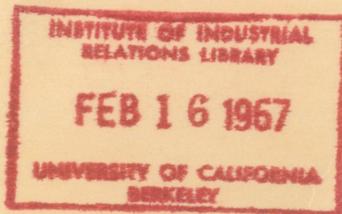


Mine Workers of Am.; United

United Mine Workers of America (Ind.)

A History of the
UMWA



Chapter I**A HISTORY OF THE UMWA**

EDITOR'S NOTE: The *Journal* herewith proudly presents the first of a series of articles on the history of the International Union, United Mine Workers of America in honor of our Organization's 75th anniversary year.

George Korson, author of the history, is an old and staunch friend of American coal miners and their Union. He grew up in the anthracite region of Pennsylvania, worked for many years on newspapers there and has written a number of authoritative books and articles about coal miners and the UMWA. His first contribution to the *Journal*, entitled "Songs and Ballads of the Coal Miner," was serialized in nine installments from November 15, 1926, to March 15, 1927.

Korson's other works about coal miners are **SONGS AND BALLADS OF THE ANTHRACITE MINER; MINSTRELS OF THE MINE PATCH** (recently reprinted); **BLACK LAND; COAL DUST ON THE FIDDLE; PENNSYLVANIA SONGS AND LEGENDS;** and **BLACK ROCK**. Korson also has produced **SONGS AND BALLADS OF THE ANTHRACITE MINERS,** and **SONGS AND BALLADS OF THE BITUMINOUS MINERS,** as long playing records containing selections of traditional coal miners' songs recorded by Korson. The records are issued by the Library of Congress and are available at the "Archive of Folk Song," Library of Congress, Washington 25, D. C.

In addition Korson wrote **AT HIS SIDE,** a history of the American Red Cross overseas in World War II, and **THE CHILD'S BOOK OF FOLKLORE.**

All told, Korson has been engaged in detailed research and writing about coal miners and the UMWA for 40 years. He has retired from his post with the American Red Cross and lives in Washington, D. C. at the Chastleton Hotel with his wife.

—Justin McCarthy, Editor.

By George Korson
Journal Correspondent

By the time American coal miners began working at their trade they had about 500 years of British coal-mining experience to fall back on. This involved not only mining methods but also a tradition of struggle by British miners for higher wages and better working conditions, and long experience in organizing and running labor unions.



Mr. Korson

—and by a similarity of industrial development in both countries.

The first record of commercial bituminous coal mining in the United States occurred in 1750 when an English company, using Negro slaves as miners, operated an open-face mine along the James River near Richmond, Virginia. The Richmond field supplied coal to factories making ammunition for the Continental Army. For many years after the end of the Revolutionary War, it maintained a monopoly of the coastwise trade. However, its

total output was comparatively small because the young nation's economy rested on wood as a household fuel and on charcoal for iron smelting.

The modern bituminous industry started in 1840 when it produced its first million tons, a scattered tonnage from small drift mines located in widely-separated places across a dozen states, chiefly Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Ohio. In 1840 the young country was still under an agrarian economy, but with signs of the coming industrial era multiplying; one of the signs had appeared the previous year with the successful introduction of the hot blast which was to displace charcoal, first with anthracite and later with coke, as the basic fuel in the iron-and-steel industry. The Middle West was still a frontier, but its settlement and steady growth gave impetus to the opening of its own coal mines which were beginning to offer competition to Ohio and Pennsylvania coal.

That early soft-coal mining population consisted largely of native farmer-miners: Negro slaves (in Virginia), Irish immigrants fresh from the canals they had helped build, and the vanguard of experienced British miners. Negro slaves in the Great Kanawha Valley of Virginia (that part which became West Virginia in 1863, during the Civil War) mined coal by hand and carried it in jute bags to the wharves along the Kanawha River. After the Civil War freed slaves drifted into the coal fields from cotton plantations, as related by Booker T. Washington in his autobiography, *Up From Slavery*.

The first foreign miners to settle in the bituminous coal fields came in the 1850's from England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. They were experienced miners, just the type wanted by a bituminous industry sprawled over 15 states and producing more than six million tons a year. The 1860's saw another wave of English-speaking immigrants whose coming was timely because of the acute shortage of miners created by the Civil War.

These English-speaking miners took virtual possession of the early bituminous (and anthracite) industry as miners, foremen and operators. Their mining methods, tools, and much of their terminology, became part of the American coal industry. They also initiated the miners' labor movement.

With the pioneers' imperfect methods of controlling the flow

(Continued on Next Page)

of streams, slackwater navigation was not so successful on the other rivers as it was on the Monongahela and the Ohio. Since the prospects for opening new coal fields and for other internal improvements were enormous, a movement to build canals such as those in England swept the United States. The major canal systems traversed the coal fields of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Maryland, and Virginia, with coal being a principal source of their revenue.

Just as canals penetrated regions in the interior beyond the reach of navigable rivers, so railroads tapped coal fields where lack of water or high altitude barred the canals. The high prices which coal brought in an ever-growing market stimulated the building of railroads into undeveloped places. Short lines, some of which later were linked by consolidation into trunk systems, appeared early in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois—the four states which, as the *Central Competitive Field*, were to dominate the bituminous markets for generations. Branches and spurs pushed their steel fingers into the most inaccessible places to tap the virgin seams; coal camps to house miners and their families sprouted over night in many states.

Railroad construction and general industrial development created a need for cheaper iron which gave rise to experiments designed to supplant charcoal with coke for metallurgical purposes, as in England. The beginning of coke production on a commercial scale dates from the winter of 1841-42 when two beehive ovens were built on the farm of John Taylor, along the Youghiogheny River, a few miles below Connellsville, Pennsylvania, a region destined to become the richest source of coking coal in the world.

Pittsburgh owed its rise chiefly to its nearness to Connellsville coking coal. When opened by railroad in 1859, the region made possible the erection of Pittsburgh's earliest blast furnace, the Clinton, the first time a blast furnace was bound to a rolling mill in one continuous plant. Other blast furnaces using Connellsville coke followed until the industry was freed from dependence upon country iron plantations. This concentration of pig iron manufacture made Pittsburgh the Union Army's arsenal in the Civil War and enabled the city to emerge as the nation's industrial center.

Pittsburgh Becomes An Industrial City

After the Civil War, Pittsburgh turned to the manufacture of a great variety of ironware, tools, and machinery for an ever-growing industry as outside capital poured into the city. When the three key industries—transportation, steel, and coal—meshed gears in the 1860's, America's industrial revolution was underway.

The coal corporation appeared early and attracted fluid capital. For a time shirt-sleeve management predominated. But when the demand for soft coal increased to the point requiring large-scale development, the opportunity was created for the invasion of the bituminous industry by the same banker-finance capitalism which was beginning to dominate other basic industries. Man-to-man relationship between employer and employes gave way to the impersonal corporation exercising its authority through salaried executives, often strangers to the communities they served. In the 1870's powerful financial syndicates were already in control of many coal fields, and by 1880 corporate business had captured control of the bituminous industry. The same could be said of the anthracite industry.

