8 October 1928, 4-1, Josephine Roche papers.

⁸⁸ Draft of health section to 1940 Democratic national platform, no date; FDR memo establishing Committee on Economic Security and the Advisory Council on Economic Security, 29 June 1934, 6-5, Josephine Roche papers.

⁸⁹ Letter from Josephine Roche to Lorena Hickock, 27 August 1940; Josephine Roche to Lorena Hickok, 5 September 1940, 3-1, Josephine Roche papers. This same box also has several letters between Roche and her friend Molly Dewson, who headed women for the Democratic National Committee. In 1932 and 1936, it is clear in letters exchanged between these two women that Roche worked hard for the Democrats, yet in 1940, Dewson could not get Roche to commit to campaigning.

in Washington, D.C., or both, after 1940, Roche's political views had changed. Lewis and the Russell Sage Foundation sent Roche to England in 1946 to study developments in the coal industry there. When she returned, she had concluded that the "Labor Party and the Nationalization Act don't offer much hope" and were not models worthy of emulating in the United States.⁹⁰

Like Lewis, Roche opposed the nationalization of coal and the linking of the UMW to a single political party. Lewis believed he was better off forming his own relationships with businesses that also wanted to keep the federal government out of the coal industry. George Love, who owned the Pennsylvania-Consolidation Coal Company, agreed. Remember that in 1931, Gifford Pinchot had negotiated a contract between Pennsylvania Consolidated Coal (the original company that formed the seed of Love's coal empire) and the UMW, even though the National Miners Union had led the region's coalminers out on strike.⁹¹ Twenty years later, Love bought out his major competitors, and as a result, controlled half of the coal mined in the United States. Love was a new breed of coal operator who said he wanted the federal government to stay out of the coal business, a goal that Lewis said he also shared, so in 1950, he and Lewis struck a deal. The UMW would not oppose increased coalmine mechanization and would agree not to strike. In return, Love would guarantee

⁹⁰ McGinn, 122-23; Letter from Josephine Roche to Norman Thomas, 25 October 1946, 6-15, Josephine Roche papers; In 1947, Great Britain nationalized coal, cementing the relationship between coalminers and the Labor Party until Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher began shutting down coalmines in 1984. .

⁹¹ Although I cannot find direct evidence that Roche influenced Pinchot in that 1932 agreement, there is a letter from Mrs. Pinchot to Roche (Letter to Josephine Roche from Cornelia Bryce Pinchot, 4 April 1932, JR Papers, 5-13), thanking her for the materials she had sent to her, although they were probably related to Pinchot's own (failed) bid for a seat in the House of Representatives. Cornelia Pinchot wrote Roche that she had received the endorsement of coalminers.

favorable UMW contracts, consistently pay its royalties into the Fund, and continue pressuring other coalminers to join the Bituminous Coal Operators' Association (BCOA), formed in 1950.

The increase in mechanization brought new problems for coalminers. The first, obviously, was that mechanized coalmines need fewer coalminers. In 1945, there were 364,997 soft coalminers mining 576 billion tons of coal. By 1965, there were 137,602 coalminers digging 513 billion tons, all the country needed.⁹² Not all displaced coalminers found new lines of work, and many former coal towns, especially in the mountains of Tennessee and Kentucky, turned into poverty-stricken hollows of misery.

Mechanization favored large coal operators over smaller ones. Bigger, more efficient operators could practice economies of scale that allowed them to mine more tons per worker, using expensive machines that smaller operators could not afford. Since Fund royalties were pegged to tonnage, Lewis favored the big operators. In 1949, Lewis and the UMW opened its own bank in Washington, D.C., in which to deposit the Fund's royalties. The bank soon began handling all UMW business, which included making loans to coal operators who wanted to mechanize. To ensure a constant market for unionized coal, Lewis and other bank officers began heavily investing in public utilities, coal's biggest customers, and then financially pressured them to burn union coal. However, Lewis' drive to increase mechanization, modernization, consolidation, and Fund royalties did not always support UMW coalminers, since "Lewis had to drive out of business all marginal

⁹² Maier, 423.

properties regardless of their union standing.”⁹³ Using his newly consolidated financial “leverage,” Lewis helped drive small, union coalmines out of business, actions showing that he no longer put union coalminers’ interests first.⁹⁴

Mechanization also produced another dire consequence for coalminers: Black Lung disease. Coalmining had always been dangerous work, and in the pick mining days, miners died in truly horrible ways. Elevators delivering men to the shafts below sliced off arms, legs, or heads. Wayward coal cars crushed men to death, as did cave-ins. Most dangerous of all, underground mines were filled with unstable gasses, and when they exploded, they could kill over a hundred men at a time. Lewis had believed that mechanization would make coalmining safer, especially as strip mining increased and machines, not men, did most of the underground cutting of coal. However, the new coal cutting machines were so efficient, they produced increasingly fine dust particles. When miners went to doctors with symptoms resembling emphysema or chronic bronchitis, x-rays showed permanently damaged, black spotted lungs. Therefore, the debilitating sickness that only affected coalminers, a disease caused by mechanization, became known as Black Lung disease. The identification of Black Lung, the denial of benefits for it from the Fund throughout the 1950s, and 1960s politics eventually converged to force reforms in the UMW, but by the time they did, Lewis had been retired for almost a decade, a subject to which I will return in the next chapter. Although Lewis retired from his UMW presidency in 1960, he did not retire from the Fund. Until his death, he and Roche continued dominating the Fund’s policies, which as we shall

⁹³ Dubofsky and Van Tine, 510.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

see, produced tragic consequences in 1969.

Many labor historians, to explore what organized labor might have become had it not purged its leftists, have largely overlooked the UMW's militancy in the 1940s; they have chosen instead to explore the militant past of leaders, such as Clinton Jencks (but not Maurice Travis), who defied the dominant red-scare culture of the late 1940s and 1950s. Oftentimes, however, such investigations not only ignore the political climate in which organized labor found itself after World War II, especially after the 1947 Taft-Hartley act, they also tend to use such accounts as precursors of 1960s civil rights movements. Leaders such as Travis and Jencks, however, did not build their movements based on individual liberties and identity politics, they drew their inspiration from organized labor's militant, collective past, looking to leaders such as A.S. Embree to provide their inspiration.

Such historians also bemoan the fact that in most industries like coal, militant strikes were over by 1950. They forget that following World War II, the UMW led the way in defying Taft-Hartley restrictions and upping the ante on its demands for workers. Fair wages and contracts were no longer enough. After the New Deal proposals for nationalized healthcare failed, workers came to realize that they had to fight—which meant strike—to get health care benefits. They also wanted defined pensions to supplement Social Security for their old age.

Critics who charge that organized labor should have held firm until everybody got those rights are misreading the political atmosphere that gripped the country following the war. The period from 1945 to 1950, especially for the UMW,

proved to be one of the most contentious and militant in the union's history, as coalminers waged almost continuous walkouts to get those benefits, which they considered rights. Even as the executive branch, Congress, and the public turned hard to the right, the coalminers waged these strikes, although they were vilified as unpatriotic and selfish for doing so.

Partly out of conviction, but also from political pragmatism, CIO labor leaders sacrificed their leftist leaders and the unions they led to hold onto the substantial gains labor had made in the 1930s, but especially during World War II. They chose to forget their militant past to create a viable present, but that forgetting produced unintended consequences. The leftist purge severely curtailed labor's social justice agenda throughout the 1950s and 1960s, so much so, that by the time baby boomers turned into social rebels, they had no memory of an era when organized labor had ever been any different. To them, as I will explore in the next chapter, organized labor was part of "the establishment," and it had become part of society's problems, not its solutions.

Chapter 9: New Labor Histories and the New Left: The Rediscovery of the IWW

On December 30, 1969, Jock Yablonski, his wife, Margaret, and their twenty-five year old daughter, Charlotte, were brutally murdered inside their Clarksville, Pennsylvania home. Six days later, the Yablonski's older son, Kenneth, found them all in their bedrooms, shot in the head. When reporters asked the Yablonskis' younger son, Chip, if he thought the UMW had something to do with the murders, he said yes, and then added, "You guys just didn't believe how rotten this union was."¹ Charlotte, a social worker, and Kenneth and Chip, both lawyers, had taken leaves of absence from their jobs to work on their father's campaign for UMW president in 1969. Jock Yablonski was challenging Tony Boyle, who had held the office since 1963. Many within the UMW apparently believed Lewis had anointed Boyle to follow in his footsteps, but while Boyle maintained all of Lewis' dictatorial practices, he exhibited none of Lewis' bombastic charm or political acumen, stirring dissatisfaction within the UMW that made Yablonski's run possible.

When the votes were tallied on December 9, few, including Yablonski, were surprised that Boyle declared he had won by a 2:1 margin. Throughout the campaign, Yablonski and his supporters had pleaded with the Department of Labor to investigate the election for fraud, but Labor had declined.² The murders changed that. Labor began a full investigation that not only tied Boyle to the murders, it also

¹ "Yablonski of U.M.W. Slain with Wife and Daughter," *The New York Times*, 6 January 1970, www.nytimes.com.

² Ibid.

exposed the inner workings of the UMW and the Fund that Lewis had so carefully obscured from UMW members and the public. The murders spawned Miners for Democracy, a movement among coalminers to take back their union and learn how to govern themselves, something they had not done since Lewis' rise to power in the 1920s. Lewis' death in the summer of 1969 unleashed pent-up discontents that he had mostly been able to suppress for years, but with Lewis gone, Josephine Roche had to face UMW critics and defend policies she and Lewis had instituted in the Fund—and she had to do it alone.

By 1955, as memories of the decades of labor turmoil before and after World War II faded, the AFL-CIO began transforming itself into a “sleepy monopoly,” administered by bureaucrats who seemed to care more about negotiating cost-of-living wage increases and grievance procedures for their members than about advocating for social justice for all Americans whether they worked under a contract or not.³ This somnambulance, accompanied by brief spikes of outright corruption, inspired a new generation of labor historians—and the cultural rebels their work influenced—to rediscover the Industrial Workers of the World, a labor organization that in every way seemed the antithesis of what organized labor had become by the mid-1950s and grown into by the late 1960s. Not only had the Wobblies loathed labor bureaucrats and rejected labor contracts, their perceived advocacy of racial, class, and occasionally even gender equality appealed to historians who disillusioned with contemporary organized labor and eager to know more about a more idealistic, egalitarian path labor might have taken.

³ Melvyn Dubofsky and Foster Rhea Dulles, *Labor in America: A History*, 6th ed. (Wheeling, Illinois: Harland Davidson, Inc., 1999), 352-353.

In spite of their best intentions, however, historians often produced IWW narratives as romanticized and incomplete as the histories they thought they were supplementing. As most of us do, researchers usually found what they went looking for: a wildly democratic, idealistic labor organization that served as a foil to the staid, even corrupt “establishment” labor unions that dominated the late 1950s and 1960s. Surprisingly perhaps, these new labor narratives left out the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike once again. I will examine how that omission happened, starting with the emergence in the 1960s of what is still called, although hardly new anymore, New Labor history. Then, I will examine how the formation of the IWW archives and use of oral histories—influenced by Fred Thompson and the democratization of history—created an IWW self-referential narrative loop that continued, incorrectly, reaffirming the quiescence of 1920s American workers. This revival of memory ironically served to renew the forgetting of 1920s labor activism in the post-Lewis era.

Even as historians and cultural rebels rediscovered the Wobblies, the memories of Ludlow helped guarantee that the story of the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike never found a meaningful place in either IWW histories or the bigger context of US labor history. The 1927-1928 strike was again ignored in favor of the more dramatic story of Ludlow, whose memories were resurrected, not by organized labor, but by leftist historians such as Howard Zinn who saw in Ludlow evidence of “class rebellion” and “the undeterred spirit of rebellion among working people—whatever legislation had been passed, whatever liberal reforms were on the books, whatever investigations were undertaken and words of regret and

conciliation uttered.”⁴ Zinn said he was working in a Brooklyn shipyard when he heard a Woody Guthrie song about Ludlow, which “led me to look in the library about this event which nobody had ever mentioned in any of my history course (and) no textbook had ever mentioned.”⁵ The deep dissatisfaction of the 1960s fueled Zinn’s inquiries into Ludlow, but he stopped before reaching the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike. Perhaps it was because the events surrounding Ludlow lent themselves more easily to the terms of the 1960s cultural divides, while those surrounding the IWW 1927-1928 strike are murkier. Ludlow encouraged leftists and New Labor historians to see themselves as inheritors of the Wobbly tradition more broadly. Dubofsky’s 1969 *We Shall Be All*, still the most important source on the IWW, appeared to be at least partly inspired by this sentiment. In a 2007 interview with his former student, Bryan Palmer, Dubofsky said that his book began as a history of metal miners in the West but evolved into a book about the IWW, because the “echoes between what could be called the New Left and the Yippies and the generation of the IWW seemed so comparable that it may have just been a natural transition.”⁶ To tell the story of labor radicals for New Labor historians was to speak truth to power.

New Labor historians employed an expanded toolbox of methods, particularly incorporating oral histories when they were available, to evidence a

⁴ Howard Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States, 1492-Present*, (New York, NY: Perennial Classics, 2001; first published in 1980 by HarperCollins Publishers), 356.

⁵ Susan Greene, “Historian Zinn Dug into Ludlow Massacre Taboo,” *The Denver Post*, 31 January 2010, www.denverpost.com/new/ci-14303400, accessed 7 August 2013.

⁶ Bryan D. Palmer, “A City Kid’s View of Working-Class History: An Interview with Melvyn Dubofsky,” *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Summer 2010), 67.

more bottom up rather than top down view of history. But the outsized reliance upon one figure—Fred Thompson—for the sources and memory of the IWW undercut some of their attempts to convey a more egalitarian story. Historians mostly took Thompson at his word, and his overwhelming influence through interviews and the formation of the IWW archives at the Walter P. Reuther Labor Archives at Wayne State University helped create a rather lopsided, romanticized history of the IWW. Thompson's reasons for downplaying the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike in his versions of IWW history were probably personal. However, just as the tumultuous twenties and early thirties—especially in the nation's coalfields—have been mostly overlooked in their influence on New Deal labor policies, the 1927-1928 strike—one of the biggest, and certainly one of the most successful of the IWW's strikes—suggests an alternate path the IWW might have pursued under the leadership of Wobblies like Embree, not Thompson.

New Labor historians grew into young adulthood in a post-GI Bill world that spawned the expansion of private and public universities after World War II, funded by a federal government commitment to higher education that, to a great extent, democratized education. According the US Census Bureau, in 1950, thirty-four percent of Americans were high school graduates; by 2000, eighty percent were. In 1950, five percent of Americans had graduated from college; by 2000, twenty-five percent had. In 1950, less than one percent of the population held graduate degrees;

by 2000, almost nine percent did.⁷ Although the greatest percentage increase in educational attainment took place between 1960 and 1980 (a trend that since then has stalled and even recently shown signs of reversal), the great educational democratizing trend that began after World War II help turn colleges and universities from exclusive bastions of privilege into more rollicking, plebian institutions whose students wanted to find out the histories of people who looked more like them.

New Labor historians rejected the John Commons, University of Wisconsin-inspired school of labor history that had held sway since the progressive era. Since Commons' adherents studied labor institutions (like unions), they examined official records—minutes, convention hearings, and the like—to construct their versions of labor history. The New Labor historians insisted those records revealed only an elitist sliver of labor's story, since they left out the voices of workers who sometimes belonged to unions, but sometimes had not. Besides using traditional sources, the New Labor historians also expanded their historical toolboxes to include the quantitative methodologies of social history, as well as increased the usage of ephemeral cultural artifacts and oral histories. The biggest names in the field—David Brody, David Montgomery, Herbert Gutman, and Melvyn Dubofsky (who is sometimes omitted from the pantheon, but should not be)—led an emerging generation of labor historians.

