A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF COAL MINING COMMUNITIES IN
NORTHERN ILLINOIS AND SOUTHEASTERN OHIO IN
THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
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* * * * *

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years Americans have become increasingly concerned about the impact of technological developments on the quality of life. The philosophy of industrial progress and greater productivity has been questioned by environmentalists who have warned that economic expansion may have unpleasant side effects. Americans, who have previously accepted uncritically the benefits of industrial progress, are now raising questions about the impact of "progress" on human values and institutions. Scientists and technicians cannot ignore the ethical implications of their work, because they know the nation must set priorities which include qualitative as well as quantitative considerations. Previous experience is often the best teacher if one is to understand a contemporary problem, and the United States first addressed some of the aforementioned questions during the "Industrial Revolution" of the late nineteenth century. Through an examination of selected industrial communities during this era, one can better understand the process of industrialization and its effects on people's lives.

According to recent scholarship, the United States experienced a transformation from a nation which was "community-centered" in the
1870's to one which was dominated by large industries and a national market by 1900. This view notes that face-to-face pre-industrial relationships became less important as the industrial revolution accelerated, technology increased, and bureaucratic institutions emerged.¹ Some scholars have asserted that American communities in the 1860's and 1870's had harmonious social class relationships. One historian, David Montgomery, contended that this environment produced a broad reform movement which transcended the economic demands of any given social class.² Herbert Gutman, who studied conflicts in various industrial communities throughout the nation, claimed that community consciousness and solidarity allowed local residents and industrial workers substantial influence in the political, economic, and social activity which affected their lives.³ This environment was altered, however, after the development of mass production techniques and a national market had rendered small communities powerless. Workers turned to national unions, rather than their middle class neighbors, for support in battles with employers, and the community solidarity of a pre-industrial era was shattered by economic forces which made the old relationships obsolete.

These studies raise numerous questions for the researcher. When, if ever, did the transition occur from a nation of small, independent communities to one in which the national market dominated? What factors contributed to a changing situation? Since this was an era of rapid technological change, to what extent did the mechanization of industry influence the changes in society? Other questions arise concerning the power of industrial workers during this era. Did the
workers lose power completely with the rise of industrial capitalism or did they continue to exert influence in their communities? Was local influence enough to counterbalance the power of employers? How did the employer-employee relationship change over time? How did the middle class respond to workers' symbols of class consciousness (trade unions), and did collective economic action destroy community consciousness? Such questions require further study of industrial areas in the late nineteenth century if one is to test the current thesis of community decline.

II

This study will endeavor to ascertain the changes brought by industrialization to the lives of coal miners in northern Illinois and southeastern Ohio during the late nineteenth century. Herbert Gutman pioneered in the study of these areas, and he utilized information from strikes in both regions to develop his thesis on community interaction. Present interest in community studies owes much to Gutman, who argued that the traditional scholarship in labor history had focused almost exclusively on "the narrow institutional development of trade unions" while neglecting the social relationships within industrial communities. Focusing on local history, Gutman claimed the sense of community in many small towns aided industrial workers in their battles with employers, and he noted that this relationship made life "less complicated" for the small town laborer than it was for his counterpart in the city. Gutman applied this interpretation to the coal mining communities in Illinois and Ohio by claiming that
the local middle classes sided with the miners in industrial disputes. Employers in these areas, according to Gutman, suffered continual frustration during industrial conflicts because the non-mining elements in the communities sympathized with and aided their fellow townsmen.  

While Gutman's work has enhanced our understanding of local history, many other questions concerning industrial communities must be addressed. Gutman correctly observed that coal miners were not impotent in this industrial era, but he exaggerated their ability to control the events which affected their lives. Residents of mining towns found that "community solidarity" could be very fragile, because these communities often contained a racially and ethnically diverse population. As a result of poor living and working conditions in these communities, solidarity often meant a shared sense of suffering. Searching for allies amidst such conditions, coal miners did receive help from the non-mining population of their communities, but miners sometimes found that their middle class neighbors either sympathized with or could not resist the power of corporate capital. Thus, workers turned to religion, politics, and trade unionism in their search for anything which might improve their standard of living. By turning to national trade unions, coal miners acknowledged their inability to effectively challenge corporate economic power through community action. Coal operators initially refused to recognize the collective rights of their employees, but, by so doing, they provoked numerous costly miners' strikes. When these operators ultimately accepted a rationalization of the industry by recognizing the miners' organizations, they lessened the threat of further violence and strengthened the existing
socio-economic order. Fragmented by population differences and organizational difficulties, most coal miners accepted this employer-led drive for rationalization, because they realized their weaknesses precluded a drive for more systematic social and economic changes. In addition, many miners and trade union leaders developed a middle class ethos and sought only reforms within a capitalistic social structure.

III

This study will attempt to dissect the events of the late 1800's in the coal communities of Ohio and Illinois in an effort to explain the complexity of political, social, and economic relationships in these areas. A list of procedural problems must be enumerated before embarking on the venture. Unfortunately, record keeping by various government agencies is often incomplete or inconsistent. For example, as a result of changes in record keeping, the United States Bureau of Census obtained different information in each census. The comparative nature of this study was also hampered because Illinois and Ohio governmental offices collected vastly dissimilar information on the coal industry, and these bureaus reported different material each year. In other instances, pertinent information was simply unavailable. Although coal company and union records have been sought, very little material has been available for the researcher's perusal. Likewise, there are few written records left by the "average resident" of the coal communities. In addition to problems of source material, it has been difficult to establish the relative importance of variables
and their interrelationship when attempting to explain the reasons for events and trends. Notwithstanding new sophisticated statistical techniques, there is no precise mathematical formula for cause and effect in history.

Despite problems inherent in such a study, a comparative examination of coal communities aids our understanding of the impact of industrialization on our nation. The problems of coal miners in many ways typify the problems of American society during this era. Like many other Americans, miners had to adjust their lives to the beat of an industrial tempo. A grassroots study of these workers' problems underscores this researcher's preference for a history which focuses on community structure rather than national political leadership. Despite the modifications of the Gutman thesis which will be offered, the author and Gutman share a preference for studies of communities when evaluating the problems relevant to people in an increasingly industrialized society.
FOOTNOTES

INTRODUCTION


CHAPTER 1

HILL AND PLAIN

I

Traveling through the rolling hills of southeastern Ohio or over the prairie of northeastern Illinois, one notices few remnants of once-thriving coal communities. Although the Athens (Ohio) Messenger recently noted a resurgence of coal mining in the area, it acknowledged that there were seven strip mines for every deep one. The Ohio tourist can ride the Hocking Valley Scenic Railway through countryside dotted with memorabilia concerning the area's mining past, but passengers see more examples of rural poverty than vestiges of industrial prosperity. The tour guide points out air shafts of old mines cut into the hillcides, but the most common example of the region's former glory is the loosely strewn coal which is scattered over the area. Such sites are less common in Will County, Illinois, a place which was once a major coal producer for Chicago. A motorist passing near Braidwood, the former center of Illinois coal, will see a few strip mine "hills" which serve as the last reminder of this area's booming era.

One would never know it from present day observations, but each region served as important coal mining centers in the late 1800's. Recognizing the economic potential of these areas, coal companies
secured property, established themselves and produced a raw material which fueled the fires of American industry in its formative period. Starting slowly, these companies soon faced strong economic competition from other coal businesses as they sought to secure a share of the national market. Most small coal companies ultimately ceased business or merged with larger corporate conglomerates, because small enterprises could not compete with their larger counterparts during an era of frequent industrial depressions.

Utilizing all their competitive advantages, large companies dominated the coal fields of southeastern Ohio and northern Illinois and successfully transformed these regions. When coal entrepreneurs entered the Hocking Valley, they created many new coal communities but the area contained many small agricultural communities before mining changed the region. The Hocking Valley, which includes the counties of Hocking, Perry and Athens, became the leading coal producing area of Ohio during this period (see Figure 1). Unlike the Hocking Valley, the northeastern Illinois coal field was developed amidst barren tracts of prairie (see Figure 2). The area surrounding Braidwood of Will County had poor farming and, according to a Chicago Tribune reporter, "without its coal shafts it would have no reasonable apology for existing, since there is no agricultural neighborhood to give it support."²

II

Given the divergent environmental conditions, it is not surprising that the coal regions in southeastern Ohio and northern
Figure 1. Coal Communities of Southeastern Ohio
Figure 2. Northern Illinois Coal Mining Towns
Illinois developed in very different ways. Ohio's Hocking Valley had coal mined for commercial purposes as early as 1830, when James Knight of Athens County hauled fifty-eight bushels by wagon to Columbus. Two years later a new era began when the Hocking branch of the Ohio canal was completed to Nelsonville, Athens County. Concurrently, investigations of the area revealed an extensive coal field which, according to one source, was capable of supplying any demand for "centuries to come." Shortly thereafter, eastern capitalists and Ohio entrepreneurs purchased extensive tracts of land along the canal for mining purposes. Many of the early mine owners located their enterprises along the canal route to facilitate easy access and transportation. Shipment on the canal resulted in inefficiency, however, because winter freezing prevented the transportation of coal to market. From 1843 to 1861 the Hocking canal, according to one source, had a net loss of $48,084, and the mining industry of the area remained small until the Columbus and Hocking Valley Railroad was completed in 1869. Within one decade the shipment of coal from the area increased from 120,000 tons (1862) to over 900,000 tons (1876), and the railroad allowed the area's coal to be marketed in Chicago and other points along the Great Lakes. As a result, the region's economy changed from one with an agrarian base to one dominated by the mining industry.

Unlike the Hocking Valley, the coal fields of northern Illinois remained undiscovered until the 1860's. When William Henneberry discovered coal in the Braidwood vicinity in 1864, the locality was "nothing but a sea of tall grass" which was "considered worthless, with only a few unthrifty farmers scattered through the neighborhood."
In 1866, the Chicago and Wilmington (later the Chicago, Wilmington, and Vermillion) Coal Company bought out some of the less successful early entrepreneurs in the Braidwood area, and it soon established itself as the dominant economic force in the locale. The company built its own branch railroad from the main line of the Chicago, Alton and St. Louis Railroad, and it had invested $475,000 in its Braidwood business by 1868. As the company reaped large profits, the region attracted other investors in the 1860's and 1870's, and Braidwood became an important source of coal for Chicago, only sixty miles distant. The Hocking Valley coal fields had developed gradually, but Braidwood was a coal "boom" town and it quickly became the most important coal community in northeastern Illinois.7

After the completion of the railroads, each area experienced rapid growth as they became important mining centers. The earliest mining establishments in the Hocking Valley lacked high initial capital expenditures, because the "drift" mines of the region could be opened and equipped at a cost of $2,000 or less. Drift mining proved easy when the entrepreneur could tap the rich seams of Valley coal by following the veins into the hills. Under such conditions, the water of the mines could be discharged by gravitation.8 The shaft mining in northeastern Illinois required a greater investment, and by 1877 five companies had investments valued at $922,000 in Will County. As early as 1873 the Chicago, Wilmington, and Vermillion Coal Company had five operating shafts in Braidwood and it employed nine hundred men. The companies in Braidwood also profited from the sale of land in and around the community, because they had made $250,000 by 1873
from their role as proprietors in the town. Clearly the companies in northeastern Illinois quickly established economic dominance within the newly-created communities, while smaller establishments in southeastern Ohio represented an era of the individual entrepreneur. Since the average mining establishment in the country only employed twenty men during this era, the Ohio environment mirrored the nation more closely than the Illinois pattern, but even the Hocking Valley had been transformed by a "syndicate" in the 1880's as the old economic relationships became increasingly anachronistic.

III

As each area developed its resources, Ohio's coal barons had natural advantages over their Illinois counterparts, because Hocking Valley coal was vastly superior to that of northern Illinois in both quantity and quality. Throughout southeastern Ohio the coal seam ranged from six to eleven feet in thickness while that of the Braidwood vicinity scarcely exceeded a density of three feet. The Hocking coal's large proportion of fixed carbon, its lack of sulfur, and its solid, firm character also made it a product of superior quality. On the other hand, the Illinois, or Wilmington, coal had much less heating power, it contained an "extraordinary" quantity of sulfur and other impurities, and it tended to fall to pieces and to be prone to spontaneous combustion. Given these qualitative differences, it is scarcely surprising that the Ohio coal attracted an important commercial market in home use, steam generation, and in the manufacturing of iron and steel. The Wilmington coal became an important locomotive fuel,
and it was used for smelting in local iron and steel works. In short, only its proximity to the market and its relative cheapness allowed Illinois coal to compete with the more valuable eastern deposits of Ohio and Pennsylvania.  

The easy availability of the Hocking Valley coal also made it more valuable than the product of the Illinois field. The drift mining in Ohio not only facilitated ease of access, but it also allowed entrepreneurs to cut costs since hoisting engines and pumps were unnecessary. Nature provided an effortless drainage and ventilation for these hillside mines. By contrast, the Illinois shaft mines had fewer conveniences and they were more costly to operate. The miners worked a "long-wall" system, which meant they mined from the bottom of the shafts outward in a constantly enlarging circle. Magnified costs resulted from the presence of solid rock on both sides of the coal, because the miner had to break away this stone to get the coal. Hocking Valley mines also had impurities, or bone coal, but the qualitative and quantitative advantages of these mines helped to compensate for the inconveniences of sorting coal from shale. The physical features of the work place clearly favored Ohio enterprises over their Illinois competitors. 

Production statistics reflected the aforementioned differences, because the Hocking Valley of Ohio remained an important coal region long after the northern Illinois field had been exhausted. In 1860, the United States Census listed seven mining establishments with 120 employees for Athens County, Ohio, but no bituminous coal mines existed in Will County, Illinois. Ten years later three mines operated
in Will County as compared to eleven in Athens County, but the Illinois county's mines had more employees and more capital invested. The 1880 census revealed a similar pattern, but the northern Illinois field near Braidwood had been exhausted by the turn of the century. During the 1880's Will County ranked eleventh among Illinois' coal producing counties, but it had fallen to thirty-fifth by the 1890's. As the Hocking Valley continued to produce the bulk of Ohio's coal, the northern Illinois' entrepreneurs lost trade to competitors in central and southern Illinois. Braidwood's miners fled to other coal-producing communities while the Hocking Valley coal towns continued to flourish until the 1920's.¹³

IV

Although nature made monopolization of the coal industry difficult, a few companies ultimately dominated the coal fields of southeastern Ohio and northern Illinois. When the Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron Company was formed in 1883, it served as an impressive example of the growing dominance of corporate economic power. According to the company, the economic situation mandated the formation of an organization which represented the consolidated capital of sixteen separate coal and iron interests, because excessive competition had deprived proprietors of adequate return from their investments. Upon its formation, the assessed value of the Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron Company was $4,494,637 and, in addition to its coal sales, the company monthly received $2,569 from housing rental and $42,967 from its company stores. The company claimed "it required very little
discernment to see that by some effectual grouping of these many interests into one, competition in the purchase of lands and raw material, competition in the hiring of labor, and competition in the sale of products in the market, might be largely done away with."  
Such a situation had prevailed from the beginning in the northern Illinois field, because the Chicago, Wilmington, and Vermillion Coal Company had quickly established itself as the leader in the area. According to Herbert Cutman, this company usually led others in the Braidwood vicinity "in such matters as setting a wage scale or determining the selling price of coal."  

Despite the trend toward industrial concentration, coal operators in Ohio and Illinois constantly complained that competition limited their actions and made their business very unpredictable. One Ohio operator, Anthony Howells, argued that Pennsylvania mines constantly undersold the product of Ohio coal companies and, thus, caused the Hocking Valley strike of 1884-1885. A reporter for the Cincinnati Commercial Gazette suggested, however, that the Columbuc and Hocking Coal and Iron Company had raised its prices after its incorporation and, by so doing, had priced itself out of the market. When a strike shut down the northern Illinois coal field in 1889, Nelson Plumb, President of Streator's Coal Run Coal Company, asserted that the central and southern fields of Illinois had forced the company out of the Chicago market. Reacting to the charge that the coal companies made exorbitant profits, William L. Scott of the Spring Valley Coal Company told the Chicago Tribune that stockholders had not received one cent return on investment in four years. In 1897 Black
Diamond, a coal business journal, noted that "the possible production of the mines opened and ready for operation is greatly in excess of the needs of the coal market" and the "result is excessive competition between the operators." 16

Some coal operators clearly had competitive advantages over their rivals, because they pursued alliances with railroads for the marketing of their coal. As a result, small companies and independent operators often found themselves closed out of the market by larger corporations. The Chicago, Wilmington, and Vermillion Coal Company dominated the northern Illinois field, and its president, James M. Walker, also headed the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad. When miners called a strike in the Hocking Valley in 1884, the Columbus and Hocking Railroad refused to supply railroad cars to William P. Rend, an independent operator in the Valley, because Rend refused to cut miners' wages. According to the Ohio State Journal, Judge Stevenson Burke, who represented the railroad, "informed Mr. Rend that they would require local rates and the payment of freight in advance, and that they would not haul the coal beyond the limit of their lines, which would necessitate a transfer." Testifying before an investigating committee, Joseph Devault, a coal miner, observed that the "coal syndicate" had ordered a cut in prices to coincide with a proposed reduction in the railway's freight rate, because the companies hoped to undersell competitors and gain control of the market. John McBride, President of the Ohio Miners' Association, agreed with this argument and stated that the officers of the Hocking Valley Railroad felt "the price of mining was far too high in the Hocking Valley, because of the
thickness of the seam. The reason they desired the price of mining reduced was to enable the coal operators to sell more coal and, thereby, increase their own business." Rend filed suit against the railroad company for fixing discriminatory rates, and he received a favorable court ruling which placed an injunction on the railroad company. 17

Although Rend won his court case, coal and railroad companies continued their assault against independent operators. The director of Ohio's Bureau of Labor Statistics claimed in 1888 that the railroad companies "own, or control, through other corporations, large tracts of coal lands ... the object of the roads is to destroy the small, independent operators ... none but members of the pool are regularly supplied with cars ... the refusal of these companies to supply cars to the small operators has been carried to such an extent that public indignation meetings have been held in the valley to denounce such gross injustice." Five years later William Crawford informed the United Mine Workers' Journal that an impending court case would "likely settle the question whether a big railroad company operating under a charter from the state can, with impunity, give the mines that are operating on this land all the cars that they want ... while at the same time other mines with equally a good quality of coal and plenty of orders, have to be content with what they can get." 18

Occasionally, an entrepreneur would fight the growth of corporate power and would champion the cause of the small businessman and coal miners. One such individual, William P. Rend, battled the coal syndicate during the Hocking Valley strike of 1884-1885, and he served
on numerous arbitration boards during the last two decades of the century. Rend argued that the greatest evil of the day "is the unbridled license that is enjoyed by corporate monopolies," and he claimed that a depression in the 1880's had been caused by a "want of confidence created by the fact that parties who have built railroads, who have gotten charters from your legislatures, and favors shown to them on all hands, have swindled and robbed the public." Rend felt laboring men could aspire to become employers in the past, but the new coal operators were "men who have never done any work; they don't understand the feelings, opinions and sentiments of the laboring classes." He maintained that he made a fair profit while paying a higher wage scale because his mines "were managed by individual enterprise and I aimed only to make profits on actual capital invested in these mines."¹⁹ Rend represented a vanishing breed, however, because he and other small businessmen could not resist the corporate tide.

While dominating or absorbing local capitalists, large coal companies also successfully defeated the cooperative movement, which represented the only other nineteenth century alternative to corporate hegemony. In 1874 businessmen and miners organized a cooperative coal company near Nelsonville, Ohio, with the avowed purpose of furnishing employment to miners who had been blacklisted during a strike of the same year. Fifty-six miners and four directors had holdings in the company, but most miners had to sell out when competition in the industry caused the company to lose trade. Purportedly, the directors bought the workers' "shares, in some cases at twenty cents on the dollar," and, at the time of the mine's inspection in 1876, "only three
of the miners still retained shares." Numerous cooperatives existed in southeastern Ohio in the 1880's and 1890's, but the United Mine Workers actively opposed the idea by the latter decade (see Chapter 8). In Illinois, coal miners established both productive and distributive cooperative enterprises which never challenged the dominance of larger companies. Daniel McLaughlin, a prominent Braidwood miner, felt the talk of cooperation was "very beautiful," but impractical. McLaughlin advised miners that their employers had been in the market for "some years, their influence is greater than yours, and unless you sell cheaper your market will be a delicate one." While cooperative adherents promised a more humane industrial development, they could not compete successfully with large concentrations of corporate capital.  

As a result of the failure of cooperation and small business, large coal companies dominated the communities of northern Illinois and southeastern Ohio during the late nineteenth century. Confronting a pre-industrial, agrarian work culture, these companies transformed the regions by importing an industrial population to work in the coal mines. The process caused much anxiety and suffering, but, considering the enormity of the change, it encountered surprisingly little resistance. Coal companies successfully established their hegemony, but the coal miner constantly struggled for better standards and greater dignity within the corporate sphere. Divided by a diverse population, miners battled for influence in, rather than transformation of, the existing socio-economic order.
FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER 1


2 *Chicago Tribune*, April 21, 1877; Gutman, "Braidwood Lockout," p. 7.


Chicago Tribune, April 21, 1877, Gutman, "Braidwood Lockout," p. 7; Wilber, Description, p. 3.

Montgomery, Beyond Equality, pp. 8, 10.


Proceedings of the Hocking Valley Investigation Committee (Columbus: Westbote Company, 1885), pp. 130, 136; Cincinnati Commercial Gazette, December 1, 1884, Transcript of Testimony Taken at Chicago, 1889, Concerning the Arbitration Between Coal Operators and Miners in the Northern Illinois District, Archives of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin; Chicago Tribune, September 26, 1889; Black Diamond, August 21, 1897.


CHAPTER 2

THE MINING POPULATION

I

The mining towns of Illinois and Ohio resembled frontier communities as their population rose and fell with the fortunes of the coal industry. Such instability applied more to ethnically diverse communities like Braidwood and Spring Valley, Illinois, than it did to their Ohio counterparts. As noted in the preceding chapter, coal towns in Illinois grew quickly and declined almost as rapidly, while Ohio's coal communities developed a bit more slowly within an area which already had a viable agricultural economy. Braidwood, Illinois, became the center of the northern Illinois coal industry during the 1870's, but by 1890 it had lost population and Spring Valley emerged as the leading coal community in the area. Meanwhile, the population of Nelsonville, New Straitsville, and other southeast Ohio towns gradually increased as the coal industry flourished there in the late nineteenth century. Racial and ethnic clashes often occurred in the multi-lingual mining towns of northern Illinois, but such problems also affected the more homogeneous population groupings in southeast Ohio. Throughout the late nineteenth century, problems resulting from racial and ethnic population differences would plague coal miners and their organizations.
Focusing on Will County, Illinois, and Athens County, Ohio, one can trace the changes in population in these coal regions during the nineteenth century. Will County totalled 29,321 inhabitants in 1860 while Athens County had 21,364 residents, but the Illinois county contained 9,539 foreign born residents while its Ohio counterpart had only 669 non-natives. During the next ten years, Athens County increased to only 23,768 inhabitants while the population in Will County jumped to 43,013, and the Ohio county remained homogeneous while the Illinois county retained its diverse ethnic composition. As the coal mining industry expanded in each county in the 1870's, the population in the coal areas reflected the trends of the preceding years. Officially unincorporated in 1870, Braidwood had emerged with a heterogeneous population of 5,524 in 1880, while Nelsonville grew from a community of 1,060 to one of 3,095 in ten years. As the northern Illinois coal field declined in the Braidwood vicinity in the 1880's, Braidwood's population dipped to 4,641 in 1890 and fell to 3,279 in 1900. Many of Braidwood's residents apparently headed for Spring Valley, because the latter community claimed 6,214 residents in 1900 and it had only been incorporated a decade earlier. Meanwhile, Nelsonville's population continued its slow ascent to 4,558 people in 1890 and to 5,421 inhabitants by the year 1900.¹

One may break down the population figures for Braidwood and Nelsonville a bit further by examining the manuscript census for 1870. By this date Braidwood had become a one industry town, because 421 of its heads of households had the occupation of "coal miner." The town also contained twenty-two merchants, twenty artisans (mostly blacksmiths
and carpenters), and a few professionals. On the other hand, Nelsonville remained a pre-industrial community in 1870. Thirty artisans worked as millers, tanners, shoemakers, wagon makers, tailors, etc. Nelsonville contained forty-one businessmen, and its business was clearly dominated by the Poston family which controlled much of the merchandizing in the community (see Table 1). Perhaps more significantly, 97 percent of Nelsonville's coal miners possessed some personal property and 58 percent of these men had some real property.

**TABLE 1**

OCCUPATIONS OF RESIDENTS IN BRAIDWOOD, ILLINOIS AND NELSONVILLE, OHIO, IN 1870*

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</table>

*Compiled from the Manuscript Census

In the "boom town" of Braidwood, 34 percent of the miners claimed personal property and only 19 percent owned any real estate. Concerning ethnicity, Nelsonville's residents usually had been born in the United States, and only a few claimed to have been born in other countries. As one might expect from the preceding data, Braidwood had immigrants from many countries as early as 1870, and the majority of the town's miners had been born in the British Isles (see Table 2). While the black population in each community was quite small in 1870, a local
historian claimed Braidwood had 386 black residents in 1880. In summary, the old, native coal mining communities of Ohio seemed to offer greater job and property opportunities for the residents than the "boom towns" of Illinois.\(^2\)

Contemporary observers and historians confirmed these characterizations of the coal towns of northern Illinois and southeastern Ohio. Reporters for Chicago newspapers noted the mixed ethnicity in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2</th>
<th>BIRTHPLACE OF RESIDENTS IN BRAIDWOOD, ILLINOIS, AND NELSONVILLE, OHIO, IN 1870*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Braidwood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bohemia</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German States</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Compiled from the Manuscript Census

Braidwood throughout the 1870's and 1880's. In June, 1874, a Chicago Tribune correspondent found Braidwood to be "akin to Babel of old, as regards the confusion of tongues." Three years later a reporter described the miners of the community as one-half Irish, one-fourth English or Scotch, and the remainder either Bohemian, Swedish, German or Italian. He claimed that "a large number own a cabin and a piece of ground. A still larger number live in rented cottages, while a few unmarried ones live in cheap boarding houses." By 1889 the Italian,
Bohemian, and Polish population had numerically surpassed the "old stock" group from the British Isles. After Braidwood lost population in the 1890's, many miners flocked to Spring Valley as it became the leading coal mining community in northern Illinois. Grace Abbott claimed that 56 percent of Spring Valley's population in 1899 had emigrated from southern and eastern Europe, and she noted that the community contained very few miners who had been both born in the United States and had native parentage.  

Early observers of the Braidwood scene commented upon its surprising sense of community, but others noted the segregation and hostility within its borders. The Chicago Tribune reporter who noted the ethnic diversity of the community in 1874 also found a "remarkable unanimity of sentiment among the miners." During a strike in 1877, a Chicago Times correspondent claimed "despite this incongruity of race, interest unites the otherwise antagonistic community in one solid body . . . They are a picturesque, if rather poverty-stricken, mosaic pavement of far-reaching humanity." On the other hand, historian Alex Gottfried, biographer of Anton Cermak, argued that in Cermak's boyhood in the 1880's a division existed between "Lower" and "Upper" Braidwood, and he asserted that Bohemians dominated in the former and Irish controlled the latter. Gottfried claimed that fighting between boys of each ethnic group "was more or less continual; the boys, with willow switches as weapons, frequently carried it to the very gate of the school." Lucy McLuckie, who lived in nearby Coal City, recalled to members of a college oral history project that "when Coal City began, the Bohemians all lived in one end, the Irish people way down," and
she claimed "they all talked their own language." Braidwood historian Modesto Donna stated that each nationality had its own sector of the city, and he noted that blacks lived in an area called "Bucktown." Many of the immigrants to Braidwood in the 1880's came from southeastern Europe, and they seldom had either an industrial or trade union background. As a result, an early sense of community in Braidwood may have been eclipsed by a sense of suspicion which arose from differences in cultural and economic backgrounds.