It was about this time that the coal corporations began tapping the manpower reservoir of southern and southeastern Europe, the beginning of an industrial policy which was to effect great changes in the ethnic complexion of the bituminous mining population with far-reaching social consequences, first in western Pennsylvania, and later in the other coal fields.

Before the pressure of this overwhelming mass of migrant humanity, the English-speaking miners were compelled to give way in one coal field after another, either abandoning the industry altogether for other occupations or else retreating, like the vanishing American Indian, westward, ever westward, to make a final but unsuccessful stand in the Far West and the Southwest.

Upon arrival in the United States, the Slavs and Italians were herded into immigrant trains, sped across the country, and dumped out on way-station sidings, bewildered and disillusioned. Unable to read safety instructions, or understand spoken English, knowing nothing of coal-mining technique, they were a constant danger to themselves and to their fellow workers in the mines. Thousands of them were killed in a long series of mine disasters which shocked the nation during the 40-year immigration period, roughly from 1880 to 1920. Cowed by mine guards, deputy sheriffs and state police; exploited and brutalized by mine bosses; ostracized and abused by English-speaking miners who accused them of tak-

'We Are Proud Of Our Record': W. A. Boyle

"Today our nation is experiencing great and significant changes. One of them is being brought about by the struggle for civil rights. This is not a new struggle as far as the



President Boyle

United Mine Workers of America is concerned. It was one of the first matters of business considered by our Union 75 years ago. One of the most important "first" principles upon which our union was founded was that of the dignity of the individual human being. The delegates to our first convention in 1890 included Negro coal miners. The men who attended our first convention knew from bitter personal experience of the many divisive forces that can separate and destroy the organizations of working men. They knew that one of the cruelest devices

used by employers for weakening and destroying labor organizations was a device that was used then, and is still being used today: the device of race hatred.

"The Delegates to the 1890 founding Convention of the United Mine Workers of America included men from Tennessee and Alabama, two of the states that had joined the Southern Confederacy, and some of the men came from Kentucky and West Virginia, border states that were intimately involved in the struggle between the North and the South. Yet, there was not a moment's hesitancy on the part of these coal miner Delegates about what should be done regarding any question that might exist concerning a brother coal miner's race, his color, his nationality or his religion.

"We are proud of our record [in civil rights]. We in the United Mine Workers of America were the very first civil rights workers. This great Organization of ours preached and practiced the principle of the dignity of the individual human being long before many of today's civil rights workers were even aware there was a problem. We have not been particularly vocal or noisy in our advocacy of civil rights during the 75 years of the history of our Union simply because it has not been necessary to wave a banner over this issue within our own ranks."

—UMWA President W. A. "Tony" Boyle.

ing their jobs away—the lot of the Slavic and Italian miners for years was wretched.

The Slavic-Italian immigration affected the Southern coal fields less than any other region. With the presence of a large body of poor mountaineers and Negroes, the Appalachian coal operators had small need of cheap labor from Europe. Mountaineers by the thousands poured into the industry during the First World War boom when immense tracts of coal-bearing lands in the South were opened. Armed with unlimited capital, advanced technology, and characteristic Yankee energy, the new owners laid violent hold on the mountaineers' traditional way of life. Overnight, two centuries of peace was broken as farm hollows were changed to raucous coal camps, and creek-bottom farmers dug coal for wartime wages. But their bubble burst with the end of the war, leaving them spoiled for the old life and stranded in the new.

Occupying a strategic position in the nation's economy, the bituminous industry should have brought prosperity to operators and a fair standard of living to employes. But for many years the contrary has been the case. It has been a benighted industry, marked on the one hand by the miners' constant struggle for a decent living, and on the other by mine owners and investors seeking a return on their investments. Remoteness of coal mines from points of consumption; the comparative ease with which men of limited capital were able to open new mines; the exploitation of the industry by large industrial consumers and absentee owners

(Continued on Page 14)

A History Of The UMWA

(Continued from Page 4)

with no real interest in the coal fields; and the invasion of soft-coal markets by competitive fuels such as oil, natural gas, and water-produced electricity—these were some of the factors responsible for the degraded condition of the industry. Throughout the years there were constant shiftings of tonnage in every major coal market, resulting in investments being wiped out, loss of jobs to mine workers, and complete abandonment of coal mines and coal camps.

America's industrial revolution was predicated on cheap coal which the operators were determined to produce, but they ran into a geologic-economic condition for which neither they nor the miners were responsible. Because of the position of the seams and the laborious and dangerous manner in which coal was produced, the labor expense was one of the highest in the country—nearly two-thirds of the cost of each ton. This labor cost, therefore, became the operators' principal point of attack. Wage cutting was a common practice. When one operator cut wages with the expectation of underselling his competitor, the latter immediately followed suit. And so the cutting went on through the years until the coal trade sank to the point where there was neither profit for the operators nor decent wages for the miners.

The Competition Was Ruthless

Few industries can compare with the ruthlessness that accompanied competition among bituminous operators. For many years it was a struggle between East and West. By 1920 it had turned into a war of attrition between North and South, although many of the Southern operators were really Northerners who had gone South in search of cheaper labor costs.

Under the new technology individual skill was made progressively unnecessary. Brawn, stamina, a strong back—these were enough to qualify men to load coal into pit cars after it had been undercut by machines and brought down by a few specialists. Immigrants and other unskilled workers who could be taught quickly to tend machines, and just as quickly discharged if found objectionable to their employers, were hired in great numbers.

The mass of these unskilled or semi-skilled mine workers were without that individual bargaining power formerly the asset of the skillful miner. With the bituminous industry under control of powerful corporations, the miners' only hope of advancing their economic interests lay in collective action.

America's last frontier was in the bituminous regions. The coal camps were outposts of American democracy whose fundamental principles were fought over and died for by American coal miners of every racial and national strain. Because they were so remote the public seldom heard of the day-to-day struggles that went on there. Only now and then did the American people read in newspapers of armed uprisings so violent as to require Federal troops to quell them.

One of these recurrent rebellions which held the front pages for days—that of August-September, 1921, in the hills of southern West Virginia—was notable for the fact that participants were not only coal miners but also railroaders, doctors, and even clergymen. It was a spontaneous community protest against the sustained, widespread terrorism of mine guards, the infamous Baldwin-Felts industrial detectives, deputy sheriffs, and state police. Among the marchers were hundreds of World War I veterans in their military uniforms, fresh from the trenches of France, whose slogan was, "Let's win West Virginia back to America."