⁷Trudy A. Suchan, Marc J. Perry, James D. Fitzsimmons, Anika E. Juhn, Alexander M. Tait, Cynthia A. Brewer, "Chapter 10: Education," *Census Atlas of the United States, Series CENSR-29*, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, D.C., 2007, http://www.census.gov/population/www/cen2000/censusatlas/pdf/10_Education.pdf, 158, accessed 2 February 2013.

By the time the New Labor historians began getting published in the late 1950s, the AFL-CIO leaders had joined what the 1960s New Left (not the Old Left that helped lead the rise of the CIO) would soon label “the establishment,” the monolithic, white, male, societal force that dominated not just government and business, but all walks of life. The establishment did not question the foundational cold war tenets leading to the United States’ increasingly unpopular interventions in Vietnam. In fact, AFL-CIO leaders enthusiastically endorsed the undeclared war as it escalated through the mid-1960s and continued through 1973, when President Richard Nixon authorized the withdrawal of most American troops, an action that, for most Americans, ended the Vietnam War.

The New Deal Democratic coalition that began to fray as early as Truman’s 1948 successful re-election bid continued unraveling, so that by the late 1950s, during Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower’s presidency, Democrats showed they were just as enthusiastic about curbing organized labor’s perceived stranglehold over its workers as their Republican counterparts. Take, for example, the role Robert Kennedy played in the McClellan hearings, which lasted between 1957 and 1960. Senator Joseph McCarthy first appointed Kennedy in 1952 as chief legal counsel to what was then formally called the Committee on Government Operations. Although Kennedy resigned as the political heat against McCarthyism peaked, he rejoined the committee in 1954, once again as legal counsel. The committee became known as the McClellan committee, so named after its conservative, union hating, Arkansan chairman, Senator John McClellan.

The McClellan committee primarily targeted the Teamsters' Union. Under the leadership of its president, Jimmy Hoffa, the Teamsters provided ample fodder for critics who charged that the union, with the members' automatic dues check off dollars lining the pockets of its undemocratically elected union officials, had grown into a cesspool of widespread corruption. The hearings led to the 1959 Landrum-Griffin Act, which is posted even today on the United Auto Workers' website as "Labor's Bill of Rights." Kennedy wrote a book about his role on the committee entitled *The Enemy Within: The McClellan Committee's Crusade Against Jimmy Hoffa and Corrupt Labor Unions*, published in 1960, the same year his older brother ran for president. While the committee successfully proved at least one labor union had grown into a bastion of thugs and self-promoters, through guilt by association, it tarnished the reputations of all labor unions during the hearings' process. Kennedy's sensationalistic book title, *The Enemy Within*, even suggested the country had as much to fear from organized labor as it did from outside forces, like Communism. The hearings, and Kennedy's role in them, demonstrated a changed, more hostile relationship between the Democratic Party and labor unions.

Of course, as seen in the last chapter, the Teamsters were hardly the only union with problems, but at least Lewis was not cavorting with organized crime. However, it is unclear what he did or did not know about the eleven-year "atmosphere of fear and terror" he authorized his lieutenant, Tony Boyle, to create from 1948 to 1959 in the non-unionized coalfields of Kentucky and Tennessee to intimidate (sometimes, to death) those miners into joining the UMW.⁸ In the 1972

⁸ Finley, 143.

Joseph E. Finley book, *The Corrupt Kingdom: The Rise and Fall of the United Mine Workers*, Finley is as unsparingly critical of Lewis as Saul Alinsky was gushingly uncritical of Lewis in his 1949 hagiography, *John L. Lewis: An Unauthorized Biography*.⁹ Both authors wrote books that were products of their times. Finley's post-Yablonski murders book names his chapter about the 1949-1959 Kentucky-Tennessee era, "Mineworker Muscle: Prelude to Terror," and he concludes that, given the level of control Lewis exerted over the UMW, "If John L. Lewis did not personally plan it [the campaign of violence], he personally permitted it, authorized it, paid for it and, when it did not work, personally brought it to a close."¹⁰ The campaign entered the court record when the Yablonski killers, UMW coalminers who participated in this wave of violence, were traced back to Boyle because of work they had done for him during this time.

When the McClellan committee met, Lewis was hardly the only dictator running his union. Walter Reuther, by red-baiting his opponents, had also ruthlessly crushed his rivals within the United Auto Workers (UAW) in 1946, and although he appears to have been a more benign dictator than Lewis, he was far from democratic, holding onto the UAW presidency from 1946 until 1970, the year he died, and heading the CIO from 1952 on. The committee only went after Hoffa, who had tied his union to organized crime while stripping locals of any authority, not Lewis or Reuther, who had *not* tied their unions to crime while stripping their locals of any authority.

⁹ Saul Alinsky, *John L. Lewis: An Unauthorized Biography* (New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1949).

¹⁰ Finley, 153.

After John F. Kennedy became president in 1961, Robert Kennedy served as his brother's attorney general and trusted White House confidant. Former vice president Lyndon B. Johnson assumed the presidency after President Kennedy's 1963 assassination, then won a 1964 landslide victory in his own right over harbinger-of-the-New Right-to-follow Republican challenger, Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater, who had also served enthusiastically on the McClellan Committee. However, Johnson's escalation of the Vietnam War made him so unpopular, he chose not to run for re-election in 1968, a decision that opened the field to a wide range of Democratic challengers, including Robert Kennedy. By 1968, like the majority of Americans after the Tet offensive, Kennedy had changed his mind about Vietnam, so he ran as a dove instead of a hawk. Immediately after winning the California primary, Robert Kennedy was assassinated, leaving no clear front-runner in the Democratic race. Johnson's vice president, Hubert Humphrey won the nomination, but tethered as he had been to Johnson's policies, he never could run as his own man. That perception of Humphrey, plus the televised riots showing Chicago cops savagely beating young protestors during the Democratic National Convention, helped Republican candidate Richard M. Nixon squeak out a presidential victory. Nixon's narrow popular vote lead looked even less like a mandate because of third party challenger George Wallace, who won several states in the deep South, awarding Wallace forty-six electoral votes, a performance even stronger than Strom Thurmond's thirty-nine electoral votes forty years earlier.

Four years later, Nixon won re-election in a landslide. One reason for Nixon's victory was this: The majority of union members voted for Nixon. Although Nixon's

“Southern Strategy” has received more academic attention, his labor strategy was equally brilliant at unraveling the New Deal coalition.¹¹ Instead of appealing to union members based on their economic interests, Nixon instead appealed to them “by making workers’ economic interests secondary to an appeal to their moral backbone, patriotic rectitude, whiteness, and machismo in the face of the inter-related threats of social decay, racial unrest, and faltering national purpose.”¹² That almost complete re-alignment of the New Deal labor coalition, completed when Republican Ronald Reagan ran and won in 1980, was something Democratic challenger George McGovern never understood, since he ran as a friend of labor.

Perhaps hoping to appeal to the labor vote, in 1972, McGovern published *The Great Coalfield War*. Co-author Leonard F. Guttridge helped McGovern re-work his 1953 Northwestern dissertation about the violent 1913-1914 phase of the Colorado coal strike, which, of course, included the Ludlow Massacre.¹³ In his conclusion, McGovern wrote that although “unequaled in bitterness and strife, it [the strike] was in essence a manifestation of the social instability and labor turmoil affecting all America. No major lasting reforms led directly from the conflict.”¹⁴ Apparently, this was not the kind of multi-causal, defeatist thinking that appealed to Americans in

¹¹ Nixon’s Southern Strategy is covered in some of the following: Joseph Crespino, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); and Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

¹² Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin’ Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2010), 127.

¹³ George S. McGovern and Leonard F. Guttridge, *The Great Coalfield War* (Boulder: The University of Colorado Press, 1972).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 341.

1972 (or ever), union members or not. Nixon won in a landslide. While McGovern had misread his support from the American labor movement, Nixon had not.

Soon after his re-election, Nixon appointed Peter J. Brennan, president of the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York, as his new Secretary of Labor. Brennan came to Nixon's attention following the May 8, 1970, "hard hat riots" in New York City. Thousands of protestors, many of them New York City high school students, gathered on Wall Street to protest the shootings four days earlier at Kent State University in Ohio, part of nationwide protests that suddenly flared after the public discovered the secret bombings over Cambodia Nixon had ordered. At least two hundred construction workers attacked the protestors, and two weeks later, Brennan (who already had come to some national attention for protesting affirmative action directives that would have forced his union to open apprentice programs to minorities) led a pro-Vietnam War construction worker rally.

Rewarded by Nixon for his loyalty and chosen to appeal to the discontented, white working class that felt its financial and social status slipping away, Brennan served as labor secretary from 1973 to 1975. No labor leader symbolizes organized labor's hard turn to the right more than Brennan, a man who clearly shared no intellectual or cultural affinity, much less labor solidarity, with either George McGovern or his recounting of the 1914 Ludlow Massacre.

Although the Ludlow Massacre did not resonate with union members in 1972, it did resonate with well-read protestors who saw parallels between Ludlow and Kent State; in both instances, the establishment had killed people who had demonstrated for their rights. There was a culture war going on, and organized

labor got lumped in to everything about the establishment the protestors hated. Unhappiness with organized labor ran even deeper than disgust with labor leaders like Brennan and his hard-hat constituents, and deservedly so. However, Brennan's pro-Vietnam war, pugilistic hard hats looked like Sunday school teachers compared to the 1969 Yablonski murderers.

In 1969, running as a reform candidate, Joseph A. "Jock" Yablonski challenged UMW President Tony Boyle for his seat, but harkening back to the way Lewis had run elections in the 1920s, Boyle successfully rigged the election, and Yablonski lost. Boyle had risen to power within the UMW after Lewis finally retired in 1960. After his retirement, Lewis' long-time vice president, Thomas Kennedy, served as president. However, when the ninety-three year old Kennedy died three years later, because Boyle had served as Kennedy's vice president, many bureaucrats and coalminers believed surely Boyle must have been Lewis' anointed choice. Although not necessarily true, after over forty years of hardball, internal politics, in which Lewis had eliminated any leaders talented or charismatic enough to challenge him, few good candidates were available to take Lewis' place in the UMW.

By the 1960s, the UMW was a shadow of its former organization. What had once been the mightiest of labor unions in the 1930s and 1940s had seen its membership shrink, both through increased mechanization in the coalmines (which required fewer workers), the steady growth of non-union mines, and changes in energy sources that had replaced coal. When Lewis hired Josephine Roche in 1946 (the year the Columbine closed for good) to serve on the newly created United Mine Workers of America Welfare and Retirement Fund, he gained an experienced and

knowledgeable administrator in health and retirement issues who was also unquestionably loyal to him. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Roche helped design innovative health programs for coalminers, but by the early 1960s, those programs were in financial trouble for a variety of reasons too complex to go into here. Consequently, the fund no longer sustained itself, leading Lewis and Roche to cut benefits to retirees. They also decided the Fund would not pay for Black Lung benefits, since they denied the disease existed.

Either because the Fund could not afford to pay, or because they refused to believe mechanization had created a new health hazard in the coalmines (or both), Lewis and Roche—who still controlled two of the three trustee votes on the Fund even after Lewis retired from his UMW presidency—denied Black Lung was a real disease. However, in the late 1960s, an unlikely coalition of UMW coalminers, law students and professors (especially from the University of West Virginia), and Ralph Nader and Nader’s Raiders began attacking UMW President Tony Boyle’s weak safety record.¹⁵ After the Yablonski murders, Kenneth and Chip Yablonski helped organize these dissident groups into Miners for Democracy. As protests rose, Lewis fell critically ill, although his illness did not directly affect the public debates, because after retiring in 1960, even though he continued to serve as a trustee on the Fund, Lewis had quickly faded from public view. Surprisingly, the formerly highly visible Lewis turned into a recluse in his Alexandria, Virginia, home, and “Toward

¹⁵Joseph E. Finley, *The Corrupt Kingdom: The Rise and Fall of the United Mine Workers* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 234-235, 256-259.

the end, only his friend and associate Josephine Roche and a couple who attended to his household and transportation needs remained to see after him.”¹⁶

In 1969, facing both the Black Lung revolt and Yablonski’s challenge for the UMW presidency, Boyle tried to gain control of the retirement fund, so he could restore the unpopular cuts to retired coalminers’ health benefits and win their votes in the upcoming election. Even if he could somehow orchestrate the appointment of a sympathetic, operator trustee to the Fund (something he was working hard to do), Boyle still could not gain control of the Fund, since Lewis and Roche controlled two of its three votes. However, after visiting the ailing Lewis (perhaps to update him on the controversial Boyle machinations), the 83 year-old, increasingly frail, and probably distraught Roche fell outside Lewis’ house and broke her hip. A week later, on June 11, 1969, Lewis died.¹⁷ Boyle could now appoint himself to fill Lewis’ spot, which he did, and immediately, “Without contacting Roche, who was still recovering [in a nearby hospital], Boyle and Judy [the newly appointed coal operator member] voted to boost pensions from \$115 to \$150 a month. Judy later claimed, under oath, that Boyle had a proxy from Roche approving the action.”¹⁸ Boyle’s move was clearly aimed at trying to win the retirees’ votes in a close election for UMW president, and maybe he really did win fair and square, but probably not.

Even before Boyle claimed to have beaten Yablonski, 2:1 for the UMW presidency, Yablonski, his sons, and his attorney had urged the federal Department of Labor to investigate widespread campaign fraud, which it declined to do until

¹⁶ Robert H. Zeiger, *John L. Lewis: Labor Leader* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, A Division of G.K. Hall & Co., 1988), 181.

¹⁷ Mulcahey, 150-1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 151.

after the murders. As a shocked nation finally took notice of corruption charges within the UMW, Roche also came under attack, not just because her “proxy” vote became associated with Boyle’s actions on the Fund preceding the UMW election, but also because lawsuits from the Black Lung activists charged that she and Lewis had misappropriated retirement funds by depositing them in a UMW-controlled bank that, for years, had drawn little to no interest. Shortly after Lewis died, a group of retired coalminers and widows who had their pensions cut sued the Fund, and their case, *Blankenship v. Boyle*, was decided in 1971. The Fund lost. The judge ruled under the trusteeships of Lewis and Roche, the Fund had consistently demonstrated a lack of financial transparency. The judge even held there was evidence of a “conspiracy by Lewis, Roche, and the bank,” that had led to a gross mismanagement of the UMW’s retirement and pension funds. Because of their roles in the Fund, the judge ruled that both Boyle and Roche be removed as trustees.¹⁹

Historians disagree to what extent Roche and Lewis mishandled the Fund. Richard P. Mulcahy concluded that the judge in the *Blankenship v. Boyle* case had over-reacted, since both Lewis and Roche, who had lived through the Great Depression, mistrusted banks and wanted to keep a large cash reserve on hand in a conservative bank they controlled, demonstrating not financial malfeasance, but financial conservatism. Joseph E. Finley vehemently disagrees with Mulcahy’s assessment. Not only does he paint a pathetic portrait of the elderly Roche, Lewis’ *only* defender during the trial, he saves his greatest outrage for Lewis, claiming “that

¹⁹ Finley, 201.

the despotism of Lewis was the great undoing of the Fund.”²⁰ Further damaging the reputation of the UMW, the Yablonski murders were eventually traced to Boyle, and in 1975, he was sentenced to life in prison. A year later, in 1976, Roche died in a Maryland nursing home just outside Washington, D.C.

The sad spectacle of the UMW pension and retirement fund trial, as well as the brutality and corruption epitomized by the Yablonski murders, helped set the stage in the late 1960s and early 1970s for widespread disgust with the contemporary state of organized labor. Such disillusionment led academic and cultural critics alike to look to the past for a labor organization that might have developed differently, more democratically. Untainted by modern labor’s shortcomings, the IWW fit the bill. Protestors identified with the idealized Wobblies’ spontaneous direct action, anti-World War I stance, and utopian, egalitarian aims.