Few observers commented upon the population characteristics of southeastern Ohio, and this may be attributed to the homogeneous nature of that population. A correspondent for a Cincinnati newspaper in 1874 reported that the "miners for the most part are Americans, born and bred in the vicinity. . . . Those of them who are of foreign birth are chiefly English and Welsh with a sprinkle of Irish and German." Earl Saliers, an ethnocentric observer of the coal miner, claimed the presence of "foreigners" in Ohio made "possible the spread of evil doctrines," but he insisted that the Hocking Valley "possessed proportionally the smallest number of immigrants of any of the coal fields of the state." Despite such an unvaried population, southeastern Ohio did not escape racial and ethnic conflict during the late 1800's. Racial and ethnic bigotry flourished in the coal fields of northern Illinois and southeastern Ohio, and these divisions made it very difficult for miners to unite in battles against their oppressors.
II

Coal companies fueled the fires of prejudice by importing racial and ethnic minorities to break strikes of native miners. During disputes in the 1870's and 1880's, coal operators brought blacks and European immigrants into southeastern Ohio and northern Illinois to replace striking miners. In 1874 Miner T. Ames, a Chicago operator, persuaded other local operators in the Hocking Valley to import blacks as strikebreakers. When the blacks arrived from the South in eleven railroad cars, the operators issued them muskets and revolvers and special policemen, hired by the companies, provided additional protection. Local miners persuaded some strikebreakers to leave by offering to pay their fare back home, but other blacks remained and helped the operators to break the strike. During the same year, employers in northern Illinois failed to break a strike with Scandinavian immigrants. When the Chicago, Wilmington, and Vermillion Coal Company again failed to break a strike with white strikebreakers in 1877, it imported four hundred Southern blacks. A. L. Sweet, the company superintendent, wrote a friend that he expected to fill the Braidwood mines with "regular colored miners," and he asserted that the new men said "they have found the land of promise." Braidwood's miners physically forced the blacks from the mines in July, but the coal company successfully broke the strike when it persuaded the Governor to send troops to protect the strikebreakers. Operators in the Hocking Valley successfully broke the strike of 1884-1885 by steadily importing European immigrants throughout the conflict.
Employers could recruit strikebreakers from both the nation's and world's unemployed, and they maintained close relations with contracting agencies which eagerly furnished such labor upon request. Historian Charlotte Erickson asserted that the American Emigrant Company often worked with British trade unions for a supply of labor during the early years of American industrial development. When British workers arrived in the United States in 1865 and 1866 and found that they were expected to break strikes, they often "flatly refused to work." Thereafter, American and British trade unions established connections and exchanged information on the conditions of employment in the American coal fields, and they warned miners who wished to emigrate about the location of strike districts. As a result, employers contracted with labor agencies for workers when they wished to break strikes, and these operators clearly favored employees who did not have trade union backgrounds because union miners proved less pliable than their unorganized counterparts. Utilizing a Chicago labor agency, A. L. Sweet imported Scandinavian immigrants in 1874 to replace Braidwood's striking miners. As Erickson has noted, employers brought the men in "under heavy guard, not so much to protect strikebreakers from injury by strikers, but rather to seal them off from hearing the strikers' explanation of the situation." When Hocking Valley miners ceased work in 1884, a reporter for John Swinton's Paper claimed that "large gangs of Italians, shipped to this country as laborers under contract to padrones or corporations are constantly arriving in New York," and he maintained that many of these immigrants were heading for the Hocking Valley. According to an article in the Ohio State
Journal, many of the "men were secured in Philadelphia through the International Agency, No. 1215 Filbert Street. Joseph Small and son engage in the business of furnishing men of all nationalities for occasions like the present." Charlotte Erickson stated that "one labor agent was promised five thousand dollars by the coal syndicate, in addition to the fee of two dollars per head he received for furnishing strikebreakers, if he succeeded in breaking the strike."

Testifying in 1901 before the United States Industrial Commission, UIW President John Mitchell remarked that "a few years ago a large shipload used to be brought here and kept by their agents at the port where they landed, ready to be sold out to striking companies." 8

Employers deliberately misled strikebreakers by neglecting to inform them in advance of their expected role. In 1874, a reporter for Logan, Ohio's Hooking Sentinel, explained that black strikebreakers had been approached by white men "who proposed to take them where they could all get rich in a very short time, and not have to work very hard either." The blacks claimed they "made very particular inquiry of these white men as to where they were to go, what they were to do."

According to the Sentinel, the "white men told these poor negroes that they wanted them to go and dig coal in a beautiful country only three miles from the city of Columbus, Ohio." When the men protested that they knew nothing about digging coal and that they did not want to go underground, the labor agents informed them that they could produce coal by stripping off a few inches of earth. The manager assured the blacks that there was no strike when they arrived, but
he gave them weapons and "told them that the woods were filled with Indians and drunken Irishmen." 9

Such misrepresentations were common during other conflicts of the era. In 1884, a reporter for the Ohio State Journal claimed some of the Italian strikebreakers had been "promised work on the railroad shoveling coal and not in the mines digging it," and he stated that the Italians said "they came here on representations that they were to receive $1.50 per day and board." When they found they would only receive $1.25 per day and would have to pay for their board, several men quit work but the company would not "transport them back." Some German strikebreakers came to "work in newly discovered mines," and they claimed "that their employer told them that there was no strike and that they could make three dollars per day." Richard L. Davis, a black miner in the Hocking Valley, visited a Pennsylvania strike district in 1891 and claimed the black strikebreakers had been "fooled away from their homes by being told that they were wanted as 'hotel waiters' and 'carriage drivers' in the cities of Pittsburgh and Gastonville... They have even been handcuffed and shot at to make them go to work or to obey the mandates of the so-called detectives that the company have there to guard them." In 1901, John Mitchell claimed "when labor is imported from one point to another, it is generally under a misapprehension, misrepresentation that no trouble exists; that wages are much better than they are; that they can make $3 and $4 a day." 10

Although many black and immigrant strikebreakers deserted the mine owners' cause when they found that they had replaced discontented
workers, enough "blacklegs" remained on many occasions to enable employers to break the strikes. Why did these men serve the interests of coal companies by working as strikebreakers? The complexity of this question precludes an easy answer, but most strikebreakers came from pre-industrial work environments, had little knowledge of collective work habits, and, thus, had unformed class consciousness. According to a report of the United States Immigration Commission in 1911, coal mining immigrants from the British Isles, who settled in Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, had usually worked in coal mines before embarking for America. Immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, however, usually worked as farmers or farm laborers in the "old country" (see Table 3). Thomas Davis, editor of the United Mine Workers' Journal in 1897, claimed that 2,500 blacks worked in the coal fields of West Virginia, and he maintained that they "spent their early lives toiling for meager wages on the farms of old Virginia. . . . They are fascinated with this increase in wages and are made veritable serfs of their employers."11 Without any background in coal mining, many workers became easy prey for unscrupulous coal operators.

During antebellum days, white laborers and black slaves distrusted each other because they occupied divergent, but subordinate roles in an economic system dominated by the white planter class. As historian Eugene Genovese has suggested, this dominant class created a network of paternalism which placed a set of reciprocal duties upon each social grouping in Southern society. Not surprisingly, when the slaves won their freedom after the Civil War, they often placed greater trust in the protective capacity of the white employer than they did
in the white working man. Booker T. Washington maintained that the black worker was "more accustomed to work for persons than for wages," and he argued that the black laborer looked upon the employer as a friend and could not understand trade unions which seemed "to be

**TABLE 3**

PERCENTAGE OF FOREIGN-BORN COAL MINERS IN ILLINOIS, INDIANA, AND OHIO, WHO HAD BEEN MINERS, FARMERS, OR GENERAL LABORERS BEFORE EMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mining</th>
<th>Farming or Farm Labor</th>
<th>General Labor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bohemian and Moravian</td>
<td>72.4%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatian</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>81.3%</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>87.8</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Italian</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>52.0%</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Italian</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>62.6%</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuanian</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>79.7%</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magyar</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>69.7%</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>86.9%</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotch</td>
<td>92.4</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovak</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>75.3%</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welsh</td>
<td>91.3</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


founded on a sort of impersonal emnity to the man by whom he is employed." According to E. David Cronon, the biographer of Marcus Garvey, "it seemed self-evident to Garvey that the 'only convenient friend' of the American Negro worker was the 'white capitalist,' who 'being selfish—seeking only the largest profit out of labor—is willing and glad to use Negro labor whenever possible.'" Many black workers did not share such a philosophy, but they realized that racial
divisions weakened the trade union movement. In 1892, Richard L. Davis, a black coal miner and labor organizer in the Hocking Valley, asked himself: "Why is it that the colored people are so hard to conceive the proper idea of organization? . . . I have noticed in my travels that they always made the plea that the organization will not do them any good, that it is a white man's organization." Davis felt each race did not understand the other, because the "whites say they are afraid of the colored men and the colored men say they are afraid of the whites." Fear, misunderstanding, and distrust contributed to the division of white and black workers during this era, and it made it possible for employers to divide these men to the capitalist's advantage.

III

Racism and ethnic bigotry flourished in many coal communities where black and immigrant strikebreakers had been introduced, because many native miners blamed the "new" workers rather than their employers for such activity. A year after blacks had served as strikebreakers in the Hocking Valley, a Nelsonville correspondent to the Miners' National Record claimed the "Negroes are getting quite scarce here at present. There seems to be a great demand for them elsewhere. It is their harvest time always when strikes are going on. . . . A number of them are professional blacklegs." A historian of Will County noted in 1876 that one-half of the Chicago, Wilmington, and Vermillion Coal Company's employees were black, and he claimed the black miners "work almost exclusively in a mine by themselves." According to the
Chicago Times, Braidwood's white miners decided to strike in 1878 over the question of the employment of black miners, and they contemplated driving the blacks from the town. Rumors circulated in 1889 that employers had decided to import black strikebreakers to replace idle miners in northern Illinois, and the Chicago Tribune predicted rioting "for the miners of LaSalle, Peru, and Spring Valley do not allow a Negro in their city limits." Native miners also often objected to southern and eastern European immigrants, because they felt the latter depressed their wage scale. Alexander Johnson of Nelsonville, Ohio, claimed that he did not object to the immigrant who wished to become a citizen, but the "Dago, Hungarian, Pole, Swede or other nationality who came here for the express purpose of demoralizing any branch of our industries, and in a few years leaving for their own shores, I would deal with them the same as the Chinese."\(^{12}\)

Although the immigrant miner often faced hostility, he seldom experienced as much hatred as the black miner who suffered both from ridicule and physical attacks. William D. Ryan, a Braidwood miner, recalled presenting a skit entitled "The Mischiefous Nigger" at the town Music Hall in 1894, and he asserted that performers in "black face" delighted "several hundred Irish citizens and their friends." Black miners and their families also had to withstand violent assaults from their fellow white workers. In 1895, a "gang of blacks" purportedly robbed and assaulted an Italian miner in Spring Valley, and the white miners reacted by asking the General Manager of the Spring Valley Coal Company to fire his black employees. According to the Chicago Tribune, he refused and a mob "headed by an Italian band"
marched on the black community yelling "Kill the niggers! Drive them out! Blood for blood!" The Tribune reported that "many shots were fired and bricks and missiles of every description were used by the combatants. Forty of the Negroes were wounded and several of them may die." While the robbery may have been the immediate precipitant of the rioting, the Tribune claimed it "had been contemplated for several weeks," because shortly before the blacks moved into the area, it had been the " boast of the foreign element that no colored man dare show himself within the city limits of Spring Valley and that boast was carried out to the letter."

Blacks faced rioting and lynching as a group, and, as individuals, they could never be assured of equal justice in the coal communities. When Clare Lafferty, a white woman, gave birth to a mulatto baby in New Straitsville, Ohio, her brother shot to death a black man who was purported to be the baby's father. A grand jury refused to indict Lafferty for the murder, and the Ohio State Journal reported that its action met "the approval of the people of this place generally." According to the Journal, Glenroy Payne was "buried in the colored graveyard without any ceremony" and his mother was not even notified of his death. 14

Newspapers added to, or mirrored, the prejudices of native miners for black and immigrant strikebreakers. In 1874 a reporter for the Cincinnati Commercial Gazette, referred to Hungarian strikebreakers in the Hocking Valley "as being at the tail end of the least orthodox of the devotees of soap and water." The Hocking Sentinel reported the arrival of black strikebreakers in the same year by claiming "these
brutal, ignorant, debauched, and idiotic Negroes, gathered from the slums of southern cities and the hospitals of the Freedmen's Bureau, are to be herded at all mines in this section." The Sentinel warned that every white man in the valley would be affected "by the blighting curse this ignorant and debased swarm of savages will inflict if settled upon us." When Chris Davis, a black man, was lynched for allegedly assaulting a white woman, the New Lexington (Ohio) Independent claimed the mob had "done a good act in saving the county the large expense of his prosecution and final death. He certainly deserved torturing death, if ever any one did."15

IV

Racial and ethnic divisions plagued coal miners throughout this era, and miners found that employers played on such differences to retard unionization of the industry. When the race riot occurred in 1895 in Spring Valley, Illinois, Frank Milligan, the Chicago agent for the Spring Valley Coal Company, told the Chicago Tribune that the company was "more determined to protect the Negroes ... because it has more faith in them than the Italians. The Negroes work much better than the Italians and make better miners." When Richard L. Davis of Ohio's Hocking Valley attempted to organize black miners in West Virginia, however, the coal company had a different attitude. Davis claimed a company man approached him and said: "Say, look here, you ________ ________ black scamp, I want you to get off these premises right away, move along or I'll knock ________ out of you in a minute." After traveling to Virginia in 1897, Davis reported to
the Ohio State Journal that most of the state's black and Hungarian miners wished to be organized, "but the ground is owned by the coal companies and no stranger is allowed to trespass on the premises, so literally organizers are excluded from the camps." 16

Mine owners may have exploited racial and ethnic differences for economic advantage, but the miners themselves were often easily divided by their prejudices. During strikes in northern Illinois in 1889 and 1894, native and immigrant miners disagreed on whether or not to accept the operators' terms. When native miners in Braidwood accepted a proposed ten cent per ton reduction of pay, recent Italian immigrants resisted the proposals and advocated a strike. Ironically, many of the Italians had been imported eight months earlier by the Chicago and Wilmington Coal Company to replace men who had called a strike. The Chicago Tribune reported that the leader of Braidwood's strikers was a "dime museum curiosity known as 'Garibaldi,'" who was "gigantic in size, with a red face and blond whiskers, huge gold rings in his ears, and wears a white pair of pants with a cluster of black velvet scallops on the bottom of each leg and his head surmounted with a sort of turban." The Tribune claimed he "nearly scared the life out of a Joliet reporter by sticking a huge revolver under the reporter's nose and telling him to get away from the mine or he would shoota him quicka." While Italian miners led the strike, the Tribune reported the "old-time" Scotch and English miners had little interest in the conflict and asserted that "the Negro miners are the most peaceable class at Braidwood. . . . A number of Negroes will attempt to go to work tomorrow." In Spring Valley, Italian and Polish miners
led a strike in 1894, and the Chicago press insisted that native Americans did not support the "anarchists." While divisions may have existed between native and immigrant miners, one must realize that the Chicago Tribune deplored strikes and wished to discredit striking miners. James O'Connor of Spring Valley intimated as much in 1894 when he wrote the United Mine Workers' Journal and protested that the operators of Illinois had begun "a war of extermination against our non-English speaking brethren—foreign anarchists, they are called. Most of them do not even understand the meaning of the term anarchy." O'Connor found it a "curious fact that nearly all the so-called foreign anarchists vote the Democratic or Republican ticket on election day."

Regardless of the true nature of such events, they often drove deep wedges between miners of different races and nationalities. Numerous black union miners in Ohio's Hocking Valley recognized the problems in the industry, and they often wrote to the United Mine Workers' Journal and urged miners to overcome their prejudices. When W. P. Rend, a coal operator, promised to fill one of his mines exclusively with black employees in 1892, F. H. Jackson, a black miner, claimed Rend wished to split the organization of the men, and Jackson expressed the hope "that all of my race could see through this offer as I do." Richard L. Davis analyzed the racial situation in many of his letters to the Journal. When Davis learned that some of his black comrades felt they would never do any good unless they organized by themselves, he replied that "I have got it fixed up in my brain that a man is a man, no matter what the color of his skin is." Davis urged blacks not to serve as strikebreakers, but he also implored white miners
to mix it up" in our mines and work together as men for it is a well-known fact the Negro is in this country and to stay." Most of Davis' letters stressed the need for organization, but he also defended black men against racist attacks by trade union organizations. When he learned that the American Railway Union had barred blacks from membership, Davis wrote that "it makes me mad whenever I think of it... Away with such rottenness." When a correspondent referred to strike-breakers in Virden, Illinois, as "big black buck niggers," Davis replied: "I assure anyone that I have more respect for a scab than I have for the person who refers to the Negro in such a way, and God knows a scab I utterly despise." Sensitive to the charge that "the Negro as a union man was a failure," Davis was "inclined to think that these words were uttered more from a prejudiced mind than as a truthful statement." 18

Aware of divisions within their ranks, unions fought to overcome the problems emanating from a racially and ethnically diverse population. As early as 1874, the Miners' National Association had organized lodges of English, Italian, French, German, and Bohemian miners in Braidwood, and the Miners' National Record reported they were "all working in harmony and doing well." Numerous correspondents to the United Mine Workers' Journal urged men to forget their differences and to organize collectively as a means to redress grievances. A "Braidwood Miner" noted that many workers blamed the immigrant miners for the slow success of the union's organizing drive, but he felt the demonstration of such a fallacy "could be found in every mining village in northern Illinois." William Crawford of New Straitsville, Ohio,
argued that "it is my opinion that the time is fully come when it is necessary for all laboring men of whatever organization, creed, color, or nationality to touch elbows and march forward in one solid phalanx against the solid columns of capitalist greed." When a mine manager in Spring Valley threatened to fill his mines with black workers in 1894, "Jumbo" wrote that "if he thinks he is living in slavery times he will be disappointed, for the colored men here are all good practical miners and have had their fill of pluck me stores as well as white men."

The United Mine Workers of America employed Richard L. Davis and other black miners during their organization drives, and the union's officials constantly warned miners about the effects of racial prejudice. When Davis entered a restaurant in Corning, Ohio, and met with a "No Negroes Allowed" policy, his white companions (Messrs. Michael Ratchford, Phil Penna, and William Haskins) also refused "to partake of the delicacies laid for them." 19

Despite constant efforts by the miners' unions to battle prejudices, coal miners found they could not always overcome such divisions. Historian Seli Perlman has argued that immigration caused much "incohesiveness" in the American labor movement, because native workers wished to restrict the influx of new workers into their industries. As a result of this position, Perlman argued that the "strongest animosity was felt, not for the employer who had initiated or stimulated the new immigrant wave, but for the immigrants who came and took jobs away." Attempting to explain the radicalism of workers in the West, Melvyn Dubofsky claimed "Western corporations encountered
a labor force less tractable than the uprooted and ethnically-divided immigrants of the East." Although Ohio's Hocking Valley contained a much more homogeneous population than northern Illinois, coal miners from each area found that, while striving for solidarity, they could not always overcome the divisions resulting from a diverse population. Yet, unionization of coal miners proved particularly difficult in the ethnically diverse coal fields of northern Illinois. William Howells of Braidwood felt the lack of organization in northern Illinois emanated from population differences, and he complained to the United Mine Workers' Journal in 1893 that "it seems that by some unorganized consort the mass have agreed to keep away from all meetings that smack of labor in any way." A few weeks later, Howells and John Fahy lamented: "To say we were often discouraged would be putting it mildly, and no lie to add, just as often discouraged by the I-don't-care-if-I-am-a-serf manner of the majority of the miners. . . . One thing sure, we must organize the non-English speaking miners to make our organization effective." When Richard L. Davis travelled outside the Hocking Valley to less organized Ohio fields, he claimed that the prime reason for their unorganized status was that "two-thirds or more are of the foreign speaking element." In 1911, the United States Immigration Commission reported that native and foreign-born coal miners were segregated at work in the northern Illinois fields. The report claimed that "although there is no open friction between the races employed at the mines, a pronounced antipathy exists on the part of the native whites and other English-speaking races toward South Italians."
Union leaders did not escape these prejudices. UMW President John Mitchell, speaking to the United States Industrial Commission in 1901, blamed the "people from the non-English speaking countries of Europe" for lowering "the standard of living of the people" in mining districts. He acknowledged that immigrants from the British Isles had good trade union backgrounds, but he claimed "I know of no trade unions in Hungary and Italy, and those people have been undesirable as far as our organization is concerned." As a result, Mitchell felt a "law should be enacted prohibiting immigration of foreigners to this country." He did not confine his hostility to southern and eastern European immigrants, however, because when asked if blacks were "a desirable class of miners," Mitchell replied: "No; their standard of morality is not as high as that of white people; they are not as desirable citizens." Mitchell claimed that "our organization does not make any distinction between classes; we regard the colored man fully as much entitled to protection as white men," but he asserted that "my opinion is that usually the colored persons in the mine are not satisfied to work to a large extent at all; but when they do work they will accept less than white men." 22

Clearly, racial and ethnic tension had not decreased over the years, and coal miners found that such tension jeopardized unity in their organization. Successive waves of pre-industrial workers had to be acculturated to the industrial work environment, and the process caused much pain and divisiveness. Coal miners, like much of the American population, found they could not always overcome divisions resulting from diverse occupational and cultural backgrounds. Although
coal miners in Ohio had a more homogeneous population than their counterparts in Illinois, they also suffered from prejudices because the American economic system had become a national network by 1900. When coal operators could import laborers from other regions and countries, working problems ceased to be solely regional concerns. The tensions flourished, moreover, in the face of common afflictions. Regardless of racial or ethnic backgrounds, coal miners shared the reality of sub-standard living and working conditions throughout this era.
FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER 2


2U.S. Bureau of the Census, Ninth Census of the United States: 1870; Manuscript Census for Will County, Illinois, and Athens County, Ohio, 1870; Modesto Donna, The Braidwood Story (n.p., 1957), p. 22. The easy property acquisition among miners of southeastern Ohio may have been more illusory than real, however. In 1879 the director of the Ohio Bureau of Labor statistics claimed that nearly all of those who purported to have real estate "assert that they earned and bought the property previous to 1872." Miners apparently found it more difficult to purchase property after the first of several industrial depressions during the late nineteenth century. See Ohio Labor Statistics, 1879, pp. 90-91.


4Chicago Tribune, June 22, 1874; Chicago Times, July 31, 1877; Alex Gottfried, Boss Cermak of Chicago (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), pp. 4, 5, 10; Interview with Lucy McLuckie, Will County Oral History Project, Joliet Junior College Library, Joliet, Illinois; Donna, Braidwood Story, pp. 18-19.

5Hostility to immigrants may have increased because miners slowly realized that a glut of workers lowered the wage scale. Also, according to historian Richard Jensen, many immigrants were "birds of passage" who hoped only "to amass enough money to make them rich in their home villages." See Richard Jensen, The Winning of the Midwest


9 Hocking Sentinel, June 18, 1874.


15. Cincinnati Commercial Gazette, May 23, 1874; Hocking Sentinel, June 18, 1874; The Independent, November 24, 1881.

16. Chicago Tribune, August 6, 1895; United Mine Workers' Journal, June 30, 1892; Ohio State Journal, May 12, 1897.


19. Miners' National Record, Vol. I (December, 1874), p. 22; United Mine Workers' Journal, June 16, 1891; Ibid, December 10, 1896; Ibid, November 1, 1894; Ibid, August 29, 1895. Herbert Gutman claimed "anti-Negro dixiecrats, common in the press and journals of the 1890's, were rare in UM publications despite the difficulties in organizing Negro miners fresh from rural areas and despite the use of Negro strikebreakers... A by-product, despite much racial friction and even violence, was the active participation of Negroes in union leadership." See Gutman, "The Negro and the United Mine Workers," p. 83.


CHAPTER 3
LIVING AND WORKING

I

Life in coal mining communities offered few advantages during the nineteenth century. The miner seldom saw the sun during the winter because he arose at 5 a.m. to work a ten or twelve hour shift. After a day's work, he returned home with sweat-stained clothing, mud-covered boots, and features "so blackened with coal as to be utterly beyond the recognition of his nearest relatives." The coal miner faced a physically unattractive environment at home and at work and he could not make sufficient money to improve his standing appreciably. With luck, the miner might purchase his own home, but he seldom earned more than required for a subsistence life style. Although he suffered from physical want, the coal miner probably found the mental anguish of his dependent position to be an even greater burden. The fluctuations of the economic cycles and the dictates of the coal companies were the two most important factors in the miner's life, and these impersonal forces left the miner with little personal discretion throughout this era.

Coal miners and their families lived in communities which contemporary observers considered quite bleak. Describing Braidwood, Illinois, in 1876, a local historian claimed the city was "built
entirely of wood," because the coal companies reserved the "right to
mine the coal that lay beneath" the surface. He noted that "with the
exception of a small brick schoolhouse, which antedates the coal
discovery, and a bakery rebuilt a year or two ago on land which had
settled, there are no stone or brick buildings, but the light balloon
frames, which a settling of the earth would not injure are universal."
A reporter for the Chicago Tribune in 1889 described nearby Coal City
as a community of small frame buildings which were "in a bad state
of repair... the interiors are hardly more inviting than the
exterior. Bare walls, bare floors, cheap and scanty furniture are
the prevailing order, and there is little indication in the homes of
miners that there ever have been good times in Coal City." An observer
for Ohio's Bureau of Labor Statistics asserted that company housing
in the Hocking Valley in 1878 consisted of "mere boarded frames, no
paint either inside or out, no plastering, no convenience of any
kind... In some cases they are built like a long barn or barracks,
with frame partitions dividing it into six or eight tenements; no
privacy, no incentive to the individual to seek to make a home attrac-
tive." Nineteen years later company housing still flourished in the
"outlying districts remote from the towns," and the houses were "poorly
constructed of rough lumber." In 1892, Richard L. Davis described the
new town of Congo, Ohio, as a place "fenced in all around, with two
gates, one at either side, and at each of these gates, so I am informed,
they are going to have gate-keepers... the duties of these gate-
keepers will be to keep out all wagons or teams except those belonging
to the company." Explaining conditions in the coal towns to the United
States Industrial Commission in 1901, John Mitchell claimed "the tenements at mines are usually built of the cheapest material; small in size, without any of the conveniences for comfortable homes; no sanitary provisions . . . closets are built one for three or four houses. They are very undesirable and unhealthy."²

Many miners purchased their own homes with hopes of improving their social and economic positions while others rented company housing. Home owners dreaded economic depressions and prolonged strikes, because hard times often forced them to place mortgages on their property. Renters had their own problems, because they usually paid substantial sums for poor, cheaply constructed company houses. During the 1889 strike in northern Illinois, a correspondent of the Chicago Tribune noted that "those who saved their money and put it into houses and lots seem to be faring no better than the others. They have houses which they cannot sell, but no food for themselves or for their children."³

Other aspects of life in the coal towns matched the drabness of the housing. Children suffered along with their parents, because they either worked or attended school under less than desirable conditions. Most families needed their children's labor to supplement the miner's income, and boys often accompanied their fathers to the mines and performed some of the trade's lighter tasks. One journalist visited a school in a mining community in the Hocking Valley and found a classroom of "thirty girls and only seven boys. In another room of pupils, ten years of age, there were counted thirty-one girls and six boys." The superintendent of the school told him of cases "where mothers confessed with tears in their eyes that they were forced to keep their
children from school in order to wash their only garments." A man in Coal City, Illinois, told a Chicago Tribune reporter that he had to keep his children from school "for decency's sake," because they had "scarcely a rag to their backs nor a shoe to their feet." 4

Coal miners and their families lived a subsistence existence throughout the late 1800's, but they suffered extreme destitution when strikes and lockouts idled the mines. During a strike in northern Illinois in 1877, a Coal City man lamented: "One day, when the children were crying for bread, I went to the employer for whom I had worked for seven years and who keeps a company store, and offered to trade my sewing machine for flour. It was the only thing of value I had, but he refused me." Nora Marks, a Chicago Tribune reporter, vividly portrayed the effects of a strike on mining families with an outstanding series of articles from Braidwood in June, 1889. Visiting homes throughout the area, Marks found one family which had not had "any meat since New Year's" and another which could not afford medicine for their sick children. A mother of seven did not have "a morsel of any kind in the house and the barefooted children were crying with hunger." One woman defended the strike by noting that her husband's wages had barely kept the family alive, and she claimed that "starving is only a little worse." A Welsh immigrant whose wife was dying of consumption explained: "My wife here has been sick two years, and for the last year I could not earn enough money to pay for a doctor or medicines. . . . I have tried for a year to buy a set of springs, only $4, to put on her bed, and couldn't do it." When asked if the neighbors helped, he replied: "What neighbor? We are all alike. It's a struggle
of life and death for all of us. We cannot help each other." The reporter claimed she had seen a "sick woman's eyes stare in unbelief at an orange that was left to cool her parched lips, and a strong man weep over 50 cents to pay for medicine for a sick child." If there were grades where all were "hungry and naked," black families appeared to be the "most destitute." Despite such conditions, the people retained a fierce pride and one man with three children and a sick wife turned down an offer of assistance from a relief committee saying "that the product of his garden would soon be ready and that there were others more needy than he." The little gardens of the miners had to be tilled carefully, because they served as the workers only means of support during rough times.  