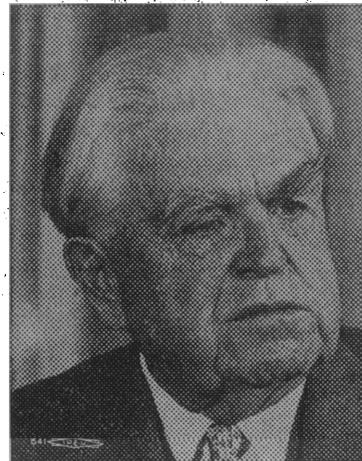
What was taking place in West Virginia paralleled conditions almost everywhere else in the benighted realm of King Coal. This was a valley of fear. The miners, realizing that as individuals they were helpless to improve their lot, sought to join the *United Mine Workers of America*. This the operators were determined to prevent. Bitter industrial warfare followed.

Coal corporations were able to rule with little hindrance from civil authorities. In many regions private industrial police were employed. The most hated by coal miners were the Pennsylvania Coal and Iron Police. Although privately paid by the coal operators, they were clothed with state authority which gave them unrestrained opportunity to intimidate and coerce Union miners. While ostensibly employed to guard mine property, they ranged all over the state ignoring town and county lines in obedience to company orders and in defiance of public opinion.

The Pennsylvania State Constabulary was no less distrusted by the miners. Created in 1905 ostensibly to police rural areas,

'Who Can Measure The Effort': John L. Lewis

Members of the United Mine Workers of America are the beneficiaries of the work and the contribution made by the men of the past 75 years who became members of our union, lived, struggled, and maintained their membership, and then passed on.



President Emeritus
John L. Lewis

Some of those men were members of the United Mine Workers of America for only one year or less because some of them were killed by explosions. Others died from after damp. Others died from miners' asthma. Others were killed by falling rock. Others had their eyes shot out and the flesh burned from the bones by premature explosions. Others simply worked themselves to death in a few years trying to provide for their families in water that

gave them rheumatism, in air that contained no oxygen and that burned out their lungs. Others died because they were not getting enough to eat at home, and as a result their bodies became weakened and they were attacked by malignant ailments that follow malnutrition and improper diet and bad sanitary conditions.

And by the thousands those men lived for a time. They contributed their strength for a time to this Union that they believed would ameliorate those conditions; and then they died and made way for other men whose strength was not yet gone to take their place, beginning where they left off and carrying the flag of this Organization and the battle for human rights in the mining industry by the conclusions and the objectives that are represented by this Organization.

Who can measure the sum total of human effort and human hopes and human tragedy that have been wrapped up in the history of this Organization, in the lives of the millions of men who have passed by and for a time have been its members?

—UMWA President Emeritus John L. Lewis.

it was ruthless toward miners during strikes in both the anthracite and bituminous regions. The deputy-sheriff method of policing was used by coal corporations in western Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Kentucky, Colorado and other states. Their purpose was to intimidate and coerce miners.

Constables and Justices of the Peace—the latter known as "squires"—were often the instruments of day-to-day intimidation; most of their cases concerned trespass actions brought by coal operators' agents.

Supplementing Coal and Iron Police, state constabularies, and deputy sheriffs, were industrial spies and thugs supplied by industrial detective agencies, of which the Pinkertons and the Baldwin-Felts organization were most feared and hated. Baldwin-Felts, long out of business, operated chiefly in West Virginia and Colorado whose sovereign police powers they expropriated for a time. So ruthless were their methods that miners stigmatized West Virginia and Colorado as "Hell and Repeat."

In time of strikes coal operators often called upon the state militia and, sometimes, even Federal troops, for assistance. State and Federal courts were open to them for sweeping injunctions which so outraged public opinion that in 1932 Congress passed the Norris-La Guardia Act forbidding Federal courts to grant injunctions in labor disputes.

Not all operators were unfair and ruthless in their labor relations. On the contrary, there were those, big and small, who realized that collective bargaining with the Union helped stabilize the industry by placing all operators on the same competitive basis as regards the largest item of expense: labor costs. Unfortunately,

(Continued on Page 15)

UMWA Joins With Free Trade Unionists In Spirit Of ICFTU May Day Manifesto

May Day does not mean much to American workers because of Labor Day, the first Monday of September each year. But in virtually every other nation of the world May Day is a workers' holiday.

May Day is mistakenly identified in the minds of many persons as a communist holiday. It was not originally a communist holiday although the communists have tried to take it over as their day in many nations.

The *International Confederation of Free Trade Unions*, with which the *UMWA* is affiliated, represents most of the organized workers of the several nations of the free world. As such it calls on these workers to observe May Day each year as an international workers' holiday. The *UMWA* through *International President W. A. "Tony" Boyle* takes the occasion to extend fraternal greetings to all members of the free trade unions in other nations throughout the world.

The 1965 May Day Manifesto of the ICFTU follows.

Workers of the world!

Once again the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions sends you its warm fraternal greetings on this international workers' holiday—the day when we remember the pioneers who paved the way for labour's present achievements, the day when we look bravely to the future for an even fuller and happier life for ourselves and our children.

It is now more than 15 years since the ICFTU sounded the clarion call rallying the world's workers to the common struggle for Bread, Peace and Freedom. Since then many successes have been won through the united strength of the international free trade union movement. But the fight is still on and today we rededicate the ICFTU to the continuing struggle:

- For lasting peace through universal controlled disarmament, thus banishing once and for all the nightmare of nuclear destruction;
- For the achievement and maintenance of full, productive and freely chosen employment, and an end to the tragic waste of the world's human and material resources especially in the developing countries; for job security, shorter working hours, decent housing, adequate protection against all the risks of old-age, sickness and disablement, and for ever rising standards of living for all the world's workers;
- For the harnessing of modern science and technology to the needs of the masses, not to the selfish interests of a privileged few;
- For full trade union rights everywhere and not least in the newly independent states: if the workers of those countries are to play their due part in nation-building, they can do so only as free men, not as regimented robots.
- For full recognition and satisfaction of the special needs of young workers and of working women.

Only by supporting their free trade unions can the workers of any country make their contribution to the achievement of these goals. Only by strengthening their own international can the world's free trade unions ensure that their resources are most effectively used for the attainment of common objectives.

This is an ICFTU congress year. Next July in Amsterdam labour leaders from all five continents will gather to review the ICFTU record over the last three years and to thrash out in democratic fashion the future policy of the international free trade union movement.

Workers of the world!

This is your fight. Rally round your free trade unions.

Forward with the ICFTU for Bread, for Peace and for Freedom!

Wear Your Gloves For Safety

Hands and fingers were victims of roughly a fourth of all occupational injuries to the different parts of the body during 1964. That's why gloves or other hand protection is so important.

Important Notice To All Local Unions United Mine Workers Of America

In order to comply with the requirements of Section 401(e) of the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act relating to local union elections, the *International Constitution of the United Mine Workers of America* was amended at the *Convention held in Florida last September*. Section 27 of *Article XIV* now provides:

"The date of local elections for local officers, mine committeemen, safety committeemen and checkweighmen must be generally advertised among the members. The local recording secretary shall mail notices to each member at his last known home address not less than 15 days prior to the election."