Although fascination with the Wobblies had begun in academic circles in the late 1950s, by the 1960s, that interest had spread into popular culture. For example, in 1969, Joan Baez sang “The Ballad of Joe Hill” at the Woodstock festival, a song she sang again in New York City during the 2011 Occupy movement. Archie Greene traced the roots of the song, and his research shows it was written in 1936, when musician Earl Robinson set to music Al Hayes’ Joe Hill poem at a communist summer camp north of New York City.²¹ The CIO adopted it, along with Ralph Chaplin’s “Solidarity Forever,” another IWW-related song, as an anthem during

²⁰ Ibid., 200-201, 204.

²¹ Archie Greene, “Singing Joe Hill,” *Wobblies, Pile Butts, and Other Heroes: Laborlore Explorations* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 84.

pickets and strikes. “The Ballad of Joe Hill” apparently was UAW’s president Walter Reuther’s favorite song, and his friends even sang it at his funeral.²² When Earl Robinson died in 1991, his obituary declared that the song “had become ‘an unofficial anthem for the Flower Children of the ‘60s and ‘70s as it had been for their working-class mothers and fathers.’”²³ In 1970, in the extremely popular and influential documentary film *Woodstock*, which captured some of the most riveting performances from the 1969 festival, Baez’s performance of Joe Hill reached out to young people living outside the urban and campus hotbeds of protest who began wondering who Joe Hill had been and what he’d represented.²⁴

Baez’s liberal, social justice credentials resonated as clearly and purely as her soprano, and both helped make her an important cultural role model. She sang “We Shall Overcome” at the 1963 March on Washington. Her husband went to jail for refusing to be drafted. In California, Baez marched with Caesar Chavez, who led migratory Latino farmworkers’ unionization efforts there. Like the idealized Wobblies of the past, Chavez captured the public’s imagination, because he and his followers represented more than labor rights. They represented the fight for social justice, something in which the AFL-CIO unions no longer seemed interested.

The same year Jock Yablonski and his family were murdered and Baez sang about Joe Hill at Woodstock, Melvyn Dubofsky’s *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* was published. Although challenged on several fronts, it still remains the classic book on the Wobblies. However, Dubofsky had

²² Ibid. 92.

²³ Ibid., 90.

²⁴ Including me, a high school sophomore living in a Dallas suburb.

hardly been researching the Wobblies in isolation. For example, in 1963, two Colorado labor historians, Charles J. Bayard and Donald J. McClurg, published scholarly articles about the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike.²⁵ For his 1959 dissertation about Colorado's coalfields, McClurg in 1953 had even interviewed A.S. Embree about his role in the 1927-1928 strike, the only Embree interview on the strike I have found. As labor historians began writing about the Wobblies in scholarly journals, in the early 1960s, social activist Joyce Kornbluh was collecting a stunning collection of IWW ephemera—song lyrics, songbooks, stickers, posters, etc.—that she eventually organized into her groundbreaking book *Rebel Voices: An IWW Anthology*, published in 1964, which helped introduce the IWW to a broader reading public. Kornbluh also took an active role in establishing the IWW archives at the Walter P. Reuther Labor Library at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan.

Here is what Kornbluh's current publisher has to say about *Rebel Voices'* historical significance: "Welcoming women, Blacks, and immigrants long before most other unions, the Wobblies from the start were labor's outstanding pioneers and innovators, unionizing hundreds of thousands of workers previously regarded as 'unorganizable.'" It continues, "Wobblies organized the first sit-down strike (at General Electric, Schenectady, 1906), the first major auto strike (6,000 Studebaker workers, Detroit, 1911), the first strike to shut down all three coalfields in Colorado

²⁵ Charles J. Bayard, "The 1927-1928 Colorado Coal Strike," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. XXXII, No. 3 (August 1963): 235-250.

(1927), and the first 'no-fare' transit-workers' job-action (Cleveland, 1944)."²⁶

Beyond those firsts, the foreword continues, the IWW's impact

has reverberated far beyond the ranks of organized labor. An important influence on the 1960s New Left, the Wobbly theory and practice of direct action, solidarity, and "class-war" humor have inspired several generations of civil rights and antiwar activists, and are a major source of ideas and inspiration for today's radicals. Indeed, virtually every movement seeking to "make this planet a good place to live" (to quote an old Wobbly slogan), has drawn on the IWW's incomparable experience.²⁷

While most of the blurb explains how the Wobblies influenced not just the New Labor historians but also the New Left, the recent reference to the Colorado strike is also significant, since the 1927-1928 strike was *not* a major section in Kornbluh's original book. Including a reference to it in the 2011 reissue shows that historians are beginning to re-evaluate the strike's value within the bigger labor history narrative. Of course, every publisher's ultimate aim is to sell its books, so it has recently re-issued the "long out of print" *Rebel Voices*, adding over forty pages of additional material, most of which appeared in a 1998 edition that lists Fred Thompson as its co-author.

Fred Thompson, probably more than any other person, helped shape the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) historical narrative as we know it today. When Thompson began rising within the IWW hierarchy, such as it was, A.S. Embree was leading the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike. For the rest of his life, Thompson would lead a group with fewer and fewer followers, yet he dominates the Industrial

²⁶ "Joyce Kornbluh, Purchasing Links to *Rebel Voices*" PM Press Authors, PM Press, <http://www.pmpress.org/content/article.php/JoyceKornbluh>, accessed 2 February 2013.

²⁷ Ibid.

Workers of the World histories, including the IWW archives at Wayne State. That makes sense, since Thompson worked tirelessly with Kornbluh and the Wayne State archivists to collect and organize materials for the collection. Out of 101 linear feet of official IWW archival records, 116 out of 181 folders contain materials relating to Thompson. That does not even include the seventeen and a half linear feet of Thompson's own personal materials also housed within the collection.

From "new left" activists to "New Labor" historians, from Joyce Kornbluh to Melvyn Dubofsky to David Roediger, from college journalists to professionals like Studs Terkel, from the late 1950s until his death in 1987, anybody who wanted to know what it had been like to be an authentic Wobbly, interviewed Thompson. That was because he was articulate, irreverent, funny, and passionate, but most important, *alive*. Having called himself a Wobbly for over half a century, Thompson long outlasted his rivals, and when the IWW historical revival began in the 1960s, he was more than eager to expound upon IWW history as he saw it. His version of Wobbly history glorified labor martyrs like Joe Hill and Frank Little and the early days of the organization from its founding in 1905 to what he claimed was its peak membership in 1923.²⁸ Yet that idealized golden age took place before he joined the

²⁸ Melvyn Dubofsky interviewed Thompson as Thompson was helping assemble the IWW collection for Wayne State, using him as a primary source of information for his classic, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), Joyce J. Kornbluh jumpstarted the IWW archival process in 1962-1963 in collecting sources for her book *Rebel Voices: An I.W.W. Anthology* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1968); her research records and correspondence for the book are part of the IWW collection, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan; Studs Terkel, *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression* (New York: The New Press, 1970); Dave Roediger, *Fellow Worker: The Life of Fred Thompson* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1993).

organization in 1922, and its worst infighting happened between 1923 and 1927, while he was in jail. By the time Thompson began his ascent to IWW leadership in 1928, the organization was dying fast. That is because he helped kill it, something he understandably wanted to forget.

Fred W. Thompson kept excellent records, but it is really his faithful correspondence, especially with historians, that dominates his own collection. Historians wrote to him because he was the closest thing to an official historian the Wobblies had produced, since, in 1955, he wrote *The I.W.W.: Its First Fifty Years*. By the time Thompson wrote that book, the oldtimers were dying fast, and the remaining Wobblies, all 100 or so of them, wanted something to preserve their history.²⁹ Tellingly, his representation of this genuine old-timer IWW story largely excluded the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike. The excerpt below includes everything Thompson wrote on the subject in his 1955 book:

Following the strike came elections of pit committees and checkweighmen and procedure for grievances. White cards of the striking miners had been issued during the dispute with IWW cards only to a minority. It was a significant victory and all considered it an IWW strike, for UMWA did not participate, but little unionism came out of it though efforts continued into the early thirties and a number of locals were maintained which assured election of checkweighmen and pit committees. This situation seems to have grown out of the strike arrangements with little actual union recruiting. It was later found that some officers of the union were planning during the strike to form a new miners body out of the Colorado miners, the Kansas followers of Howat and dissatisfied miners elsewhere as those who followed the communist line in Pennsylvania and those were to step over the traces in Illinois a few years later.³⁰

²⁹ Fred W. Thompson and Patrick Murfin, *The I.W.W.: Its First Seventy Years, 1905-1975* (Chicago: Industrial Workers of the World, 1976), 201.

³⁰ Thompson and Murfin, 153.

This brief, antiseptic critique offers no clues to what research in the IWW archives turned up: the antagonistic relationship between Embree and Thompson following the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike.

As covered in Chapter 2, Embree in 1926 had just returned to the IWW headquarters in Chicago after serving time in Idaho's state prison for criminal syndicalism. In 1926, Thompson was in jail for the same crime. Although Embree wanted to settle down in Chicago, edit the IWW newspaper, and live with his family, the IWW executive board sent him to Colorado, to organize the coalfields there, which the UMW, for the most part, had abandoned after the 1914 Ludlow Massacre. By 1927, he and fellow worker Kristen Svanum had built such a strong IWW organization in the state that the successful strike that followed surpassed everyone's expectations.³¹

Thompson was clearly aware that Embree used both old and new organizational tactics during the strike. At first, Embree slowly recruited members using traditional organizing techniques. He quietly organized through "missionary work," recruiting from house to house, miner to miner. Next, he started holding small meetings, which eventually grew into mass rallies.³² One of Embree's new organizing tactics included forming the Junior Wobblies, a youth group that picketed, created and performed street theater, and even conducted its own school

³¹ McClurg, 73.

³² IWW Collection, Box 17-15; Embree brought in the "rebel girl" herself, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, for a series of meetings "in connection with the defense spiel and woke up our members besides enabling us to gather in a few new ones."

walkout.³³ Recruiting young women (an old technique) as well as local married men (a new technique) to assume strike leadership positions challenged the stereotype of Wobblies as footloose, single, male transients.³⁴ Adapting to the new dominant mode of transportation in the 1920s that had replaced trains and train stations as Wobbly recruiting zones, Embree may have been the first labor organizer to create car caravans to recruit new supporters.³⁵ Embree expressly targeted former UMW members to join the strike, and under his leadership, the IWW sent Spanish speaking Wobblies (about half the coalminers) into the sugar beet fields and factories, to convince Mexican immigrant contract workers to join the coalminers' strike, which they did. While he worked with the IWW's General Defense Committee on legal strategies, an old tactic, he created new alliances when he also coordinated with the American Civil Liberties Union and the International Labor Defense.

The only Embree tactic that Thompson criticized in his 1955 historical account of the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, however, was the issuing of non-IWW white cards to Colorado's striking miners. As explained in Chapter 2, those cards appear to have been a creative necessity, a response to Colorado-specific, on-

³³ IWW Collection, Box 26-44, In a 19 September 1963 letter from Fred Thompson to Roberta McBride (a librarian who was helping to organize the collection), Thompson tells McBride that the Junior Wobblies were first created during the 1927-1928 strike to give the kids something to do. In a newspaper clippings file (IWW 152-21), there is an un-cited newspaper article from Frederick, Colorado (in the northern field), about 100 students who walked out of school on strike on 10 January 1928 following a "fistic encounter" between students whose parents supported and opposed the strike. After the walkout, the Junior Wobblies marched through the streets of the town "with an American flag at the head" of their parade singing I.W.W. songs.

³⁴ A.A. Swain, "I.W.W. to Tell Governor Adams How Good They Are," *The [Boulder] Daily Camera*, 25 October 1927: 2.

³⁵ McClurg, 79. This information is based on a 1953 interview McClurg conducted in Denver with A.S. Embree.

the-ground strike conditions, not evidence that Embree was abandoning the IWW as Thompson later charged. Those unique conditions emanated from the Ludlow Massacre, which had led to the creation of the Colorado Industrial Relations Commission. From early August through mid-October in 1927, the IWW assiduously followed the necessary legal steps to call a strike, but when the IWW submitted its strike petition, the commissioners refused to recognize it, because it refused to recognize the IWW.³⁶

All three commissioners agreed that since the IWW was not a legitimate labor organization, Wobblies could not legally call a strike under any conditions—except that they did, on October 18, 1927. Officially, however, it was never an IWW strike, even though everybody knew it was, from start to finish. Embree and Kristin Svanum had created the Colorado Strike Committee, a “front” committee that issued its own strike petition and strike cards (the generic white strike cards to which Thompson referred), then led the walkout. That front committee also met with the governor and organized the testimony before the industrial commission after the Columbine Massacre. Therefore, Embree’s fake white cards proved a very valuable strike strategy indeed, because it gave the IWW institutional access it wouldn’t otherwise have had.

But Fred Thompson did not see it that way. Arriving in Colorado two months after the walkout ended, he either did not understand what conditions had been like during the strike or he believed Embree was lying to him about why he had issued the white strike cards. Instead of helping Embree with legal issues as the Executive

³⁶ “I.W.W. Ignored by the State at Pueblo Meet,” The [Boulder] *Daily Camera*, 14 October 1927: 1.

Board had sent him to do, Thompson began attacking Embree before the headquarters' Chicago executive board, to which both he and Embree belonged. First he accused Embree of spying for the United Mine Workers and next, of misappropriating IWW funds during the strike.³⁷ The spying charge was ludicrous, and it quickly disappeared. But when it came to financial charges, the IWW constitution was clear: The executive board *had* to suspend Embree while the charges against him were being investigated. Considering that during most of the strike, Embree was either on the road organizing or in jail, his accounting seemed remarkably precise.³⁸ Even so, the board hired a professional accounting firm to examine Embree's records.³⁹

Because of Thompson's accusations against Embree, the Colorado strike leadership began slipping into disarray as Embree was forced to spend his efforts defending himself, not holding the new Wobbly coalition together. Seizing this opportunity, Josephine Roche made a series of brilliant moves. Her most inspired decision was hiring John R. Lawson, the hero of the 1910-1914 strike, to manage the RMFC. Just as the IWW had done throughout the 1927-1928 strike, Roche demonstrated that she too could successfully invoke the memories of Ludlow to her advantage. Memories of Ludlow helped lay the foundation for the August 1928 contract between her company and the UMW.⁴⁰ Although the UMW had lost after

³⁷ Boxes 96-10, 96-11, IWW archives.

³⁸ Boxes 96-15, 96-16, IWW archives.

³⁹ There were two audits. One concerned funds from the ILD (IWW, Box 51-21) and the other was just on Embree's financial records (IWW, Box 96-12).

⁴⁰ During the strike, IWW rallies were often held at the mouth of Berwind Canyon, where miners took to the hills in what Scott Martelle has aptly called a ten-day class war waged in response to the Ludlow Massacre.

the Ludlow Massacre, Roche could present the 1928 contract as the final resolution to the 1910-1914 strike.

Independent accountants declared Embree's financial records clean, but not until 1929, almost a year after Roche signed a contract with the UMW. Not only had Thompson destroyed the momentum and trust in IWW leaders that Embree had established during the strike, Thompson's attacks on Embree and his unconventional methods might have cost the IWW a genuine opportunity to rebuild itself into a significant labor organization once again, one more nimble and powerful than before.