Perhaps the adversity would have been more bearable if it had not been accompanied by a hopelessness that drained the miners of all aspiration. Robert Dean, a Nelsonville correspondent for the Ohio State Journal, toured the coal communities of the Hocking Valley in 1897 and philosophized about his observations of the day when he reported: "As a soft twilight added to the sublimity of the surrounding beauty, we thought how unfortunate it was that where nature had been so lavish men were not able to see the grandeur because of hunger. A man who could see what we did that day and not be touched would surely have a heart of stone." During hard times in northern Illinois, an Irish immigrant in Coal City claimed that "by working as long and as hard as I have done here, I could earn more money in the old country than here," while an Italian miner in the same community exclaimed: "No money, no credit. I steal before my children starve. Better that
the rich men kill us than we die without food." Yet, it was an "old Englishman" who best expressed the denial of the American dream to Nora Marks when he lamented:

I came here from Yorkshire, England, fifteen years ago, thinking I could educate my boys in America. . . . That boy will be a miner, and the girl a miner's wife—slaves to corporations, all of them. What can I do? It isn't just something to feed ourselves with that we work for; it's culture, education, some leisure, a chance to learn how to rise, to make our children better equipped for the battle than we have been. If we can't do that, our labor is a farce—a failure.

Marks added her own conclusion by stating:

I heard such sentiments as these from dozens of lips—lips that had not tasted food for twenty-four hours—desire for education, development, and a chance for their children. Bohemians, Poles, Irish, Italians, Germans, Scotch and English—the idea in coming to America at all had been to give their children a chance. And they could not even feed them.6

II

Coal miners faced some problems periodically, but they experienced other difficulties year after year. The reality of the miner's subservient position must have constantly been reinforced by the presence of the "most pretentious building in the town"—the company store. Throughout the last three decades of the nineteenth century, Illinois and Ohio coal miners confronted a problem which was not shared by laborers in most trades. Prominent coal companies, like the Chicago, Wilmington, and Vermillion, and the Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron, operated stores in northeastern Illinois and southeastern Ohio, respectively. These "truck" stores, or "pluck-me-stores" in the miner's vernacular, often had monopolies in the smaller mining communities, but they existed alongside local merchants in the larger
towns. Mining companies issued checks, or "scrip," as an advance on wages to employees who then exchanged the certificates for merchandise at the companies' stores. The checks could not be redeemed in cash, and employers would deduct the value of the scrip from the miners' pay at the end of the month. Mine proprietors occasionally concluded alliances with selected local merchants to maintain the principle of the system when a company store was not present. In 1890, Illinois' Bureau of Labor Statistics claimed the stores had grown from shanties which sold only mining supplies to establishments which retailed everything "from a cradle to a coffin." 7

Technically, the miners did not have to trade at the company store, but employers devised means to make such trade "necessary," if not mandatory. By paying workers a month to six weeks after services performed, companies forced employees to continually seek credit and, thus, strengthened the company store system. If the constraints of the method of payment failed to elicit the proper response, the employer utilized more direct means to evoke the desired behavior. J. A. Donley, an Orbiston, Ohio miner, claimed the company clerk would "put on a long face and stare" at the miner who had money due on pay day before saying: "You have some money coming to you here, how is that; why don't you buy from the store here?" When the miner refused to take this hint and continued to avoid the store, he would receive a poor working place in the mine. 8 Utilizing such tactics, mine managers could force some recalcitrant employees to quit while others were directly discharged. In 1901, John Mitchell, a native of Braidwood, Illinois, and President of the United Mine Workers of America, explained to the United States
Industrial Commission that "there is a constant fear on the part of employees that if they do not trade there (company store) they will not be treated as well."⁹

These fears may have reflected the realization that the company stores provided a consistent margin of profit during an era of periodic depression in the coal trade. Truck stores consistently charged higher prices than the independent stores in the mining regions (see Table 4). Profit margins varied, but store and saloon owners consistently redeemed scrip at less than face value. An Illinois miner's wife bitterly complained to a Chicago Tribune reporter, "If we trade that out at the company's store we get the value of it, but if we go anywhere else with it, ten cents is taken off every dollar because the company won't redeem its own checks at full value."¹⁰ Regardless of the market's condition, many miners were convinced that the operators made money through the company stores.¹¹ The stores' profitability even affected the nature of the work force, because operators invariably favored married men over their single counterparts. Joseph Devault, a Nelsonville, Ohio miner, maintained that the first question directed to a prospective employee was, "Are you married and have you a family; we want all married men; they are better to work (they mean they are better to draw out of the store) than single men."¹²

Coal operators defended the practice by claiming that the company store benefitted the employee as well as the employer. When the Illinois legislature considered various bills to end the truck system in 1890, an Illinois entrepreneur argued that scrip allowed the miners to purchase needed goods before pay day arrived. Responding
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Company Stores</th>
<th>Cash Stores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coffee - per lb.</td>
<td>$ .20</td>
<td>$ .18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea - per lb.</td>
<td>.91 2/3</td>
<td>.70 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar - per lb.</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ham - per lb.</td>
<td>.18-3/4</td>
<td>.17-1/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bacon - per lb.</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.16-2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flour - per barrel</td>
<td>6.84</td>
<td>6.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flour - per sack</td>
<td>1.33-3/4</td>
<td>1.11 2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canned goods - per can</td>
<td>.18-1/3</td>
<td>.13-2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boots (men's) - per pair</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>3.87 2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boots (boy's) - per pair</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoes (men's) - per pair</td>
<td>2.21 2/3</td>
<td>1.94-2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoes (women's) - per pair</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>2.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoes (children's) - per pair</td>
<td>1.21 2/3</td>
<td>.93-3/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calico - per yard</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.07-1/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslin - per yard</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flannels - per yard</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powder - per keg</td>
<td>3.66 2/3</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil - per gallon</td>
<td>.97 2/3</td>
<td>.78-3/4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Ohio Labor Statistics, 1882, p. 9*
to similar arguments by George Carr, President of the Columbus, Hocking Valley, and Toledo Railroad, a Shawnee (Ohio) "Coal Digger" replied, "Oh, what 'taffy'!" and challenged Mr. Carr "to show us an operator that cares a straw for the 'convenience' of the miner where it is not specially convenient to his pocket-book."\textsuperscript{13} Operators exaggerated the benefits of the system for employees, but the company store gave its proprietor important competitive advantages over entrepreneurs who did not possess them. W. P. Rend, an operator who often sided with miners in industrial disputes, confessed his inability to compete with companies which maintained stores, because "they sell coal at a price which it costs to produce it and take their profit out of the store."\textsuperscript{14}

Coal miners and their allies fought for legislative bans of the company store system, and the Ohio and Illinois legislatures ultimately enacted laws to this effect. Despite such legislation, however, the system flourished since there was no adequate enforcement of the laws' provisions. In 1879, Ohio's Bureau of Labor Statistics could find no information "showing that even one person, firm, or company" had complied with an anti-scrip law, and it claimed to have knowledge of seventy-one violations of the legislation. According to the Bureau, the law's violators had enough political influence to forestall prosecution, but the prosecuting attorney would "take special delight" in sending a hungry man who "steals a ham" to the penitentiary. The Bureau noted that a Perry County coal company did face prosecution, but the case never came before the court. Miners seldom reported violations of the laws, because they feared "that the vengeance of the
operators would be visited upon the head of anyone interfering with
the issuance of scrip."\(^{15}\) Loopholes in the laws allowed operators to
devise means to circumvent the intent of the law without violating
its letter. According to John Mitchell, operators violated the
Illinois law by placing the store in the name of another firm or by
showing the miner cash and scrip simultaneously before giving him the
latter with the "inference" that he had "traded it for the check,
although the person did not get his hands on the money."\(^{16}\) Better
law enforcement would have denied operators both a measure of power
and a source of profit.

III

Denied choice by the company store system, the coal miner also
had little control over the nature and method of wage payment. Operators
paid their employees several weeks after work performed, and this
arrangement perpetuated the miners' dependent relationship with the
company. Wage amounts varied with the quality of the resources, the
thickness or thinness of coal seams, the regularity or irregularity
of production, and the nature of the industry's competition.\(^{17}\) The
needs of the coal miners in the various districts seldom influenced the
determination of wage scales, and operators made no efforts to standardize or equalize miners' wages. Instead, according to John Mitchell,
wage determinations reflected the effort to allow "each district to
produce coal at a price which shall enable it to be sold in fair com-
petition with every other district."\(^{18}\) This system certainly aided
efforts to eliminate cutthroat competition in the coal industry and,
thus, indirectly helped miners combat spiralling wage reductions.
However, it provided few palliatives to miners or operators who worked in the less competitive coal fields and rose or fell at the whims of the market.

Available statistical information on wages for Illinois and Ohio coal miners, though highly unreliable, inconsistent, and incomplete, reflected the unstable nature of the industry during the late nineteenth century. Coal miners normally earned about ten cents per ton more in the winter than in the summer, and their wages alternately rose during prosperous years and fell during industrial depressions. Although existing records lack consistency, available indicators show declining wages for coal miners throughout this era. Wage reductions precipitated strikes in both northern Illinois and southeastern Ohio during the panic of the 1870's. According to Illinois' Bureau of Labor Statistics, miners in the Wilmington field received a three percent wage decrease between 1883 and 1887, and the Hocking Valley experienced its famous strike during this period as miners resisted wage cuts. After a brief rally in the early 1890's, each area suffered with the rest of the nation as another industrial depression swept the country. Fighting the pauperization of labor, Illinois and Ohio miners collectively experienced 227 major coal strikes between 1887 and 1897, with a loss of 47,800 and 24,500 workdays, respectively. The United Mine Workers of America called national strikes in 1894 and 1897 to battle the deteriorating conditions in the country's bituminous mines, but wages did not begin to rise until the nation emerged from the depression in the late 1890's.
If the wages of coal miners declined during this era, did the workers' earnings match or exceed their expenses? In 1876 the Ohio Bureau of Labor Statistics asked miners, "Have your earnings for five years paid your expenses?" Eleven responded "yes" and twenty-nine answered "no," while a "majority of those claiming that their earnings have not covered their expenses claim to be in debt in amounts ranging from $75 to $500 each." 22 Five years later, Ohio miners in the counties of Athens, Hocking, and Perry, reported an average of earnings over expenses of $139, $234, and $155, respectively. Yet, a statewide survey in 1885 revealed that expenses exceeded earnings by an average of $119. Illinois' statistics disclosed a similar irregular pattern, since earnings exceeded expenses by an average of fifteen dollars per family in 1881, but this relationship was reversed in 1884 when expenses exceeded earnings by seven dollars per family. 23 Clearly, coal miners only managed a subsistence standard of living during the late nineteenth century as their meager wages barely kept pace with the cost of living.

Given the scarcity and unreliability of statistical information, it has been impossible to determine with any precision whether or not coal miners' lives improved during the late 1800's. Complete and accurate numerical records, however, would not answer all questions concerning living conditions because, as the English historian, E. P. Thompson, noted, "a per capita increase in quantitative factors may take place at the same time as a great qualitative disturbance
in people's way of life, traditional relationships and sanctions. People may consume more goods and become less happy or less free at the same time." Thompson, a participant in the English "standard of living" controversy, found this pattern fit English coal miners who experienced a rise in real wages between 1790 and 1840 only "at the cost of longer hours and a greater intensity of labour." 24 When trend questions arose, observers of coal mining conditions in Ohio and Illinois generally noticed a downward tendency in the living standards of miners during the nineteenth century. Miners in both states often claimed they had lived better in earlier years, and the Ohio Bureau of Labor Statistics asserted that wages in the industry had fallen to a record low in 1897. In 1901, John Mitchell admitted to the U.S. Industrial Commission that the cost of living had declined steadily in the closing years of the nineteenth century, but he maintained that miners' wages had fallen even more rapidly. 25 In short, coal miners made a poor living during this era, but they would have fared better if they had received regular employment.

IV

Coal miners often claimed they could make fair wages if they received steady work, but unstable employment patterns characterized the coal industry throughout the late 1800's. In 1869 Daniel McLach'lan (later McLaughlin), a Braidwood immigrant, wrote a friend in his native Scotland that "the work has not begun to run steady yet. Some weeks you may get good work, and the next you may get hardly anything." 26 During the next three decades, the state labor bureaus revealed that
miners could expect to lose fifteen to twenty weeks of work during good years, and these figures rose during years when strikes or depressions hampered the coal industry. All industries experienced employment irregularities, but the Illinois Bureau of Labor Statistics claimed that coal miners annually received the fewest weeks of work among laboring groups.27

The coal industry's employment problem was exacerbated by the presence of an excessive number of miners in the labor pool. According to Karl Marx, capitalistic accumulation produced a larger laboring population than was needed for the expansion of capital. Marx maintained that the cycles of modern industrial production required an "industrial reserve army of surplus population." This "mass of human material always ready for exploitation" served the "changing needs of the self-expansion of capital."28 The mining regions of the United States during this era constantly reflected this problem, and coal miners often advised fellow workers through newspapers and other media to stay away from their regions. Miners had the unenviable choice of finding employment in a steadily-working, overcrowded mine or working in an often-idle, less crowded operation.29 Ironically, Marx's views of exploitation received support from Black Diamond, a business journal, which noted that depressed market conditions made it difficult to induce some entrepreneurs, who were not "noted for either humanity or foresight, to unanimously refrain from taking advantage of the necessities of the unemployed by getting their work done more cheaply."30
The reserve army of labor and irregular work patterns existed as a result of the very nature of the coal industry. Mine owners had difficulty providing steady employment in the spring and summer, because the demand for coal was considerably less than in the fall and winter. Thus, coal miners consistently received less work in the summer, and they often could not make enough money to meet their expenses. The coal industry also interacted with various facets of manufacturing, and a general trade depression invariably lessened the demand for coal and increased frantic competition among operators for a shrinking market. While seasonal demand and periodic depression hampered trade and retarded employment, other "rational" decisions compounded the problem of surplus labor. Some companies, desiring more customers for their truck stores, employed more men than necessary to fill mine contracts, since the added work force could increase profits without damaging the profitability of the mine itself. An excessive, heterogeneous laboring population also often caused dissension among the employees, and it made combination against the coal companies more difficult. Workers felt the companies often cut wages during periods of irregular employment, because management expected less resistance when the men could not oppose such reductions. Perhaps the Illinois Bureau of Labor Statistics summed up the problem most accurately when it stated: "The proprietor, while expecting men to work full time, is interested in their product rather than their hours of labor. Of the former, he preserves an accurate record, while of the latter, the record is only incidental."
Miners responded to labor congestion by either moving to new areas or by devising means to make their existing situation as bearable as possible. Census returns indicated the mobility of coal miners, who often left unproductive areas for other coal regions. This mobility may have improved a worker's position, but it often simply caused productive areas, like Ohio's Hocking Valley, to become saturated with laborers. Other miners, through choice or necessity, remained in one area and shared existing work. Henry Demarest Lloyd, a prominent social reformer, who took an active interest in northern Illinois coal miners, praised Spring Valley's miners for their willingness to work only one day in three in an effort to give employment to all. On occasion, labor unions supervised this process by placing idled miners into working mines and dividing the work between them.

V

Company stores, subsistence wages, and irregular employment made coal mining a grueling occupation, and the working conditions in the mines added to the workers' problems. In addition to excavating coal, miners had to perform a variety of duties which they termed "dead work," because the miners received little or no compensation for this work. These duties included timbering one's work place, bailing water, and "taking up bottom"—i.e., lowering the floor enough to allow loaded mine cars to pass through. Coal miners also had to brush down the slate roofing, shovel away debris, and repair the railway before quitting work each evening. Such procedures irritated the miners, but workers particularly resented being docked
for the equipment and supplies which they used in the mines. They had to pay a blacksmithing charge for tool sharpening, and, if they had a checkweighman, workers had to contribute to his salary. If employees could not meet all of the expenses, employers would often carry them in debt and perpetuate the sense of dependency and subordination to the company. 36

Although miners objected to the aforementioned limitations on their income, they condemned various practices which denied them the full product of their labor. Coal in Ohio and Illinois mines passed over screens before it was weighed, and miners only received compensation for the "lump" coal which did not filter through the screens. Coal operators contended that a higher wage paid for lump coal indirectly compensated the miners for "nut" and "pea" coal which passed through the screens, but such arguments failed to convince employees who simply noticed that the companies marketed some grades of coal without payment to the workers. According to management, screening encouraged the miners to apply their skills more carefully when blasting coal from the facing, because an excessive use of powder would produce less lump coal and lower wages for the workers. Miners countered this position by claiming the screening system actually encouraged poorer workmanship, because the employers preferred unskilled workers who would produce more of the smaller grades of coal and, thus, free the operators from additional wage costs. Employees further noted the disparity in the size of screens from mine to mine, and they claimed mine owners and superintendents had little interest in maintaining the condition of the screens since a
widening of the distance between the bars worked to the employers' advantage. Suspicious workers even accused the companies of using "breakers" on the coal to increase the amount of the product passing through the screens. Coal miners successfully eliminated screening in Illinois in 1897, but Ohio miners worked under these conditions well into the twentieth century. An Ohio investigative commission in 1913 found that a screening commission thirty years earlier had produced similar testimony, and it concluded that "relatively little new light has been thrown upon the subject as a result of the discussion for the past three decades." 37

In addition to screening, miners faced other practices which detracted from their earnings. In the 1880's, Hocking Valley operators only paid for the first 3,000 pounds loaded on an individual car and any coal over this limit went to the company. Miners had to use their judgment when loading the cars, and they often exceeded the weight limit in an effort to achieve the maximum quantity. A similar predicament confronted northern Illinois miners, because they did not receive compensation for coal which fell from cars as they traveled from the mining chamber to the mouth of the pit. The workers claimed they had to heap on all the coal which they could, because the operators furnished very few cars and they often remained idle for hours. 38

Coal miners desired fair treatment at work, but they also fought for improvements in their health and safety standards. Working beneath the earth's surface, miners often breathed foul air contaminated by numerous impurities, and their demands for better ventilation
sparked Ohio and Illinois legislative action in the 1870's which provided for state mine inspection. Inspectors found a great variety of conditions in the mines, and the air quality ranged from "very foul" to "excellent." Viewing a New Straitsville, Ohio mine, the State Mine Inspector noted: "It is a pleasure to go into this mine, as it is in such good order; a good currency of air in circulation; and the roads perfectly dry." In another operation, the miners frequently left work because their lights would "no longer burn, or because they are so oppressed with languor and headache that they can no longer stay in the mine." Accidents occurred frequently, and inspectors complained that they could never obtain adequate information on the ones which did happen. Most fatalities occurred when a roof fell and killed one or two miners, but on February 16, 1883, sixty-nine miners perished in a catastrophe at the Diamond mine in Braidwood. Warm rains and melting snow covered the level prairie on the fateful day and, when the overlying strata gave way, many of the working miners drowned. Other mines in the area had closed because of existing conditions, but the managers of the Diamond mine had decided to run as usual. Few accidents reached the proportions of the Braidwood disaster, but the fear of mishaps constantly hounded workers in this hazardous occupation. Workmen's compensation did not exist, and workers had to devise their own inadequate policies to help families that lost a breadwinner.

While pay deductions, screening, and hazardous working conditions weighed heavily on coal miners, a general sense of dependency sapped their minds and bodies. The Industrial Revolution in Europe,
according to E. P. Thompson, made working men "more disciplined, more subject to the productive tempo of 'the clock,' more reserved and methodical, less violent and less spontaneous."\textsuperscript{42} This "draconic labor discipline" also demoralized the American mining population as employers determined the nature and pace of work. Operators caused disension and jealousy by allowing some men to have "free turns" in the mines and, thus, encouraged each man to undermine his neighbor. A Braidwood miner complained that his fellow workmen had no ambition and "no wish to leave the world better than they found it," and he described the typical miner as "broken in constitution, the money he saved gone for doctors, bills, and medicines. He is probably thirty-five or forty years old, but he is past work, an old man in fact, in the prime of life."\textsuperscript{43} In short, the coal miner suffered physically, but he also endured a mentally debilitated work environment which drained the worker and kept him in virtual bondage. This does not mean that the worker had no power in this era, because as later chapters will show, the miner exercised considerable influence in relationships with his employers. It does mean that his subordinate status made his fight for a decent standard of living a very difficult process.
FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER 3

1. "Chicago Tribune," June 22, 1874; Bruce, 1877: Year of Violence, p. 292; Gottfried, Boss Cermak, p. 12; Donna, Braidwood Story, p. 86.

2. "History of Will County," p. 468; "Chicago Tribune," June 23, 1889; Second Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics to the General Assembly of Ohio for the Year 1878 (Columbus: Nevins and Meyers, 1879), p. 59; Twenty-First Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics to the General Assembly of Ohio for the Year 1897 (Columbus: Laning Printing Company, 1898), pp. 114-115; United Mine Workers' Journal, September 22, 1892; Report of the Industrial Commission, 1901, pp. 44-45; Alex Gottfried, Anton Cermak's biographer, claimed that in Cermak's boyhood Braidwood "was dark and dirty, gray and drab. Houses were all small, frame, spindly, and unpainted, with sagging front porches and decrepit steps. There were no sidewalks. In the rain, streets and paths were like swamps, similar in their effect to the dark and slimy pits from which the men emerged." See Gottfried, Boss Cermak, p. 5.


Valley, pp. 36, 39-40; History of Mill County, p. 467.


11 John Brophy, a Pennsylvania miner in the 1890's and later an official of the United Mine Workers of America, claimed "everything the miners made went right back to the company again, so it was hard to see how the company could fail to make money." See John Brophy, A Miner's Life (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), p. 35.

12 Proceedings of the Hocking Valley, pp. 90-91; Katherine Harvey maintained that Maryland operators also favored married men, but she neglected to give reasons for this policy. See Katherine Harvey, The Best Dressed Miners (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1969), p. 190.


34. *New York Times*, December 1, 1884. John Brophy claimed miners lived a "gypsy life." He said the moves rarely lead "to any great improvement, but it was impossible to sit around and make no effort to do better." See Brophy, *A Miner's Life*, p. 51.

35. Chicago Tribune, September 5, 1889; Miner's National Record, April, 1875, p. 91; Ohio State Journal, August 15, 1897.


CHAPTER 4
THE MECHANIZATION OF COAL MINING

I

The terms industrialism and mechanization have often been used interchangeably, because significant industrial changes have occurred as machines have replaced hand labor. Discussions of a pre-industrial work culture evoke images of the independent, self-employed artisan plying his craft without the aid of machinery. According to this stereotype, a simple, unhurried environment bred a rugged individualist who worked for himself until the economy changed and forced the worker to become a time-conscious, machine tender. This view may have applied to the manufacturing segment of the economy, but the coal industry flourished throughout most of the nineteenth century without the aid of coal-cutting machinery. 1 Hardly a group of self-employed craftsmen, coal miners received employment from an assortment of entrepreneurs. Nor did miners learn about collective action from the mechanization of their work, because they formed unions and called strikes before machines arrived to transform their trade. Aware of their dependent, wage-earning status, coal miners attempted to redress many grievances before they became concerned about machine mining. Nevertheless, miners recognized that machines minimized their skills and changed the very nature of their work.
Prior to the mechanization of coal mines, most miners viewed
themselves as craftsmen who were intimately familiar with the various
aspects of the mining process. Before he commenced work, each miner
had to "timber his place"—i.e., he had to check the roof and then
apply the necessary supports. Lying on his side and swinging his pick
in a very confined space, the miner then proceeded to undercut the
coal facing. Although this work required considerable strength, it
also demanded delicacy because coal could fall from the facing onto
the miner as he worked. The miner then drilled a hole, inserted
powder, and blasted the coal loose before loading it into cars for
shipment to the mouth of the pit. As one might expect, these opera-
tions required skill for safety purposes, but miners also utilized
powder carefully to maximize the production of lump coal since they
received no compensation for the other grades. Unhampered by job
specialization, the pick miner could justifiably claim that his
position required knowledge of the various intricate phases of coal
mining.

The introduction of mining machinery diluted the aforementioneded
skills and disrupted traditional working patterns. In his examination
of the English Industrial Revolution, E. P. Thompson maintained that
industrialists "aimed at withdrawing any process which required pecul-
iar dexterity and steadiness of hand" from the workmen by placing it
in charge of a "mechanism, so self-regulating that a child may super-
intend it." Such a process occurred in the American mining industry
when employers introduced mechanical coal cutters which destroyed much
of the old pick miner's craftsmanship. Pick mines normally employed
day laborers, mule drivers, mechanics, engineers, etc., but the majority of men who worked in these operations were simply classified as "miners." Machines brought specialization and a further division of labor because each machine required an operator, or cutter, a cutter's assistant, and several loaders, and each employee performed only his portion of the work. In 1897 the Ohio Bureau of Labor Statistics noted that "the old and skilled pick miner has become a thing of the past and in his stead has come the living moving automaton—the 'loader'—without incentive and without hope." It required skill to handle the coal-cutting machinery, but this work only necessitated one or two men per machine while the remaining workers merely needed "strong backs" and the ability to shovel large quantities of coal.

Employers favored this subdivision of labor because it rationalized the production process by maximizing the per capita efficiency of the work force. According to operators, machine production and a division of labor lessened the number of men needed to mine a comparable amount of coal under the pick system. Freed from the restraints of skilled labor, the operator could recruit employees from the whole labor market and the miner lost the value of his skill and experience. While entrepreneurs lauded the advantages of labor-saving machinery, many miners complained that the technological advances did not significantly reduce their duties. Some, like "Irish Congo," complained that the machines created large quantities of dust and thus added to the "dead work" of the miners, because
they had to "lift bottoms a foot thick" which had been "left by this labor-producing machine."  

II

The first contact of Illinois and Ohio coal miners with machine mining occurred during strikes of the 1870's and 1880's, and this initial taste of the fruits of mechanization hardly endeared working men to the machine. A strike in the northern Illinois field in 1877 prompted operators to encourage an inventor to test one of his machines in the Braidwood vicinity. Mine owners hoped to lessen the cost of production with machinery, because they faced a difficult task of getting sufficient "green hands" into the shafts to replace striking miners. Another strike in 1889 evoked a similar response from employers in Spring Valley, Illinois, as they utilized a skeleton crew to mine one of the coal veins with machinery. Clearly, employers hoped to frighten miners into returning to work by leaking such information to the press, because numerous articles noted the flight of miners from the striking regions as machines daily replaced the troublesome workers. Since the northern Illinois field remained an area of pick mining throughout the nineteenth century, it is apparent that such reports reflected the coal operators' desires rather than reality.