In complying with the above provision, *Local Union Recording Secretaries* can mail postal cards to each member at his last known home address not less than 15 days prior to the election. The postal card should contain information giving the time, date and place the election is to be held and the offices which are to be filled.

(Clip out the form below and use for "The National Drivers Test" to be broadcast over the CBS television network May 24, 10-11 p.m., Eastern Daylight Time.)



THE NATIONAL DRIVERS TEST

OFFICIAL TEST FORM

<p>A. JUDGMENT</p> <p>Defensive Driving Techniques</p> <p>circle correct letter</p> <p>Score</p> <p>1. a. b. c. d. <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>2. a. b. c. d. <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>3. a. b. c. d. <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>B. KNOWLEDGE</p> <p>Rules of the Road:</p> <p>circle T (true) or F (false)</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Score</td> <td>Score</td> <td>Score</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>6. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>11. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>7. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>12. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>8. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>13. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>9. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>14. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>5. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>10. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>15. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>	Score	Score	Score	1. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>	6. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>	11. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>	2. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>	7. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>	12. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>	3. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>	8. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>	13. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>	4. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>	9. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>	14. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>	5. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>	10. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>	15. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>
Score	Score	Score																	
1. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>	6. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>	11. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>																	
2. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>	7. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>	12. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>																	
3. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>	8. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>	13. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>																	
4. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>	9. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>	14. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>																	
5. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>	10. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>	15. T. F. <input type="checkbox"/>																	
<p>C. PERCEPTION</p> <p>Hazards Alertness</p> <p>1. List the number of driving hazards you have seen</p> <p>Number () Score <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>D. SPECIAL</p> <p>circle correct letter</p> <p>Score</p> <p>1. a. b. c. d. <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>2. a. b. c. d. <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>TOTAL SCORE</p> <p><input style="width: 40px; height: 30px;" type="text"/></p>																	

This test form is printed for your convenience in marking your answers, totaling your score and comparing it with those of your family and your friends.

"The National Drivers Test" is produced by CBS News in cooperation with the National Safety Council and sponsored by Shell Oil Company.

NSC's Coal Mining Section Met March 24 At Pittsburgh

By a Journal Correspondent

PITTSBURGH, Pa.—The executive committee of the Coal Mining Section of the National Safety Council held its spring meeting at the Pittsburgh-Hilton Hotel here on March 24.

The UMWA was represented by Rex Lauck, Assistant Editor, the Journal, and District 31 Vice President L. J. Panakovich. Chairman of the Coal Mining Section this year is Harry Gandy, Jr., director, safety, National Coal Association.

Lauck reported for labor representatives on the Coal Mining Section in the absence of Safety Director Charles Ferguson and also reported as chairman of the Section's publicity committee.

Other committee chairmen who reported included: Wilbur F. Eigenbrod, director of the West Virginia Department of Mines, for State Mine Inspector Representatives; James F. Wildey, safety director, Bethlehem Mines Corp., for the Engineering Committee; Paul Lingo, assistant safety director, Bituminous Coal Operators Association, for the Program Committee; A. J. Barry of the U. S. Bureau of Mines and Francis R. Boyle of U. S. Steel Corp., for the Roof Control Committee; George W. Mandel, Bethlehem Mines Corp., for the Off-The-Job Safety Committee; and Ewalt Herzog, safety director of Hann Coal Co., for the Poster and Visual Aids Committee.

Wildey reported that a data sheet on silicon diodes was nearly completed and would be ready for the fall meeting of the Section in Chicago. As a supplement to the Engineering Committee's report S. P. Polack of the U. S. Bureau of Mines in Pittsburgh reported on use—or lack of same—of the fire resistant hydraulic fluids in coal mining machinery. His urging that they be accepted by the coal operators and mine equipment manufacturers was backed strongly by UMWA representatives.

Another member of the Engineering Committee who reported briefly was D. S. Kingery, also of the U. S. Bureau of Mines in Pittsburgh, who told of the progress on developing a methane monitor and said that one unit had been approved and also said that one unit was being tested at Grant Town, W. Va., and another at a mine of the Pittsburgh Coal Co. Kingery reported that the Bureau was continuing to study the problem of float dust and that what he hoped was a final experiment on rigid foam on March 24 at the Bureau's experimental mine at Monroeville, Pa. (Ed. Note: It failed.)

Boyle and Barry said that considerable progress was being made on their joint experiment on roof bolts at the Robena Mine. They said that much progress had been made by changing the shape of the embossment of the bearing plates and in changing the length of the roof bolts themselves. Barry said he and other Bureau experts were beginning to believe that a build-up of gas pressure in the roof may explain hitherto unexplained roof falls.

The executive committee also heard a report from National Safety Council Staff Representative Clinton H. Hoch on the Council's new drive to cut down traffic fatalities. This is an attempt to enroll all drivers, regardless of age, in a driver-improvement program aimed at eradicating unsafe driving habits which may have led to most of the 48,000 traffic fatalities on the U. S. highways in 1964.

A History Of The UMWA

(Continued from Page 14)

there were others who took the expedient way because that led to the cheap coal demanded by their industrial customers. The clash of interests resulted in constant turmoil, violence and bloodshed that lasted into the 1930's.

Unionization and passage by Congress of the 1937 National Bituminous Coal Act, curbing overproduction and eliminating cut-throat competition, laid the foundation for a brighter future.

In its opinion upholding the Act, the United States Supreme Court made the following observation on the industry's past:

"Labor and capital alike were the victims. Financial distress among the operators and acute poverty among miners prevailed during periods of general prosperity. This history of the bituminous coal industry is written in blood as well as in ink."

© George Korson, 1965

District One Praises UMWA Leaders

The adoption of the following resolutions by the Sixth Quadrennial Constitutional Convention of UMWA District 1, dealing with the three International Officers came by a unanimous standing vote of the delegation coupled with thunderous applause that lasted for several minutes. The Convention was held March 22-24:

— PRESIDENT W. A. BOYLE —

WHEREAS, since our last Convention the International Union of the United Mine Workers of America was blessed with the leadership of a new President in W. A. "Tony" Boyle, and

WHEREAS, this youthful, aggressive, brilliant, militant and well-trained resident International Officer was elected recently by a landslide vote of the membership to a five-year term to head the world's greatest labor organization, and

WHEREAS, since assuming the highest office in our Union, he presided over his first International Convention—one of the most harmonious and constructive in the long and rich history of our Union—in a highly commendable manner, always displaying tolerance and recognizing all who desired to be heard, and

WHEREAS, as head of the Union's negotiating teams in bargaining sessions with the operators was responsible for consummating the finest anthracite and bituminous agreements the rank and file of this Union has had in many decades, and

WHEREAS, it was our distinguished new President who displayed outstanding militancy and brilliance at meeting in this region in compelling a number of hard coal companies to liquidate delinquencies to the Anthracite Health and Welfare Fund that made it possible for thousands of our retired members and beneficiaries of deceased members to enjoy added benefits, and

WHEREAS, President Boyle moved for the creation for the first time in the history of our Union of a Department of Organization to bring into the fold of the United Mine Workers of America thousands of unorganized mine workers, and to which we pledge him our wholehearted cooperation and support; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the delegates to this Sixth Quadrennial Constitutional Convention of District 1, United Mine Workers of America, representing thousands of our members in Local Unions throughout Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties of Northeastern Pennsylvania, offer to our distinguished International President W. A. (Tony) Boyle by a standing vote of this delegation our deep appreciation and gratitude for the benefits that have redounded to our membership through his able leadership and determined efforts, and to further pledge our continued cooperation and assistance to him for a successful reign as head of this great and mighty Union.