Counterfactual history is always a dangerous exercise, but it is fascinating to ponder what might have happened if Embree and other Wobblies like him might have succeeded in knitting together a broad-based coalition of UMW insurgents, newly recruited Wobblies, unorganized coalminers, and Communists almost a decade before just such a coalition combined to lead the rise of the CIO. In 1928, there were about 650,000 coalminers in the United States, and the insurgents certainly outnumbered the 80,000 United Mine Worker miners that Lewis represented. As demonstrated not just in Colorado, but also in Kansas, Pennsylvania, and Illinois, and elsewhere, insurgents were militant and willing to strike. Whether or not their hatred of Lewis was strong enough to unite them will always remain a matter of speculation.

At any rate, they never got the chance. Of course, ironically, Lewis himself cobbled together a similar coalition in 1935 after becoming convinced that his previous labor organizing efforts, after what seemed to be a promising burst of

activity in 1933, had stalled. Surely his experiences in the late 1920s and early to mid-1930s influenced his 1935 decision to form the CIO, a labor organization that A.S. Embree enthusiastically embraced, but that Fred Thompson, forever a Wobbly, eschewed.

After Fred Thompson drummed Embree out of his IWW leadership position in 1928, Thompson began rising in the ranks. The IWW executive board even sent Thompson to Colorado to try to organize what was left of the Wobblies. Although he married (the first of three times) a coalminer's daughter he met while working in a coalmine in Superior (at the same coalmine Powers Hapgood had worked at just a year before), Thompson was unsuccessful and he left the state in 1931.⁴¹ In spite of pockets of strength in places like Cleveland and evidence of strong organization during the 1931 Harlan County, Kentucky, coal strike and the 1931-1932 stages of constructing the Boulder (later Hoover) Dam, the Wobblies really did begin their irreversible decline, not in 1923 as Thompson later claimed, but in 1928.⁴²

But that was not the way Thompson remembered it. When he was recounting the 1927-1928 strike in his 1955 IWW history, gone were his 1928 accusations that Embree had been a UMW spy. Gone were his 1928 charges of fraud. What took their places were charges that Embree had not been a loyal Wobbly, but instead, a Communist conspirator. The crux of his proof was that, during the strike, Embree had issued generic, non-IWW white cards.

⁴¹ Dave Roediger, *Fellow Worker: The Life of Fred Thompson* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1993), 62.

⁴² Andrew J. Dunar & Dennis McBride, *Building Hoover Dam: An Oral History of the Great Depression* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1993), 47-56, 113-114, 264, 307..

Thompson's memories were shaped by how his life had turned out. In the introduction to his book *Fellow Worker: The Life of Fred Thompson*, a compilation of chronologically arranged Thompson interviews from the 1960s through the 1980s, Dave Roediger wrote that "Fred tended to open up most when he thought his past held lessons."⁴³ Roediger astutely observed, "Thompson often told the same thing, in nearly the same words, to different interviewers and correspondents, sometimes even when they posed rather different questions."⁴⁴ This kind of well-rehearsed storytelling evolves over time, and while such narratives may not be an accounting of literal truth, they are an accounting of what lessons the speaker believes have been learned from the past. As Alessandro Portelli reminds us in the introduction to *Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories*, "Oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing and what they now think they did."⁴⁵

What lessons from the past did Thompson's well-rehearsed stories—his memories—need to prove? Thompson needed to prove that it was Embree, not he, who destroyed the IWW's 1927-1928 strike gains. As psychologist Daniel Schacter has written in his book, *The Seven Sins of Memory: How the Mind Forgets and Remembers*, "The self's preeminent role in encoding and retrieval, combined with a powerful tendency for people to view themselves positively, creates fertile ground

⁴³ Dave Roediger, *Fellow Worker: The Life of Fred Thompson* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1993), 7.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 50.

for memory biases that allow people to remember past experiences in a self-enhancing light.”⁴⁶ In other words, our memories make us look good.

To shift the fault to Embree, Thompson needed to prove Embree had been a Communist, not a loyal Wobbly, which required chronological shifts in his memories. In 1928, Thompson wrote that he had found incriminating letters between A.S. Embree and Kristen Svanum that proved they were conspiring to join the UMW and misappropriating funds. However, by the time of his early 1960s’s memories (before the IWW archives were organized), Thompson also included Alexander Howat (the expelled Kansas UMW leader) and William Z. Foster among the 1928 correspondents.⁴⁷ Foster led the American CP in the late twenties and early thirties, fell from favor, then arose again to lead what was left of the party after 1945. Therefore, Foster’s addition as a 1928 correspondent helped Thompson allege that these four—Embree, Svanum, Howat, and Foster—had been “contemplating the creation of a Communist coal miners’ union—something the CP did not formally announce until the next year, for they were still in the state of ‘boring from within.’”⁴⁸

True enough, one of Embree’s strongest allies during the strike had been CP leader James Cannon. Cannon, a former Wobbly and perhaps an Embree friend from the IWW’s earliest days, had visited Embree’s old IWW mentor, Big Bill Haywood, in Moscow in 1925, where the two “kicked around” what soon evolved into the

⁴⁶ Daniel L. Schacter, *The Seven Sins of Memory: How the Mind Forgets and Remembers* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001), 151.

⁴⁷ Roediger, 7.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

International Labor Defense (ILD) organization.⁴⁹ While the ILD openly recruited on behalf of the CP, it also had formed a wide-ranging coalition of non-Communist supporters (including the likes of Roger Baldwin and Oswald Garrison Villard), too, since its central aim was defending all workers, not just Communists, who needed legal help. From March to April in 1928 (before Thompson arrived in Colorado), Cannon toured the western United States, visiting thirty-five cities. That tour



included some “soap-boxing” in Colorado, which was natural, since the ILD was helping with the strikes’ expenses, especially for providing legal work.⁵⁰ A poster from one of his Colorado speeches is on the left.⁵¹

In his Cannon biography, Bryan D. Palmer suggests that the main reason Cannon embarked on his western tour was to escape the east coast CP factionalism that came to a head in October of 1928, when Cannon was expelled from the party by Fosterites (followers of William Z. Foster). In

⁴⁹ Bryan D. Palmer, *James P. Cannon and the Origins of the American Revolutionary Left, 1890-1928* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 262.

⁵⁰ Palmer, 279.

⁵¹ “The American Frame-Up System, a lecture by James P. Cannon,” INR 1299-2, CF&I archives.

October of 1928, when Joseph Stalin took firm control of the USSR, he *did* stop the official policy of “boring from within,” the CP’s previous policy, which had directed Communists to surreptitiously take over unions from inside the organizations. After Stalin took over, Communists were instructed to abandon boring from within. Instead, they were to form their own independent, Communist-led and dominated unions, which was one reason why the National Miners Union in Pennsylvania formed in the fall of 1928. During all this 1928 byzantine Communist intrigue, Embree allied with Cannon, not Cannon’s enemy Foster, so it is highly unlikely Embree would ever have corresponded with Foster, especially during the strike.

As far as the 1928 Communist Party split was concerned, both in the USSR and in the US, months mattered a lot. Even today, it is difficult to keep straight the fast-changing chronology of that year—and who would want to, unless that particular topic were the focus of a specific historical investigation. Memories have a way of blurring timelines even more, since we tend to construct our stories in narrative form so we can remember them, a structure that was even more important if we tell and re-tell those memories as stories. We also omit, or sometime completely forget, events unless we are able to connect them in some meaningful way to other memories, usually in a chronological, linear progression that leads to turning points—or as Roediger wrote about Thompson, lessons. When we remember the past, chronologies often shift, and create anachronistic thinking, something Thompson’s memories exhibit.

Portelli shows how a chronological shift in collective memory occurred concerning the death of Luigi Trastulli, the subject of his book’s title. Newspaper

records and other primary sources clearly showed that Luigi Trastulli, “a 21-year-old steel worker from Tern,” and an active member of the Communist party, “died in a clash with the police on 17 March 1949 as workers walked out of the factory to attend a rally against the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty by the Italian government.”⁵² However, within a few years, Communists no longer actively opposed Italy’s membership in NATO. By the early 1950s, other issues had taken center stage, including the closure of the steel plant where Trastulli was shot. When the plant closed, the city erupted in riots, and the plant closure became the single most important event in the town’s history. Over time, individual and collective memories of Trastulli’s death shifted chronologically, until eventually, oral histories uniformly placed Trastulli’s death within the context of the 1952 steel plant riots, not the 1949 NATO protest. Within the context of the NATO protest, his death had no continuing meaning; but in the context of the 1952 riots, it did.

Another example from Roediger’s book shows Thompson’s chronological re-ordering of events even more clearly than his understandable confusion over 1928 communist intrigues. Remembering, once again, the subject of the 1927-1928 strike’s white cards, Thompson recalled that he and “other Wobs had been questioning this white card policy, but Embree had insisted on the importance of keeping all the miners united whether they were for IWW aims or not.”⁵³ A few sentences later, Thompson remarked that Embree “was employed by Mine, Mill & Smelter workers when it was, according to most, under CP control. Nonetheless we should not in retrospect have any illusion that CP antics were what kept the IWW

⁵² Portelli, 1.

⁵³ Ibid.

from becoming a successful organization.”⁵⁴ Not only had Thompson mistakenly remembered the April 1928 letters within in the context of the October 1928 CP split, he made an even bigger chronological mistake when he associated Embree with Communism through Mine Mill, an organization Embree had not even joined until 1937. In his 1955 reconstruction of the past, written five years after Mine Mill had been expelled from the CIO, Thompson, like the rest of the country, seemed willing to blame Communism for everything, including the outcome of the 1927-1928 strike. Thompson, by chronologically rearranging events (and perhaps embellishing them, too), learned “lessons” from the past that enabled him to shift the blame for the IWW’s collapse after the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike from the IWW onto the Communists, but even more important, from himself onto Embree.

By 1981, Thompson’s memories about the 1927-1928 strike seem to have shifted again. That year, labor activist Bob Rossi wrote Thompson, asking him to enclose an informational query in the upcoming *Industrial Worker* about the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, since “nothing had been written about the strike or its meaning to the labor movement.”⁵⁵ Thompson declined, he wrote Rossi, since the strike had already been “thoroughly chronicled.”⁵⁶ As proof, Thompson referred Rossi to four published sources about the strike that I have previously cited: the McClurg and Bayard articles, his own IWW history, and a chapter (written by Ronald McMahan, who is featured in the next chapter) in Joseph Conlin’s just-published

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Letter from Fred W. Thompson to Bob Rossi, 10 December 1981, Frederick W. Thompson Collection, Box 9-12, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

1981 IWW anthology, *At the Point of Production*. Last, Thompson shared his own memories of the strike with Rossi: When he had found correspondence proving “in black and white” that Embree and Svanum were “planning to build a communist party coal miners union based on miners under CP influence” that would unite coalminers in Kansas, Pennsylvania, and Colorado, he had sent that correspondence to the Chicago leadership; however, he admitted, “I don’t know where it is now.”⁵⁷

Thompson’s earlier memories about the strike had been formed before the construction of the IWW archives, but by 1981, the archives, which Thompson helped assemble, were at about the same state of completion as they are today. Thompson’s inability to locate the smoking gun correspondence troubled him, because later that day, he wrote a letter trying to figure out in whose possession that incriminating letter might have landed, since he did not have it.⁵⁸ What Thompson in the 1960s had remembered as a *series* of condemning letters written among four people (including William Z. Foster), was now down to *one* incriminating letter between Embree and Svanum (the same two correspondents he originally had accused in 1928), a letter he remembered forwarding to IWW headquarters, but now could not find. The man who had become the default historian of the IWW, not just because of his longevity, but also because of his meticulous record keeping, could not locate the key piece of evidence that had changed the course of the IWW. Was Thompson, in his old age, beginning to doubt

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Letter from Thompson to Rochelle (no last name, but from the context, she seems to be the editor of the IWW newspaper), 10 December 1981, 9-12, Fred W. Thompson papers.

his own story? Without the letter for evidence, could Thompson have been experiencing a twinge of doubt about the reliability of his own memories?

Of course, we can never know what Thompson was thinking. What we can know is that Thompson, through his correspondence, his oral histories, and his role in organizing the IWW archives, clearly had an outsized influence in shaping the construction of the IWW's historical narrative. Because he joined the IWW in 1922, he had not even been a member during the 1905 to 1923 period he so frequently described; historians, eager to speak or write with a real, live Wobbly, did not challenge him on that impossibility, either. Since most of the IWW's records were destroyed during the post-World War I red scare, it is unclear how Thompson got most of his historical information from that time period, unless it came from the oldtimers' stories that he had heard so often, he incorporated them into his own memories. While those stories and memories made Thompson an interesting, romantic, and extremely democratic correspondent and oral interview subject, they did not make him a very reliable source.

In their search for authentic, non-elite voices from the past, New Left historians over-eagerly elevated the voices of some former Wobblies, such as Thompson, to the status of noble class warriors who, like themselves, fought exterior threats—their own version of “the establishment”—in the past. Such a narrative downplayed the IWW's petty infighting and internal corruption, evidenced by the Thompson and Embree split, that contributed to the organization's demise. Considering such an interpretation would have meant that perhaps the New Left did not have as much to learn or admire from the Wobblies as it hoped.

Chapter 10:
Colorado Coalfield Memories:
***Out of the Depths* and Oral Histories,**
1970s-1980s

In the 1960s, as New Labor historians democratized labor history with the questions they researched using an expanded toolbox of sources, everyday people began wondering about their own families' and communities' histories they had not found in standard historical narratives. This burst of curiosity led to a renewed interest in the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike. However, none of these democratized research efforts ever successfully placed the strike into a national context, which remained forever stuck in a local history niche, still subservient to the memories of Ludlow.

Everyday people began exploring their own family histories as a result of several developing trends: cheap technology, since almost anybody could afford a tape cassette recorder (which recorded histories even from illiterate people or people who hadn't saved a body of paper to donate to archives) and sometimes a video recorder; democratization (looking at history from the "bottom up" rather from the "top down"); and identity politics, because many people wanted to know more about their previously sublimated family histories. Author Alex Haley's search for his family's history reflected all these trends. Haley was not an historian but a journalist, and after ghostwriting the deeply influential *Autobiography of Malcolm X*, published in 1965, he turned his interests to his own family's history. Because his ancestors had been brought to the United States as slaves, he had an even more

difficult task than most in trying to discover information about his family's past. Haley began his research process by conducting extended oral history interviews with his own family members, which eventually led him to write a best-selling, Pulitzer Prize winning book, *Roots*, published in 1976. The following year, for eight consecutive nights in January of 1977, 85% of American television owners were glued to their sets watching the first ever mini-series based on Haley's book.¹

Whether that show reflected or spurred Americans' interest, suddenly it seemed everybody was interested in collecting family histories, and the federal government was about to help them when the National Endowment for the Humanities began awarding local history grants for communities to begin oral history projects aimed at helping them discover their historical roots.² At last, it would seem, for the first time, the complex story of the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike would emerge. Except it never did. So much time had passed since the event had taken place, even its participants had reconstructed the events surrounding the strike into personal memories that fit the already written dominant national labor narrative, a narrative that remembered Ludlow but forgot the Columbine.

The same month and year *Roots* became, at the time, the highest-rated show in television history, Democrat Jimmy Carter began his presidency. In most historical surveys today, Carter is remembered for the Panama Canal Treaty, the

¹ "Roots," The Museum of Broadcast Communications, www.museum.tv/archives/etv, accessed 6 October 2007.

² National Endowment for the Humanities, "The Cultural Explosion: The Hunger for Humanities," *Thirteenth Annual Report of the National Endowment for the Humanities* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1978), 5.

1978 Camp David Agreement, runaway inflation, and the 1980 Iranian Hostage Crisis. What goes unmentioned was Carter's vigorous expansion of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). In 1965, President Johnson signed the NEH into law "to support post-doctoral fellowships, research, programs designed to improve education at all levels, and projects fostering a wider public awareness of the humanities."³ Although its mission remains unchanged, what *has* changed over time are the NEH's budgets and the types of projects that get funded, both of which ebb, flow, and change direction according to the prevailing political and cultural winds.