In the Hocking Valley labor problems also accompanied the earliest attempts to mechanize the coal mines. According to one scholar, the first mines to use machines had the "worst labor relations histories in the district," and he concluded that the mine owner's decision to purchase machinery "was motivated more to eliminate or
threaten their troublesome miners than to cut costs." A reporter for the New York Times attributed the major cause of the Hocking Valley’s coal strike of 1884-1885 to the desire of the Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron Company to mechanize its mines. According to his view, the company plotted its action three months prior to implementation, it expected a bitter reaction to the innovation, and it prepared for it by emptying the mines and calling for a reduction of the workers’ wages. When the miners called the anticipated strike in June, 1884, "the company at once put in the new machinery and set if safe in position before the move was understood by the strikers." The operators then brought in strikebreakers to tend the machines, and the striking miners found "that the mines could be run without them." Other accounts of the conflict confirmed that the company did intend to replace the strikers with machines. The Athens Messenger claimed operators had announced they would "substitute machinery in place of muscle," and the Logan Republican noted that the "proprietor" of the Butler mining machine had been operating his equipment at the Longstreth mines in the Valley. A Columbus newspaper, which sympathized with the mine owners, also trumpeted the triumph of the machine over the striking miners by proclaiming that "machines are arriving every day." Like the Illinois situation, much in the newspapers merely reflected the operators’ propaganda, but it clearly informed miners of the intentions of their employers to replace them during times of trouble.
III

Although coal companies utilized some machinery during the strikes of the 1870's and 1880's, they did not initiate any large-scale mechanization of the industry until the 1890's. During the latter decade the Hocking Valley of Ohio became one of the nation's leading centers of machine mining; but the northern Illinois coal magnates used very little machinery in their mines throughout this era. Illinois operators complained that they could not compete with the mechanized mines in the central and southern portions of the state, and one operator, Herman Justi, blamed the northern Illinois pick miner for resistance to mechanization. Regardless of the miners' wishes, operators undoubtedly would have introduced machines in this region, but the thin veins of the northern Illinois field made mechanization impracticable. Robert Haseltine, Ohio's State Mine Inspector in the 1890's, claimed that machines were only designed for the thickest of veins and "high coal." Haseltine argued that the reduced space available in the thin veins "makes the moving of the machine very laborious and slow and thus diminishes the opportunity of profit that might be derived from their installation."¹⁰ Although unfeasible for the northern Illinois region, machines could be used easily and readily in the ten to twelve feet thick seams of the Hocking Valley.

Production and employment statistics for the State of Ohio in the 1890's clearly illustrated the growing importance of coal-cutting machines in the mining industry.¹¹ Pick mine production fluctuated greatly during this decade and even declined in years of depression,
but machine mine output constantly increased until it rivaled the production figures for hand mines by the turn of the century (see Table 5). One reason for this dramatic change was the introduction

**TABLE 5**

**A COMPARISON OF PICK AND MACHINE MINE PRODUCTION IN OHIO, 1869-1900**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pick Mine Tonnage</th>
<th>Percentage of Change</th>
<th>Machine Mine Tonnage</th>
<th>Percentage of Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>10,007,385</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>900,000</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>10,640,360</td>
<td>+ 6.3</td>
<td>1,148,449</td>
<td>+27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>11,396,106</td>
<td>+ 7.1</td>
<td>1,654,081</td>
<td>+44.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>12,360,828</td>
<td>+ 8.4</td>
<td>2,239,080</td>
<td>+35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>12,275,023</td>
<td>- 0.7</td>
<td>2,553,074</td>
<td>+14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>9,354,753</td>
<td>-23.8</td>
<td>2,555,466</td>
<td>+ 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>10,563,423</td>
<td>+12.9</td>
<td>3,120,456</td>
<td>+22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>9,544,259</td>
<td>- 9.7</td>
<td>3,368,349</td>
<td>+ 7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>8,342,698</td>
<td>-12.5</td>
<td>4,106,124</td>
<td>+21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>8,805,557</td>
<td>+ 5.5</td>
<td>5,252,598</td>
<td>+27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>9,167,874</td>
<td>+ 4.1</td>
<td>6,741,060</td>
<td>+26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>9,966,872</td>
<td>+ 8.7</td>
<td>9,459,777</td>
<td>+40.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

in 1889 of the electric coal-cutting machine which largely replaced its less efficient, compressed air counterpart by the late 1890's. As a result of improved techniques and thick coal seams, the entrepreneurs of Athens, Hocking, and Perry counties emerged as the leading producers of machine-mined coal in Ohio. Throughout the 1890's the Hocking Valley field produced between seventy-eight and ninety percent of the machine tonnage of the state. The percentage of coal produced by the machine increased during this decade in the Hocking Valley, but an unexplained decline in the machine totals of Hocking County in 1898 and 1899 actually caused a decrease in the rate of the machine increment in the area for these years (see Table 6). Despite this

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Tonnage</th>
<th>Machine Tonnage</th>
<th>Machine Percentage of Total Tonnage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>4,657,594</td>
<td>2,909,685</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>4,439,036</td>
<td>3,022,522</td>
<td>68.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>4,130,046</td>
<td>3,201,719</td>
<td>77.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>5,127,870</td>
<td>3,550,705</td>
<td>69.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>5,440,050</td>
<td>3,926,894</td>
<td>72.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>7,423,796</td>
<td>6,292,429</td>
<td>84.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

setback, the age of machinery had dawned in the coal industry, and
the Hocking Valley enterprises symbolized the changing nature of
the trade. Employment figures for Ohio's mines rose slowly, if at
all, during the 1890's, but the Hocking Valley's machine mines in-
creased their payroll from 3,544 men in 1892 to 6,292 employees in
1900.12

IV

As machines replaced picks in the coal mining industry,
umerous problems accompanied the implementation of the new equip-
ment. Years before the mechanization of coal mines in the United
States, critics of industrial capitalism indicted the machine as the
agent of an oppressive new economic order. Karl Marx claimed the
machine could shorten the working time needed to produce a commodity,
but he maintained that in the hands of the capitalist it was used to
lengthen the working day. This process ultimately led to laws limiting
the hours of work, but, according to Marx, it also encouraged the
entrepreneur to intensify labor by either speeding up the machinery
or by giving the worker more machinery to tend. He claimed that
mechanization aggravated the problem of underemployment, because the
old handicrafts could not compete with machines in their industries
and, thus, many men either went "to the wall" or swamped the existing
labor market. Undoubtedly referring to the plight of England's hand-
loom weavers, Marx asserted that "when machinery seizes on an industry
by degrees, it produces chronic misery among the operatives who compete
with it." Marx concluded his polemic with the following:
Machinery, considered alone, shortens the hours of labour, but, when in the service of capital lengthens them; in itself it lightens labour, but when employed by capital, heightens the intensity of labour; in itself it is a victory of man over the forces of nature, but in the hands of capital, makes man the slave of those forces; in itself it increases the wealth of the producers, but in the hands of capital, makes them paupers.\(^{13}\)

E. P. Thompson and Eric Hobsbaum concurred with Marx, because they argued that European workers expressed concern about the impact of mechanization on their standard of living but did not oppose technical innovations that could ease their tasks.\(^{14}\) These and other questions must be considered when examining the reaction of coal miners to the mechanization of their work environment.

Most observers of machine coal mining claimed the process inevitably displaced a great many miners, but a few experts argued that the use of machinery increased the demand for coal and, thus, indirectly spurred employment. Testifying before the United States Industrial Commission, several operators admitted they had "necessarily" reduced their work force when they had mechanized their mines. Thomas Davis, Vice President of the United Mine Workers of America, blamed the introduction of machinery for the displacement of thirty to fifty percent of the nation's mine workers, and Samuel Gompers asserted that rapid mechanization made it difficult for miners to find alternate employment. When he was asked the whereabouts of men who had been displaced by machines, George Clark, a Colorado coal miner, responded: "Oh, some go in the hills, some on the farm, some go East, and some go West."\(^{15}\) According to Black Diamond, an operators' journal, mechanization left miners with the choice of "adopting some
other calling to making a living or accepting less pay for their work." The *United Mine Workers' Journal* acknowledged the elementary fact that "a lesser number of men can mine more coal by machine than the same number can by hand." Such arguments did not go unchallenged, however, because David Ross, Illinois' Secretary of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, told the Industrial Commission in 1901 that increased mechanization had been accompanied by rising employment figures. 16 Ohio's employment statistics for the 1890's show a rapid increase in the work force of the Hocking Valley's machine mines, but the overall state totals reveal only a slight rise in employment. Clearly, machine mines prospered while pick mining suffered from a technological lag.

Marx had predicted that craftsmen would suffer if machinery entered an industry, and pick mines in the 1890's complained that machines had rendered them superfluous. One Pennsylvania operator maintained that machinery cut the cost of production from eight to fifteen cents a ton, and W. C. Pearce, an Ohio union official, admitted that "the operators who are working their mines by machinery can control, to a certain extent, the price of coal and undersell those who are less fortunate." 17 Coal barons in Illinois argued that they could not compete with the machine differential of Pennsylvania and the Hocking Valley. Pick miners correctly perceived that the competition arising from machine production could jeopardize their position, because many operators could only hope to compete with machines through cheap labor. Utilizing the *United Mine Workers' Journal* as a forum, Ohio's miners expressed their apprehensions. J. D. Mack, a pick miner
from New Straitsville, represented the thoughts of many when he claimed the machines took "all the work at the present rate of prices. The machine miner has the market too, and at his command the pick man has to sit down on a store box looking at his children going around in rags." Another spokesman from the same community, William H. Crawford, claimed the miners might have had their tools in some large pick mine, "but the men themselves are basking on the sunny slope of some friendly Hocking hillside . . . every practical miner knows that up to the present writing the machine has been a success only at the expense of the miner." Correspondence to the Journal even revealed a tension between machine and pick miners over the question of proper wage adjustment, because machine miners convened separately within their own subdistrict.18 Those miners who obtained work in the machine mines often received steady employment by the industry's standards, but pick miners considered the machine an unfair competitor and a threat to their livelihood.

Despite these concerns, most American miners did not object to mechanization as an example of technological innovation, but they did resent an unfavorable application of the machines. John Mitchell echoed the miners' concern succinctly: "They [coal miners] are not opposed to the introduction of machinery in the sense that they oppose improved methods. They certainly recognize the age in which we live and understand that machinery has come and come to stay; but they do oppose the introduction of machinery to displace men."19 In 1889 Alexander Johnson of Nelsonville informed the Ohio Bureau of Labor Statistics that he did not object to the "inventive genius of man,
providing the wage-worker can get the benefit of each piece of machinery." Numerous miners showed their real concerns when they wrote to the United Mine Workers' Journal and objected, not to the machine, but to the prevailing social system. David Wallace of Hollister, Ohio, felt mechanical improvements "are a blessing to mankind if properly handled, but under the present system are a curse to society." This theme received support from James Beattie of Spring Valley, Illinois, when he stated: "We alone are to blame for these machines being a curse instead of being a blessing, for so long as individuals own and control the machinery of the world for private gain instead of the people owning it for the public good our position as workingmen will never be up to the standard where God almighty intended us to be." Noting the effects of industrial depression, Murray City, Ohio's William Haskins asked, "Can we say that the introduction of modern machinery is wholly responsible for this state of affairs, or can we attribute it to a false and unjust economical system?" Haskins blamed the "latter" for the miners' position of "dependence and serfdom." 20 This researcher could only find one attempt by miners to resist mechanization itself, and this action occurred in eastern Athens County in 1897 when the miners of Clouster formed an organization whose purpose was to check the dual "evils" of immigration and mechanization. 21

Thus, most coal miners did not object to mechanization, but they expressed concerns about the impact of the new technology upon their efforts to achieve a better life and a living wage. Andrew Roy, reformer and one-time State Inspector of Ohio's mines, claimed labor-
saving machinery "benefitted the laborer by increasing his wages and taking the severe toil off his hands." Available information, although spotty, indicates that the machine miner earned more than the pick miner because the former could expect more regular employment. In 1892 the average daily pay for Ohio machine cutters, i.e., those men who operated the machines, was $2.07, but the loaders and drillers earned only $1.71 per day. Pick miners could earn $1.98 a day, but they worked only an average of 175 days per year while machine miners received 229 days of employment. Three years later the machine mines of Athens, Hocking, and Perry counties furnished 196 days of work to employees while their pick counterparts could only give 178 work days. Although pick miners wage rates exceeded the scale for those "following" the machine, they seldom earned as much money because they could not obtain steady employment. In short, the skilled machine operator could earn a good living, but the skilled pick miner increasingly found his position threatened by the competition of machine mines. Miners who loaded and cleaned up after machines made a poorer daily wage than pick miners, but they managed to earn a livelihood through steady employment. The division of labor may have made machine mining "less interesting" than pick mining by the turn of the century, but the latter usually was less financially remunerative.22

Unlike the English Luddites, American coal miners responded rationally to the mechanization of their occupation, since they shunned the violent practices of machine breaking for more reasoned responses to the changing nature of their work. Many pick miners resented the diminution of their skills, but they realized that mechanization had
increased output and efficiency in coal mining. Only the most prescient workers could have predicted the degree of automation that would ultimately invade the industry in the twentieth century, but nineteenth century miners did not oppose the idea of technical innovation. When machines began to transform the coal industry in the 1890's pick miners in northern Illinois and southeastern Ohio suffered great disadvantages, but those men who received employment in the machine mines gradually improved their standard of living. Marx's argument concerning the pauperization of labor may have been applicable to pick miners in this period of history, but this view seems less relevant for men who received employment in machine mines. The wider impact of the effects of industrialization, however, needs greater consideration, because most coal miners of this era seemed more concerned with issues which involved power relationships.
FOOTNOTES
CHAPTER 4

The romantic view of the independent craftsman may be more mythical than real in manufacturing as well. In his study of Lynn, Massachusetts, Allen Dawley maintained that a group of entrepreneurs and hired wage laborers existed a "quarter of a century before the factory system." He claimed that this situation "was a necessary pre-condition for the successful conversion to mechanized, factory methods of production." See Allen Dawley, Class and Community (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 32.


Thompson, Making, p. 360.


Industrial Commission, 1901, p. 54; Journal of United Labor, November 15, 1880, p. 69; United Mine Workers' Journal, January 21, 1897.

James, "Braidwood Coal Field," pp. 128-129; Chicago Tribune, May 7, 1889; Ibid., June 25, 1889; Ibid., July 5, 1889; Black Diamond, August 1, 1889, p. 10; Ibid., September 15, 1889, p. 129.


New York Times, September 2, 1884.

Athens Messenger, July 17, 1884; Logan Republican, August 7, 1884; Ohio State Journal, July 31, 1884.

Yearly statistical information may be found in the reports of the State Mine Inspector, but a compilation of production and employment statistics is in Klein, Two Billion Tons of Coal, pp. 12-13.


Black Diamond, March 27, 1897; United Mine Workers' Journal, January 26, 1899; Report of the Industrial Commission, 1901, p. 186. Irwin Yellowitz has argued that "although unemployment was not a result of mechanization alone it was argued that machines so increased the supply of goods that the market needs were met in fewer working days than in the past. Of course, more workers were now employed, but to many skilled workmen, the result of mechanization seemed to be less work, not more." See Irwin Yellowitz, The Position of the Worker in American Society, 1865-1896 (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1969), p. 29.


United Mine Workers' Journal, June 23, 1892; Ibid., December 7, 1893; Ibid., January 18, 1894; Ibid., April 16, 1895.


Athens Messenger, September 9, 1897.

CHAPTER 5

COMMUNITY CONSCIOUSNESS: A CRITIQUE
OF THE GUTMAN THESIS

I

Ohio and Illinois coal miners expressed concern about their working conditions in the late nineteenth century, but they also faced political, social, and economic problems within their communities. Traditionally, historians have viewed industrial workers in a narrow, institutional context by focusing on their role as trade union members, but a new school of historiography has emphasized the community life of workers. Herbert Gutman pioneered in this grass-roots approach when he examined the small town life of industrial workers in the nineteenth century. According to Gutman, a form of community consciousness initially sheltered the nation's small towns from the onslaught of industrial capitalism, because the typical resident retained an older, agrarian set of humane values. In his study of Braidwood, Illinois, Gutman noted the "social and class relations lacked the stability and relative rigidity that were characteristic of older, more settled communities," because the physical growth of the community had occurred simultaneously with the expansion of the mining industry. In Ohio's Hocking Valley, however, Gutman claimed coal miners lived in "self-contained homogeneous" communities before 1869, but the rapid
development of the coal industry after that date "unsettled the traditional status and outlook of these workers." Summing up the growth of industrialism, Gutman saw it as a "story of the painful process by which an old way of life was discarded for a new one."¹

Gutman felt the presence of pre-industrial values in the nation's small communities aided coal miners in their disputes with operators, because "the ideology of many non-workers in these small towns was not entirely hospitable toward industrial, as opposed to traditional, business enterprise." Industrial capitalism had not been "fully institutionalized," and, thus, many non-miners and members of the local middle classes supported the coal miners when they battled their employers. These middle class sympathizers included public officials, newspaper editors, and small businessmen—all of whom resisted attempts by industrial capitalists to establish hegemony. Gutman noted that "unlike the urban middle class, they had direct and everyday contact with the new industrialism and with the problems and the outlook of workers and employers." As a result, workers "were able at times to influence local and regional affairs in a manner not open to wage-earners in the larger cities." This "influence" often frustrated the coal magnates in conflicts with their employees and forced them to reach "outside their local environments in order to win industrial disputes." Applying this framework to northern Illinois and southeastern Ohio, Gutman claimed the coal miners and their middle class allies in these areas successfully challenged the attitudes and actions of mine owners.²
Although Cutman's perspective adds much to our understanding of industrial social relationships during this era, his thesis presents an oversimplification of rather complex phenomena. By examining the role of local governments, community newspapers, and non-mining residents in the mining communities of Illinois and Ohio, this researcher has unearthed important material which challenges the credulity of Cutman's postulations. All of these institutions contained individuals who consistently supported the miners when they confronted capitalists. There were numerous exceptions, however, and these exceptions show that considerable tension existed within these communities. Cutman correctly observed that industrial capitalism and traditional business enterprise had separate world views, but he did not give equal emphasis to the differences between local businessmen and wage earners. As a result, he constructs a mythical, almost utopian, setting in which community consciousness transcends social class considerations and neighborliness replaces social conflict. Cutman's view is certainly an appealing respite from the theme of conflict in history, but, unfortunately, it offers a simplified view of the interaction of the small town's social classes. Many middle class people in the coal mining communities of Ohio and Illinois aided their neighbors during industrial strikes, but many non-miners also feared violence and the threats to property which accompanied these struggles. Maximizing these fears, industrial capitalists often managed to undermine the fragile alliance between the mining and non-mining elements of the communities as they sought to instill the desired, industrial values on "recalcitrant provincials."

Occasionally, miners successfully resisted this trend on the local
level, but they succeeded much less frequently on a regional basis. Examining local government action, newspaper policy, and middle class activity, this chapter will document the need for a revision of the Gutman thesis.

II

Coal miners successfully influenced local politics throughout the late 1800's in their Ohio and Illinois communities. During a strike in the Hocking Valley in 1874 the Cincinnati Commercial reported that the miners held "as a class, a good position in society, filling a fair share of the municipal, church and school offices." The Chicago Tribune noted in the spring of 1877 that the local elections in Braidwood, Illinois, had "resulted in the complete success of the Miners' ticket." Daniel McLaughlin, a Scottish immigrant and mine union official, headed the successful Greenback Labor ticket and served as Braidwood's mayor during a strike the following summer. Of course, support from local politicians did not always guarantee community support during conflicts, because this assistance may have reflected a practical political philosophy designed to obtain votes. In 1884 the Athens Messenger cynically observed: "A miner's committee was in Athens at the beginning of the week soliciting money for the benefit of the strikers. They obtained generous sums from several political candidates, otherwise they did not, we are told, meet with encouraging success."

Despite such qualifications, public officials helped coal miners during battles with employers, and Gutman clearly documented
this support in his studies of northern Illinois and southeastern Ohio. During a strike in Braidwood in 1874 a miner wrote the Workingman's Advocate and informed the labor journal that local miners had given "their names to the mayor, to be at his service anytime to act as special police to protect the citizens from any molestation of the scallawags that the company might bring here." Mayor L. H. Goodrich, a dry goods merchant, refused to grant any authority to special policemen or "watchmen" who had been recruited in Chicago by the Chicago and Wilmington Coal Company. Instead, Deputy Sheriff O'Donnell, acting under instructions from Sheriff Arnold, disarmed the "specials" and explained that he "did not propose to have a lot of strangers dragooning a quiet town." During the same year a strike in the Hocking Valley prompted one operator to bring in armed men to protect strikebreakers, but the city marshall of Logan arrested the men and charged them with disorderly conduct.4

During the prolonged Hocking Valley strike of 1884-1885 numerous local government officials aided miners in their efforts to resist the armed guards who had been hired by the company. In a wire to Governor George Hoadly, Elias Boudinot, a Justice of the Peace in Carbon Hill, Ohio, angrily wrote: "The guards at Longstreth have by force and violence, ejected free citizens from the public highway this morning [July 15]. Is this to be permitted? Is it lawful? Have we rights that are bound to be respected by these guards. Please answer." Hoadly answered that he had no authority to "interfere with them," but a few weeks later Boudinot bound over to court a Pinkerton guard and dismissed charges against a striking miner. At the same
time Henry Spurrier, the mayor of New Straitsville, wired the Governor that a "squad of men armed with repeating rifles" had invaded the community, and three days later the local magistrate charged these Pinkerton guards with "unlawfully assembling with arms and obstructing the public highways." The justice of the peace found the twenty-five men "guilty of an unlawful usurpation of legal authority, and bound them in the sum of $100 each to answer before the grand jury."\(^5\) A detective for the Columbus Hocking Valley and Toledo Railway met a similar fate in Nelsonville when he was arrested for firing his revolver inside the town's corporate limits. Walter Crafts, an operator, complained that local authorities were unable or unwilling to protect company property, and John McBride, a union official, boasted that through legal counsel the miners had been able to arrest company detectives "for usurping powers of special constables."\(^6\) Ten years later, the city council of New Straitsville maintained this tradition by giving public employment to idle, striking miners.\(^7\)

The foregoing information certainly supports Gutman's findings, but other evidence indicates an ambivalent relationship between miners and their local governments. Braidwood's strikers received aid from both local and county authorities in 1874, but the strike in 1877 produced a severe clash between Mayor Daniel McLaughlin and the sheriff of Will County. Sheriff Nobles revealed his sympathies when he refused to allow proponents of the miners' cause to meet in the county courthouse in Joliet. When the sheriff brought a posse into Braidwood to protect company property, Mayor McLaughlin promptly notified Nobles that he must leave the town. Shortly thereafter, the sheriff arrested
McLaughlin for causing a riot, which allegedly occurred when the sheriff and his posse had descended upon Braidwood.  

A similar pattern of events occurred in 1889 when county officials subdued protesting miners who had attempted to prevent strikebreakers from taking their jobs. The Chicago Tribune reported that Sheriff Huston ordered Braidwood’s strikers to disperse, “and, upon meeting with a refusal, opened fire, one ball grazing the skull of a striker. The deputies then charged the crowd and put them to flight.” The Joliet Republic and Sun claimed the sheriff’s squad included two Pinkerton police who, along with other deputies, used the butts of their pistols as clubs. Even the town’s authorities occasionally acted callously, because one destitute woman complained that “the City Marshall had some flour, but he said we don’t get any—go to work.” In Spring Valley, another northern Illinois coal town, the sheriff of Bureau County recruited an armed posse of eighty-six citizens to subdue strikers, and he asked the Governor for the support of the state militia.  

Like their Illinois counterparts, Ohio miners faced some hostility from county officials during the 1884 strike. Some local officials arrested Pinkerton detectives, but Sheriff J. J. McCarty of Hocking County ordered the arrest of women who had been “hootling” at strikebreakers and “raising disturbances by beating on tin pans and buckets” when they went to work. On August 31 McCarty frantically telegraphed Governor Roadly: “All means in my power are exhausted to repress disorder and to protect property. The strikers are cutting all telegraph wires... Please send troops immediately and save
further bloodshed—Jail is threatened." Interestingly, McCarty's letter was printed on the stationery of the Columbus, Hocking Valley, and Toledo Railway Company, an enterprise which supported and aided the coal "Syndicate" during the conflict. Although Roadly complied with the request, he expressed bewilderment at McCarty's inability to maintain order, and he refused a similar overture from Sheriff Boden of Athens County in December. 10

Coal miners helped elect state legislators as well as local officials, but some of their representatives supported the miners' adversaries. In January, 1885, Colonel Seth Weldy, a Hocking Valley legislator, introduced a bill which made it a penal offence for strikers to "threaten" laborers with the intention of forcing them to quit work. As an early advocate of a "right-to-work" philosophy Weldy claimed each individual should be allowed to make contracts without any hindrance. He argued that the citizens in the valley had been bulldozed by a few "despotic and tyrannical men who could not appreciate good government, but had the laws of the commune at heart." Reporting from New Straitsville, an observer for the Ohio State Journal noted: "The Weldy bill is denounced with emphatic tones here. It would not be safe for him to make a visit to this section." This proposal was defeated, but Weldy's action and that of sheriffs in Illinois and Ohio signified the tenuous nature of coal miners' political power within their regions. Beyond the narrow boundaries of the mining communities themselves, the workers had problems with questions of law and order. Miners clearly exercised considerable influence in these areas, but they also often faced
hostility within their own counties. Employers had allies, not only among urbanites and state government officials, but also among local government leaders.

III

In support of his views on community relations, Herbert Gutman argued that local newspapers "often stood apart from the industrial entrepreneur" and criticized the actions of coal operators. According to Gutman, "editorials in these journals defended local workers and demanded redress for their grievances. Certain of these newspapers were entirely independent in their outlook, and others warmly endorsed local trade-union activities." In his study of the 1874 Hocking Valley strike Gutman asserted that all the valley's newspapers, with the exception of the Logan Republic, either supported the miners or "stood independently between them and the operators." Citing the Hocking Sentinel and New Lexington Herald, Gutman made a strong case for community support, but both the Logan Republican and Athens Messenger (a newspaper which Gutman categorized as "independent") consistently criticized the actions of miners during this era. In addition, Gutman omitted any mention of the local press in his discussion of the Braidwood lockout of 1874, but the Joliet press normally supported the position of coal operators during disputes in the 1870's and 1880's.

The Hocking Sentinel, published in Logan, Ohio, strongly supported the area's miners throughout this era and, if considered alone, would vindicate Gutman's contentions. During strikes in 1884 and 1897 this journal took the same position which Gutman described in
the 1874 conflict—i.e., it attacked the coal companies for representing corporate capital rather than the small businessman or worker. On July 17, 1884, the Sentinel claimed "this Syndicate is an organization of capital for the purpose of crushing individual enterprise in the coal business and with a view of the subjugation of the miners to a condition of slaves and serfs." Two months later the newspaper predicted that, if the miners remained peaceable, individual enterprise would again gain control of the mines and the Hocking Valley would "again become the industrial garden spot of the continent." In 1897 the Hocking Sentinel continued its campaign against industrial capital by blaming the "Rockefeller and Carnegie" interests for the poor economic conditions in the valley. Clearly, this newspaper longed for an earlier era when small business interests dominated the economy of the region, and it opposed the concentration of capital which accompanied industrial development.