— VICE PRESIDENT R. O. LEWIS —

WHEREAS, We are fortunate in having as our International Vice President, R. O. Lewis, a seasoned and able member of the International triumvirate, and

WHEREAS, In Vice President Lewis the membership of the United Mine Workers of America gave him a resounding vote of confidence in his recent election to a new five-year term, and

WHEREAS, Vice President Lewis, in his inimitable and determined manner in discharging the duties of his responsible office, played a major role in the writing of both the hard and soft coal agreements, and

WHEREAS, His wise counsel and guidance in carrying out the responsibilities and policy of the International Union are greatly appreciated; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Sixth Quadrennial Convention of District 1, United Mine Workers of America, offer its highest commendation to Vice President Lewis for his outstanding work and to give him the assurance of our continuing cooperation in the years that lie ahead.

— SECRETARY-TREASURER JOHN OWENS —

WHEREAS, International Secretary-Treasurer John Owens, veteran among the International Officers of our Union, is in a class by himself, and

WHEREAS, His record in handling the financial affairs of the United Mine Workers of America for almost two decades has been so outstanding that he will go down in the history of our Union as one of the greatest ever to hold that office, and

WHEREAS, This able, distinguished and efficient officer of our Union, with innate ability of foresight, vision and leadership has played a vital role in moulding the United Mine Workers of America into the cohesive and strong Union it is today, and

WHEREAS, His knowledge and experience in the high councils of our Union played an important role in the writing of contracts enjoyed by the membership of this Union today, and

WHEREAS, His magnificent participation in the recent International Convention and his equally magnificent victory in the recent election for a new five-year term in office makes him most outstanding; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the delegates assembled in this convention express our sincere and deepest appreciation to International Secretary-Treasurer Owens for the dignity and unselfish manner in which he has discharged his most responsible duties as an officer of this Union, and to here pledge our continued and unstinting loyalty to him.

Seven Killed In Pa. Mines During March

There were seven fatalities in Pennsylvania mines during March, according to figures released by H. B. Charnbury, secretary of Mines and Mineral Industries. Five deaths occurred in bituminous coal mines and two in the anthracite industry.

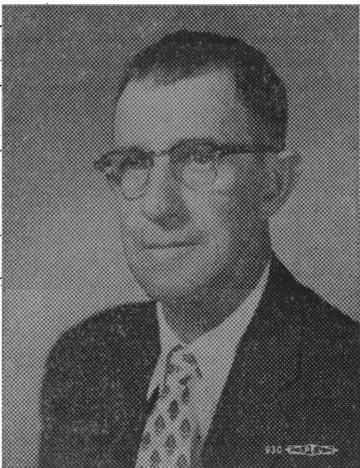
There were 13 fatalities during the first six months of 1965, 13 in the soft-coal industry and four in anthracite mines.

Lee C. Burke, District 28

Lee C. Burke, retired UMWA District 28 Representative, died March 16, at Richlands, Va. He was 63.

Upon learning of his death the UMWA's International Officers—President W. A. Boyle, Vice President R. O. Lewis and Secretary-Treasurer John Owens—sent the following message of sympathy to his widow:

"We were deeply distressed to learn of the death of your beloved husband whose loyal services to the United Mine Workers of America and its membership in District 28 will ever be remembered and sincerely appreciated. Please accept our heartfelt sympathy on this sad occasion of your great personal loss."



Mr. Burke

Mr. Burke was a District Representative from 1933 until 1957 when he retired due to ill health. He was born at Big Creek, Va., and spent most of his life in Tazewell County, Va.

In addition to his widow, Mrs. Minnie Burke of Richlands, he is survived by a brother, Charles Johnson of Williamson, W. Va., and two sisters, Mrs. Tina Reynolds of Richlands and Mrs. Hattie Hooper of Jewell Ridge, Va.

Funeral services were held on March 19, at the First Baptist Church in Richlands with the Rev. Peery Smith and the Rev. A. Charles Allen officiating. Burial was at Green Hills Memory Gardens at Claypool Hill.

Honorary pallbearers included District 28 President Carson Hibbitts, District 29 President George J. Titler, District 28 Representatives Ray Thornsbury, Ed Gilbert and Bud Clark and District 29 Representative Charlie Phillips.

Gardiner Jackson, Former UMWA Employee

One of the most colorful and determined fighters for trade union and liberal causes in our era, Gardiner (Pat) Jackson died in Washington of a heart ailment at the age of 68. Mr. Jackson at one time worked for the UMWA.

The story of his life reads like a history of our times.

In the 1920's he quit as a reporter on the *Boston Globe* to become secretary of the Sacco-Vanzetti Defense Committee. In later years, along with his good friend, Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, he became the authority on the famous case.

He came to Washington during the New Deal, first as a newspaperman and later as an Agriculture Department official to help farmers hurt by the depression. In the 1930's and 1940's he worked with the CIO in the farm labor field and in the internal fight against communist-dominated unions.

Jackson felt for years that the most neglected economic group in the country was farm workers and he never gave up efforts to encourage their organization.

He was a close associate of members of Congress, cabinet members and even Presidents.

At memorial services for Jackson, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. recalled that when he was a White House aide, President Kennedy used to call him in from time to time and ask: "What is Pat Jackson up to these days?"

C & O Has Special World's Fair Tours

Chesapeake and Ohio Railway has announced nine week-long escorted "Chessie Parties" via its passenger trains to the New York World's Fair and Washington, D. C., from cities on its line.

First tour will start on May 15. The others begin June 5, June 26, July 10, July 24, August 7, August 21, September 18 and October 2. All tours will depart Saturdays, with a stopover in the nation's capital on Sunday for church, lunch and sightseeing.

The round-trip package plan includes five nights at the Hotel Taft in New York City, two admissions to the World's Fair and sightseeing tours of the city itself. Several optional features in New York will also be available for the tour-goers. Departure

Dr. Sayers, Fund's Advisory Board Head

Dr. Royd R. Sayers, 79, who helped pioneer the medical care program of the UMWA Welfare and Retirement Fund, died April 23 at Bethesda Naval Hospital. Most of his career had been devoted to industrial medicine to which he made many noteworthy contributions.