During the Carter administration, from 1977 to 1981, the NEH staff almost doubled and so did its budget.⁴ The goals of the expanded NEH also changed, and the first annual NEH report issued during Carter's presidency linked those changes directly to him: "When President Carter took office, he stated clearly that 'I want to be sure that any elitist attitude is ended' in the management of Federal dollars for culture. And his concerns were further underlined in the budget message he sent to Congress this year. The President said that he wanted emphasis placed on reaching 'underserved populations.'"⁵ Growing up in poverty-stricken Georgia during the Great Depression, Carter had been deeply influenced by Roosevelt's cultural New

³ National Endowment for the Humanities, *Second Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1967* (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1968).

⁴ U.S. Congress. Senate. Testimony regarding staffing before Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Education, Arts and Humanities of the Committee on Labor and Human Resources, 96th Congress, 1st Session, June 26, 27, and 28, 1979: 243, as cited in Congressional Research Service (CRS), Report for Congress (RL33725), "Arts, Humanities, and Museum Services: Background, Funding, and Issues," 15 November 2006, accessed through CRS web, CRS-19.

⁵ "The Cultural Explosion: The Hunger for Humanities," 5.

Deal. He said his favorite book was the James Agee and Walker Evans book, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. The deeply influential book, read and emulated more in the 1960s than when it was published in 1940, combined Agee's self-conscious analysis of the impoverished lives of his subjects—desperately poor Southern sharecroppers and tenant farmers—with Evans' stark, modernist, unsentimental photographs.⁶ The federal government had paid Evans to take those photographs, so perhaps that kind of art was what Carter had in mind when he advocated increased funding for the NEH. Also, in 1976, one-third of newly minted history PhDs were unable to find jobs.⁷ The newly expanded NEH could serve the same dual purposes the New Deal arts programs had in the thirties: creating jobs and creating democratic research and art.

In keeping with this new democratic spirit, the House Select Education Subcommittee, in charge of re-authorizing the NEH's budget, took its show on the road, holding hearings in several major cities across the country where representatives heard a "growing enthusiasm among Americans to discover their own roots."⁸ Funding followed. Suddenly, history "from the bottom up" became more than the purview of New Labor historians. It became official governmental policy. For the first time since the 1930s, the federal government enthusiastically began funding local historical research projects, which included extensive oral

⁶ "Jimmy Carter: A President of Peace," *Academy of Achievement, A Museum of Living History*, last revised 26 March 2011, <http://www.achievement.org/autodoc/page/car0int-2>, accessed 7 August 2013, 2; "Things You Never Asked," *Time*, 27 November 1978, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,916467,00.html>, accessed 7 August 2013.

⁷ Frank Freidel, "Backlogging," *The New York Times*, 2 June 1976, www.nytimes.com.

⁸ "The Cultural Explosion: The Hunger for Humanities," 6.

histories. It was during this burst of NEH funding that, for the first time, anybody publicly bothered to ask the survivors of the Columbine Massacre what they had experienced in 1927. Since the informants had lived fifty or more years since the strike began, their memories no longer conveyed the literal truth, if they ever had. Interview transcripts, articles, and books produced from those oral histories show that the interviewers rarely appreciated that discrepancy.

There were four major efforts at interviewing old Colorado coal miners in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and although none of those research projects ever quite broke out of its narrow, local history niche, two of them—Phyllis Smith’s book, *Once A Coal Miner: The Story of Colorado’s Northern Coal Fields* and an essay emanating from the Colorado Coal Project—were published with aspirations of reaching a broader, national audience. The other two—Joanna Sampson’s work and the Lafayette oral history project—were produced for strictly local audiences, yet they still yield valuable historical information for historians. The order in which I encountered these sources revealed some of the underlying structures of this local coalfield memory. I first read Ronald McMahan’s essay, Smith’s book, then Sampson’s works. Next, I read the Lafayette oral interview transcripts, and last, interviews from the Colorado Coal Project. During the course of my research on the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, Denver Wobblies in 2005 published *Slaughter in Serene: The Columbine Coal Strike Reader*.⁹ That book included essays both by Joanna Sampson and Eric Margolis (co-creator of the Colorado Coal Project), and by

⁹ Lowell May and Richard Myers, ed., *Slaughter in Serene: The Columbine Coal Strike Reader* (Denver: Bread and Roses Workers’ Cultural Center and the Industrial Workers of the World, 2005).

Richard Myers, a self-taught historian and IWW activist who, more than any other researcher, delved deeply into the 1927-1928 strike, but only as it related to IWW history. While each of these sources has value, they all failed at placing the 1927-1928 strike within a larger, US historical context.

Phyllis Smith's book, *Once a Coal Miner: The Story of Colorado's Northern Coal Field*, was published in Boulder in 1989, perhaps to help commemorate Lafayette's centennial. Smith is a prolific author, having written eight regional histories. Her book gave the usual beneficent portrayal of Roche, but more than any other source, Smith emphasized Elizabeth Beranek's role in the strike and the Columbine Massacre. In 1927, Beranek was a forty-four year old, naturalized Bohemian immigrant, a coalminer's wife, and mother of fifteen children, since, after the strike, she bore two more children.¹⁰ Smith wrote that when the daily parades began at the Columbine two weeks before the massacre, "Mrs. Beranek was always there, at the head of the lines, holding a large American flag aloft as she led the picketers through the north gate." Furthermore, "Because of this 'no-nonsense' manner, the Denver papers often referred to Mrs. Beranek as 'the Amazon,' although she stood a mere five feet, two inches tall."¹¹ When the state police pulled Adam Bell over the fence and beat him, protestors pushed through the closed gate while "Mrs. Beranek tried

¹⁰ "Beranek, Joe and Elizabeth," *Lafayette, Colorado History: Treeless Plain to Thriving City, Centennial, 1889-1989* (Dallas: Curtis Media Corporation and The Lafayette Historical Society, 1990), 152-3.

¹¹ Phyllis Smith, *Once a Coal Miner: The Story of Colorado's Northern Coal Field* (Boulder: Pruett Publishing Company, 1989), 174-175.

to cover Bell with her flag; it was wrenched from her hands, the staff broken and the flag ripped up. She was beaten as well.”¹²

I originally chose the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike for feminist reasons. I wanted to know more about Josephine Roche, perhaps the only woman coal mine owner in the United States, who, against all advice, had established a UMW contract with her miners, when all the other coal operators were intent on breaking theirs. After reading about Beranek in Smith’s book, I was even more interested in the project. My first plan was to write a comparative biography of Roche and Beranek, but I soon found that the sources Smith had used for Beranek consisted only of oral interviews she had herself conducted, and they were unavailable for historians.

Unlike Smith, who had no ties to the local mining community, Joanna Sampson was married to a retired coal miner, so her insider status brought her not only credibility but also almost unlimited access to the many “oldtimers” who still lived in Colorado, especially around her hometown of Marshall, Colorado, a former northern coalfield mining town near Boulder. Sampson was talented, committed, and passionate, but she was also uncritically accepting of the stories she heard, which meant the historical accounts she wrote lacked balance and context. Her goal, which she met, was to tell the story of the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike from the perspectives of the coalminers and their families, even though that did not include taking a critical look at Roche’s role at the RMFC.¹³ Sampson interviewed even more

¹² Ibid., 183.

¹³ The following is a list of some of Ms. Sampson’s mostly self-published writing: *A Glimpse at Eldorado’s Colorful Past: High-wire Aerialists, Ranchers, and Ballrooms* (1997), *Historic Walker Rancho: Western Cowboy Country* (1998), *Remember Ludlow: Ludlow Massacre, April 20, 1914* (1999), *High, Wild, and Handsome: The Story of*

people than Smith had, including one of Beranek's daughters.¹⁴ Her Columbine Massacre material was published in 2005 as several chapters in the aforementioned *Slaughter in Serene: The Columbine Coal Strike Reader*.

Lafayette public librarian Effie Amicarella spearheaded the Lafayette oral history project after she won a grant from the Colorado Endowment for the Humanities (which got their funds from the NEH). Amicarella and her friend Donna Carbone conducted those interviews (which Smith and Sampson also cited in their books) with their friends and neighbors. Although the library has done little to let researchers know those sources exist, the Lafayette Public Library still houses transcripts and cassettes of those interviews for anyone who wants to use them.

The library interviews remain valuable sources, especially for the 1927-1928 strike. Reading an obituary in Richard Lewis' file, I discovered Powers Hapgood (who served as a pallbearer for a Lewis family member) had lived in Lafayette in 1930, an accidental discovery that led my project in a completely different direction. Unlike Mrs. Beranek, who struggled speaking English and never learned to write it, the Harvard graduate Hapgood left voluminous personal records, housed at the Lilly Library at Indiana University in Bloomington.¹⁵ The hardest part about trying to write history from the bottom up is this: The bottom does not write much, and when

Colorado's Beautiful South Boulder Creek and Eldorado Canyon (2004), *Walking Through History on Marshall Mesa* (2008), and her chapter "Hawk Over November," in the previously cited *Slaughter in Serene: The Columbine Coal Strike Reader*.

¹⁴ Sampson interviewed Mrs. Peter Ross, on January 15, 1970, and footnotes this interview (fn 130), along with "many reports, both written and oral statements," that support Mrs. Beranek's activist role during the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, especially the Columbine Massacre. Beranek's daughter would have been twenty years old in 1927 and seventy years old when interviewed.

¹⁵ "Obituary: Mary Baker," *Lafayette Times*, 30 January 1930: 1, Elmo Lewis file, Lafayette Public Library, Lafayette, Colorado.

they do, their lives are often so mobile and insecure, they rarely keep what they have written, much less donate their papers to archives. That is why oral histories help fill such an historical void.

Effie Amicarella's husband and his brother, who were teenagers in 1927, became two of the most interviewed informants surrounding the Columbine Massacre. They remembered coming home in the early morning hours as their father was getting ready for work just as the shooting started and diving for cover as bullets riddled the house. Other helpful Lafayette interviews include those of Mary Borstnick, Dorothy Fleming, Andy Borrego, Frank Deborski, and Walt Celinski. Like many other mining families, Borstnick and her husband lived in dozens of coal camps in both the southern and northern coalfields. After the 1914 Ludlow Massacre, Borstnick and her husband moved to the northern fields, and in 1927, her family lived next door to the Amicarellas at the Columbine. Her interview helped show the deep social connections as well as the mobility between the southern and northern coalfields. Her memories also included more than just coalmining stories. For example, she recalled the local Ku Klux Klan burning a cross in front of the Catholic church in town and riding the train to El Dorado canyon for Sunday picnics, as well as activities associated with the strike, such as attending the IWW rallies, and seeing "the old lady Beranek" come "screaming and running back of my house" after the Columbine Massacre.¹⁶

Dorothy Fleming was the daughter of John Eastenes, one of the two miners shot during the Columbine Massacre who died instantly. Since Eastenes, the father

¹⁶ "Mary Borstnick, interviewed by Donna Carbone, Tape #1044 (transcription), 1983, Lafayette Public Library.

of six children, was the only married man killed that day, when the IWW's General Defense Committee, the ACLU, and the ILD brought wrongful death lawsuits against the governor, the state police, and the RMFC, Eastenes' widow was usually listed as the first plaintiff. Dorothy was only six years old when her father was killed, and on that day she was in school, not at the Columbine, so everything she knew about the strike was hearsay. Her father's back had been blown off to such an extent that "[e]ven though they had put some sort of cotton or padding or something, still he was abnormally low in the coffin."¹⁷ Unlike every other informant, she denied her father had been shot by a machine gun. She had heard her father had been a strike leader and that a sheriff named "Sheratt" had "pulled a handgun" and "shot my father once in each side of the chest."¹⁸ Three other informants also identified Sheratt as the leader of the militia at the Columbine, even though the newspapers made clear that Louis Scherf commanded the state police that day.

Although none of those interviewed admitted they had been Wobblies, Borrego, who would have been twenty-three years old in 1927, came closest.¹⁹ In one breath he said he was at the Columbine the morning of the massacre, then in the next, he said he arrived after the shooting stopped. Yet a few sentences later, Borrego placed himself back at the Columbine on the morning of the shootings, saying, "They opened a machine gun on them. And Beranek, she didn't get shot, I don't think, but they beat her up. I seen her when she put the flag over Adam Bell;

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ "Dorothy Estaneous (sic) Fleming, interviewed by Effie Amicarella, Tape #1046 (transcribed), 7 May 1980, Lafayette Public Library.

¹⁹ Bill Boas, "Borrego has seen history evolve," *Louisville Times/Lafayette News*, 18 December 1985: 27, Andy Borrego file, Lafayette Public Library.

they beat him up and then she threw the flag over him.”²⁰ Sampson and Smith also relate this same version of Mrs. Beranek’s actions that day. Borrego later claimed to be the second striker hired back at the Columbine when it re-opened:

There was only 13 of us—only 13 union men working there when the United Mine Workers took over. They told us we either join the United Mine Workers or get out of the camp. We didn’t know what the heck to do and Charlie Metz said that we were lost and we’d better join the United Mine Workers or we were going to be out all together. And so we did.²¹

This story rings true, because the IWW newspapers in 1927-1928 identified Metz as a Wobbly leader at the Columbine. Even as an old man, Borrego’s anger still comes through in his interview, a valuable emotion since it contradicts the official story Roche spun that all her workers were happy with her and the UMW contract. Borrego was upset that the men who had scabbed during the strike got to keep their jobs at the Columbine (and they subsequently joined the UMW when told to), while the RMFC blacklisted most of the IWW strikers, except for him and few others who were willing also to join the UMW. Borrego also angrily mentions the time he and the other miners were pressured to sign an agreement cutting their wages. He contends he did not sign it, but the majority did, because if they had refused, the superintendent would have fired them.²² Although he remembered the petition had circulated before the UMW unionized the RMFC, it actually circulated in 1931, when Roche pressured her employees to reduce their own wages. She then touted that wage cut (nationally, but not locally, in *Time* magazine and the *New York Times*) as

²⁰ “Andy Borrego, interviewed by Donna Carbone, Tape #1044 (transcribed), 1983, Lafayette Public Library, 2.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

²² *Ibid.*, 4.

evidence her miners supported both her personally and her RMFC policies. Even though Borrego could not allow himself to remember the petition chronology correctly, he did dredge up authentic emotions surrounding the strike and working at the Columbine for Roche.

No coalminers openly admitted joining the IWW, but Deborski and Celinski both fondly remembered joining the Junior Wobblies. Deborski recalled when he and other children put on plays throughout the Denver area to raise strike funds.²³ Celinski also loved being a Junior Wobbly, and when asked about the strike, he said his father had been an organizer (although he did not say he organized for the IWW), an admission that makes it fairly clear that if a child were a Junior Wobbly, his coalminer father almost certainly had been a Wobbly. Celinski recalled that people in the community after the 1927-1928 strike always referred to both him and his dad as no-good radicals, but “That’s what you get from people. That’s how they reward you.”²⁴

The interviews were fascinating, but they made little sense. Informants freely transposed names (like Sheratt and Scherf) and events (the petition circulated among coalminers to voluntarily cut their own wages) across time. Oftentimes the memories were inconsistent with each other, while other stories were repeated, almost word for word, like the stories about Mrs. Beranek, as if the informants had rehearsed them. Then, I read *Doña María’s Story* by Daniel James, and I realized why those oral histories did not always make factual sense. For his book, James

²³ “Columbine Mine Program,” Tape #1086 (transcribed), 19 November 1988, Lafayette Public Library.