Curiously, the local newspapers which supported the coal miners claimed identification with the Democratic Party while those hostile to trade unions proclaimed a Republican affiliation. The Democratic newspapers favored a classless, community-oriented society as an alternative to industrial capitalism. Quoting approvingly an article in the New York World, the New Lexington Herald noted that "twenty years of Republican rule have successfully built up classes, and each year the Republican power lessens the distinction between the 'classes' will be more sharply defined." The Hocking Sentinel blamed the 1884 strike on the Republican Party, because "Your Syndicate is a Republican organization, a Monopoly, the pet child of Republican parents. Every
man of your Syndicate is a Republican." The newspaper accused its community rival, the Logan Republican, of supporting the Syndicate because its largest stockholder was a Republican. Outraged, the Logan Republican printed a letter from "A Workingman" who inquired: "Is it not a fact that Republican enterprise and industry, backed by Republican capital and brains, have made America one of the greatest nations in the world? Your party is directly opposed to Corporations."14

The Republican journals especially feared and denounced violence during strikes because such acts threatened property and the concept of "law and order." During the 1884 Hocking Valley conflict the Athens Messenger initially praised the striking miners for their peaceful conduct, but a clash between strikers and strikebreakers prompted the newspaper to rebuke the miner's union for this "disgraceful" action. The violence increased during the autumn of 1884 as miners destroyed some company property, and the Athens organ claimed the "fear is general that much damage will be inflicted upon property." As the strike neared its end in February, 1885, the Athens Messenger claimed the departing Pinkerton guards had "creditably deported themselves and left behind a reputation for approved conduct and a fearless and conscientious discharge of duty." In the same issue it castigated the state government for investigating the strike when it could use the money "as a reward for the arrest and conviction of outlaws."15

In Hocking County the Logan Republican rushed to the defense of Sheriff J. J. McCarty, who had been criticized for his rigorous response to the strike, by claiming the sheriff had the support of "the conservative, law-abiding citizens of the county." The 1889
strike in northern Illinois elicited comment from the Joliet Republic
and Sun which concentrated its press coverage on the maneuvers of
troops who were employed to keep order. Although this newspaper seldom
editorialized on the conflict, it categorized the county sheriff and
his Finkerton aids as "a jolly party" when it reported the group's
efforts to disperse Braidwood's miners. 16

On other occasions, these local newspapers denounced unions
and union officials for allegedly interfering with traditional employer-
employee relations. In 1874 the Athens Messenger criticized Thomas
Pirt, a union leader, and his "deluded adherents" for "battling against
fate" in their continued efforts to support a strike. Ten years later
the same journal blamed a miners' strike on a "comparatively few
active and influential leaders who realize pecuniary gain in fostering
a spirit of discontent and turbulency among ordinarily peaceably dis-
posed employees." The Joliet Republican in 1877 accused unions of
dictating to employers and laborers, and it hoped that "the cry may
yet be raised, 'Down with trade-union organizations.'" 17 Many news-
papers believed that the decision to work was an individual, rather
than a collective one—a view which was also shared by employers
during this era. On May 14, 1874, the Athens Messenger responded to
a conflict between strikebreakers and strikers by stating: "It is
the privilege of the strikers to refuse to work upon terms unsatis-
factory to themselves, but they have no right to interfere with those
to whom the terms are satisfactory." The Logan Republican added that
the central question which concerned the American people was: "Shall
a man be permitted to work when he wishes to?" In 1877 the Joliet
Republican purported to advocate Negro rights when it criticized Braidwood miners who had forced black strikebreakers to leave the community, and it concluded that "the popular impression that an American citizen is at liberty to pursue his occupation anywhere in the United States, protected from molestation by the laws of the country, seems to be a popular fallacy." By the 1890's the Athens Messenger and Joliet Republican had conceded a role for labor, and they advocated a more harmonious relationship between labor and capital. In so doing, these newspapers, perhaps unwittingly, anticipated an era of progressive reform which advocated greater class harmony. Before they reached these conclusions, however, these journals constantly criticized the conduct of labor organizations. As Gutman has suggested, the local press often allied itself with workers in the late nineteenth century, but many newspapers blasted striking miners with rhetoric which was strikingly similar to that of employers.

IV

In addition to his examination of local governments and newspapers, Herbert Gutman noted the interrelationships of non-miners and coal miners during industrial disputes of the 1870's. Gutman maintained that the non-industrial, small town middle class viewed industrial capitalism much differently than their urban counterparts. According to Gutman, many small businessmen and professionals "unhesitatingly rejected the social outlook of the operators" during the Hocking Valley strike of 1874. At the same time in Braidwood, Illinois, local businessmen aided striking miners and criticized coal operators
for interfering in local matters. As Paul Faler has suggested, however, this view of community "solidarity against the capitalist would indicate an extensive network of relationships that created loyalties among people of diverse occupations, but Gutman gives us only fragmentary evidence of the ties between them." This study has revealed some "ties" between the middle classes and coal miners of Illinois and Ohio, but the evidence has also necessitated some important qualifications of the Gutman thesis.

Herbert Gutman documented instances of community support for Illinois and Ohio coal miners in the 1870's, but non-miners showed humanitarian sympathy for their neighbors in these areas throughout the nineteenth century. In 1889 a Chicago Tribune reporter explained community relations in Braidwood: "The aged Scotchwoman who keeps the Cottage Hotel, told with tears in her eyes how she had relieved the immediate wants of certain of her neighbors. Another lady, the wife of a business man makes soap and bakes bread every day, which she distributes to the needy." A few days later the same reporter wrote that the storekeepers "have long ago given all they can to starving miners, and must look forward themselves to an uncertain income until the strike is ended." One businessman, quoted in the Joliet Republic and Sun, exclaimed: "Why, the men have not earned $15 a month the past year, and this amount to support large families, as most of the miners have." A miner from Shawnee, Ohio, explained the effect of depression in 1895 when he stated that "had it not been for the kindness of storekeepers, we would have cried for relief months ago."
Sympathy may have motivated some support, but defense of the community apparently prompted "a large citizens' meeting" in Nelsonville, Ohio, in 1874 in which a doctor and school teacher protested against the Nelsonville community being judged as riotous because of personal quarrels. They complained of newspaper reports which had been calculated to give Nelsonville a bad reputation."\textsuperscript{22}

This tacit support of local coal miners may have been motivated by the realization that local business could not flourish without a prosperous wage-earning class. Michael Ratchford, a United Mine Workers' official in the 1890's, expressed this view when he wrote: "When the miners get living wages, these men [local businessmen] share the benefits. They also suffer to a greater or less extent when the miners are underpaid." Fred Dilcher of Buchtel, Ohio, wrote the \textit{United Mine Workers' Journal} in 1896 and claimed that local businessmen, who were also former miners, had aided laborers by "keeping their prices down."\textsuperscript{23}

Merchants often supported workers during disputes, because they resented the power of large industrial conglomerates. Company stores dominated the economies of many communities (see Chapter 3), and local storekeepers often competed with these establishments for the coal miner's trade. In 1883 the Ohio Bureau of Labor Statistics claimed the company stores in the Hocking Valley monopolized the business of the communities and shut out any "active healthy competition," because local businessmen had to sell on credit or accept scrip. Businessmen in Braidwood blasted the coal companies for causing the 1889 strike by claiming they had overcrowded their mines in order to
aid their truck stores. The Illinois Bureau of Labor Statistics (1890) claimed that company stores had a lasting, harmful impact upon local business. According to the Bureau, "buildings that rented a few years ago at $75 per month cannot get takers at $5" in many mining communities, and it blamed the truck system for this depreciation. When coal miners struck in this era, local merchants found that the conflicts enabled them to strike back at "absentee" mine owners by "cultivating the patronage of the miners." During strikes coal operators rescinded the credit system for their company stores, and local shopkeepers quickly filled the gap.\(^{24}\) Regardless of the reasons for the businessman's motivation, his support of coal miners clearly aided these laborers during times of trouble.

Businessmen, local farmers, and professionals may have aided their neighbors in the small mining towns during industrial disputes, but they also occupied a different position than the miners within the communities. Strikes paralyzed the business community and threatened the profitability of small enterprises, and such conflicts caused much "uneasiness" among small businessmen in the late 1800's. Newspapers reported the closing of many businesses during the 1874 coal strikes in Illinois and Ohio, because merchants wished to avoid doing a large credit business. In 1884 the New Lexington Herald noted that New York trade unions had made contributions for the relief of Shawnee, Ohio's miners, and it added: "Our businessmen are not so jubilant. Many of them claim they are not paying expenses, and say that if the strike continues until spring they will be obliged to discontinue business."\(^{25}\) Local farmers also faced the problem of
relieving the miner's distress as committees and private families "scoured the countryside" for anything edible. As the Hocking Valley strike entered its fourth month, the Athens Messenger reported that miners had been "making raids on the stock of farmers for food, and scarcely a night passes but that cattle are butchered in the fields and carcasses carried away." Viewing the situation in Spring Valley, Illinois, in 1889, H. C. Hullinger wrote to Henry D. Lloyd: "The farmers are placed in a very perplexing situation. They are not so hard hearted as to wish to see suffering. And yet as long as the miners are under the direction of the Union they feel that if the Unions are responsible for telling them not to go to work, they should provide the 'necessaries.'"26

Such situations could produce tension between the mining and non-mining residents of the coal communities. The Joliet Republican explained the pressure tactics of Braidwood's coal miners who petitioned merchants and asked them not to supply strikebreakers during the strike of 1874. It added, however, that few of the merchants had "signed the agreement." A Chicago Tribune correspondent reported that a "charitable doctor" had not pressed a family for the collection of a bill in the 1889 Braidwood strike, but the reporter added that "the necessary medicines for the sick child could not be obtained any longer. The druggist has shut down on any further credit." When violence erupted in New Straitsville, Ohio, in 1884-1885, fire insurance companies withdrew policies from local businesses.27 Violent, pro-longed strikes frightened and dismayed local businessmen who felt that such activity reduced the value of their enterprises.
Many middle class people viewed labor unions and violent labor activity as alien to a sense of community, and they expressed disapproval when the striking miners took action which might harm the community's image. Testifying before an Ohio investigating commission, Thomas Knauss, a Nelsonville businessman, claimed local merchants "desired that, if miners had a union at all, they ought to have one which would be for the benefit of the Hocking Valley. It ought to stand on its own merits, and not be controlled by outside localities." In New Straitsville, a local merchant, who feared the effects of violence, told a reporter from the Ohio State Journal that "if I were the syndicate I would nail up every coal bank in this town and would keep it nailed for ten years." Another non-mining resident of New Straitsville praised Colonel Weldy for "locating h—l in the Hocking Valley, and intimated privately that this town was not a mile from it." The Athens Messenger claimed local citizens wished to suppress "the state of riot and anarchy" in the valley because it was a "grievous detriment to all local business interests." Similar problems existed in Spring Valley, Illinois, in 1889, and Father John Powers explained their nature to Henry D. Lloyd when he wrote: "Again the business men are restive and deprecate further newspaper notoriety for the town and seem to think that Scott [a coal operator] will settle quicker by being let alone awhile." Three weeks later Lloyd responded: "if the business men and other 'middle class' people of Spring Valley have not the wit, and virtue and bravery to see, feel, and say to Mr. Scott, and the world, that the miners' cause is their own . . . they will deserve their fate."
Local merchants remained silent at times because they viewed themselves as intermediaries in conflicts, and they often sought to reconcile differences between operators and miners. In 1884 the Cincinnati Commercial Gazette reported that the merchants of New Straitsville had, "as far as they dared, talked up the advantage of the miners resuming work" at a reduced wage, and the Ohio State Journal claimed the local Nelsonville newspaper had urged the miners "to stop resistance and go to work." During the 1889 strike in Spring Valley, Illinois, Adjutant General Joseph Vance informed the Governor that "there is evidence of a sentiment of hostility toward both mineowners and miners among citizens not engaged in these pursuits, for the reason, as stated by them, that neither party seems to have made much effort to come to an agreement or to compromise their differences." Henry D. Lloyd explained this attitude in his personal study on Spring Valley by asserting that local merchants "felt the prejudices of their class against the workingmen and their ideas, although this prejudice was often tempered by the kindest personal feelings." The Chicago Tribune reported that the newspaper and businessmen in Streator, Illinois, had unsuccessfully attempted to mediate a conflict between operators and miners, and it noted that the merchants had counseled their neighbors to submit "on the principle that half a loaf is better than no bread at all." These compromising efforts may have furthered community tension, because the miners often rejected the proposed sacrifices and continued the strikes.

If local merchants and other non-mining residents sympathized with and aided the coal miners of their communities, some may have
done so only because they feared the consequences of refusal.

Alexander Crombie, a Braidwood operator who praised the behavior of miners in 1874, incurred the wrath of the town's miners the following year when he issued scrip in lieu of pay. At a mass meeting the miners passed resolutions which requested "all storekeepers of Braidwood to refuse and decline to receive store orders issued for pay. We on our part promising that our cash and patronage shall go only to those storekeepers who will aid us in keeping down this incipient trick trick by refusing to accept or to give goods on such orders." During the Hocking Valley conflict of 1884, miners in Corning posted notices which urged a boycott of the "store of J. W. Monahan, grocer, and Adamson and Co., dry goods and notions, because they had refused to give anything for the relief of the Nelsonville miners." In September, 1884, the Ohio State Journal reported that the businessmen of New Straitsville feared "to say anything against the striking miner lest their business be boycotted." Tension in the valley reached a climax in late November when a group of non-mining citizens of Nelsonville unanimously adopted the following resolutions:

Whereas, it is credibly reported that a number of our miners have expressed a desire to go to work, but through fear of violence to their persons or property from threats that have been made, are still standing out; Therefore, be it

Resolved, That the citizens not directly interested as miners or operators do hereafter denounce all such usurpation and pledge their influence and support to the enforcement of the law in the protection of all such citizens in their rights.

Resolved, That all miners who are now at work, and who come to our city on business shall receive the same support and protection.
Resolved, That a copy of the above resolutions be furnished the mayor, and he be requested to instruct his subordinates to the prompt enforcement of the law wherever such violations or attacks be made, and that fifty copies of the above be posted throughout the town.

Two days later the miners of Nelsonville responded. "All at said meeting will be given two days to clear their skirts, then their names will be published, for BOYCOTT [newspaper's emphasis] is the word." A few weeks later a Shawnee correspondent informed the Athens Messenger that "considerable excitement exists in business circles here today, owing to a notice being posted here this morning asking the miners and their friends to boycott "several business and professional men who allegedly sympathized with the operators." Spring Valley, Illinois experienced a similar conflict in 1889 and, according to Adjutant General Vance, numerous merchants had been forced to sign a memorial concerning destitution in the community because "they feared being boycotted in business had they refused." The national coal strike of 1894 erupted into violence at Spring Valley, and one dry goods merchant told the Chicago Tribune that anarchists armed with "dynamite bombs" had terrorized the community.

Clearly, such examples cast doubt on the assertion that small industrial communities largely escaped the social class problems which plagued urban areas. Whether in governmental, editorial, or local economic matters, important qualifications must be added to the Gutman thesis on community consciousness. There is abundant evidence to support Gutman's conclusions, but one cannot ignore the information which challenges the validity of his thesis. One might object that Gutman's findings focused on the 1870's while the information in
this study spanned the last three decades of the nineteenth century, but conflict between the mining and non-mining portions of the population existed in the 1870's as well. The problems which separated coal miners and their neighbors arose as a result of the different roles which each group played within their communities. The various groups necessarily interacted, but the social class differences made conflict possible, or even probable, during times of intense labor activity. Cutman's vision ultimately romanticized the nature of community in pre-capitalist days, and it offered the hope that society might be reconstructed around more humane, community-oriented goals. While such a potential for democratic grassroots change exists, its realization does not necessitate a construction of a mythical past. Coal miners and their middle class neighbors shared similar problems in the late 1800's, but they also perceived things differently on numerous occasions.
FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER 5


3 Cincinnati Commercial, May 23, 1874; Chicago Tribune, April 21, 1877; Athens Messenger, July 10, 1884. For information on Daniel McLaughlin, see Clifton K. Yearley, Britons in American Labor (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957), pp. 138-139.

4 Workingman's Advocate, June 20, 1874; Chicago Tribune, June 22, 1874; Hocking Sentinel, April 9, 1874.

5 Elias Boudinot to George Hoadly, July 15, 1884; Hoadly Papers, Ohio State Historical Society Archives, Columbus, Ohio; New York Times, July 16, 1884; Henry Spurrer to George Hoadly, July 14, 1884; Hoadly Papers; Ohio State Journal, July 17, 1884; Ibid., July 20, 1884.

6 Lorain Republican, August 7, 1884; Proceedings of the Hocking Valley, p. 285; John Swinton's Paper, August 17, 1884.

7 Ohio State Journal, April 25, 1894.

8 Workingman's Advocate, June 16, 1877; Joliet Republican, July 28, 1877; Chicago Times, August 9, 1877.

9 Chicago Tribune, July 14, 1889; Joliet Republic and Sun, July 19, 1889; Chicago Tribune, June 27, 1889; Ibid., June 3, 1889.
10. Ohio State Journal, July 17, 1884; J. J. McCarty to George Hoadly, August 31, 1884, Hoadly Papers; Athens Messenger, December 25, 1884.

11. Logan Republican, January 15, 1885; Ohio State Journal, January 12, 1885; Ibid., January 15, 1884.


13. Hocking Sentinel, July 17, 1884; Ibid., September 18, 1884; Ibid., July 1, 1897.


15. Athens Messenger, July 31, 1884; Ibid., August 28, 1884; Ibid., November 13, 1884; Ibid., February 19, 1885.

16. Logan Republican, September 11, 1884; Joliet Republic and Sun, May 31, 1889; Ibid., July 12, 1889.

17. Athens Messenger, July 9, 1874; Ibid., July 17, 1884; Joliet Republican, August 8, 1877.

18. Athens Messenger, May 14, 1874; Logan Republican, April 30, 1874; Joliet Republican, July 28, 1877; Athens Messenger, July 22, 1897; Joliet Republican, May 11, 1894.


22. Ohio State Journal, May 12, 1874. In his study of Lynn, Massachusetts, Allen Dawley found that "the sheer numerical preponderance of shoemakers," the personalized nature of business, and a sense of community helped workers obtain support from the city's retail businessmen. See Allen Dawley, Class and Community, p. 56.


25. *Joliet Republican*, August 8, 1874; *Chicago Tribune*, June 30, 1874; *New Lexington Herald*, November 27, 1884.


27. *Joliet Republican*, August 1, 1874; *Chicago Tribune*, June 22, 1889; *Ohio State Journal*, February 5, 1885.


In his study on Western workers, Melvin Dubofsky claimed corporations successfully separated workers from the non-working class by playing on the latter's fear of violence and radicalism. See Dubofsky, "Origins of Western Working Class," pp. 136-137, 146-147.
CHAPTER 6

COAL MINERS AND THE WORLD: THE INTERRELATIONSHIP OF IDEAS AND ACTION

I

Coal miners sought influence in their communities during the late nineteenth century, but these workers also faced problems which transcended the boundaries of their small towns. As the nation industrialized, a national market replaced the old local economy and created a need for institutions which reflected this changing world. Thus, industrial workers often shaped local events but found that they could not always control larger national forces which increasingly dominated the small communities. According to Herbert Gutman, local successes of workers did not guarantee long-term success, because employers often appealed to state and Federal allies when they confronted their employees during industrial disputes. People in the United States became increasingly interdependent, local autonomy decreased, and large corporations began to establish hegemony during the last decades of the nineteenth century.¹ Such changes occurred slowly and they often caused much suffering, because, as Gutman has correctly suggested, industrial capitalism had not been "fully institutionalized" by the late 1800's. Yet, the process was inexorable, and it is important to examine the reaction of coal miners to the changing nature of American life.

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Illinois and Ohio coal miners fought for better working conditions and influenced community relations, but they also expressed concern about their place in a larger national community. Aware of the importance of ideas, these men supported the establishment of religious and educational institutions which served the miners' needs. Convinced that they could only succeed with the aid of a sympathetic public, coal miners showed an open disdain for a hostile urban press and they designed alternative methods to advance their cause. Knowing that the power of the state government exceeded that of their localities, workers sought the aid of their officials and frequently received a sympathetic response. Herbert Gutman justifiably claimed that the workers of the late 1800's had social and political power within their communities, but he should have extended his analysis to an investigation of their activity in a broader social setting. This chapter will focus on the efforts of Ohio and Illinois coal miners to influence the superstructure of an emerging American form of corporate capitalism.

II

Nineteenth century coal miners often supported a form of religious expression and educational training which was designed to advance the cause of working men while shielding them from the harshness of the new industrial environment. Such views were hardly new, because European workers had been formulating similar institutions since the onset of the Industrial Revolution. E. P. Thompson argued that Methodism "opened its door wide to the working class," because "as a religion of 'the heart' rather than of the intellect, the
simplest and least educated might hope to attain grace." Eric Hobsbawm claimed that religion protected the working man "against the entire society in which rational calculation dominated and against the upper classes who deformed religion in their own image." While Hobsbawm maintained that "Methodism advanced when Radicalism advanced" and connected this religion to "mounting popular agitation," Thompson asserted that religion ultimately recast the rebellious, pre-industrial worker into the "submissive industrial worker." Thompson claimed the "energies and emotions which were dangerous to the social order, or which were merely unproductive were released in the harmless form of sporadic love-feasts, watch-nights, band-meetings, or revivalist campaigns." Clearly, religion could serve the cause of its working class adherents or it could reflect the demands of the social order.

Census figures in 1870 indicated that Methodism was the strongest religion in Will County, Illinois, and in Athens County, Ohio, and some miners used the ideas of religion to advance their cause. On January 17, 1895, the United Mine Workers' Journal printed a long article by Murray City, Ohio's William Haskins who entitled his essay, "Labor and Church." Haskins argued for an integration of religion and life, but he admitted that some of his fellow churchgoers perceived the role of religion very differently. He noted that his church had hired a minister who "was a workingman and preached to the workingman; but, alas! some of our church going people condemned him and said that he was talking politics." Haskins likened these church members to hypocritical religious philanthropists, "because they never seek to remove the conditions which excite their sympathy."
According to Haskins, "their philanthropy is sentiment, not the philanthropy of Christ. Their religious observances and charitable donations are mere cloaks to hide their business transactions in the business world." He admitted that industrial conditions often strained religious faith, because "when the poor go home and see the empty larder it certainly makes one wonder where all the blessings God has blessed us with are at." Continuing his social commentary, Haskins noted "Christ taught brotherly love and fraternity to his people. Who was it that taught them to 'love gold more than thyself or thy neighbor'?" Unwittingly reflecting the Thompson-Hobsbawm thesis of a religion of sentiment rather than intellect, Haskins then urged: "let us have some preaching of God's word instead of out of some theologian's works, and you will see larger congregations at church." He argued that workingmen would ultimately be rewarded, because "when organized labor stands at the bar of justice ... it will surely find the man of the people, the CARPENTER's son [author's emphasis] of Bethlehem present to defend the principals [sic] advocated while on earth."4

It has been impossible to ascertain the role of religion in the average miner's life in these coal regions, but fragmentary evidence indicates that religion and clerical figures played an important part in the mining areas. Examining life in Braidwood during the 1874 strike, a Chicago Tribune reporter claimed women and children "fight the good fight and keep the faith, but the men are not quite so noted for orthodoxy, and, as a rule, prefer to observe Sunday as a day of rest rather than as a day of devotion." In 1884, however, officials in New
Sraitsville conducted their trial of Pinkerton detectives, who had been charged with disrupting the community, in the local Methodist church. During the 1890's Richard L. Davis, a black miner from Rendville, Ohio, wrote numerous letters to the United Mine Workers' Journal, and he often used religious arguments to encourage unionization of workers. On one occasion he noted that many men refused to consider collective action and explained that "most of those of whom I speak claim to be Christians . . . I have never found any place in the Bible where Christ taught that man should take undue advantage of his fellow man, but rather that he should do unto others as he would have them do unto him." Supporting the principles of unionization, Davis quoted Acts 27:31 when he stated: "Except these abide in the ship, ye shall not be saved."⁵

Clerics in these areas reflected multiple opinions and approaches, since some accepted the role as described by William Haskins while others concerned themselves with the morality of individual behavior. Father John Powers of Spring Valley, Illinois, clearly represented the former, because he corresponded frequently with Henry D. Lloyd and sought direct aid for the suffering miners. In 1891 he testified before an Illinois legislative investigating committee and urged the legislature to abolish all company stores. Powers said "he found it hard work to educate people in the paths of duty when soulless corporations were daily devising schemes to rob them of all they possess." According to the United Mine Workers' Journal, this investigating committee learned that "V. L. Scott, chief owner of the Spring Valley coal mines, had written a letter to
Bishop Spaulding of Peoria asking him to remove Father Powers from Spring Valley or he would shut down his coal mines at that place." Another minister, Elder Jayne of Nelsonville's Church of Christ, reflected much different views in a Labor Day speech in 1895. Jayne criticized the dominance of "gold," but he also claimed labor had attempted to "perpetuate the reign of force and compulsion." After blasting the "professional agitator," Jayne summed up his polemic with the following: "I venture the assertion that fully nine-tenths of the strikes in our country have had their origin in some vile groggery or saloon." The United Mine Workers' Journal hastily added: "While printing this statement, we deem it right to say that we strongly dispute it."6

Educational reform also received attention from coal miners who sought new facilities as a means of self-improvement. In December, 1894, Richard L. Davis wrote the union's Journal and supported the establishment of reading rooms in "every little mining camp," and he urged that the rooms be well-stocked in labor newspapers. As an alternative to idle leisure time, Davis asked coal miners to "get all the material we possibly can treating upon social and economic questions . . . then let us meet on certain nights during the week and read and discuss such matters as will have a tendency to elevate us socially, politically and otherwise." A few weeks later the United Mine Workers' Journal noted that the men of Shawnee, Ohio, had started a "Literary and Debating Club," and it praised Richard Davis for opening the idea. An Illinois miner, Alfred Brood of Coal City, concurred with the sentiment and urged miners to support education.
rather than the local saloon. Responding to the charges that miners drank too much, "Bill," a contributor to the Journal from New Straitsville, maintained that the miners did not "indulge in this respect any more than any other class of people, and I will say not near as much as lawyers, politicians, law-makers, and supreme court judges who ride around over the country on free passes from the money power." "Bill" also introduced a note of cynicism into the question of miners and education. He acknowledged that miners were interested in education, but he claimed neither the "common school" nor "intelligence and oratory" could lift the miners out of their condition.  
Despite such notes of cynicism, coal miners frequently sought to direct religious and educational activities in a manner which directly aided them.

III

Wishing to project a positive public image, coal miners in Illinois and Ohio faced the unpleasant reality of a hostile urban press during most of the late nineteenth century. Violent strikes and riotous behavior produced immediate, almost paranoia, responses from urban newspapers which supported rigorous law and order measures. In 1877, amidst talk of a national railroad strike and "Red War," the Chicago Tribune warned striking miners in Braidwood not to resist the state militia. In a parting admonition an editorial writer advised: "Let it be instant submission or instant bullets." Three years earlier, the Ohio State Journal labeled the Hocking Valley's striking miners as "aggressors" who had been "guilty of criminal violence against both
person and property." The same journal blamed some "powerful agent" for backing the "communist element" in the Hocking Valley in 1885, and it claimed the "law-abiding citizens" of the valley feared being "assassinated or dynamited." The Chicago Tribune felt the "sight of the militia" had a "wholesome effect on the riotous disposition of the strikers" in Braidwood in 1889, and it praised Colonel Bennett for his order "that the first man who moved a foot would be shot."6

In its coverage of violence and radicalism among coal miners during this era, the Tribune clearly linked the disruptive forces with the immigrant population rather than their native counterparts. It argued this connection as early as 1874 when the journal noted that the "foreign element" sympathized with striking coal miners while native Americans viewed the "claims of the proprietors with a more favorable eye." The Tribune saved its harshest nativistic invective for the national strike of 1894 when it announced that "blatant anarchists, bred in the slums of Europe, have established a reign of terror in Spring Valley... They impudently insult decent appearing people upon the streets and defy the laws with vehemence." A few days later the newspaper printed the following headlines: "Reds on a Rampage," "Hostile Move to be Made at Dawn Today," "Spring Valley Strikers Will Force Workers Out." In the same issue an editorial entitled, "The Hun and Slav Rebellion," urged that "the jails should be filled with these murderous wretches, the penitentiaries yawn for them... They must be taught they cannot run this country into the ground." An editorial the following year claimed that Spring Valley had been a curse to Illinois "ever since the mines were opened
there," because the mining population was largely "alien and lawless." In 1897 the **Tribune** blamed "lawless demonstrations on the turbulent Anarchists and their dupes from eastern and southern Europe," and it claimed that Englishmen, Irishmen, Germans and French were "rarely" found in this class.⁹

Coal miners viewed these urban newspapers as company agents, because the journals' views often mirrored the perspectives of coal operators. Violence and strikes clearly threatened private property, and the **Ohio State Journal** claimed many businessmen in 1884 were asking: "Is it safe for us to make investments when property has no protection?" Claiming that the coal companies incurred an unnecessary expense when they hired their own guards, the **Journal** urged the state to protect private property. When "many leading Socialists" visited the Hocking Valley, the newspaper noted that their presence had "caused much uneasiness among property owners." City newspapers also reflected the mine owners' "right to work" philosophy, and they constantly argued that miners had no right, in the **Ohio State Journal**'s words, "to interfere with the property of the man who declines to employ them on the terms they demand, and they have no right to interfere with the liberty of any citizen who chooses to work upon any terms satisfactory to himself." The **Chicago Tribune** argued that union combinations which interfered with the course of business inflicted "heavy loss upon a far greater number of workers than those engaged in coal mining." Examining the impact of a strike in Ohio's Hocking Valley, the **New York Times** castigated union officials and it expressed amaze-
trade is depressed, and that labor of all kinds commands low prices, and they will not go to work until the charitably disposed grow weary of contributing means calculated to place a premium upon idleness and its handmaiden, crime." Occasionally, however, an urban correspondent would express less concern about the miners' "idleness" and focus on humanitarian questions. Reporting from Braidwood for the Chicago Tribune in 1889, Nora Marks stated: "To one who would see these people there would be no question of right and wrong, but only one of suffering."  