Resigning his post as director of the U. S. Bureau of Mines, Dr. Sayers came with the Fund in August of 1947 to assist in launching the unprecedented health program. Subsequently, he was named by Dr. Warren F. Draper, Executive Medical Officer of the Fund, as chairman of a ten-man Medical Advisory Board. The membership included some of the top-flight medical men of the nation.

His duties, in addition to advising Fund Trustees on health and medical problems, included carrying out recommendations contained in the *Medical Survey of the Bituminous Coal Industry* conducted by Rear Admiral Joel T. Boone. The survey, first nationwide report on the living and working conditions of coal miners, was provided for by the 1946 Krug-Lewis agreement when the government had legal control of the mines.

Dr. Sayers obtained major changes in health and safety regulations during his first year as director of the Bureau of Mines. In 1941, largely due to his findings, a Federal coal mine safety law was passed permitting the government to inspect mines and publish its findings. New safety codes which he formulated were adopted following the Centralia (Ill.) coal mine disaster in the spring of 1947.

Dr. Sayers held membership in approximately 30 medical societies and was the author of more than 100 articles on occupational diseases and various industrial medical subjects. He attended numerous scientific conferences both in this country and abroad.

A native of Crothersville, Ind., Dr. Sayers received his bachelor and master degrees in chemistry from the University of Indiana. Before entering Buffalo University in 1910, he worked as an electro-chemist in Indiana and New York. A year after receiving his medical degree in 1914, he was commissioned an assistant surgeon and assigned to Ellis Island, N. Y., by the Federal government.

In 1917 Dr. Sayers joined the U. S. Bureau of Mines to research the causes of tuberculosis and silicosis among mine workers. A year later, on assignment by the U. S. Public Health Service, he traveled in New England and the southern states to study the current influenza epidemic.

After completing graduate courses at Rush Medical School in Chicago, he resumed his association with the Bureau of Mines until 1933 when he became medical officer in charge of the office of industrial hygiene and sanitation for the U. S. Public Health Service. Several years later he developed the medical care program for the United Mine Workers. He served with the Baltimore City Health Department before retiring in 1963.

Dr. Sayers helped develop the ventilation system for New York's Holland Tunnel. Among his other accomplishments was the utilization of helium to aid the work of deep-sea divers and in other usages in industry and in the military.

Dr. Sayers is survived by his widow, Edna; a daughter, Joan S. Brown, 2727 34th Place, N. W., Washington; two grandchildren, and a sister, Clytia Skeel of Bloomington, Ind.



Dr. R. R. Sayers

from New York for home towns will be mid-day on Friday.

Over 1,000 people went on eight C&O World's Fair Tours in 1964 and the tours are expected to be virtual sell-outs again this year.

Typical "Chessie Party" package costs from points in Ohio, Kentucky and West Virginia are: Louisville, Ky., \$132.10; Lexington, Ky., \$128.65; Morehead, Ky., \$126.00; Cincinnati, Ohio, \$128.65; Ashland, Ky., \$122.70; Huntington, W. Va., \$121.85; Charleston, W. Va., \$118.85; Prince, W. Va., \$114.70.

Chapter 2

A HISTORY OF THE UMWA

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second article in George Korson's history of the International Union, *United Mine Workers of America*. The first was published in the May 1, 1965, issue of the *Journal*. It told in general of the early history of coal mining in the United States and of the reasons for the terrible need for organization of coal miners to better their working conditions.

These articles are being published by the *Journal* in celebration of the 75th anniversary of the UMWA, which was established on January 25, 1890, in Columbus, Ohio.

Korson is a veteran newspaper reporter, author, folklorist and friend of the nation's coal miners and their Union. He was reared in the anthracite region of North-eastern Pennsylvania and has been engaged in research and writing about American coal miners for 40 years. His first contribution to the *Journal*, entitled "Songs and Ballads of the Coal Miner," was serialized in nine installments from November 15, 1926, to March 15, 1927.

By George Korson
Journal Correspondent

© George Korson 1965

*"This is our country, and
'All men are brethren — how the watch-
words run!"*

And when men act as such is justice won."

*"Come, then, and rally around the standard of
Union—the union of States and the Unity of
miners . . . Unite for the emancipation of our
labor, and the regeneration and elevation physi-
cally, mentally, and morally, of our species."*

Thus ends Daniel Weaver's historic address of 1861 directed at the unorganized coal miners of the United States. This eloquent call "on the necessity for association," brought a group of pioneer delegates on horseback, in stagecoaches, and on foot to the little mining town of West Belleville, Ill., where, on January 28, 1861, the first national miners' Union was organized. It is known to history as the *American Miners' Association*.



Mr. Korson

As previously noted, British miners brought the spirit and technique of unionism to the United States. Two British immigrant miners—*Thomas Lloyd* and *Daniel Weaver*—were the leaders behind the American Miners' Association, Lloyd serving as president and Weaver as secretary. By coincidence, both were natives of Staffordshire, England.

Growing out of a strike protesting against wage reductions, the American Miners' Association was the militant granddaddy of the *United Mine Workers of America*. That pioneer national Union was a product of the industrial revolution then opening a new chapter in American history. This early Union was called upon

to solve such familiar problems as recurring recessions, unemployment, wage reductions, and insecurity of living standards. The American Miners' Association is linked by history with the United Mine Workers of America because, despite the span of years separating them, both felt a concern for the same social and economic conditions spawned by industrialism.

Seventy-five years ago, when the United Mine Workers of America was launched, there was little, if any, contact between the anthracite and bituminous miners. The pre-Civil War local miners' Unions of the anthracite region limited their activities to the hard coal fields. The American Miners Association, on the other hand, made a general appeal to all miners. Through the years it was coal miners in the bituminous part of the coal industry, beginning in 1861, who extended the hand of fraternity to coal miners in all parts of the United States. These coal miners realized that the only way to protect their own working and living standards from the effects of competition from non-Union miners was to unite behind a strong Union.

The earliest record of a coal miners' Union organized along modern lines is traceable to Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania, 1848. It was the *Bates Union*, named for its founder, *John Bates*, an English immigrant miner. He held the Union's highest office, "agent," at a salary of \$12 a week and the use of a horse. At its peak, Bates Union boasted of 5,000 members. In May, 1849 there was a strike which resulted in considerable violence.

The Company Store Was A Big 'Beef'

A principal miners' grievance was compulsory trading in the company store where prices were higher than in commercial stores. The miners also walked out of the pits to keep coal from glutting the market and causing wage deductions. There was considerable dissension within the Union because of the miners' inexperience. Bates Union faded into oblivion in 1850, largely as a result of the members' losing confidence in John Bates whom they accused of mixing politics with Union business. From time to time isolated local Unions rose up in the anthracite region, especially during and after the Civil War; but they were only temporary in nature. It took about 20 years for a strong, regionwide union to develop in the hard coal fields—the *Workingmen's Benevolent Association*.