²⁴ Transcribed oral interview with Walt Celinski, May 1976, Lafayette Public Library.

interviewed Doña María, an Argentine labor leader who had been very active in the mass protests in 1945 that brought Juan Perón to power. She remained a *peronista* long after Perón's policies hurt the working class that had propelled him to power. Therefore, Perón's legacy was a mixed one for Doña María. She couldn't bring herself to acknowledge her mixed feelings openly, yet those ambiguities came through in her oral interviews as James shows when he explores the inconsistencies, silences, and literary conventions she employed when constructing her own life's narrative. James also analyzed the way his role as an American scholar influenced their conversations. His book helped me understand why the interviews I read were so inconsistent. Like Doña María, the memories of the 1927-1928 strike for the informants were deeply ambiguous, not just because so much time had passed and because of the ways their lives had turned out, but especially because the Wobblies had lost the strike.

Reading James led me to Allesandro Portelli, who teaches American literature in Rome and is generally considered the most influential historian in the burgeoning field of interpreting oral histories.²⁵ The fact that Portelli teaches literature, not history, shows how the interest in oral histories is breaking down strict disciplinary boundaries, since this new scholarship includes influences not just from psychology and literature, but also from linguistics, anthropology, folklore, and other areas of the humanities. Portelli's brilliant books, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* and *The Order Has Been Given*, further

²⁵ Alexander Stille, "Prospecting for Truth in the Ore of Memory," *The New York Times*, 10 March 2001, www.nytimes.com.

influenced the way I came to use the oral histories I had heard, read, and seen.²⁶

Although I've already used the following Portelli quote, it bears repeating, since it guided the way I began using the oral interviews as sources: "Oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing and what they now think they did."²⁷ In what is remembered and told, but also in what has been forgotten or silenced, oral sources have great historical value even if they are not always literally true.

At last, the discrepancies and silences in the local interviews began to make sense. If the Amicarellas and Borstnicks were living inside the Columbine camp, the men working there had to have been scabs. That would explain why they had not been part of the crowd during the Columbine Massacre. The Amicarella teenagers probably came home drunk after the big rally the day before in Boulder, yet their oral histories omitted both their father's scabbing and the rally. Smith, Sampson, and the Lafayette informants identically described Mrs. Beranek and her heroic role in the strike, even though reporters writing the day of and witnesses testifying the day after the strike did not mention any of the details about her or the flag bearer. Although the stories about Mrs. Beranek may be true, I could never find any other sources to corroborate her role in the strike. What made the Beranek story even more interesting was the prominent role other women—young, single women like Flaming Milka, not a middle-aged mother like Beranek—had played in the strike, yet not one informant mentioned Flaming Milka. The press described Flaming Milka,

²⁶ Alessandro Portelli, *The Order Has Been Given: History, Memory, and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

²⁷ Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 50.

her sister, and other young women as amazons, not Mrs. Beranek, as Smith wrote. Given reporters' fascination with women in the strike, and the fact that everybody in the northern coalfield community knew Mrs. Beranek (because she had so many children), that discrepancy is hard to explain. Even more confusing was when Eastenes' daughter (and several others) said a militiaman named Sheratt had killed her father when Louis Scherf had commanded the state police that day. Almost every informant misidentified Scherf as Sheratt, who I later discovered was the local sheriff during the 1910-1914 strike. Although none of the coalminers openly admitted joining the Wobblies, several admitted they were at the Columbine the day of the massacre and had joined the 1927 and 1928 walkout. The way the community mistreated Celinski and his father after the strike helped show why former Wobblies did not want to admit their former membership. Apparently, childhood behavior—joining the Junior Wobblies—was safer to remember than the adult behavior of joining the Wobblies. Given the way his life turned out—retiring after forty-one years in both the soft and hard rock mines and receiving a gold pin for fifty years of membership and service to the UMW—Borrego needed to remember his boss, Roche, and his union, the UMW, in favorable terms, so he chronologically misplaced the 1931 wage cut petition to a pre-UMW-RMFC era, a memory that helped reinforce Roche's saintly reputation.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the NEH liberally funded local history projects, although interviewers certainly understood that memories were not always reliable, oral histories tended to be accepted as snapshots of the past

that accurately described literal truths.²⁸ Subsequent historians using these oral interviews as sources in their works have rarely challenged the veracity of those informants' stories or explored what the discrepancies and silences in the informants' memories might mean.

James and Portelli had an easier entrance to deciphering these conundrums as they had the luxury of asking their own questions of their informants, and they self-consciously knew that they, as interviewers, actively participated in the interview process. Trying to unravel the stories the miners told about the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike in general and about the Columbine Massacre specifically thus became doubly difficult. Other researchers had conducted interviews with now-dead informants. There is no re-interviewing to be done. Moreover, Smith, Sampson, and the other local interviewers did not self-consciously take their own roles as interviewers into account as James and Portelli had. Thus, from their writings, it became clear that both women had been looking for—as I once had—

²⁸ While more recent Colorado coal histories, such as Scott Martelle's *Blood Passion* and Thomas Andrews' *Killing for Coal*, have understood that the oral histories could not necessarily be used to convey a "snapshot" of what happened, that is not the case with earlier histories, starting in the early 1940s with Barron Beshoar, continuing through the 1970s with George McGovern, and through the 1980s with the many local historians I have cited in this chapter. From the ways they cited their oral history sources, it is clear they believed those stories conveyed accurate eyewitness accounts. Of course, it's not just history that began questioning the reliability of eyewitnesses. Memory studies began in psychology and moved to criminal justice, spurred by DNA evidence, which proved thousands of wrongful convictions had been based on faulty eyewitness testimony. According to a *New York Times* article, "34 Years Later, Supreme Court Will Revisit Eyewitness IDs," written by Adam Liptak and published on 22 August 2011, over the past thirty years, "More than 2,000 studies on the topic [eyewitness testimony] have been published in professional journals in the past 30 years," transforming scientific, and social, understandings of human memory. As one Supreme Court Justice noted, "The unreliability of eyewitness identification is matched by its power," a power, as we have seen, that is connected to the personal and collective narratives we have constructed based on what we believe we have witnessed.

and therefore, found, heroic struggles of brave women, like Roche and Beranek, and working class coalminers who had stood up for themselves against all odds.

Even though Eric Margolis and Ronald McMahan, who produced the largest oral interview body of research in the late 1970s and early 1980s, said they had been extremely self-conscious about their roles as interviewers, in the context of this project, they also found what they went looking for. For my purposes, they serve as historical actors as much as their informants. When they started their project in 1974, Margolis and McMahan began interviewing retired coalminers in Colorado to find out what life had been like for them in the old coalmining communities. They saved their early interviews on cassette tapes, since that was all the two University of Colorado at Boulder PhD students could afford. The Colorado Endowment for the Humanities funded those initial interviews with a small grant, but in 1977, the research partners won a huge \$352,000 award, direct from the NEH. With that money, they bought video equipment, hired a small crew, and began re-interviewing people, this time on videotape, with the goal of creating several documentaries for Colorado public television.²⁹ They called their work the Colorado Coal Project, and it contains over 200 hours of videotape, 12,000 photographs, and 75 tape-recorded interviews (about half of which are transcribed), all housed at the University of Colorado archives in Boulder.³⁰

²⁹ The Colorado Coal Project, Ronald McMahan interview with the Amicarella brothers, 7-3, Archives, University of Colorado Boulder Libraries, 16-17.

³⁰ Guide to the Eric Margolis: Coal Project (1974-1984), Archives, University of Colorado, Boulder, 2. In some places, the collection is called the Eric Margolis Coal Project, and in their research, it's called the Colorado Coal Project. I have chosen to cite it as the latter, to honor the work also done by Margolis' partner, Ronald McMahan.

In a 1994 essay about how the Coal Project materials were organized to make their videos, Margolis wrote that “[h]istorical categories were not imposed by the editor [Margolis] but were nominated by coal people out of their own experience,” because “[e]thnographic editing techniques allowed the raw materials to inspire both form and content.”³¹ Yet their transcribed interviews contradict Margolis’ assertion. Even though it did not start that way, by the time Margolis and McMahan finished, memories of Ludlow overwhelmed their entire project. When Margolis wrote that the Ludlow Massacre was “mentioned by every miner interviewed; it was the most important event in the community’s history,” it is no mystery why every miner mentioned it.³² Margolis and McMahan *asked* every person they interviewed about Ludlow, in large part because of Barron B. Beshoar’s influence. Beshoar is to Ludlow history as Thompson is to IWW history. Both men serve as the center of self-referential historical source loops that, so far, have proven difficult to break.

After spending over five years collecting interviews, Margolis and McMahan’s grant money began running out. Pressure mounted on the pair to create tangible products from their interviews and to finally get their degrees. As a graduation requirement, McMahan wrote “ ‘Rang-U-Tang’: The I.W.W. and the 1927 Colorado Coal Strike,” which was published as the ninth out of ten short essays in Joseph R.

³¹ Eric Margolis, “Video Ethnography: Toward a Reflexive Paradigm for Documentary,” 12. Margolis sent me this article as an email attachment as a response to an email query I sent him about this project. It is accessible via his website at Arizona State University where he is a professor in the education department, but the article was originally published in the journal *Jump Cut* as “Video Ethnography” (1994, *Jump Cut* 39: 122-131).

³² *Ibid.*, 13.

Conlin's 1981 book, *At the Point of Production: The Local History of the I.W.W.*³³ Although Conlin's book was intended for a national audience, McMahan's essay broke little new ground beyond its local, historical sources. Nor did Conlin's book break much new historical ground on the Wobblies, because it was still tied to Thompson, to whom Conlin dedicated his book. In his introduction, Conlin wrote that Thompson had "donated his assistance to every effort in the writing of Wobbly history since he did his own account in 1955. Fred Thompson is well known to every historian interested in the I.W.W., whether in his voluble and hospitable person or through his voluminous letters in response to, no doubt often stupid questions."³⁴ After Conlin describes Thompson's instrumental role in constructing the IWW archives at Wayne State, Conlin writes that "the files in his [Thompson's] head, however, remain the single greatest repository of Wobbly lore and interpretation from which he graciously draws for the benefit of every investigator who approaches him. He is not so gentle a critic as he is generous an advisor." Conlin asked for, and received, Thompson's advice during every stage of his book, which helps explain why McMahan's essay on the 1927 strike is grouped in the last section, entitled "The I.W.W. After the Fall."

Besides producing publishable articles as a condition of getting their degrees, as a condition for their big NEH grant, Margolis and McMahan had agreed to create a documentary series for Colorado Public Broadcasting. The series originally was supposed to consist of ten, one-hour documentaries, but the

³³ Joseph R. Conlin, ed., *At the Point of Production: The Local History of the I.W.W.* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, vii.

researchers pared that requirement down to three, one-hour shows. Given today's technology, which makes it possible for almost anyone with a computer to produce a professional-looking documentary, the shows they created are painful to watch.³⁵ However, Bill Moyers saw enough potential in them to further edit those three shows into a one-hour documentary broadcast in 1984, the eighteenth out of nineteen episodes he produced for his Emmy-award winning series for the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) called *A Walk Through the Twentieth Century*. That episode, entitled *Out of the Depths*, focused exclusively on the Ludlow Massacre.

Moyers' Ludlow documentary was far from what Margolis and McMahan originally had in mind when they began the Colorado Coal Project. However, as their project spiraled out of control, as their money ran out, and as their deadlines approached, they were forced to make decisions—quickly—on how to organize the massive amount of material they had amassed.³⁶ Completely overwhelmed, they turned to one of their informants, Barron Beshoar, who enthusiastically helped the graduate students whip their material into shape. McMahan admitted to Beshoar, "We've got so much stuff Barron and if you can't save it for us, I don't know what we're going to do." Beshoar told McMahan he'd be happy to help them out.³⁷

What began as help turned into control. As ethnographers, Margolis and McMahan had let the informants, these "little cameos of people," go on tangents, because those stories took the informants "to another place which is the most

³⁵ These films can be checked out at the Lafayette Historical Society in Lafayette, Colorado. There's no information on the films to cite.

³⁶ Beshoar, 06208-2, 18-19, The Colorado Coal Project.

³⁷ Beshoar, 06208-2, 14, The Colorado Coal Project.

fascinating story you ever heard.”³⁸ Beshoar advised them to cut the tangents out of their videos,³⁹ because “It’s got to be dramatic.”⁴⁰ As they were writing their scripts and filming, Beshoar asked them critical questions they hadn’t seemed to consider before, such as, “Who’s going to watch this?”⁴¹ The researchers thought their viewers would consist of “your basic liberal audience,” every coal miner in the nation, and women.⁴² Since liberals and women would be watching, Beshoar told them their story had to take place not underground, but “on the surface.”⁴³

Instead of an ethnographic assemblage of individual people telling their disparate, often inarticulate stories, the storyline needed to be not just dramatic, but also narrative and linear, covering the five Ws of journalism, the who, when, where, what, and why.⁴⁴ Margolis and McMahan decided that Beshoar would be their narrator. He was not an academic (their delivery was too “uppity”), yet he was articulate and passionate, unlike most of the people they had interviewed.⁴⁵ Beshoar agreed with their assessment, since “You see, there isn’t any one of these people you interviewed that can do that whole thing for you. Cause all any of them saw was little pieces that interested them. Practically none of them saw the broad picture.” Furthermore, “Did any one really know who Rockefeller was? A lot of them didn’t speak English. They didn’t know what was going on; they didn’t know how these

³⁸ Beshoar, 06208-2, 1 & 29, The Colorado Coal Project.

³⁹ Ibid.,

⁴⁰ Beshoar, 06208-2, 15, The Colorado Coal Project.

⁴¹ Beshoar, 06208-1, 9, The Colorado Coal Project.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 10.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁵ Beshoar, 06208-2, 12, The Colorado Coal Project.

things developed; they can't tell you."⁴⁶ The miners were "too busy working. And they were not trained to observe and to tell."⁴⁷ As the group filmed, Beshoar carried around his own copy of his book with him, even though he understood the filming couldn't cover the whole book, only "the high spots."⁴⁸ Not surprisingly, the narrative structure Beshoar imposed upon their research remarkably paralleled the same structure he had created for his 1942 book, *Out of the Depths*.⁴⁹

In fact, Beshoar's book not only shaped the way the Colorado Coal Project's research ultimately got presented in documentary format, it had also shaped the very interviews Margolis and McMahan had conducted in the first place. Margolis and McMahan told Beshoar they found a copy of his book in the house of *every* miner they interviewed.⁵⁰ Although Beshoar was flattered by that information, he told the young researchers that he thought most of the miners were interviewing for the Coal Project had been too young during the 1913-1914 strike to remember it; furthermore, he thought most of their informants were basing their stories on his book.⁵¹ Most discordant of all, the Coal Project informants had a hard time remembering much about the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, an event most of them had actually participated in or at least lived through, yet they freely

⁴⁶ Beshoar, 06208-1, 16, The Colorado Coal Project.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 17.

⁴⁸ Beshoar, 0608-3, 17 & 33, The Colorado Coal Project, 8-2.

⁴⁹ See the entire transcripts of "Barron Beshoar #1, Wild Sound, 06238-1, The Colorado Coal Project, 7-8. Margolis, McMahan, Beshoar, and their crew are filming, and their conversations between and during takes are recorded and transcribed. Included in the transcription are highlighted photocopied pages of *Out of the Depths* with time cues next to specific portions of the book that Beshoar read for the narrative documentary voice over.

⁵⁰ Interview with Barron Beshoar, 3, 8-2 Interview with Barron Beshoar, #06228-1, The Colorado Coal Project.

⁵¹ Interview with Barron Beshoar, 25, The Colorado Coal Project, 8-1.

expounded upon the 1910-1914 Colorado coal strike and the Ludlow Massacre, events they could not have remembered, either because they were too young or not even born. Clearly, Beshoar's book had played a critical role in organizing their memories before Margolis and McMahan ever arrived.