In addition to their sympathy for the philosophical position of mine owners, urban newspapers also printed material which directly aided operators during disputes with employees. The Hocking Valley strike of 1884-1885 lasted nine months, and newspaper accounts announced the impending end of the strike more than three months before its completion. On November 29, 1884, the New York Times claimed that observers believed the strike would be "smothered out completely after December 1." The Times stated that the Nelsonville News, "which has strongly upheld the striking miners in the past, now admits that the end of the strike is near, and intimates that the time is short for those who desire work to obtain it, as the places are being rapidly filled up." Apparently, some of the local press did adopt this perspective, because on December 4, the Athens Messenger reported that the "backbone of the strike may be regarded as broken." According to The Alarm, an anarchist newspaper, the Hocking Valley Syndicate sent out "every day or two" reports to the Associated Press of the country which predicted "the imminent end of the strike." Thomas McEldowney,
a miner, complained that the strike had been "broken several times by
correspondents, who are paid agents of the company." In a letter to
John Swinton's Paper, a labor journal, union leader John McBride
alleged that "the Syndicate and their agents are proclaiming the
Hocking Strike ended, purposely to cut off outside aid."

Some urban newspapers, like the Chicago Tribune, continued
their ardent anti-union and anti-labor activity throughout the nine-
teenth century, but the Ohio State Journal spoke the language of
"Progressive reform" by the 1890's. Viewing the national coal strike
of 1894 and the actions of UMWA President John McBride, the Tribune
sarcastically asked: "Who is this McBride that, with cigar between
his teeth and body lolling in an armchair and his heels on a table,
dictates to hundreds of thousands of toilers that they shall thus
deprive themselves of wages and imperil the welfare of many millions?"
A much different view of this conflict prevailed in the editorial
pages of the Ohio State Journal, which praised John McBride and the
"conservative element in the executive board." The Journal supported
McBride because it felt he represented a "perpetual breakwater"
against "Jacobin" and "communist" miners who urged more militant
action when confronting coal companies. In 1897 the Journal advocated
arbitration of grievances because "If the struggle is prolonged a
riot may occur . . . . Whether by national or state act, the strike
should be arbitrated before it gets beyond the control of the miners' associations." It also noted that the "Association of Republican
Editors of Ohio" had expressed "hearty sympathy with the coal miners
of the country" and the organization pledged its support of all
"lawful and orderly means" to improve their situation. This new editorial position also reflected a change in the attitudes of mine owners who had begun to advocate arbitration in an attempt to avoid violent labor activity.

Given the perspective of the nation's urban newspapers throughout most of the late nineteenth century, however, it is scarcely surprising that coal miners felt they received unfair press coverage. Aware of the importance of the press, miners in the Hocking Valley searched for information which would vindicate their action during the early months of the strike of 1884. A reporter for the *Ohio State Journal* noted: "If you purchase a daily paper on the street and commence reading about the 'mining situation,' you will soon have a crowd of anxious strikers about you, who, with abated breath, eagerly listen for some news that might be construed in their favor." Several months later, a representative of the *Cincinnati Commercial-Gazette* found the miners to be "intelligent, and in many cases really so well informed that a great fondness for reading is observable in their conversation when they are brought to converse at all." According to this reporter, everyone he addressed "seemed to fully understand the situation." He then quoted a Nelsonville miner as having said: "The newspapers haven't done us justice ... men will come here and the bosses will get hold of them and give their view of the matter, and that's all they ever hear. Our side of the question is never heard, and I believe you are all alike." When the correspondent suggested "there might be two ways of looking at the matter, he was met by a look of doubt." By 1885 cynicism and suspicion prevailed among the
valley's miners, and the *Athens Messenger* noted the strikers were "much reserved and loth to speak before reporters against whom, as a class, they are very bitter in their denunciations, claiming that the newspapermen have generally misrepresented them and their intentions and deeds and have lauded the operators to the skies." Similar events occurred in Illinois, because in 1877 the *Chicago Times* noted "its representative was excellently well treated by the [Braidwood] citizens, although some of them felt rather crusty about some of the recent editorial comments on their position." In 1894 a local deputy sheriff informed the *Chicago Tribune* that "he did not consider the life of any newspaperman safe within the borders of Spring Valley, Peru, or La Salle."  

To combat the influence of this hostile press, coal miners turned to the labor press and vented their rage against the news media in the United States. During a national coal strike in 1894, the *Journal of the Knights of Labor* accused the capitalistic press of accepting a few strikebreakers "as the proper exponents of the laboring masses, while the many are regarded as rioters." Richard L. Davis blamed an individual contributor to the *Ohio State Journal* for misleading the public, but he felt the people had begun to learn that the miner's position had been misrepresented. On the other hand, D. E. Jones of New Straitsville viewed the daily papers as the chief culprits, because he claimed they ignored the working people during disputes and printed "arguments against the strikers." Jones expressed incredulity when he noted that these papers printed in "big letters, and as loud as any labor paper in our land, 'the press is free for
all.' Yes, I say for all the rich and that only." Dan Wallace of Hollister, Ohio, urged miners not to support any newspaper that did not "uphold the dignity of labor," and he stated that "it is labor that should have the daily papers instead of monopoly; laboring men, why not have a daily paper? why support the Associated Press, that is controlled by monopoly or run by some political machine? It is only buying weapons for your enemy's army." The United Mine Workers' Journal accompanied its call for a strike in 1894 with the following advice: "Be not deluded by newspaper reports nor mere rumors, but apply to us for information." 14

Coal miners did not always limit their hostility to words, since hostile newspaper "observers and spies" risked personal injury if they offended local inhabitants. In 1894 a La Salle businessman told the Chicago Tribune that any "well-dressed stranger" in Spring Valley was in "danger of his life," and he asserted that "I was stopped on the street and made to prove that I was not a Chicago correspondent. . . . If I were the Tribune correspondent I would leave this part of the country before dark tonight. The Anarchists are violent in the extreme in denouncing that paper." During the Hocking Valley strike of 1884 the Ohio State Journal reported that miners in New Straitsville had "resolved to boycott the State Journal and not to patronize anyone who gives patronage to it." The following day the Journal acknowledged that it received daily a "mass of letters from the mining district setting forth real or imaginary grievances against pretty much everything in general and the State Journal in particular. . . . The space in our column is limited but
our waste basket is large and waste paper is a merchantable article." Less than a month later the Journal announced that miners in New Straitsville had expelled its agent and a committee escorted him to the train. According to the Journal, "the business men and good citizens here [New Straitsville] refer to the manner in which Mr. Jones, the State Journal's agent, was driven off by 'law-abiding citizens,' as shameful to the reputation of a town." If miners perceived the press as an ally, however, they expressed their gratitude. The Illinois convention of the United Mine Workers unanimously commended E. R. Smith of the Joliet Republican in 1898 for giving "valuable assistance to us through his paper during our strike." 15

A hostile news media made it difficult for miners to obtain sufficient public aid during times of crisis. During the Hocking Valley strike of 1884-1885 the New York Times accompanied its stories on the imminent end of the strike with an expose of fraudulent practices of relief committees in Ohio. According to the Times, members from a relief committee canvassed Springfield, Ohio, for funds to aid the striking miners but, after completing their mission, they proceeded to "paint the town red" by frequenting the "town saloons." Two months later the Times proclaimed that relief supplies had drastically dwindled, and it noted that "with no assistance from the outside the striking miners that cannot get work are now in a pitiable condition." According to the newspaper, the majority of the miners realized that the advocates of the strike were "individuals who do not want work." Interestingly, despite its editorial position, the Chicago Tribune supported relief efforts to aid striking miners in
northern Illinois in 1889. It reported the amount of relief collected, and the newspaper announced events like benefit concerts which were designed to aid the suffering families of miners. 16

Nevertheless, striking miners normally depended upon other laboring men, rather than the press, when they sought outside aid. In 1874 the New Lexington Democratic Herald reported that the Hocking Valley miners received four dollars per man each week from their fellow miners in Pennsylvania and Ohio's Mahoning Valley. Ten years later the valley's miners sought support from various labor groups throughout the country. Alexander Johnson, a Nelsonville miner, informed John Swinton's Paper that the coal miners of the Sunday Creek Valley and Jackson County, Ohio, had saved his fellow workers from starvation. The New York Times reported that the city's Central Labor Union had promised food and clothing for the valley's miners, and it claimed "labor associations in all the major cities" were engaged in fund-raising drives. In New York City, alone, the strikers received aid from the cigar makers, carvers, clothing knife cutters, upholsterers and the Bohemian newspaper, Deinicki Americki. On December 2 John L. Sullivan gave a boxing exhibition in Madison Square Garden to benefit the striking miners. The coal miners also appealed to radical labor organizations, because Neal McGachen, a miner from Shawnee, journeyed to New York and spoke before a "large meeting of the International Working People's Association." Samuel Davis, Secretary of the Miner's Relief Committee in New Straitsville, wrote The Alarm to thank Ohio miners for their efforts, and he expressed appreciation to Albert Parsons for his $155 contribution. 17
When other laborers needed their aid, coal miners quickly reciprocated by raising funds in their communities. Daniel McLaughlin wrote the *Miners National Record* in 1875 and asserted that Braidwood's miners had agreed to contribute one dollar per man each month to aid striking miners in Indiana. In 1893 the *United Mine Workers' Journal* reported that "a committee soliciting for the suffering families of Homestead" had visited "Shawnee and part of the Hocking Valley and received liberal donations from the majority of the miners while there." Thus, despite a hostile urban press, coal miners managed to devise alternative means to express their viewpoints and aid their cause.

IV

If local government officials often aided miners during industrial disputes, state government figures also showed sympathy for these workers and used their power judiciously. Although Governor George Hoadly sent troops to the Hocking Valley in late August, 1884, he pursued a cautious policy and he hoped to minimize the use of force. Hoadly's telegram to Thomas Dill, Ohio's Adjutant General, stated: "Sheriff McCarty reports danger to bridges on Hocking Valley road. I am not prepared to believe such danger exists... Bear in mind throughout, that I do not desire troops to remain longer than it is necessary to preserve order and sustain civil authorities." This action received substantial criticism from Colonel Churchill, an official in the Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron Company, who wrote the *New York Times* and explained that the company had to protect its own property. Churchill claimed the company's employment of
private guards put it "under no obligation to the State of Ohio, nor to the curious man who occupies the executive chair, the most uncertain man, who ever held the office. He promised protection, then refused it. He issued the famous proclamation, and the strikers and rioters laughed at it, and we were compelled to protect our property at our own expense, although we are taxed heavily." 19

National coal strikes in 1894 and 1897 elicited sympathetic responses from the chief executives in both Ohio and Illinois. One historian has claimed that William McKinley, Governor of Ohio in 1894, acted prudently and cautiously after "miners purportedly burned railroad bridges, broke into company tool sheds, sidetracked a coal train, and destroyed couplings and broke rods" in eastern Athens County. Governor John Altgeld sent troops to Spring Valley, Illinois, during the same year, but he cautioned the commanding officer that it was "not the business of the soldiers to act as custodians or guards to protect private property. The law authorizes them to assist civil authorities in preserving the peace ... and when an owner of property feels it necessary to have it guarded he must do so at his own expense." Three days later the Chicago Tribune urged Altgeld to "teach these anarchistic aliens a lesson on the ability of the people to maintain and protect their rights," but the Tribune added that "the socialistic Governor has no sympathy with the rights of property." When the Illinois mine owners threatened to import foreign labor to break the strike of 1897, Governor John Tanner claimed "they will not have the support of our administration. I believe in taking care of our own." In 1897 Ohio Governor Asa Bushnell personally organized
relief efforts to aid the destitute miners of the State. Bushnell expressed himself as a "strong believer in arbitration. Life is but a compromise. . . . It is not right that they [miners] should be so miserably paid. . . . I would put the advance on the price of coal and let the consumer pay it." 20

Coal miners often received sympathy from state government officials, but they demanded such support through various labor organizations. An assembly of the Knights of Labor in Shawnee, Ohio, asked Governor Hoadly to remove Pinkerton guards from the valley because they perceived the importation of armed men to be "unconstitutional." Miners also received support from laborers outside the Hocking Valley, because John Roetgerman wrote Hoadly that, as a member of the Cincinnati House Painters' Union, he had been "directed to call your Excellency's attention to the continued keeping of armed forces in the Hocking Valley, to overawe and intimidate the laborers there who are now locked out for demanding their just rights." The Ohio State Journal explained the miners' awareness of the political situation when it noted that in New Straitsville "nearly every public place has its crowds of men discussing the situation. They read everything touching the subject of the strike, and keep close watch over the proceedings of the Legislature." Historian Charlotte Erickson claimed pressure from coal miners influenced the United States Congress when it passed the Foran Act (1885) which forbade "any person, company, partnership or corporation, in any matter whatsoever, to prepay the transportation, or in any way assist or encourage the importation or migration of aliens into the United States . . . to perform labor of any kind in the United States." 21
Coal miners influenced the governmental process, but their employers also sought to shape public policy by pressuring public officials. In 1884 John Brashear, an Ohio mine owner, asked Governor Roadly to "pay no attention to the Miners and their friends, who are trying to throw stones in our road to prevent us from protecting our property." Attempting to create a sense of emergency, George Carr, President of the Columbus, Hocking Valley, and Toledo Railroad, wired Adjutant General Thomas Dill and claimed "the streets of Straitsville are full of people; more excitement than usual prevails there. . . . There are several hundred men on the streets of Nelsonville, and drinking heavily. Some have shotguns." On September 1, 1884, William Brooks, another operator, wrote the Governor and implored: "For God sake send on troops. Our men are frightened and must be protected. . . . Anyone who knows me can tell you who I am and that I don't go off half cocked." Such correspondence mirrored the insecurity and uncertainty of property holders who hoped for, but did not necessarily expect, aid from the State government. Although Governor Roadly acted cautiously, he and his Adjutant General increasingly supported the claims of property as the strike progressed. On January 14, 1885, Dill wrote the Governor that he thought "a taste of martial law, if it could be applied at Nelsonville, Straitsville and Shawnee would be about the correct thing for these devils; for my opinion is they have given up all hopes of forcing the operators to terms, and now only aim at the destruction of property." A few days later the Governor stated: "The mine owners have the right to prosecute their business without being subjected to such burden [employment of private guards]. The
state owes them protection, and if the ordinary methods prove un-
availling, others should be devised." 22

On other occasions, coal miners faced the reality of either
hostile legislation or unfriendly State government officials. In
1863 the State of Illinois enacted the "La Salle Black Law" which,
according to historian Edward Wieck, made "unlawful any effort by
strikers, however peaceful, to persuade strikebreakers from taking
their place." The Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron Company utilized
a United States government conspiracy act to facilitate the arrest of
three men who had attempted to dissuade a man from going to work
during the strike of 1884-1885. Coal miners in both Illinois and Ohio
faced hostile Adjutant Generals during strikes in 1874. Braidwood's
strikers referred to the Adjutant General as the "Agitating General"
and a Chicago Tribune correspondent claimed his conduct had been "much
more like that of an agent of the coal companies than of an officer
of the State of Illinois." His Ohio counterpart told Thomas Pirt, head
of the local miners' union, to "notify members of your union that it
is unlawful for any of them to appear anywhere within the vicinity
of the works of Mr. Longstreth [a coal operator], and there, by words
or action undertake to induce or drive employees upon his premises
therefrom." 23 Thus, coal miners could never be certain what action
state or local government officials would take during industrial
disputes.

In his study of the role of the state in Europe, Antonio
Gramsci claimed the ruling classes of society manipulated and changed
the structure of government faster than such change could be achieved
by the "subordinate classes." While this perspective may have applied on a national level, the ambivalence of the nature of governmental activity in Illinois and Ohio during the late 1800's may have fore-stalled serious discontent among working people. John Brophy argued that "political solutions were at best rather distant and visionary compared to problems—better jobs, higher pay, and elimination of un-employment—that could be dealt with by a union." Nevertheless, while coal miners voted for candidates in the major political parties, they occasionally expressed their discontent with the prevailing political and social order. According to Richard Jensen, the People's Party carried a dozen precincts in Illinois in 1894, and "half were coal camps, led by Spring Valley, whose 54 per cent Populist support was one of the highest in the Midwest. On Labor Day, 1893, Lucy Parsons, widow of the Haymarket martyr, spoke to an enthusiastic gathering of miners in Spring Valley and delivered "a terrible arraign-ment of the robber classes." One noticeable feature of the meeting, according to observer O'Neill McDarrah, was "the blood red flag, symbolizing the universal brotherhood of man, carried by the anarchist societies." McDarrah claimed that, at the conclusion of her two hour address, a miner asked a vote of thanks and "the motion was carried by a thunderous aye from the entire audience, accompanied by cheers which awoke the echoes along the quiet wooded vales of Spring Creek." On the other hand, when George Hoadly toured the Hocking Valley in 1884 someone proposed three cheers for the Governor but, according to the New York Times, "the cheers in response were very weak and without enthusiasm. Some of the miners are very glum and say that
this trip is only a political scheme. Several of them, on being inter-
viewed, said there is nothing political in the situation, and that
that topic is scarcely mentioned in the Valley."^{24}

Through correspondence to the United Mine Workers' Journal,
many coal miners expressed hostility toward existing political parties
and institutions. Officers in Ohio's UMWA criticized the Ohio Senate
for rejecting an anti-screening bill, and they claimed the senators
had shown "the rights of capital" to be more important "than the
honest and fair treatment of the laborer." William Hawkins, author
of the aforementioned "Labor and Church" article, felt miners could
expect poor working conditions as long as they continued to send
"bankers and lawyers to our capitols to make laws for us." New
Straitsville's William Crawford argued that "the destruction of our
present system is certain, either peaceably or by force," and he
doubted the efficacy of electoral politics. According to Crawford,
"No one claims for one instant that the present congress is carrying
out the policy which it may be elected to do. No one doubts that the
reason is its members have been bribed, either with office or money,
to betray the interest of their constituents." Crawford concluded
that "it makes no difference to the working people whether the
Democrats or Republicans are at the bat, so long as Wall Street is
umpiring the game." Daniel Wallace of Hollister urged coal miners
to develop "a class-conscious political organization" which would
support the collective ownership of "all the facilities of production
and distribution." Spring Valley's G. M. Schmidt concurred with this
sentiment, and he argued that if a man did not have "brains enough
to see what is wrong, he is behind the times and should make room for men who are willing to stand up for this principle." It has been impossible to determine the opinion of the average coal miner on such questions, but many of the more articulate union leaders clearly favored a socialistic form of society.

Coal miners in southeastern Ohio and northern Illinois came from multiple ethnic backgrounds and they represented varying viewpoints, but they shared a determination to improve their social and political position in society. Despite the immense problems of the late nineteenth century, these men consistently endeavored to add dignity to their lives. They hoped to receive greater respect by influencing the religious, educational, editorial, and political activity of the era, and their methods showed that they understood the linkage between ideas and action. Amidst harsh living conditions, these workers often expressed an amazing optimism that the nation could be transformed into a fairer and more equitable society. Yet, economic hardship clearly hampered and limited the efforts of coal miners to achieve this vision, and the problems of employer–employee relationships often superseded those of social reconstruction. The next two chapters will examine the evolution of these economic problems, and they will show how operators and miners moved from an era of conflict and violence to one of unionization and arbitration.
FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER 6

1 Melvin Dubofsky claimed Idaho's miners initially received community support in the 1890's, but he argued that "their local power proved insufficient" because mine owners "influenced the Governor" and "maintained their own newspaper." See Dubofsky, "Origins of Western," p. 164. In his study on the community, sociologist Maurice Stein found a pattern of decreasing local autonomy during the early twentieth century and an "increasing standardization of community patterns throughout the country with agencies of nationwide diffusion and control acting as centers of innovation." See Maurice Stein, The Eclipse of a Community (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960), pp. 107-108.

2 Thompson, Making, pp. 363, 367-368; Hobsbawm, Age of Revolution, p. 272; Hobsbawm, Labouring Men, p. 32.

3 Thirty-five of sixty-eight church organizations in Athens County were listed as Methodist. On the other hand, only fifteen of sixty-one organizations in Will County were labeled Methodist, but this denomination was still the single largest religious sect in the county. See U.S. Bureau of the Census, Ninth Census of the United States: 1870, Population (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), pp. 536, 551.

4 United Mine Workers' Journal, January 17, 1895. Haskins' letter reflected a form of religious millenarianism. Eric Hobsbawm defined this phenomena as the "hope of a complete and radical change in the world" which would be achieved in the "millenium, a world shorn of all present deficiencies." Hobsbawm noted that millenarian thinking could, on occasion, take a secular form. See Eric J. Hobsbawm, Social Bandits and Primitive Rebels (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1959), pp. 57, 64. A study of the interaction of religion and politics in eighteenth century France and England may be found in Clarke Garrett, Respectable Folly (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975).

5 Chicago Tribune, June 22, 1874; Ohio State Journal, July 19, 1884; United Mine Workers' Journal, August 27, 1896; Ibid., August 15, 1895.
United Mine Workers' Journal, April 23, 1891; Ibid., September 12, 1895.

United Mine Workers' Journal, December 13, 1894; Ibid., January 31, 1895; Ibid., February 14, 1895; Ibid., June 8, 1893.

Chicago Tribune, June 26, 1877; Ibid., June 29, 1877; Ohio State Journal, April 3, 1874; Ibid., January 19, 1885; Ibid., February 16, 1885; Chicago Tribune, May 29, 1889.

Chicago Tribune, June 22, 1874; Ibid., June 2, 1894; Ibid., June 12, 1894; Ibid., August 7, 1895; Ibid., July 24, 1897.

Ohio State Journal, September 3, 1884; Ibid., September 19, 1884; Ibid., February 16, 1885; Ibid., May 11, 1874; Chicago Tribune, May 7, 1894; New York Times, December 15, 1884; Ibid., January 2, 1885; Chicago Tribune, June 26, 1889.


Chicago Tribune, May 23, 1894; Ohio State Journal, June 7, 1894; Ibid., June 8, 1894; Ibid., June 15, 1894; Ibid., July 7, 1897; Ibid., August 18, 1897.

Ohio State Journal, August 8, 1884; Cincinnati Commercial-Gazette, December 1, 1884; Athens Messenger, January 15, 1885; Chicago Times, July 31, 1877; Chicago Tribune, June 2, 1894.

Journal of the Knights of Labor, May 31, 1894; United Mine Workers' Journal, July 21, 1892; Ibid., March 15, 1894; Ibid., April 15, 1897; Ibid., April 19, 1894.

Ohio State Journal, January 15, 1885; Chicago Tribune, June 2, 1894; Ohio State Journal, August 6, 1884; Ibid., August 7, 1884; Ibid., September 1, 1884; Ibid., September 2, 1884; Ibid., September 8, 1884; United Mine Workers' Journal, March 3, 1898.

New York Times, December 8, 1884; Ibid., February 17, 1885; Chicago Tribune, June 20, 1889; Ibid., June 22, 1889.

New Lexington Democratic Herald, May 14, 1874; John Swinton's Paper, December 14, 1884; New York Times, November 17, 1884; Ibid., November 29, 1884; Ibid., December 1, 1884; Ibid., December 16, 1884.

Miners' National Record, Vol. I, April, 1875, p. 91; United Mine Workers' Journal, March 9, 1893. On July 30, 1897, the Ohio
State Journal published the names of individual or group contributors who had given aid to striking miners. Most of the contributors were labor organizations.


20 John Wakmudski, "McKinley Politics and the Changing Attitudes Toward Labor, 1870–1900" (Ohio State University, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, 1972), pp. 88–90; Chicago Tribune, May 26, 1889; Ibid., May 29, 1884; United Mine Workers' Journal, November 18, 1897; Ohio State Journal, August 13, 1897; Ibid., July 8, 1897.

21 Local Assembly, Knights of Labor (Shawnee) to G. Hoadly, December 6, 1884, Hoadly Papers; John Roetgerman to G. Hoadly, December 13, 1884, Hoadly Papers; Ohio State Journal, January 19, 1885; Erickson, American Industry and the European Immigrant, p. 164.


CHAPTER 7
CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

I

While social and political problems concerned coal miners in this era, economic hardships in the mining communities prompted numerous confrontations between workers and the coal companies. Facing high costs and an unstable market, mine owners forced employees to share much of the burden during hard times. If they could control their work force, operators felt they could minimize production costs. Throughout most of this period coal barons sought to divide their workers and discourage unionization, because they thought the collectivization of miners would reduce the prerogatives of employers. Uncompromising in their stand, coal operators sought complete control over their employees' lives and they reacted strongly when these men threatened to withhold their labor. If disgruntled employees went on strike, employers unhesitatingly hired armed guards and imported strike-breakers. Such steps by coal operators created much bitterness in the mining community, and the industry suffered from intermittent turmoil throughout the late 1800's.

Plagued by problems of the market and employer attitudes, coal miners devised numerous methods to combat their overseers. In addition
to the aforementioned action within their communities and states, these workers developed tactics to improve their bargaining position with management. Acknowledging the intransigent position of coal operators, miners responded with a general hostility toward the changing nature of American business. Unable to achieve arbitration, miners used more direct methods, including violence, to obtain a hearing, because employers refused to meet with the workers' representatives. If miners adopted violent tactics, they directed their action against the coal companies and the companies' allies. Hesitant to attack people, the miners would destroy property if they had no other means to support a strike. Coal miners and their wives sought a united front of workers arraigned against the arbitrary rule of the companies, and they met each move of their employers with a tactic designed to lessen the power of corporate capital. As a result, conflict and violence characterized the mining industry until operators and miners recognized that unionization and arbitration could bring greater stability to a chaotic industry.

II

Competition characterized the nature of the coal industry throughout much of the nineteenth century, and coal operators in Illinois and Ohio claimed the problems of a market economy limited their actions. Given the severe price competition, coal operators felt thoroughly justified when they asked miners to accept wage reductions. When Braidwood miners struck in 1874, Alanson Sweet of the Chicago, Wilmington and Vermillion Coal Company asserted that "we
must, to retain our trade, . . . either sell our coal at no profit or have the reduction asked for." Fifteen years later Sweet wrote the Chicago Tribune and acknowledged: "We know that the men cannot make big wages at the prices we offer, and it is our intention to reduce the number of men employed and try and give those remaining more steady work, so as to enable them to make as much or more at the reduced price than they have been earning at the old." Coal miners viewed the problems of competition a bit differently because, as one observed, owners could "allow their works to remain idle and still live sumptuously on the credit of their property" but "laboring men must look forward to constant employment for their subsistence." A Nelsonville miner asserted that "my opinion of the depressed state of business is, one corporation trying to run against the others, and when they both combine, they run the poor miner to death. . . . I have seen more tyrants of coal operators in the Hocking Valley than I have in all the days of my life." Miners probably would have agreed with E. P. Thompson when he observed that "the strong ebb and flow of the trade cycle" masked a "structure of social relations, fostering some sorts of expropriation (rent, interest, and profit) and outlawing others (theft, feudal dues), legitimising some types of conflict (competition and warfare) and inhibiting others (trade unionism, bread riots, popular political organization)." ¹

Throughout much of the nineteenth century employers insisted that their workers act as individuals, and they often refused to recognize any organized group of coal miners. As early as 1863 a group of Illinois operators passed resolutions in which they claimed they
would not "acknowledge or deal with any association of miners whatsoever," but would "hire and discharge individuals." Illinois and Ohio miners faced similar problems when the coal companies adopted uncompromising stands. The Chicago and Wilmington Coal Company published a list of rules and regulations which reaffirmed its unwillingness to negotiate with unions, and it added that "no person will be allowed to interfere in any manner with the employers just right of employing ... nor interfere in any way by threats, or menace, or otherwise, with the rights of any employee to work." A reporter for the Cincinnati Commercial claimed Hocking Valley operators would meet with men as individuals, but "under no circumstances are they going to directly or indirectly recognize the communistic principle that the miners have a proprietary interest in the mines by virtue of the fact of their being engaged in the labor of digging coal. ... They claim that mining coal is an act easily acquired, and deserving of recompense but little above that of common laborer." In 1881 the Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron Company presented miners with an "iron-clad contract" which stated that the "party of the second part further agrees that he will not stop work, join any strike or combination for the purpose of obtaining or causing the said Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron Company to pay their employees an advance in wages." As a rationalization for such a policy, Stevenson Burke, Vice-President of the Columbus, Hocking Valley, and Toledo Railroad, informed an investigating committee that "it is a well-known fact that so-called Unions—organizations of miners—in every case of a strike, will proceed to violence." Henry D. Lloyd publicized the plight of Spring Valley's
miners in 1889 when he wrote the New York Sun that miners were "compelled to give up their unions by signing ironclad contracts." Unlike most companies, the Spring Valley Coal Company retained this view well into the 1890's when it continued to deal with individuals rather than committees.  