Meanwhile, through strikes and other concerted activities, the bituminous miners in widely-scattered coal camps were growing in strength for more than a decade prior to 1861. Their struggles centered around wages and the amount of work to be done for a day's pay. Even in those pioneer years, the nation's soft-coal miners were concerned with solving such problems as honest weights of coal at the tippie, working conditions (including health and safety), bad company housing, company store patronage and medical services.

In those groping years the miners gradually learned that mass revolts were futile unless they first organized a strong union and gained some maturity and experience. Mass revolts by unorganized and inexperienced miners were often unsuccessful. Without unity, doubts grew, and the return to work soon became a stampede with each striker concerned only with preserving his own job. When the strikers were firmly organized in a Union, the precarious unity arising from a strike was supplemented by a stronger bond springing from the union itself. This bond was capable of dissolving individual doubts, and if necessary, of managing an orderly retreat with ranks intact.

During this pioneer era the widely-scattered mines were still small. In many cases the economic line separating coal operator and coal miner was thin or even non-existent.

In its Constitution the American Miners' Association set a pattern that was to serve succeeding miners' Unions, including the United Mine Workers of America. One of the principles stressed was no discrimination because of color, creed, or nationality. In his now famous address to the coal miners, Weaver said: "Let there be no English, no Irish, Germans, Scotch or Welsh." While the problem of uniting the English-speaking miners may not have been difficult, the assimilation of the German miners of St. Clair County, Ill., did present a difficulty. But efforts at integration were successful.

This was a swift vindication of the value of a principle which has been held vital by all miners' unions, especially the United Mine Workers of America, since that time. It accounts for the traditionally friendly attitude of white coal miners toward their Negro fellow workers. The rule of non-discrimination remains a basic tenet of the United Mine Workers of America and was recently restated at the UMWA's International Convention.

In the opening of his address ("The necessity of an association of miners, and of those branches of industry immediately connected with mining operations,") Weaver makes a plea for the industrial form of organization. The organizational structure of the Association, with lodges composing districts, and with both more or less subordinate to the national organization, has persisted in the succeeding miners' unions, including the UMWA.

The American Miners' Association was unique because in outlook and policy it was ahead of the typical labor union of its time, the 1860s. It built its membership to about 20,000 miners and laborers. From this plateau it gradually declined, unable to survive the post-Civil War period of economic readjustment. More specifically, the American Miners Association could not afford the luxury of dissension that broke out only a few months after the end of the Civil War. It thus passed into history—and oblivion. Only a few isolated local lodges survived after 1867.

Its successor was the *Miners' National Association* and this brings us to one of the immortals of the coal miners' Union movement—*John Siney*.

Siney was born in Queens County, Ireland on July 31, 1831, the eldest of seven children born to an impoverished potato grower. When Johnny was five the Siney family moved to Wigan, Lancashire, England. Johnny's younger brothers went into the coal pits; but he got himself a job in a cotton mill; later he was apprenticed to a brick maker. While still in the brick trade he became involved with the Chartist political movement whose manifesto he learned by heart. He proved himself a born leader: he was elected president of the Wigan Chartist local union. In 1863, at the height of the Civil War, he immigrated to St. Clair, Schuylkill County, Pa.

He Learned Coal Mining From His Brothers

What he knew about coal mining he had learned from his younger brothers; but this did not deter him from going into the St. Clair coal mines, then enjoying a war boom. He entered as a mine laborer, and before long became a certified miner.

Siney differed from most miners of his day in that he was an avid reader and paid close attention to the economics of the coal industry.

In June, 1864 shortly after coal prices had soared to \$12 a ton in the prime market of Philadelphia, there was a strike for higher wages. The miners won their demand of 10 cents a wagon and the mine laborers received a \$1.00 raise in pay. This victory determined Siney to dedicate his career to leadership of the mine workers. However, in the three years following the collapse of the Civil War boom, Siney watched wages fall as coal piled up in the coal yards of Philadelphia, New York, and other big cities of the East. This taught him a lesson he never forgot: as long as coal glutted the market the workers who had produced it would receive instable wages.

Convinced that the only way to get fair wages was to try to prevent the overproduction of coal, he helped organize the *Workingmen's Benevolent Association*, the first region-wide miners' Union in the anthracite coal fields. Siney led 15 fellow miners from St. Clair to the Schuylkill County seat at Pottsville to obtain a charter for a labor organization. They consulted a prominent Pottsville lawyer, *Linn Bartholomew*, who told them that though they could obtain a charter for almost any other kind of organization, a labor Union was not among them. That is why their group is known to history as the Workingmen's Benevolent Association. By the payment of \$150 they received a charter from the Schuylkill County Common Pleas Court in March 1868.

The Association had come into existence during the post-Civil War period which was characterized in the nation by gigantic industrial expansions, with financial titans fighting ruthlessly for control of natural resources, railroads, and key industries. It was a period in which rampant rugged individualism was paralleled by great strikes, riots and bloodshed among the nation's industrial workers.

This period—the late 1860's and the 1870's—also saw the anthracite industry experience its greatest expansion. To insure themselves a steady supply of cheap coal the big anthracite-carrying railroads plunged into the purchase of coal-bearing lands in

The UMWA Is An American Institution: Thomas Kennedy

We are meeting in Cincinnati, in the great State of Ohio. The United Mine Workers of America was born in Columbus. A great deal of our history was made in Ohio. I well remember that it was in Cincinnati, in the early '30s, when the United Mine Workers of America introduced a resolution in the convention of the American Federation of Labor calling for a Social Security program under the Federal government. Up to that convention the American labor movement had been divided on the question of Social Security. As a result of the action of that convention, great impetus was given to the Social Security program, and it was later adopted by Congress.



Thomas Kennedy

Apropos of the talks that are going on now about civil liberties, the United Mine Workers of America was the first organization on the American continent that made as part of its Constitution the declaration that all men were created equal and that there should be no discrimination in the United Mine Workers of America on account of creed, color or nationality. In addition to that, we were the first organization on the American continent to declare for the principle of the industrial form of organization which is now dominant in the United States. We were the only organization of labor in the United States that opposed recognition of Communist Russia. We pointed out what would happen as a result of that recognition. We were absolutely correct in our appraisal of that situation.

The United Mine Workers of America is an American institution. I do not know of a communist member in our Union. And certainly in this delegation there are no communists. There are none of you who believe in the totalitarian form of government. You believe in Americanism and all that Americanism stands for under our flag. In my judgment, we need legislation to relieve depressed labor areas in the United States, and especially in the mining sections. The quickest and the best way to help solve this problem is to have unemployment compensation increased and paid for the duration of unemployment.

—UMWA President, Thomas Kennedy (1960-1963)

their respective territories, and began producing themselves, forming subsidiaries for that purpose.

Of course, labor-management disputes frequently had broken out before the railroads captured control of the anthracite industry. But never before had they been so intense, nor marked by so much violence. The small independent operators, while not always agreeing with their miners, nevertheless had been close to them and had understood their problems. Hence, they had been inclined to compromise more often than the impersonal, absentee-controlled, corporate monopolies.