This intermingling of personal and published memory was often directly captured on audio and videotape. Many informants, such as Mike Livoda, probably the most interviewed person ever surrounding the Ludlow Massacre, even referred directly to the book when his own words escaped him.⁵² Livoda became such a fixture for anything Ludlow, he is the only person buried at the memorial site, yet even Beshoar remarked, "Now he (Livoda) was nothing but a kid himself when the strike started here. Just among ourselves his role was pretty minor." Beshoar continued, "You know one time my father told me...some of these old time stories...I've told them over and over and to tell you the truth I can't remember whether they happened to my father or to me."⁵³ Beshoar exaggerated, since Livoda had been in his early twenties during the long strike. However, that exaggeration probably flowed from the fact that Livoda and Beshoar's father had repeated "these old time stories" so much, their roles within the 1910-1914 strike grew and flowed into each other over time. The same was true for the strikers and their families, especially after reading Beshoar's book.

⁵² Interview with Mike Livoda, 23, The Colorado Coal Collection 10-7; Harold Black Interview with Mike Livoda 15 November 1968, 8, 14, 18, 10-6, The Colorado Coal Collection.

⁵³ "Barron Beshoar, Interview 132, Cassette #2, C," 1976, 10-11, The Colorado Coal Project.

Beshoar's own memories of the 1910-1914 strike, however, were as problematic as those of the Colorado Coal Project's informants. Beshoar was only six years old during the 1913-1914 phase of the strike in southern Colorado. However, those childhood memories were more vivid to him than those from the 1927-1928 strike, which occurred when he attended the University of Colorado in Boulder, just ten miles from where the Columbine Massacre took place. It was over thirty years after the 1910-1914 strike ended that Beshoar conducted his own research for his 1942 book, since the strike occurred "when I was a boy of six; most of these characters I did not know."⁵⁴ His said his major advantage when he wrote was,

I had John Lawson at elbow [they were then working together on the World War II War Manpower Commission], I had Horace Hawkins the noted attorney for the United Mine Workers at the other elbow and I had the assistance of Ed Doyle who had been a member of the policy committee and I had complete cooperation of all of these people. And so what I had as research were the first hand accounts of men who were there. As you know books are often written by reading what other people had written which they got from what other people had written and so on. But in this instance, such merit as the book has comes from the fact that it's a direct transmission from the people who were there.⁵⁵

As some of Beshoar's comments show, he understood the fallacies and frailties of memories, yet that last quote shows that he still believed those memories he collected from his informants were "a direct transmission" from eyewitnesses.

Beshoar's research was hardly unbiased. Every coalminer, both in his book and in later interviews with Margolis and McMahan, Beshoar described as a "stalwart honest decent coal miner with a red bandana around his neck," while he

⁵⁴ Beshoar interview, #132-A, 35, The Colorado Coal Collection.

⁵⁵ Beshoar, 06228-1, 2, The Colorado Coal Collection, 8-2.

called almost every official (government, mining, or otherwise) a “sonofabitch.”⁵⁶ As often as he repeated phrases, he repeated stories. The following is one of Beshoar’s most seminal, and repeated, memories:

At one point there after the massacre at Ludlow the miners took Trinidad. And my sight, the thing I see, is my father who was a very young man. He took my mother and me in his car, open car and he drove proudly around Trinidad. And on each corner there stood a stalwart miner, with his red bandana and his rifle. And as we drove by they all saluted my father like a general. This was a great proud moment after all of this intimidation by cavalry and...

I [McMahan]: When was it that they took Trinidad?

I2 [Margolis]: After. After war.

I: After Ludlow, during the 10 day war.⁵⁷

As quoted earlier, Dave Roediger wrote that Fred Thompson “tended to open up most when he thought his past held lessons,” and that “Thompson often told the same thing, in nearly the same words, to different interviewers and correspondents, sometimes even when they posed rather different questions.”⁵⁸ Storytellers do this all the time, and so did Barron Beshoar, when he repeated, almost word-for-word, the same story cited above on several different occasions, a story that served as a personal turning point, but also, in his evaluation, as a turning point in the nation’s labor movement. Yet, at the same time, Beshoar also acknowledged the unreliability of his memories.

My own personal recollection of the strike was like still pictures. I see an occasional flash. For example the day the miners took over Trinidad and they stationed a miner on every intersection in this town. And he stood there with his rifle and his red bandana on. And

⁵⁶ One of many examples sprinkled throughout all the Beshoar interviews can be found in the following, “Barron Beshoar, Interview 132-A, 1976, 3, The Colorado Coal Project.

⁵⁷ Beshoar, 06228-1, 38, 8-2, The Colorado Coal Collection.

⁵⁸ Dave Roediger, *Fellow Worker: The Life of Fred Thompson* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1993), 7.

my father came and got my mother and sister and he drove proudly around town and all of them hailed him. This was sort of a great moment. We'd driven the militia out, and isn't everything wonderful. As you know the miners lost the strike and the miners never became the people they are today until Roosevelt became president and the Rockefeller plan was busted, and finally the UMWA years and years and years later gets a contract, a proper union contract in the mine. But from 1913, 14, until the Roosevelt administration, they had not won anything really.⁵⁹

Immediately after these remarks (there are no breaks in the interview quoted here), McMahan challenged Beshoar, pointedly asking him, "What about the 1927 strike?" Beshoar answered,

Tell me they lost that strike. In this area that was a Wobbly strike and the total thing we saw here...I happened to see it...And the anti-union people in town...disliked Wobblies even more than they disliked the strikers of 1913 and 14. So one day, one night...they complained to the police that there was a bad situation over there and the police should go over there and stop it...Well anyway the town, the anti-union people in town, businessmen, the Chamber of Commerce, they were outraged. [T]hey bought a supply of pick handles and...everybody gathered, vigilante style, and...they marched from downtown out to San Juan Street to bust up the Wobblie Hall...they busted it all up and threw a lot of the Wobblies in jail and that sort of ended the (blank) (laughs) in Trinidad. It was very minor here, there was some killings up in the northern field as you know. There were none here.⁶⁰

He was right about the killings in the northern field, and although Beshoar thought that no one had died in the southern coalfields during the strike, about that, he was wrong. The state police shot and killed two people after firing on a crowd of approximately 700 men, women, and children that protested outside the Colorado Industrial Commission (CIC) hearings held in Walsenburg, about 50 miles north of Trinidad.⁶¹ Although Beshoar said he saw the attack on the Wobbly hall in Trinidad

⁵⁹ Beshoar interview #132-A, 35, The Colorado Coal Project.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 35-36.

⁶¹ McClurg, 85-86.

in October, that might or might not be true, since he also said he was going to college in Boulder at the time.

Later in the interview, he admitted that he really had not followed the 1927-1928 strike very closely. Given his background and what he says he saw in Trinidad, his lack of interest in following the 1927-1928 strike is hard to fathom, especially considering that it was a front-page newspaper story all across the state, including southern Colorado, Denver, and Boulder. The day before the massacre, strikers had held a huge rally in Boulder, which over a thousand people attended, including local college students who were supporting the strikers.⁶² Clearly, he was not part of that activist college crowd.

Beshoar's lack of interest in the 1927-1928 strike and his vivid boyhood memories of what he believed to be only a 1913-1914 strike in southern Colorado could explain why, when he wrote *Out of the Depths* in 1942, the entire book focuses on the stalwart miners and the sonofabitch officials. Those black and white characters and the good and evil they did are the memories of a boy, not a man. As a 1920s college student, Beshoar chose not to see the labor unrest surrounding him, so for him, it did not exist. He was hardly alone. At the time, others shared his blind spot, one shared by most contemporary historians. They have not looked for, so they have not found 1920s labor activism.

In 1980, as Margolis and McMahan graduated and found jobs, Republican Ronald Reagan overwhelmingly defeated incumbent Jimmy Carter, a victory more

⁶² "One Thousand Led by the I.W.W. Held Meeting Here Sunday," *The [Boulder] Daily Camera*, 21 November 1927: 1.

attributable to the voters' discontents over soaring interest rates and the Iranian hostage crisis than to Carter's democratized NEH funding, yet Americans were about to experience a profound cultural as well as a political shift. Almost immediately, Reagan cut the NEH budget, and more importantly, a special conservative taskforce Reagan assembled, charged with developing a " 'blueprint' for a conservative American Government," determined that the NEH should stop funding unworthy research projects, including the local, oral history projects initiated during the Carter years.⁶³ Apparently, there was a "firmly held belief, reported to be virtually unanimous among otherwise divided Reagan advisers, that the activities of both endowments [the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities] have been profoundly compromised by politicization and an accompanying lowering of standards under the Carter Administration."⁶⁴ Some on the task force, including William Bennett, whom Reagan soon appointed to head the NEH, urged re-directing the populist, "blue-collar" NEH funding toward projects that instead demonstrated "scholarly excellence."⁶⁵ Other advisers, such as economist Milton Friedman, advocated "the complete dismantling of Federal programs in art and culture," since Friedman argued, "There is no justification that I can see for the National Endowment for the Humanities."⁶⁶

Although the Reagan Administration did not follow Friedman's radical advice, it did dramatically cut NEH funding (1981—\$151 million, 1982—\$130

⁶³ Hilton Kramer, "Reagan Aides Discuss U.S. Role in Helping Arts and Humanities," *The New York Times*, 26 November 1980, www.nytimes.com.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

million, 1983—\$96 million), a policy Bennett supported, as did his successor, Lynn Cheney, who continued to serve as NEH chair in President George H.W. Bush's administration. Bennett, then Cheney, turned the previously low-key position into their bully pulpits. For example, when addressing the 1982 National Council of Teachers of English annual convention, Bennett told the audience of mostly high school teachers that they had become "multicultural travel agents."⁶⁷ Then Bennett lambasted practically all humanities offerings, which he said amounted to "an obscure interpretation of literature here, a skinny piece of somebody's history there, a dose of a few philosophical dilemmas and conundrums, a dash of anthropological relativism, and then an exhortation to think of all this in connection with current events."⁶⁸

Lynn Cheney, Dick Cheney's wife, followed Bennett's political lead, when she "used her position as head of the national endowment to assert an increasingly conservative ideology."⁶⁹ Many critics and scholars accused her of "politicizing the endowment's grant-making by favoring traditional over multicultural projects and loading the endowment's peer review committees with conservatives." Ms. Cheney, "a cultural warrior and darling of the right," accused "those she calls cultural relativists of taking over American art, literature and education."⁷⁰ Cheney not only reversed national cultural funding, in the fall of 1994, she also destroyed national efforts to establish voluntary national standards for history—a policy that has had

⁶⁷ Irvin Molotsky, "Head of Humanities Fund Assails 'Obscure' Studies," *The New York Times*, 21 November 1982, www.nytimes.com.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Elaine Sciolino, "The 2000 Campaign: The Spouse; The Real Conservative in the Family," *The New York Times*, 26 July 2000, www.nytimes.com.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

far reaching effects on both the content orientation and pedagogical approach by which history is taught—or, more recently, not taught—given the emphasis of testing in language arts and math—only—which has crowded out history teaching in classrooms across the nation as a result of No Child Left Behind, signed by President George W. Bush in 2001.⁷¹

Although this shift in political orientation and the de-funding of the NEH effectively killed the funds for the Lafayette oral history project, the memories those interviews had rekindled had created a renewed spark and community pride in Lafayette that did not die. As the town approached its 1989 centennial celebration, local activists began collecting material for a book that would be published in time for that celebration. At the same time, the Denver Labor Forum, a small group of Denver labor organizers that included a contingent of contemporary Wobblies, the same group that would later publish the 2005 book, *Slaughter in Serene: The Columbine Coal Strike Reader*, began organizing an effort to finally erect a memorial

⁷¹ On how this law and Cheney's role in the history debates has not only reduced the amount of time students spend on history in public schools, but has also influenced "whose history should be taught," see Diane Ravitch, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice are Undermining Education* (New York, NY: Basis Books, A Member of the Perseus Books Group, 2010), 17. The No Child Left Behind Act mandates students all across the country be tested in grades three through ten in language arts and math only, leading to a precipitous decline in all social studies' teaching, including history, as teachers are increasingly pressured to teach to the test. Democratic President Barack Obama raised the stakes on test scores even higher with his Race to the Top (RTTT) policy. If states or districts hoped to gain precious federal dollars, they had to pass laws linking teacher evaluations to student test scores. The Colorado legislature in 2010 passed n SB-191 trying, unsuccessfully it turned out, to win RTTT money, tying 50% of teachers' evaluations to students' test scores, the highest percentage in the nation. RTTT has only further squeezed out the teaching of history in schools.

for the still unmarked graves of five of the six men killed at the Columbine Massacre.⁷²

The Lafayette Historical Society captured the Columbine Memorial event on videotape for posterity.⁷³ Gary Cox and other members of the local Denver Labor Forum did most of the work organizing the ceremony, which took place in October in 1988. In the program that preceded the monument's unveiling, Cox and others



during the ceremony wore red neck scarves, emulating the red scarves the “rednecks” had adopted as uniforms not during the 1927-1928 strike, but during the 1910-1914 strike. Although the photo of Gary Cox on the left was taken during the 2005 Ludlow Memorial re-

dedication, he's dressed as he was in 1989, wearing an IWW hat and button, and a red bandana around his neck.⁷⁴ An unidentified guest of honor, a man who looked at least in his nineties, sat in a folding chair in the front row's place of honor, while a hundred or so locals stood behind the thirty other attendees seated in folding chairs.

⁷² Lowell May and Richard Myers, eds., *Slaughter in Serene: The Columbine Coal Strike Reader* (Denver: Bread and Roses Workers' Cultural Center & the Industrial Workers of the World, 2005).

⁷³ This video, which has no name or other credits, can be checked out from the Lafayette Historical Society in Lafayette, Colorado.

⁷⁴ “Ludlow Monument Re-dedication Ceremony,”

http://www.rebelgraphics.org/ludlow_second_century.html, accessed 15 April 2013. The caption under the photograph reads, “IWW Gary Cox (left) and Ryszard Tomtas, a Polish immigrant who was involved in Poland's Solidarity union movement in the 1980s, converse through the monument fence with Jonathan Rees (unseen), Associate Professor of History at Colorado State University in Pueblo.”

Marshaling the resources to construct the monument had taken meticulous organization, widespread community effort, and good-natured, respectful cooperation. Jim Hutchison and his wife Beth were doing most of the legwork for the Lafayette centennial book, and Jim also served as secretary for the committee that raised money for the Columbine memorial. The committee negotiated a bargain price for a headstone somebody had ordered but not paid for, and the stone mason ground off the old inscription, and then engraved a new, more elaborate one. As Hutchinson's bookkeeping shows, although some groups, such as the Erie and Lafayette historical societies and the San Francisco and Michigan Wobblies donated to the committee, private, individual donations comprised over half of the \$2,300 needed for the monument.⁷⁵

The contrasts between the Columbine and the Ludlow memorials could not be more stark. The UMW, which had leased the land on which the Ludlow tent colony had been built, bought the land after the 1914 Ludlow Massacre and erected the monument quickly, in 1918. I earlier contended the speed with which that monument was built was a conscious effort to reclaim the memories of the Ludlow Massacre from its original victims, a commemoration process that especially aimed to erase the 1910-1914 long strike and Ludlow memories associated with John Lawson and Ed Doyle, both expelled from the UMW in 1917. The UMW held annual memorial services there, although attendance certainly thinned out over the years.

⁷⁵ "Columbine Memorial Fund," copy of fund record from the private files of James and Beth Hutchinson in Lafayette, Colorado.