Attempting to divide the ranks of their employees, coal operators urged the miners to act for themselves rather than for the group. George Whitcomb, Treasurer and Manager of Braidwood's Diamond Mine in 1874, admitted that the object of a proposed compromise agreement "was to break up the cohesion of the men, as there are a good number of men who wanted to go to work, and would work regardless of a change in the terms if someone would only make a start for the pits." Employers claimed miners would work if they were not pressured by the unions, and they urged their men to disavow union leadership. Black Diamond, the coal operator's journal, asserted that a "majority of the men" wanted to work during the northern Illinois strike of 1889, but it claimed these miners were threatened by a "shiftless" minority. In 1884 Stevenson Burke wrote the New York Times and argued that "men anxious and willing to work are prevented from entering the mines by menaces, threats, and open violence." George Carr, Superintendent of the Columbus, Hocking Valley, and Toledo Railroad, noted that miners in the Hocking Valley felt a wage reduction would hurt fellow workers in other districts, but Carr said "they ought to look out for themselves first, and let their fellow-workmen do the same."  

During this era of conflict coal barons used verbal attacks and direct action against organizations of miners, but they also devised
blacklisting techniques to punish troublesome employees. As the
Hocking Valley strike of 1884 became the strike of 1885, employer
William Brooks claimed "there are some in this valley who are marked,
and will never be employed again, for they have been the cause of
trouble . . . we are also bound to break the union." A few days later
Colonel Churchill, Treasurer of the Columbus and Hocking Valley Coal
and Iron Company, said "we shall not hire any of the old strikers . . .
some of the other operators are taking in some of the old hands, but
they are not going to employ any but the most reliable men." After the
1889 strike in Spring Valley, Henry D. Lloyd argued that the coal com-
pany "refused employment, upon reopening the mines, to the miners who
took a leading part in the distribution of food, clothing, and medicine
to the sick and starving, and to the officers of the union during the
lockout." According to Lloyd, miners returning to work had to sign
contracts "by which they bind themselves, individually, not to take
part in any combination to obtain better wages, and agree to leave the
settlement of all grievances to the sole judgment and decisions of the
company." While the most intransigent entrepreneurs may have sponsored
the blacklisting technique more frequently, other operators, who often
identified with their employees, also utilized this device. William
P. Reed, a champion of the miner's cause throughout most of this era,
asked his superintendent in Rendville to remove union-organizer
Richard L. Davis from his job as checkweighman in 1895 because he felt
Davis' presence was not "in the interest of the men." Three years
later Davis, who earlier in the decade had written optimistically to
the United Mine Workers' Journal about the growth of the union, lamented:
"I can't get work here today because of my advocacy of right vs. wrong, and now for two years almost they have been giving me lessons on how to live on wind. Well, I don't care for myself, but it is these innocent little children of mine that I care for, and yet they say it is free America. Hoping that all will end well for the miners of our country, if we have one." Sadly, Davis realized that, after sixteen years in the labor movement, "I am worse off than ever, for now I have no money, nor no work. I will not beg, and I am not inclined to steal, nor will I unless compelled by dire necessity." Within two years, Davis was dead at the age of thirty-six.

In the 1870's and 1880's operators often declared war on striking miners and imported men to take their place. The Chicago and Wilmington Coal Company brought strikebreakers to Braidwood in railroad cars in 1874, and officials informed them that the striking miners would kill them if they left the cars to talk with the strikers. Three years later Alanson Sweet, the company's superintendent, imported black strikebreakers from Kentucky and West Virginia, and this action helped the company to win the strike and to break the local miners' union.

When striking miners in Ohio's Hocking Valley continued their resistance despite the importation of "blacklegs" in 1884-1885, the coal and railroad companies devised other methods to intimidate strikers. An official of the railroad company issued an order "prohibiting striking miners from loafing about the depots or stations of the company and instructing railway policemen to enforce the order." Describing a state of war in Buchtel in January, 1885, a reporter for the Ohio State Journal wrote:
The different works [of the coal companies] are fortified in such a manner as to be practically impregnable to the engine of war now in the valley. The forts are absolutely shot proof, and are so solid in their construction that dynamite would have to be well placed under them to effect serious damage. They serve as the quarters for guards, and have loop holes opening up from every side. They are situated in commanding positions, and there is not a foot of ground approaching the hoppers and mines but what is exposed to a scathing fire from the fortification.

III

How did coal miners respond to the hostile attitudes of employers? In order to understand the miners' actions, one must first examine some of the historiographical evidence which examines the relationship of industrial work and violence. In his study of popular disturbances in France and England between 1730 and 1848, George Rude found that "if the pre-industrial crowd was not remarkable either for its fickleness or irrationality, it was certainly given to acts of violence, above all to the violent and methodical destruction of property." Rude found that even crowds which appeared to act spontaneously had a "remarkable single-mindedness and discriminating purposefulness."

Concluding his study on workers during the years between 1830 and 1930, Charles Tilly and family claimed that "we have discovered that by and large the participants in European collective violence knew what they were doing." American historians have not questioned the rationality of workers during labor violence, but most of these historians have argued that ideology has played very little role in these disputes. Philip Taft argued that the one common factor of violent labor disputes in America appeared to be "the attempt of one of the parties to change fundamentally the terms of employment and the resistance by the other."
According to H. M. Gitelman, "most worker-initiated strike violence took the form of physical assaults upon strikebreakers and upon fellow employees who attempted to cross picket lines." Gitelman claimed that "American workers, in attacking others, made it clear that to them the blame lay with their own kind and not with the social system." Taft and Gitelman both argued that American workers never challenged the established order and only used violence when the avenues for self-improvement were blocked. All of the aforementioned historians have insights which can be applied to coal miner violence in the late nineteenth century, because American miners seemingly had rational methods and non-ideological goals. Gitelman’s views on worker violence, however, must be qualified.

Violence erupted in coal strikes when miners felt the companies utilized unfair methods to win the conflicts, and it did not necessarily occur, as Gitelman has suggested, as a response to the introduction of strikebreakers. In July, 1884, the Hocking Sentinel claimed the syndicate, "failing to provoke a riot by the introduction of lousy Italians," had begun the "English Landlord System of eviction, hoping by this process to aggravate the miners into violation of the law." Operators continued to evict miners from company housing in August and September, and miners responded with violence throughout the autumn of 1884. In October, John Swinton’s Paper reported that four hundred writs of ejectment had been decided against miners in the courts, and it noted that hundreds were huddled in tents which had been furnished by the State. The Chicago Tribune stated on July 20, 1889, that the Spring Valley Coal Company had served eviction notices on its tenants, and it claimed
trouble was anticipated. A few days later the *Tribune* explained a
change in policy by asserting that the company did not "care to incur
the useless expense and danger that would arise from putting the men
out." In 1901 John Mitchell informed the Industrial Commission that
companies wanted employees to live in company housing, "because in
times of labor disturbances they are more readily induced to return to
work, because they can be ejected." Eviction gave the company a
weapon, but mine owners knew that its use could cause a bitter reaction.

Coal miners in Illinois and Ohio used violence very selectively
during this era, and they focused much of their hostility against the
companies and their property. When the coal company threatened to
import strikebreakers into Braidwood in 1874, striking miners burned
the company's boarding house to the ground. Seeking to prevent con-
tinued operation of the mines in 1889, Braidwood's miners filled the
"main shaft with empty pit cars and other debris." Workers utilized
violence throughout this period, but striking miners in the Hocking
Valley in 1884-1885 practiced violence more extensively because of the
prolonged nature of the strike. After a miner "stoned" a train of
the Columbus, Hocking Valley and Toledo Railroad at Carbon Hill, the
company abandoned the station. On August 31, 1884, Nelsonville's
miners set fire to the hoppers of an area mine and destroyed four or
five thousand dollars worth of company property. In mid-October
strikers fired four mines in New Straitsville, one in Sand Run, and
one in Nelsonville, and two weeks later miners burned three bridges
on the Hocking Valley railroad. By February, 1885, the *Ohio State
Journal* could report from New Straitsville that "six out of the eight
mines are burning fiercely, two of them hopeless, while it will be very expensive to get the remainder in working order. . . . Further up the hill can be seen the ashes of the once fine house that was erected to accommodate the imported paupers, but before the distinguished gentlemen arrived the incendiary torch was applied." Such action confirms the Hobsbawm-Rude-Tilly thesis which argues that workers used violence rationally and directed it against perceived oppressors. 9

Coal miners also directed violence against strikebreakers, but they preferred persuasive methods over direct physical force. Understandably, strikers viewed "blacklegs" as traitors to the ranks of labor, and they refused a final settlement in northern Illinois in 1874 until the coal company agreed to remove the objectionable men. Miners in the Hocking Valley disclaimed any intention of violence in 1874, and they blamed a violent incident on operator William Brooks, who had employed "desperate men" to intimidate striking employees. When Brooks and other operators imported black strikebreakers to replace the idle men, Thomas Pirt, President of the local miner's union, persuaded many of the men to leave the area. During the 1884 strike in the valley, miners devised ingenious tactics to dissuade "blacklegs" from taking their places. In September the Ohio State Journal noted that operators at Buchtel "made a big mistake several days ago by employing a number of strikers, who, after they were once in the mines, persuaded the newcomers to quit." A few months later the Journal reported that a "man doing work for the syndicate had a cow killed this week and left untouched. It is evident that it was killed for spite
and not for beef." Miners in Carbon Hill forced a fellow worker to leave town after they learned he was a spy for the railroad and coal companies. State Inspector of Mines William Dalrymple admitted that miners in the valley had guns, but he informed Governor Hoadly "that it is done for show and also to intimidate those at work and get them to quit work." Dalrymple claimed none of the working miners had "received any threatening letters."\(^{10}\)

Strikers in the ethnically diverse northern Illinois fields took a stronger stand against the presence of strikebreakers in their communities. In 1877 black strikebreakers fled Braidwood after being informed that strikers intended to move against them, and they returned only after they received protection from the state militia. In May, 1889, Will County Sheriff Robert Huston frantically wired Governor Joseph Pifer that striking Italian miners threatened one hundred men who had returned to work. According to Huston, "many of them carried guns ... the leader called me to them under the cover of his gun, which was cocked, and commenced to threaten the lives of all the men at work. He said there would be 2,000 men there at 12 o'clock and they would kill every man at work." In 1894 Spring Valley's strikers marched to Toluca to shut down its mines, and the *Ohio State Journal* reported that "feeling is running very high against the men who have refused to quit work."\(^{11}\) In two of the three aforementioned incidents, miners reacted against fellow workers who refused to join strikers. Strikers often resented inconstancy among their comrades more than they feared imported strikebreakers, because they viewed the latter as pawns of the coal companies. Despite instances of personal confrontation,
striking miners in both states behaved more prudently toward individuals than they did toward property.

Although the foregoing accounts attest to the violent nature of strike activity, they do not necessarily infer any ideological radicalism on the part of coal miners. In fact, Philip Taft’s argument that violence stemmed from lack of union recognition rather than ideology appears to fit the pattern in coal communities. Nevertheless, coal miners often expressed a deeper hostility toward the corporate social order in their writings and actions. The Alarm, an anarchist newspaper edited by Lucy Parsons, reported in 1884 that miners in Buchtel, Ohio, had "organized two groups of the International, one in English and the other in German. Over a thousand determined men will soon be enrolled there under the 'scarlet banner' to battle for the emancipation of labor." William Crawford of New Straitsville wrote numerous letters to the United Mine Workers' Journal in the 1890's, and he continually criticized existing institutions and values. Responding to an allegation that miners were responsible for their own position, "Bill" admitted that there had been an era when an "energetic" young man could get ahead but "today nearly all the occupied lands have passed into the hands of railroad companies, coal companies and land speculating syndicates, and is either held at very high prices or cannot be bought at any price." In another letter "Bill" argued "the map of the United States is colored to show states and territories, a map of the real political powers of this country would ignore state lines," because "there are sovereign states so completely in the hands of rings and corporations that it seems as if nothing short of a
revolutionary uprising of the people could dispossess them." Crawford examined the merits of a competitive social order and he concluded poetically:

Many mills to grind the toilers
Have the Gods the millionaires.
But to grind the weary miners
Into gold dust for the spoilers
None with competition compares.12

IV

When battling employers during the late 1800's coal miners mobilized all available resources, including the women of their communities, in their struggle for a decent standard of living. Women knew that adverse conditions in the mines affected the entire family, and they often took leading roles in the conflicts of the era. During the Hocking Valley strike of 1874 the Athens Messenger claimed the wives of miners had "violently assaulted" several non-strikers. In the same year in Illinois the Joliet Republican reported that "the blooming and buxom matrons of Braidwood gathered around the mines and went for the bosses with a vengeance. Mr. Hunter, one of the bosses, was pounced upon by the muscular feminines." The women struck Allen Pinkerton, who headed a contingent of strikebreakers, and Pinkerton used the butt of his revolver to fight off the "amazon mob." When the company brought "blacklegs" into Braidwood in 1877, the Chicago Times claimed that "considerable bull-dozing was going on, most of which was done by women and boys." During a violent period in the Hocking Valley strike of 1884, J. J. McCarty, the controversial Sheriff of Hocking County, wired the Governor that "no men are to be found in the town [New Straitsville]
and the women refused to tell their whereabouts.\textsuperscript{13}

Women recognized the need for sacrifice and solidarity, because they often had to ration the family's meager resources. When a reporter asked a woman in Coal City, Illinois, whether she wanted her husband to accept a proposed wage reduction and to return to work, the woman responded: "We were half starving before they came out on strike. It is not much worse to keep on as we are than it would be to work for less than before." According to the same Chicago Tribune correspondent, "a bright, intelligent German housewife, the mother of seven children, replied to the reporter's inquiry with mute eloquence by bringing out an empty flour barrel and disclosing its hollow inwardness." In 1897 a representative of the Ohio State Journal wrote from Nelsonville that "the wives and children of the miners are helping bear their part in the struggle. They are encouraging them to hold out and are willingly joining in the hardship in order that husband and father may not have to work so hard."\textsuperscript{14}

Illinois and Ohio women did not bear their burden alone, because their sisters in other coal fields also supported their men during conflicts. In her study of Maryland miners Katherine Harvey claimed that, when strikebreakers emerged from a mine in 1894, "they encountered about sixty women, armed with tin pans, buckets, base-ball bats and babies. The women called the miners 'blacklegs' and 'sneaks' who were taking the bread out of their babies' mouths." According to Mother (Mary) Jones, she told the strikers in Arnot, Pennsylvania, in 1889 "to stay home with the children and let the women attend to the scabs. I organized an army of women housekeepers. On a given day
they were to bring their mops and the army would charge the scabs up at the mine." Emily Haas, wife of a miner, wrote the United Mine Workers' Journal that "instead of the men forcing the women into the early morning marches the women force the men... Some of the women have threatened to leave their husbands if the latter did not assert their manhood... A woman does not want to be looked upon as the wife or sister of a black sheep who is trying to prevent his fellow-men from bettering their condition."^15 Throughout the country women joined their mining husbands in the battle for a more decent, dignified life.

v

Despite weak trade unions and imported strikebreakers, coal miners displayed a remarkable amount of solidarity during the 1870's and 1880's. Miners in Illinois and the Hocking Valley frequently paraded behind local bands while airing their grievances with the coal companies. The long strike of 1884-1885 created tension among the Hocking Valley's miners, but strikers in New Straitsville "unanimously agreed that no man who considered himself a friend of the miners should guard or do any kind of work whatever for the syndicate or coal exchange" until they reached a "peaceable settlement of the present trouble." Shortly thereafter, John Roberts, a local resident, asked for volunteers to extinguish a mine fire which had presumably been set by strikers. Striking miners immediately posted a notice which stated: "The above meeting is called illegally. Let no miner attend, and then old Jack will be president, vice president, and secretary of all he
surveys." An Ohio State Journal correspondent reported that he "was at the appointed place for the meeting, and only John Roberts and two of his constituents were present." A few days later the Journal noted that Roberts attempted to attend a miners' meeting, but he "was refused admittance. He was considered a notorious striker, and not a little hard feeling is manifested that he flopped over."  

While unity and collective action served as the miners' goals throughout this period, workers could not always prevent disunity within their ranks. Braidwood's miners called strikes in 1874 and 1877 against the Columbus, Vermillion, and Wilmington Coal Company, but the strikers could not persuade Streator's miners, who worked for the same company, to join the battle in either year. Miners pleaded with fellow workers not to serve as strikebreakers, but they could never achieve total compliance with their requests. Railroad executive George Carr boasted in 1885 "that the secret councils and machinations of evily disposed strikers were promptly reported to the syndicate and railroad authorities by union spies in their confidence." As the great Hocking Valley strike ended in failure, S. E. Davis wrote The Alarm and complained: "I, myself, feel broken hearted to think we have been beaten by our own men." Given these problems of cohesion, miners understandably sought a stable national organization which could adjust to the demands of the country's changing economic structure. Community support did not guarantee success, because operators could survive local strikes if other areas maintained production.  

As a result, coal miners ultimately founded their own national organization to counter the policies of corporate conglomerates.
FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER 7

1 Chicago Tribune, June 30, 1874; Ibid., May 28, 1889; Athens Messenger, January 15, 1885; Ohio Labor Statistics, 1885, p. 209; Thompson, Making, p. 205.

2 Wieck, American Miners' Association, pp. 102-103; Chicago Tribune, June 22, 1874; Cincinnati Commercial, May 23, 1874; Proceedings of the Hocking Valley, p. 34; Ibid., p. 175; Reprint of letter from Henry D. Lloyd to the New York Sun, December 17, 1869, Lloyd Papers; United Mine Workers' Journal, August 16, 1891.

3 Chicago Tribune, August 22, 1874; Black Diamond, June 15, 1889; New York Times, December 1, 1884; Ohio State Journal, July 4, 1884.


5 Workingman's Advocate, July 18, 1874. For an account of Sweet's actions see Robert Bruce, 1877: Year of Violence, p. 293; Athens Messenger, January 8, 1885.

6 Ohio State Journal, January 26, 1885.


8 Hocking Sentinel, July 31, 1884; John Swinton's Paper, October 12, 1884; Chicago Tribune, July 30, 1889; Ibid., July 31, 1889; Report of the Industrial Commission, 1901, p. 45. For ideas in this section, the author has consulted George Cotkin. See Cotkin, "Strike-breakers, Evictions, and Violence: A study of Industrial Conflict in the Hocking Valley Coal Strike of 1864-1885," Ohio History, Vol. LXXXVII (Spring, 1976), pp. 140-150.
Joliet Republican, June 13, 1874; Chicago Tribune, May 28, 1889;
Athens Messenger, August 28, 1884; Ibid., September 4, 1884; Ibid.,
October 16, 1884; Ibid., November 13, 1884; Ohio State Journal,
February 9, 1885. One of the mine fires at New Straitsville continues
to burn despite numerous efforts to put it out. "As of 1971, an esti-
mated 40 million tons of coal were lost, at a cost of $250 million."
See Historic Athens County (Athens, Ohio: Athens County Bicentennial
Commission, 1975), p. 23. Eric Hobsbawn noted that "where [English]
coal-miners had reached the point of aiming their demands against em-
ployers of labour, they used the technique of wrecking. . . . Thus
in the Northumberland coal-field the burning of pit-head machinery was
part of the great riot of the 1740's, which won the men a sizeable wage-
rise." According to Hobsbawn, European workers often used the riot as
a "recognized form of collective pressure" when trade unions were weak
and ineffective. See Hobsbawn, Laboring Men, pp. 7-8; Ibid., The Age
of Revolution, pp. 251-252.

Joliet Republican, September 12, 1874; Hocking Sentinel,
May 14, 1874; Ibid., June 18, 1874; Athens Messenger, June 18, 1874;
Ohio State Journal, September 11, 1884; Ibid., February 5, 1885; Athens
Messenger, September 25, 1884; William Dalrymple to G. Hoadly,
January 26, 1885, Hoadly Papers.

Donna, The Braidwood Story, p. 71; Bruce, 1877: Year of
Violence, p. 293; Chicago Tribune, May 28, 1889; Ohio State Journal,
April 27, 1894.

The Alarm, October 4, 1884; United Mine Workers' Journal,
June 8, 1893; Ibid., July 13, 1893; Ibid., July 18, 1895.

Athens Messenger, April 19, 1874; Joliet Republican,
July 11, 1874; Gutman, "Braidwood Lockout," p. 18; Chicago Times,
May 8, 1877; New York Times, September 1, 1884.

Chicago Tribune, June 23, 1889; Ohio State Journal,
July 13, 1897.

Harvey, Best Dressed Miners, p. 293; The Autobiography of
Mother Jones (Chicago: Charles Kerr Company, 1925), p. 34; United
Mine Workers' Journal, October 28, 1897.

Athens Messenger, April 23, 1874; George Carr to T. Dill,
September 4, 1884, Hoadly Papers; Ohio State Journal, December 5, 1884;
Ibid., January 22, 1885; Ibid., January 27, 1885.

Workingman's Advocate, June 20, 1874; Ibid., May 19, 1877;
Athens Messenger, February 19, 1885; The Alarm, April 14, 1885.
John Cumbler has noted that local unions could not win in Massachusetts when companies became part of a national organization. See Cumbler, "Labor, Capital, and Community: The Struggle for Power," *Labor History*, Vol. XV (Summer, 1974), p. 444.
CHAPTER 8

UNIONIZATION AND ARBITRATION

I

In the 1870's and 1880's many coal miners supported trade unionism, but they often failed in their initial attempts at collective action. As noted in the preceding chapter, coal operators in these decades fought the unionization of their industry through every available means. Trade unions also faced opposition from some coal miners with agrarian backgrounds who felt unionism contradicted their preference for economic independence. Thus, the unionization of the coal fields proceeded haltingly until the formation of the United Mine Workers of America in 1890. By 1890 most coal operators had abandoned their early intransigence and had adopted mechanisms to deal with organizations of employees. The growth of the UMW in the 1890's coincided with a change in the attitudes of managers who preferred rationalization to violence. As a result, operators and miners eventually developed a bureaucratic process in the northern fields by which they could reconcile their differences at the bargaining table and minimize the costliness of prolonged conflicts.

Although coal operators ultimately recognized unions and collective bargaining, most mine owners adopted these views after years of confrontation. On the other hand, coal miners supported the
arbitration procedure throughout this era as a respite from industrial violence. Union leaders consistently urged modes of accommodation with employers, and they cautioned miners to forego violent tactics. American miners and their unions accepted the prevailing socio-economic system, but they hoped to secure a greater slice of the industrial pie. Miners occasionally criticized the existing corporate establishment, but they did not support political parties or programs which might have established an alternative social and economic order. As a result, coal miners sought a better life through trade unionism and, despite occasional rank and file dissatisfaction, they tacitly accepted the bureaucratization of their organization. As the nation entered the twentieth century, the coal mining industry had been rationalized by the collective bargaining process which provided a peaceful mechanism for the settlement of disputes. Miners turned to their national union for protection, and economic action became the primary means for redressing grievances.

II

Coal miners initially hesitated to join unions because they viewed unionization as contrary to their conceptions of individual independence, but they eventually realized that dependence accompanied industrialization and that trade unions could protect workers from the worst effects of the process. Andrew Roy, an Ohio labor reformer and State Mine Inspector, noted that the "general American idea of manhood and duty is for every individual working man to make contracts, and to work for his employer on any terms he may choose." According to
Roy, the coal miner's view "is the very reverse of this, since "no single workman ought, as an honorable man, to do anything affecting the price of labor against the will of the majority of his fellow-workers." When John Siney, President of the Miners' National Association, visited Braidwood in 1874, he "hoped that whatever the men did they would do it as one man. If you conclude to go to work, go all together, and if you conclude to come out, come out all together, and stand shoulder to shoulder like brothers till you have brought the strike to a successful issue." John Mitchell reiterated this position in 1901 in his testimony to the Industrial Commission when a questioner asked: "Do you admit that a man has a right to individual contracts, individualism in his contracts?" Mitchell replied that "we recognize the fact that under the law he has the right to make these, but we regard the man who does it in the coal mines to be not only injuring himself but everyone else, and for that reason we disapprove of it. As a matter of policy, we condemn it." 1

The collective ideal applied to other labor organizations as well, and miners sought a commonality of interest among other wage-workers. When Hocking Valley miners stopped work in 1884, the Knights of Labor Journal warned its readers that operators were soliciting men to break the strike, and it urged Local Assemblies to "prevent them from misleading the men in their localities. All miners in our Order will stay away from that locality until the difficulty is settled." In 1889, the Chicago Tribune reported that miners in Spring Valley had received cooperation from the Knights of Labor and American Federation of Labor in their campaign to boycott the products of mine owner
William Scott, and it asserted that in "Chicago and vicinity the school boards and municipal authorities have been urged to buy no coal from the William L. Scott and Co. ... Lake steamers have also been induced to quit patronizing Mr. Scott’s interests." The *Ohio State Journal* noted in 1897 that Samuel Gompers "was willing to go anywhere the miners’ officials desired to send him to aid them in the strike." Through their own unions and other labor organizations, miners adopted collective means to improve their standard of living.²

Despite such collective ideals, the path to unionization for Illinois and Ohio miners was a long and difficult one. British immigrants organized the first unions in the coal fields because many of them had belonged to the National Miners’ Association of Great Britain and Ireland before emigrating to the United States. Alexander McDonald, a British union leader, travelled to Braidwood in 1867 and according to historian C. K. Yearley, he "underlined the necessity of trade unions, pointed to the values of benefit funds, stressed the need of miners for educational facilities, and outlined briefly proposals for new mine legislation."³ In 1872 Braidwood’s miners joined the Illinois Benevolent and Protective Association of the Northwest and the following year miners in this community formed one of the first locals of the Miners National Association. John Siney, a Pennsylvania miner, and John James of Braidwood were early leaders of the M.N.A., as was Braidwood’s Daniel McLaughlin, a Scottish immigrant who served on the organization’s executive board. McLaughlin had held several union posts in Scotland where he had worked to shorten hours, raise pay, and improve safety conditions within the mines. Throughout the 1870’s and
1880's, McLaughlin played an important role in union affairs in both Illinois and the nation.4

In the Hocking Valley trade unionism began in the Civil War with the formation of a branch of the American Miners' Association, but this organization lasted only a short time. Valley miners joined the Miners' National Association and other organizations in the 1870's, but they often faced obstinate operators who refused to recognize unions. Despite their weakness, Chris Evans argued that the Hocking Valley associations' "methods of unity at the mines, their valley delegations, and their district conventions were equal to the best of organizations." Miners also belonged to the Knights of Labor, and the Knights' convention proceedings in 1885 listed eleven local assemblies in the Hocking Valley. Interestingly, membership in the valley dropped between 1884 and 1885, and this fact suggests that the Knights had little effectiveness during the strike of these years. Chris Evans, who worked in the valley in this era, later blamed the mixed locals, which included doctors, grocers, and businessmen, for the Knights' problems. According to Evans, "the commercial man rarely looks upon a strike in the same light as the coal miner, nor does he contribute much, as a rule, to encourage a cessation of work."5

Throughout the 1870's and 1880's, miners in Ohio and Illinois organized in local as well as national unions, but they did not achieve much success until they formed the United Mine Workers of America in 1890. The National Federation of Miners (later the National Progressive Union of Miners) battled National Trade Assembly 135 of the Knights of Labor for membership in the late 1880's; this dual unionism ended
only with the formation of the UMW in 1890. Leading miners from southeastern Ohio and northern Illinois participated in the proceedings which formed a new national union. A few years later, Ohio's John McBride noted that prior to 1890 trade union miners often conflicted with locals of the Knights of Labor on questions of tactics and jurisdiction, and he argued that the "rapid development of the coal trade and the facility for transportation made nearly every miner in the country directly or indirectly a competitor with his brother miner, so that, even if the miners had not the two forms of organization, they were unable to secure any permanent benefit through local effort." Thus, many miners recognized the need for a strong national organization to meet the demands of a changing economy, and they hoped the UMW would help alleviate the problems which accompanied the rise of a national market.