In 2003, vandals decapitated the man (as seen in the photo) and woman figure (but not the child), and two years later, the UMW paid to restore the monument.⁷⁶

The Ludlow monument was and is big, expensive, and dramatic. Today the memorial is geographically isolated from any nearby town, although it is easily accessible since it is

located just a mile east of Interstate-25. The memorial was built next to the “death hole” where the eleven children and two women died. Until the 2003 vandalism, the



site stood unprotected. Now, a short fence surrounds the monument. Additionally, a metal-roofed patio-like structure that looks like a 1960s Dairy Queen was also constructed in 2005 next to the memorial.

Completing that aesthetic, ten or so folding tables have been set up inside the patio, for memorial services or visitors. The photo above shows the crowd that assembled under the patio for the 2005 Ludlow re-dedication, after the monument’s restoration.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ “Ludlow Monument,” *Rebel Graphics*, <http://www.rebelgraphics.org/ludlow.html>, accessed 15 April 2013.

⁷⁷ “Ludlow Monument Re-dedication Ceremony,” *Rebel Graphics*, http://www.rebelgraphics.org/ludlow_second_century.html, accessed 15 April 2013.

In contrast to the Ludlow Memorial, it took over fifty years to build the Columbine Massacre memorial. That effort probably would never have taken place without the late 1970s and early 1980s oral histories, which revived the community's pride in its own history. The effort brought together unlikely partners, including contemporary Wobblies and oldtimer Lafayette and Erie residents, all intent on memorializing the event. The Columbine Memorial, especially when contrasted to the Ludlow Memorial, is simple and cheap. As the photographs show,





the slab headstone lists the victim's names on the front and the groups that paid for it on the back.⁷⁸ It is integrated into Lafayette's public cemetery, directly west of the town's recreation center, just south of community soccer and baseball fields, and several miles southwest of the Josephine Roche Open Space, which abuts Josephine Commons, a subsidized apartment complex for senior citizens.

The Denver Labor Forum, including Gary Cox and Richard Meyers, helped plan both the 1989 Columbine Memorial ceremony, as well as the 2005 Ludlow Memorial rededication. In 1989, after Gary Cox and other local Wobblies spoke, a young folksinger earnestly strummed her guitar and sang several songs. Last, Carlos Cortez, at that time the best-known living Wobbly, produced a big surprise for the crowd. In 1915, the state of Utah executed IWW songwriter Joe Hill, and Wobblies had his body sent to Chicago, where a massive public funeral took place. Hill's body was then cremated, and envelopes filled with his ashes were sent to IWW offices all across the country. During the 1917 IWW raids, most of the contents of those offices had been destroyed, including the envelopes filled with dead Joe Hill. One letter

⁷⁸ I took these photographs.

containing his ashes got lost in the mail and later somehow ended up at the National Archives. In the mid-1980s, the IWW somehow got wind of the Joe Hill letter and its contents and demanded their return. Although the archives insisted upon keeping the letter, in 1988, it returned (in a vial) the ashes to the chairman of the IWW General Executive Board.⁷⁹ For the grand finale of the Columbine Memorial ceremony, Carlos Cortez stepped forward and scattered Hill's ashes over the ground that covered five of the Columbine Massacre's victims.⁸⁰ Although those ashes had great symbolic meaning for Cortez, Cox, and the other Wobblies in attendance that day, most of the locals, including those old enough to remember the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, probably had no idea who Joe Hill was.

During the ceremony, none of the speakers mentioned Adam Bell, Mrs. Beranek, Kristin Svanum, A.S. Embree, or Flaming Milka. None of them mentioned the Junior Wobblies (even though surely a few were in attendance) or the Mexican sugar beet workers who also walked out on strike. Even as Joe Hill's ashes were scattered over the Columbine victims' graves, nobody mentioned Byron Kitto, whose ashes had been scattered over the very same spot in 1931. The written IWW historical narratives, as shaped by Fred Thompson, had erased the significance of the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike, and it had never been a major part of the national labor narrative, thanks to sources that included newspaper accounts, Josephine Roche, John L. Lewis, New Deal officials, Barron Beshoar and the historical

⁷⁹ "IWW's Joe Hill Executed as Murderer 73 Years Ago: Ashes of Legendary Union Organizer, Martyr Turned Over to 'Wobblies,'" The *Los Angeles Times*, 20 November 1988, www.articles.latimes.com/print/1988-11-20/news/mn-590_1_joe-hill-s-ashes, accessed 27 February 2012.

⁸⁰ Columbine memorial video.

narratives his book influenced, and various archival collections that excluded most workers' voices. Even in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when researchers tried getting the workers' voices back into the story of the 1927-1928 strike, memories of Ludlow drowned them out.

The ceremony commemorating the Columbine Massacre victims was a local historical event. When the 1989 Wobblies invoked the memories of Joe Hill during the Columbine Massacre memorial ceremony, their invocation was only slightly less anachronistic than their red bandanas. Even for those who were most passionate about reviving its significance, like everyone else, they had remembered Ludlow but forgotten the Columbine.

Epilogue:
The Second Columbine Massacre and Lessons Learned, 1999-2013

The first Columbine Massacre took place on November 20, 1927. The second and more infamous Columbine Massacre took place on April 20, 1999, eighty-five years to the day after the Ludlow Massacre. Reporters neither mentioned Ludlow, which shared the same day, nor the Columbine, which shared the same name, in their coverage of the Columbine High School deaths in Littleton, Colorado.

The day after the massacre, news sources identified Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, both Columbine High School seniors, as the shooters. The *New York Times* reported that the two boys killed “as many as 23 students and teachers,” as well as “wounding at least 20 in a five-hour siege.” The article also stated, “Students said the gunmen were part of a group of misfits who called themselves the trench coat mafia, which expressed disdain for racial minorities and athletes.”¹ Other students said the trench coat mafia consisted of “nerds, geeks and dweebs trying to find someplace to fit in,” who “suffered their fair share of being picked on.” When asked about the shootings, Colorado Governor Bill Owens said, “This is a cultural virus.” He added, “We have to ask ourselves what kind of children we are raising.”²

Some of the reporting errors were corrected right away. Within days, news stories accurately reported that Harris and Klebold killed not twenty-three but twelve students and a teacher before killing themselves. They wounded sixty more,

¹ James Brooke, “Terror in Littleton,” *The New York Times*: A17, www.nytimes.com, accessed 23 March 2013.

² Ibid.

some who would never walk again or think abstract thoughts. It had not been a five-hour siege at all. The shootings lasted less than half an hour.

Dave Cullen, one of the first reporters on the scene, could not let go of the story. He continued researching the second Columbine Massacre for nine more years, and his findings appear in his masterful book, *Columbine*, published in 2009.³ Cullen convincingly shows how the media, in spite of new evidence that began surfacing as soon as two days after the attacks, continued to filter all new information it received through the initially reported narrative that the killers had been outcasts who had targeted jocks, minorities, and Christians.⁴ But Harris and Klebold had not targeted anybody. Their original plan was to kill everybody at their high school. They were only foiled by their absolute incompetence at building bombs. Harris and Klebold had not been bullied and they did not belong to a trench coat mafia. They were relatively popular kids who got good grades.

Yet most of the public, at least those who remember the Columbine Massacre, still believe the myths reported immediately after the massacre. As Cullen writes, “Repetition was the problem.”⁵ Reporters started asking students about the Trench Coat Mafia, so kids started talking about the Trench Coat Mafia. “The writers assumed kids were informing the media. It was the other way around. Most of the

³ Dave Cullen, *Columbine* (New York, NY: Twelve, 2009).

⁴ Ibid., 125.

⁵ Ibid., 150.

myths were in place by nightfall,” and they never disappeared.⁶ Reporters and students had formed their own self-referential loop.⁷

There is a good reason journalism is called the first draft of history. In the case of the first and second Columbine Massacres, as well as the Ludlow Massacre, journalists and their readers together created the myths that grew up surrounding those tragedies. But Cullen only discovered the Columbine myths after nine years of careful research, studying the thousands of pages of evidence the shootings generated, including police, sheriff, ballistics, and court reports. He also conducted hundreds of interviews with people involved with the massacre including investigators, parents, students, teachers, and anyone who knew something about what had happened that day. By not accepting the commonly held narrative of what happened at Columbine, Cullen’s research began the process of revising the first draft of history.

After almost every tragic event that pricks the public’s conscience, we seek meaning to help explain why it happened. We need for there to be lessons learned, so such events will never happen again. What lessons were learned from the second Columbine Massacre? Even though Harris and Klebold had not been bullied, schools started bullying-prevention programs. No longer are police or other law enforcement officers instructed to “hold the perimeter,” as they did during the Columbine Massacre. Today, officers are instructed to enter a building right away.

⁶ Ibid., 151.

⁷ Ed Linenthal also examined a similar kind of phenomenon about the formation of myths, memories, and narratives in the immediate aftermath of the Oklahoma City Bombing. See Edward Linenthal, *The Unfinished Bombing: Oklahoma City in American Memory* (New York, NY: Oxford Press, 2003).

Teachers wear photo badges around their necks and schools now practice lock-down drills. Voters all across the country taxed themselves so school districts could construct locked, safety-glassed outside entries. That way, workers inside the school could see who wanted inside and only buzz in visitors who looked safe.

None of those lessons learned from the second Columbine Massacre prevented Adam Lanza from committing another shocking school shooting. On December 14, 2012, the twenty-year-old Lanza shot through the glass foyer of Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, and killed the two adults who tried to stop him from entering the school. Then Lanza entered two first grade classrooms and killed 20 five and six-year-old children along with the adults who tried to protect them. Those killings are simply called Sandy Hook. Apparently, the word massacre is implied. Sometimes the lessons learned from tragic events are not the right lessons at all.

Were any lessons learned from the November 21, 1927, Columbine Massacre? If so, those lessons varied by the individuals who were affected by it. A.S. Embree learned that the IWW would not support his goal of reviving the organization by building a leftist, democratic, anti-Lewis coalition. He also learned that the IWW could not stop its infighting, even when such disagreements further hastened its demise. While he maintained his militant, egalitarian goals for the labor movement all his life, Embree eventually learned to compromise, as his later career with Mine Mill demonstrated. He also passed along the lessons he had learned to other labor leaders such as Clinton Jencks and his son-in-law, Maurice Travis, who tried hard to live up to his legacy.

Josephine Roche learned that even with an infusion of money from her rich, liberal investors, her “experiment” in industrial democracy could never pay its own way, even after she tried rationalizing the RMFC’s management and labor policies. She needed the UMW and its money to stay afloat. She learned that even a tragedy such as the Columbine Massacre could be “spun” in a way to briefly, and successfully, create an entry into national politics. Roche so successfully created the myth of Saint Josephine, so far, most historians have accepted wholesale the myths Roche created about herself with the help of cooperative national reporters and aided by her heavily purged archival records. Above all, the Columbine Massacre taught Roche whom she could trust: her former Progressive allies and John L. Lewis. After her allies died, moved on, or switched allegiances, only Lewis was left. Lewis trusted Roche, too, and that mutual loyalty produced long-lasting consequences not just for the UMW, but also for the entire US labor movement.

Following the Columbine Massacre, Powers Hapgood thought Roche’s new RMFC contract with the UMW might mean a fresh start for him. He soon learned that working in a UMW coalmine for one of Lewis’ new allies was not enough to get him back into the UMW fold. While living in Colorado, Hapgood learned that personal happiness was not enough for him; he needed to be part of the labor movement. But after once again failing to reform the UMW from within, as he had tried to do since the early 1920s, Hapgood went to work for his father at the Columbia Conserve Canning Company, which had served as a model for industrial democracy “experiments” such as Roche’s. While working there, torn between his loyalty to his father and his mentor John Brophy, he learned that experiments in industrial

democracy were not democratic at all, a discovery that led the bitterly disillusioned Hapgood to get swept up into the creation of the CIO in 1935. Hapgood made a good CIO organizer but not a good CIO bureaucrat. By 1949, the post-World War II red scare ended his career, and possibly, his life.

Leading up to and immediately following the Columbine Massacre, Colorado coalminers, their families, and their supporters learned their militancy could win pay raises, respect, and solidarity. It also won them a labor contract with the UMW, even though the UMW had not led, but only denounced, the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike. In the years following the strike, the survivors most directly affected by the massacre learned to keep their mouths shut, since they had participated in a walkout led by the IWW (which truly did diminish in the 1930s), not the UMW, which after 1933 emerged as the dominant coalminer labor union in the nation. Some former strike participants kept their mouths shut so they did not appear to be radicals in their increasingly conservative community, and some really did forget what had happened during the strike. As all of us do, the strike participants began to reconstruct their memories of those events to explain the ways their lives had turned out. They also began to rely on written sources such as Barron Beshoar's version of Colorado labor history to help them remember details that began slipping away in the fog of time. Increasingly, they doubted the reliability of their memories, especially since neither the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike nor the Columbine Massacre made it into the national historical narrative. Even in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the surviving informants were asked to remember what they had seen and done fifty years earlier, they had a hard time making their personal

narratives jibe with the national historical narrative that surrounded them. Consequently, most of the informants adjusted their memories to fit neatly into the narrative that celebrated Josephine Roche and John L. Lewis as heroes. However, occasional incongruities escaped from their oral histories often enough to show that there was more to the strike and the massacre than either national or local historical narratives had conveyed.

What lessons did historians learn from the Columbine Massacre and the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike? Apparently, not many. For the most part, it has been ignored. True enough, the Columbine Massacre did not cause the IWW to disintegrate. It did not cause progressives to abandon the matriarchal and patriarchal privatized industrial democracy experiments in which they had placed so much hope. It did not directly lead to the UMW revival in the 1930s, the rise of the CIO, or Roche's alliance with Lewis. However, it did contribute—significantly—to all of those outcomes.

Almost more interesting than the lessons learned from the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike are the historical silences that still surround it and the mistakes in historical interpretation that silence has created. The 1920s was not a quiescent decade for workers or organized labor, and the IWW did not die after World War I. In 1927-1928, the IWW waged a successful strike in Colorado, yet those same years, John L. Lewis directed a UMW-led strike in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia that failed. The 1928 contract the RMFC negotiated with the UMW resulted from that organization's weakness in 1928, not its strength. In the early 1930s, before the National Industrial Recovery Act coal code was finalized, other coal operators across

the country, perhaps following Roche's lead, invited the UMW to sign contracts with them for many of the same reasons Roche had: The coal industry could not continue on the trajectory it was following. Cutthroat competition continually drove wages down, and even those harsh cuts had not made coal profitable. Something had to change. If that meant coal operators needed to deal with some kind of labor union to help bring stability to the industry, better to deal with the UMW than the more radical elements, such as the IWW, that had kept the nation's coalfields in turmoil since the early 1920s.

The most interesting way Roche and those who allied with her were able to silence the significance of the 1927-1928 Colorado coal strike and the Columbine Massacre, both for their contemporaries and for future historians, came through evoking the memories of Ludlow, an evocation that began less than two weeks after the shootings when Frank Palmer published his article about the strike and the massacre in *The Nation*. No one has seriously challenged his largely misinformed interpretation since. By the early 1930s, the labor narrative that suggests the Ludlow Massacre led directly to organized labor's victories by the 1930s was already in place, and Barron Beshoar's 1942 book *Out of the Depths* established that basic narrative structure. Then, except for memorial editions in the UMW newspaper, Ludlow disappeared for almost two decades, revived by New Labor historians. Yet they, too, remembered Ludlow and forgot the Columbine.

Of course, the Ludlow Massacre could not have directly led to 1930s organized labor's victories, since such an interpretation omits almost twenty years of coalmining history. In this dissertation, I have tried to put some of those missing

years back in and to show how personal memories can get subsumed into bigger historical narratives that, unfortunately, leave gaping silences in the historical record. I hope that this dissertation helps historians remember Ludlow *and* the Columbine—because it is together that they offer a full understanding of the complex history of coal and community in Colorado and the crucial decades of the labor movement in the early twentieth century United States.

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