III

Costly and prolonged strikes in the coal industry convinced many operators that they needed a more peaceable method of settling disputes with employees. Alanson Sweet, an official in the Chicago, Wilmington and Vermillion Coal Company, wrote a colleague in 1877 and complained about the cost of a strike in northern Illinois during that year. In 1881 the Ohio State Mine Inspector reported that strikes had caused a loss of twelve weeks of work per year in the Hocking Valley during the preceding eight or nine years. He estimated that miners had lost "three hundred thousand dollars a year, or two million five hundred thousand dollars in the aggregate, while the losses to the mine operators cannot have been less than one and a half million
dollars." As a result, some of the more prescient owners began to advocate negotiations between employers and employees. William Rend, one of the leaders in this movement, told an investigating committee that arbitration of strikes would limit "the terrible loss of capital on the one side, and the want, suffering, privation and misery on the other." 7

Collective bargaining and arbitration remained a dream, however, until the devastating effects of the Hocking Valley strike of 1884-1885 convinced many mine owners that such catastrophes must be avoided in the future. According to one observer, the losses of 1884 "showed the necessity of a less destructive mode of settlement. It made labor organizations reluctant to strike, and it induced capitalists to look with favor upon arbitration." When operators and miners disputed terms in the valley in late 1885, both sides agreed to present their grievances to a board of arbitration. Historian David McDonald claimed the strike had aroused "liberal newspapers, educators, and statesmen" who "deplored the conditions found in the coal fields." A few years after the great conflict, journalist Edward Beinis stated that operators in the Hocking Valley "who fought the miners most bitterly in 1884 and 1885, now acknowledge their mistake, and admit that the inestimable benefits of the present system of arbitration in Ohio were only made possible by the organization of the laborers." He added that one "proprietor said that this arbitration brought such immunity from strikes that he now was assisting his men to own their own homes." Between 1886 and 1894 miners and operators forged a system of interstate agreements to maintain a scale of prices in the various competitive
districts. This system broke down temporarily in the 1890's, but the precedent had been set for national settlements of coal disputes. 6

Arbitration was first used in a major coal strike in 1889 during a dispute in northern Illinois. William Rend served as arbitrator and sided with the miners, but, according to the Chicago Tribune, the board decided "practically in favor of the operators." An accepted technique by 1897, arbitration had the support of the governors of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Pennsylvania during the national strike of that year. The Ohio State Journal reported that President William McKinley had "signed his willingness to appoint an arbitration board if both sides" would agree to stand by the decision. Ohio Senator Mark Hanna wired his representative in Cleveland to "cooperate in a movement with operators to end the great struggle in an amicable manner." Owners in the northern Illinois field, according to Black Diamond, wished to convince their miners that the "operators were not only willing but were positively anxious that their men should be paid a better wage, provided it is uniform and on a proper differential." All of these efforts eventually resulted in an agreement as the United Mine Workers accepted a differential wage scale for its various districts. Between 1896 and 1916, participants in disputes utilized the joint conference to adjust labor controversies. 9

By recognizing the rights of miners during conflicts, coal operators illustrated their changing view of industrial disputes. A meeting of operators and miners in October, 1885, produced a report which stated: "Capital is entitled to fair and just remuneration for its risk and its use, and must have security and protection, while
labor, on the other hand, is as fully entitled to its equitable share, and there is no law . . . to justify the one impoverishing and crushing the other." In 1894, William Rend castigated both miners and operators who pursued a "course contrary to public interest," and he claimed that these intransigent men "should be held as objects of public denunciation." A reporter for Black Diamond stated in 1897 that operators recognized that "the business of coal production should be relieved as far as possible of the vicissitudes and fluctuations to which it has long been subjected, and that the relations between the capital and the labor employed in its production should be equitably adjusted and placed on a stable and permanent basis." In short, operators realized that frequent strikes meant a loss of investment in time and money, and they favored arbitration to remedy this problem. Testifying before the Industrial Commission in 1901, Herman Justi, Commissioner of the Illinois Coal Operators' Association, was asked whether an increase in wages added to the price of coal and thus taxed the public. Justi, obviously cognizant of the rationalization of his industry, responded:

On the contrary, it makes the condition of trade more stable, it establishes a fairer scale of wages, and it insures to the different operators greater safety in their business. They are enabled to operate their mines a greater number of days, and give to the miner steadier work and so increase the volume of business of the country. In every way the system seems to me to be a great help to the public, because upon the steady employment and upon the fair wages of the masses depends the prosperity of the country.10

By the 1890's some operators even displayed a strong sympathy for the miners' complaints, and they hoped to remedy their problems by ending the worst effects of competition in the industry. In 1897,
Black Diamond suggested that striking miners had the "entire sympathy of the public and the moral, if tacit, support of the operators as a whole," and the Journal urged the strikers to use "self-restraint, conservation, and good conduct." Each operator visited by an Ohio State Journal correspondent "said he hoped miners would win and that he was willing to pay the price if operators of other states could be brought into line." One operator in the Hocking Valley supported the strike, because he felt it would allow Ohio mine owners to compete with Pennsylvania coal if the miners won their dispute. Walter Mullins, an Ohio operator, told the Industrial Commission in 1901 that unions had made it possible "to form a fair basis of prices," and he claimed these organizations made the "industry more stable" and gave security to their operations. ¹¹

Although coal operators often supported unionization by the 1890's, they retained some distrust of collective action by their employees. Some owners criticized unions because these organizations limited employer's prerogatives, and Black Diamond claimed the union compelled the "employment of two men where one was formerly employed." While acknowledging public sympathy for striking miners in 1897, this operators' journal claimed the "public is not cognizant of the fact that the open ballot is employed at their lodge meetings in the various districts and the fear of being termed 'black-leg' enables a very few of the truculent leaders who compose the minority to invariably rule the majority." Although it tacitly supported striking miners, the Ohio Coal Association threatened to call for standing troops to protect the non-union coal shipped from West Virginia if the strikers attempted
to prevent shipment. 12 Operators began to recognize unions in the 1890's, but they understood the different roles which management and labor played in the bargaining process and they accepted unions only as a matter of necessity.

IV

When coal operators began to accept collective bargaining and arbitration, they received a friendly response, because miners had advocated such principles since the 1870's. When Alanson Sweet refused to meet the demands of Braidwood's miners in 1874, Daniel McLaughlin asked: "If he will not treat his miners like men, will he agree to arbitrate? The miners are satisfied to rest their case with any right-minded, disinterested men." During the same year a correspondent for the Cincinnati Commercial visited the Hocking Valley, and he noted that "in looking over the constitution I notice that 'in no case' shall a strike be permitted 'until the operators refuse to refer the matter to a court of arbitration.'" John Siney explained the objectives of the Miners' National Association when he stated "the society shall be to promote the interests of the miners . . . to remove, as far as possible, the cause for all strikes, and adopt, wherever and whenever it is practicable, the principle of arbitration." During the northern Illinois strike of 1889, William Scaife of Coal City wrote the Chicago Tribune and claimed "when this reduction was proposed by the operators, we asked that we might meet and arbitrate. They refused. We asked this time and again. We say it now." When miners wrote the preamble to the Constitution for the United Mine Workers in 1890, they pledged "to use all honorable means to maintain peace between ourselves and
employers; adjusting all differences, as far as possible, by arbitration and conciliation, that strikes may become unnecessary." John Mitchell expressed the same views in 1901 when he told the Industrial Commission that "we favor arbitration of differences between ourselves and employers, and ordinarily only resort to a strike when all other methods of adjusting our differences have failed."  

As noted in the preceding chapter, miners occasionally utilized violence when battling their employers, but union leaders consistently rejected such tactics as counterproductive to the miners' cause. In 1884, John McBride warned miners at Buchtel, Ohio, that when miners used violence they "forfeited the respect of those citizens who are not miners." McBride also felt that violence by the miners prompted swift retaliation by mine owners. Testifying before an investigating commission in 1885, McBride asserted that if operators "can create a riot and get our miners into trouble, so that they can have an excuse for calling the military there, then they think the case is won."

These statements reflected McBride's awareness of the weakness of miners' organizations which could not adequately challenge the power of corporate capital.  

Coal miners destroyed company property during strikes, but few workers actually questioned the legitimacy of the existing socio-economic system. A miners' union in the Hocking Valley in 1874 resolved: "That the miners of Straitsville and vicinity do not wish to interfere with the operators in the running of their mines, as to who they shall hire, or the amount of coal they shall put out each day. All we want is a fair day's wage for a fair day's work." In the same year, Daniel
McLaughlin told the *Chicago Tribune* that "we don't want to drive the companies to the wall. If they would come out like men and be frank with us, and say how they are fixed, why we are not so bad but what we would come to terms." When miners had disputes with the companies in the 1870's, they often proposed a variety of compromise solutions to avoid further trouble. In 1874, a group of miners in the Hocking Valley advocated a union of miners and operators against the railroad company as a solution to the depression of the decade. When Braidwood's men stopped work in 1877, a *Chicago Tribune* reporter noted that at a meeting of strikers "pacific speeches were made by leading men, and finally it was decided that, in the event of the company's refusing the men their just dues, each miner would begin a separate civil suit in the courts." Thus, miners preferred litigation and other peaceful measures over violent confrontation. Andrew Brown, a Nelsonville miner, went a step further in 1884 when he wrote Governor Hoadly that the miners' "motto is Arbitration, Equal Rights to Capital and Labour, Capital and Labour hand in hand producing prosperity over every State of this great union."\(^{15}\)

In the 1890's, correspondents to the *United Mine Workers' Journal* evinced a similar acceptance of the social order despite severe inequality in the society. Charles Chatfield of Murray City, Ohio, claimed "since the erection of the pyramids 2700 years before Christ, and down to and including the present decade, there has been a constant struggle between the upper and lower classes, the rich and the poor, the master and the slave," but he then advocated arbitration, legislative reform, and other peaceful means of change. A "Spring
Valley Reader” maintained that wars would continue between labor and capital, but he supported arbitration to "restore harmony" between employees and businessmen. "A Miner" from Nelsonville claimed the laboring man "would be content with a fair share of the profit," but the "gold bug wants it all." Richard L. Davis told miners "you may curse the operators all you please, but it won't do any good. It is all our own fault, for the operators as employers are only doing as we ourselves would do under the circumstances had we the same chances. . . . Do you blame them? I don't. I believe in the adage that, 'Heaven helps those who help themselves.'" Reporting from a joint conference of miners and operators in 1898, Chris Evans announced: "To see and hear employers and employees in such large numbers as attended the Chicago meeting singing together the national anthem of our country marks an epoch in the history of mining."  

Miners may have adopted such conservative views, because they felt that the divisions which plagued and weakened their organizations during the late nineteenth century precluded more militant attitudes. While miners continued their strike in northern Illinois in 1889, some workers in Streator expressed a desire to return to work at the proposed wage reduction. A Chicago Tribune correspondent reported harsh debate between miners and one worker purportedly said, "he had dug coal at Streator for 70 cents and proposed to do it again before he would be a pauper and allow his children to get the bread of charity. He defied the leaders individually and collectively, and declared he would not allow any crowd of men to prevent him from speaking or acting according to his convictions any longer." In 1891 miners at New Straitsville
asked to work at ten cents per ton below the general UMWA scale demands, and, as a result, they helped forestall a call for a national strike during that year. John Nugent of Shawnee challenged one of his counterparts from New Straitsville to debate the "following questions:

Resolved, That the late action of Straitsville miners was injurious to themselves and detrimental to the miners of the country. Resolved, that more has been done since the formation of the UMWA to injure the condition of Straitsville miners than was ever done by any other organization." After a year of controversy, the miners of New Straitsville once again agreed to affiliate with the United Mine Workers of America. John Fahy of Braidwood wrote the miners' Journal in 1893 and criticized the "mass of disorganized miners" who served as strikebreakers and he admonished: "Shame on them, they should suffer because they know what they are doing."¹⁷

Weaknesses, divisions, and alternative economic schemes retarded the growth of trade unionism among coal miners during this era. Some workers continued to work in cooperative mines in the 1890's and they accepted wages below the union scale, and their action caused much concern among union miners. Miners in the Ohio district offered to contribute fifty cents per month to the miners of Shawnee if the latter would strike to abolish their cooperative system. Cooperation died a slow death, however, because Nelsonville's S. R. Helm wrote the Union's Journal in 1897 and urged miners to "gather money for a defense fund, buy coal land and employ ourselves, and then we will be on the road to better conditions." A month later "A Victim" from Shawnee advised "all men seeking work to keep away from this place as they will regret
the day they dropped anchor in the valley of cooperation." In April a convention of Illinois miners protested "against cooperative mines reducing the price of coal."  

Aware of these problems, union leaders consistently supported the principles of discipline and sacrifice throughout this era. In the 1870's and 1880's union leaders could make demands on the rank and file, but they realized that their organizations' weakness and instability limited their actions. Nevertheless, union officials in these decades supported a peaceful, rationalized grievance procedure, and they served as the forerunners of business unionism. Daniel McLaughlin of Braidwood participated in the establishment of the joint-convention system of arbitration during the mid-eighties to settle wage disputes, and he would support strikes only if compromise and arbitration proved unsuccessful. When the United Mine Workers of America was formed in 1890, its constitution established a grievance procedure to rationalize the bargaining process. Article Four of the constitution stated: "no local strike shall be legalized or supported by a district unless its inauguration was approved of by officers of the district, or by the National Executive Board . . . any local union or local assembly striking in violation of the above provisions shall not be sustained or recognized by national office or officers."  

Thus, unionization of coal miners brought bureaucratization, and the leading members of the new national organization developed a philosophy which has been termed "business unionism." Union leaders accepted the inevitability of a corporate capitalist order, and they merely wanted the coal miner to receive better wages, hours, and
working conditions under such a system. 20 Chris Evans of Nelsonville, a United Mine Workers' organizer, explained to the union's Journal that miners wished to avoid conflict in their efforts to obtain a fair wage scale, and he asserted that "we are not desirous, neither do we wish to be considered as interfering in any way with the affairs of coal operators." In his testimony before the Industrial Commission in 1901, UMW President John Mitchell, a former resident of Braidwood and Spring Valley, stated: "I am not opposed to either consolidation or concentration. I believe, however, that where manufacturing interests or industrial interests enter into combinations, trusts, etc., that it is generally for the purpose of cheapening the cost of production; that it makes it possible for employers to pay higher wages." Mitchell also disavowed any sympathy for socialism when he argued that "I do not believe it would be best for the State to own and operate the coal mines. I am a strict trade-unionist. I believe in progress slowly—by evolution rather than by revolution. I believe a better day is in store for the American workingman, but it has to come through no radical change in the organization of human society." Evans and Mitchell followed the path of Samuel Gompers and other trade unionists who felt the worker would gain more if he accepted the existing social structure. 21

As the UMW centralized its functions, many rank and file members complained that the leaders had deserted their cause. When the depression of 1893 hit the industry, union officials in Ohio accepted a company proposal which provided for payment in sixty day notes rather than money. "C.H.J." of Murray City, Ohio, wrote the union's Journal
and asserted that "if this question had been submitted with proper
instructions to each local assembly and local union, then it might
have been accepted, but to take the whole business in your own hands
you shouldered more than your share and to a good many it looked like
a sell." Within a week the men of the area had rejected the plan.
William Crawford of New Straitsville claimed "the rank and file have
no confidence in their officers, and the officers have no confidence
in the rank and file. And where harmony and brotherly love should
reign supreme, we find only jealousy and discord." 22

When the union called a national strike in 1894, many locals
in Ohio and Illinois resisted the compromise efforts of union officials. Miners in New Straitsville wired their representative in June
to stand firm for seventy cents per ton without any compromise. A
couple of days later miners in northern Illinois condemned a compromise
agreement as a "cowardly slander of the principle for which we are
contending" and they called upon their "national officers and members
of the board who signed the aforesaid scale to resign from the posi-
tions they have disgraced." Although the rank and file ultimately
accepted the agreement, many locals including those of northern
Illinois, called for the resignation of President John McBride. In
1897, another negotiated settlement incurred the wrath of northern
Illinois miners, and the union had to secure local settlements with
operators in this field. William Crawford thought the solution lay
in decentralization, because he felt "our miners would be satisfied
if they had their officers a little nearer to them, so that they could
be more directly in touch with them, and the rank and file could have
a more direct knowledge of conditions and the methods of doing busi-
ness."23 Despite such voices of dissent, the union officials continued
their bureaucratic policies as the century drew to a close.

Yet, as a result of the dissension in the organization in the 1890's, union leaders constantly stressed the need for unity in the
miners' Journal. The editor of this organ reported Lucy Parsons'
speech at Spring Valley in 1893, but he cautioned "those who might
be fascinated by the hope contained" in her speeches that "a little
sound, persistent, and well directed trade unionism would, in our
opinion, be more prolific of immediate results." Acknowledging dis-
content in Ohio in 1894, District Six President, A. A. Adams, urged
the miners to "try and become reconciled to existing conditions.
Believing as we do, that the existence of our organization is paramount
to all other issues, we would recommend that you resume work at the
prices named." The following year D. E. Jones of New Straitsville
pleaded with his fellow workers that "a house divided cannot stand or
succeed. Nourish better confidence in your officers, hold their hands
up, strengthen their hands . . . You will never have any union to
exist unless you defend your officers in place of cursing them."
Union officials made similar pleas throughout the decade as they sought
to both deflect criticism and to instill confidence in the national
organization.24

While urging unity in their organization, some union officials
offered critiques of the American economic system. Although business
unionism has been considered an ally of corporate capitalism, many of
the union leaders in the 1890's still hoped for a transformation of
the social order and they felt the trade union could be used to
achieve this change. William Crawford of New Straitsville criticized
miners who used violence "to subvert the existing order of things,"
and he urged workers to "cling to our organization, cease our rude
rabble, give up our petty factions . . . and be men, study the condi-
tions which surround us and march up to the ballot box in one solid
phalanx and register our votes in our own interests instead of voting
for millionaires and corporation lawyers." Another miner wrote the
Journal and supported John McBride's call for "the collective owner-
ship by the people of the means of production and distribution."^5

Miners may have ultimately hoped for a more just society,
but most workers and trade union officials in the coal industry simply
hoped to achieve a better life within the prevailing American ethos.
In the early years of coal mining many workers had been overwhelmed
by their new condition as wage workers, and, as a result, they found
it difficult to devise means to improve their living conditions. Later,
they revolted against their dehumanized condition by engaging their
employers in violent, protracted strikes. When coal miners sought
aid from their non-mining neighbors in their Ohio and Illinois communi-
ties, coal operators reacted by organizing to meet the demands of the
new national market. Miners finally realized the futility of local
political and economic action, and they formed their own national
organization in 1890. By 1900 the United Mine Workers of America had
emerged as a modern, bureaucratic labor organization, and its officials
worked diligently with representatives of the coal industry to rational-
ize the collective bargaining process.
FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER 8

1Yellowitz, Position, p. 29; Ohio Labor Statistics, 1879, p. 106; Workingman's Advocate, June 13, 1874; Report of the Industrial Commission, 1901, p. 34. E. P. Thompson argued that "as contrasted with middle class ideas of individualism or (at their best) of service, 'what is properly meant by working class culture' is the basic collective idea." See Thompson, Making, p. 423. Selig Perlman noted that trade unionism "required that the individual, both in his own interest and in that of the group to which he immediately belonged, should not be permitted to occupy any job opportunity except on the condition of observing the 'common rule' laid down by his union." See Perlman, Theory, p. 199.

2Journal of United Labor, August 25, 1884; Chicago Tribune, November 27, 1889; Ohio State Journal, August 11, 1897. Coal miners did have an advantage over some industrial workers who were divided into craft unions. Ray Ginger claimed these divisions in the railway industry fostered "class prejudices and class selfishness." See Ginger, Eugene V. Debs (New York: Collier Books, 1949), p. 97.


of the Knights of Labor Convention, 1885, p. 77. In his study of the labor movement in the late nineteenth century Gerald Grob maintained that in the 1880's "trade unions began to come into conflict with the Knights over crucial ideological issues. The trade unions, for example, were opposed to broad programs of social reconstruction; they looked rather toward immediate material improvements within the framework of existing institutions, and relied primarily on economic organization and action." See Grob, Workers and Utopia (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), p. 37.

6 Andrew Roy, A History of the Coal Mines of the United States (Columbus, Ohio: J. L. Trauger Printing Co., n.d.), pp. 262-282; Ohio State Journal, April 8, 1894. In her study of the Maryland coal industry Katherine Harvey claimed the Knights of Labor did not understand that "unless a strike could be maintained within an entire competitive district, the miners of one field suffered while their non-striking neighbors profited through the increase of business." See Harvey, "The Knights of Labor in the Maryland Coal Fields, 1878-1882," Labor History, Vol. X (Fall, 1969), p. 581. Despite the merger of unions, John Brophy claimed the Knights treated the UMWA as a "dual movement. Because the UMWA was more efficiently set up to deal with grievances of the trade, it drew members from the Knights who had vanished from the coal fields by the beginning of the century." See Brophy, A Miner's Life, p. 76.


9 Chicago Tribune, August 8, 1889; Ohio State Journal, July 13, 1897; Ibid., July 17, 1897; Black Diamond, August 21, 1897; Suffern, Coal Miners, p. 73.

10 Ohio State Inspector of the Mines, 1885, p. 320; Chicago Tribune, May 3, 1894; Black Diamond, August 21, 1897; Report of the Industrial Commission, 1901, p. 688. Justi also acknowledged that the National Civic Federation had initiated some of the conferences between miners and operators. For an account of the role of the National Civic Federation in the rationalization of the American economy see James Weinstein, The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State: 1900-1918 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968). Justi's views were hardly original,
because William Rend had argued as early as the 1880s that the remedy for excessive competition in the industry would be to "raise the price of mining reasonably in all coal fields and raise the price of coal accordingly." See Evans, History of the United Mine Workers, Vol. I, pp. 172-173.


12 Black Diamond, August 28, 1897; Ohio State Journal, July 8, 1897.


14 Logan Republican, July 17, 1884; Proceedings of the Hocking Valley, p. 312.

15 Hocking Sentinel, June 4, 1874; Chicago Tribune, June 22, 1874; Hocking Sentinel, January 8, 1874; Chicago Tribune, April 21, 1877; Andrew Brown to G. Hoadly, September 18, 1884, Hoadly Papers. C. K. Yearley explained these attitudes of workers by asserting that "Britons in American labor exhibited the same sense of propriety, the same self-discipline, diligence and stability, often associated with the terms 'Victorian' and 'bourgeois'... These immigrant organizers, like natives themselves, found nothing incompatible in their becoming petty capitalists as well as labor leaders... The Illinois mine chieftain, John James (Braidwood), operated an agency for the Anchor White Star Line." See Yearley, Britons, pp. 89-90. According to Warren Van Tine, John Mitchell, also of Braidwood, accumulated an estate which was valued at $244,295 upon his death. "Among his assets were bonds of Armour and Company, The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, and the New York Central." See Van Tine, Making of the Labor Bureaucrat, p. 25.

16 United Mine Workers' Journal, July 19, 1894; Ibid., July 26, 1894; Ibid., July 27, 1893; Ibid., December 26, 1895; Ibid., February 10, 1898. Leon Fink has observed that the "major interpretive works continue to suggest that in the period of most intense industrialization the world's most advanced capitalist society produced a citizenry substantially at peace with the process if not always with themselves." See Fink, "Class Conflict in the Gilded Age: The Figure and the Phantom," Radical History Review, Vol. III (Fall-Winter 1975), p. 36. In his study of Scranton, Pennsylvania, Samuel Walker found "the coal
miners accepted the prevailing socio-economic system and saw themselves as legitimate partners in it." See Walker, "Terrence Powderly," p. 75.

17 Chicago Tribune, August 20, 1899; United Mine Workers' Journal, April 23, 1891; Ibid., June 25, 1891; Ibid., June 23, 1892; Ibid., July 20, 1893. Speaking of the American trade union movement, Selig Perlman suggested that the "main feature of its development has been a rather perpetual struggle to keep the organization from going to pieces for want of inner cohesiveness," because it has tended to "identify itself in outlook, interest, and action, with the great lower middle classes." See Perlman, Theory of the Labor Movement, p. 154.

18 United Mine Workers' Journal, May 28, 1896; Ibid., February 25, 1897; Ibid., March 18, 1897; Ibid., April 15, 1897.


22 United Mine Workers' Journal, August 17, 1893; Ibid., August 24, 1893; Ibid., November 23, 1893.

23 Ohio State Journal, June 11, 1894; Ibid., June 14, 1894; Ibid., June 15, 1894; Ibid., June 16, 1894; Gluck, Mitchell, p. 34; United Mine Workers' Journal, November 15, 1896.

25. United Mine Workers' Journal, July 18, 1895; Ibid., April 26, 1894.
CONCLUSION

By the end of the nineteenth century Illinois and Ohio coal mining communities had passed through several stages of development. When coal companies established their claims in the 1860's and 1870's they built towns and company stores to service their mining population. Most of the coal towns of northern Illinois were created as industrial communities, but several mining villages in southeastern Ohio had pre-industrial characteristics before mining transformed the region. The Illinois towns had an ethnically diverse population throughout the era while Ohio communities contained a homogeneous, native population, but each area had similar living and working conditions. Coal miners sought aid from their middle class neighbors during times of conflict and they received some help, but workers found that community consciousness could not always shield them from the worst effects of the competitive economic system. During the pre-industrial era, miners often found that prolonged, violent strikes alienated the local middle class because merchants feared the effects of conflict on property values. Nevertheless, as the corporate order transformed the nation's economy, it did not totally sever ties between social classes of these communities. Continuity characterized community social relationships, but workers found that a national market economy made links between social classes less meaningful.
During the pre-industrial stage of community development, coal miners often violently resisted arbitrary actions by their employers. Contrary to assertions by nativists, this violent, even radical, activity did not necessarily result from the influx of an alien, "un-American" population. One of the most violent strikes in the nation's history occurred in the Hocking Valley in 1884-1885, and the miners of this region had native American backgrounds. On the other hand, immigrant miners utilized violent tactics during conflicts in Braidwood and Spring Valley in 1889 and 1894. The pre-industrial background of the mining population, rather than ethnicity, provides the common denominator for these conflicts in separate areas of the country. As mentioned earlier, the coal fields of southeastern Ohio had a pre-industrial population in the 1870's and 1880's. The mining population of northern Illinois in these decades had emigrated from Europe, and many of the workers had worked as miners in the "old country." As a result of their working class and trade union backgrounds, these miners preferred a disciplined, rational approach to remedy labor problems. Their successors in the 1880's and 1890's, however, came from pre-industrial areas of southeastern Europe, and the recent immigrants battled employers with radical words and actions. These workers resisted the dehumanizing aspects of industrialization with spontaneous, violent action, because they had not yet learned the value of a disciplined organization.

Violent strikes allowed miners to discharge their frustrations, but these conflicts did not directly alleviate the miners' problems. As a result, trade union leaders found a responsive chord when they
promised miners improved living and working conditions if the workers
would make the necessary sacrifices for organization. Coal miners
did not reject idealism by such an affiliation, because, even in their
early conflicts, they failed to develop an ideology which challenged
the power of corporate capital. Only the intransigence of employers
prevented an earlier rationalization of the coal industry. When coal
miners secured union recognition in their districts, they developed
a bureaucratic mechanism which limited the more violent aspects of
strikes. Like other American labor organizations, the United Mine
Workers of America has considerably improved the standard of living
of its members.

Yet the practical outlook of unions and employers in the coal
industry has not eliminated problems for the mining population. Miners
found that the unorganized position of fellow miners in other districts
would continue to jeopardize their position in the twentieth century.
Dissension has remained the miner's worst enemy, and the rank and
file continues to distrust its leadership. While struggling for a
better standard of living, coal miners have sought dignity, job satis-
faction, and a chance for a brighter future. The words of Braidwood's
"Old Englishman" ring as true today as when originally spoken: "It
isn't just something to feed ourselves with that we work for; its culture,
education, some leisure, a chance to learn how to rise, to make our
children better equipped for the battle than we have been. If we can't
do that our labor is a farce—a failure."
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