At the mercy of the law of supply and demand, the industry suffered its most severe headaches from unstable markets. Hard times had much to do with this instability; but the industry's own weaknesses were also an important factor. Cutthroat competition between railroads on the one hand and between the coal operators on the other, brought over-production. This led to falling market prices, wage cuts, and unemployment. All added up to suffering among the miners, and the 1873 financial panic intensified it.

The leading factor in this era was the Reading Railroad which, with its coal and iron subsidiary (the Philadelphia & Reading Coal & Iron Co.), had undisputed mastery of most of the region, and the dominant single voice was that of its young president, Franklin B. Gowen. Before his election as president in 1869—he was 34 at the time—the Reading, through conservative management had attained a strong position as one of the nation's largest and most prosperous corporations. Yet Gowen departed from this con-

(Continued on Page 10)

A History Of The UMWA

(Continued from Page 9)

servative policy the moment he took office when he conceived the grandiose scheme of buying up all the coal-bearing lands served by the company, and the properties of hard-pressed independent operators.

Gowen's pet hate was unionism. The Workingmen's Benevolent Association was on its way up when he became the Reading's president, and by word and deed he showed his determination to crush it. He was actuated primarily by two motives: to remove the threat to his one-man control of his company's labor policies, and to keep the wages down as low as possible.

In 1869, the W.B.A. ordered a work suspension, obeyed only by the miners in the Schuylkill County, to allow surplus coal to be disposed of. It ended with a Joint Agreement between the W.B.A. and the Anthracite Board of Trade, created for the purpose of dealing collectively with the Union. This Agreement, signed July 29, 1870, provided for a sliding scale to regulate wages in accordance with the rise and fall of average coal prices at Port Carbon, then at the head of the Schuylkill Canal. The basis for calculating monthly percentages was \$3.00 a ton, the miners to receive a 5 percent increase for every 25-cent advance in the market price above \$3.00. When the price fell below the basis, a suspension would go into effect until the market had adjusted itself. This was the anthracite industry's first written labor contract.

The miners had accepted the sliding scale in good faith as a means of stabilizing relations with their employers. Only a few months later, however, when market prices took a tumble, the Anthracite Board of Trade put into effect wage cuts which the men refused to accept, maintaining that they were in violation of their Agreement. Consequently, they were locked out from their jobs and remained idle for four months until they had accepted the so-called *Gowen's Compromise*, which called for a \$2.50 basis and a percentage of 8¼ on or off the basis.

The miners had a ballad that told the sad story how the sliding scale always seemed to slide the wrong way against their interests. Following are the first verse and chorus:

THE SLIDING SCALE

*Come on, you jolly minin' boys, that love to hear a song,
I will unfold a circumstance, to us it all belongs;
It's of those operators, as I do tell the tale,
And how nice they pull the wages down to meet the sliding
scale.*

(Chorus)

*Still thinking that the scale would turn, the men did work
along,
Expecting the coming month to have eight and a quarter on;
But when the twenty-fifth had come, it was the same old
tale:
Those eight and a quarter off, me boys, upon the sliding
scale.*

Without a national Union, the miners were in deep despair. Before long, however, a new organization, known as the *Knights of Labor*, made its appearance. Miners joined its Local Assemblies furtively for fear of losing their jobs. Secrecy promoted membership. All trades and professions, even physicians and business men, were eligible.

An air of mystery surrounded many coal camps, heightened by mystic signs and ciphers chalked on fences, poles, and walls. Only the initiated understood the code, and they were pledged to secrecy. Not even members of their own families were told. Upon seeing these signs and symbols, miners retired to the woods or to some other inaccessible rendezvous at night.

Secrecy, while necessary, kept many from joining the order because it conflicted with their religious principles. The Catholic Church opposed it. Another source of weakness was its heterogeneous membership. Too many had signed up without a sense of urgency. The coal miners concluded that the Knights of Labor was too diversified to meet their individual needs.

To establish a distinctive miners' Union, representative mine workers from seven states, many of them ex-Knights, formed the *National Federation of Miners and Mine Laborers of the United States and Territories*, at Indianapolis on September 12, 1885. Within two months it had established the first Joint Conference of miners and operators in the history of the bituminous industry. On February 24, 1886 an Agreement, the first interstate wage contract in history, was signed.

The conference agreed upon a wage scale and set up arbitration machinery. This marked the grandest effort made up to that

time for the substitution of reason for force in the labor-management relations of the bituminous industry.

Meanwhile, the Knights of Labor, conscious of its power—it had more than 700,000 members at its peak—resented the forming of the Federation. It interpreted that action as an attempt to crowd it out of the nation's coalfields.

At a Convention held in St. Louis, Mo., on May 20, 1886—eight months after the Federation had come into existence—a *National Trades Assembly No. 135* was created. With complete powers over all Local Assemblies having a majority of coal miners, this was another national organization. By a coincidence, both Unions had their national headquarters in the little mining town of New Straitsville, Ohio, the home of *Chris Evans, Executive Secretary* of the Federation, and *Lewis James, Secretary-Treasurer* of National Trades Assembly 135.

There was a pressing need for one united movement among the nation's miners at this time, instead of these two mutually-destructive factions. An extraordinary demand for coal followed the revival of business after the panic had spent itself in 1879, and new coalfields were being opened almost daily.

At the same time, railroad expansion had caused markets to be thrown open to almost all the new coal-producing fields. This had the effect of intensifying competition among the mine owners. At the least disturbance to business they sought economic advantage by cutting their miners' wages. In most cases, the miners went out on strike. However, with internecine warfare between the two national Unions, these strikes were rarely successful. Many towns had the two kinds of Unions, one secret, the other open. Strikes begun by one Union were lost because of the other's indifference or even hostility.

Strong Right Arms Were Used

An early historian wrote: "*The quarrels and bickerings were not always wordy ones, the opposing miners frequently using their strong right arms to prove the superiority of their respective organizations.*"

In the beginning the Federation assumed the attitude that it alone was capable of adequately representing the nation's coal miners. But the National Trades Assembly 135 threatened action that might have undermined the joint wage conference. From then on the Federation regarded its rival as an equal. For two years its officers sought to consolidate with the N.T.A. 135; but the most they could accomplish was a temporary truce in their bitter feud.

Then, in September, 1888, at the Federation's Fourth Annual Convention, a *Committee* was appointed to meet with a *Committee* of the N.T.A. 135. Both groups drew up a joint letter addressed "*To Organized Miners Everywhere,*" calling a *Convention* in Columbus, Ohio, in December, for the purpose of deciding "*upon the form of organization to govern our organized craftsmen in the future, and to determine upon a policy that will more effectually protect the interests of our craft.*"

This bore the surface appearance of having the approval of the officers of the two factions; but it developed that Master Workman Lewis of the N.T.A. 135 in a remarkable about-face, had acted without the knowledge or consent of his fellow officers. The latter were furious. *Robert Watchorn, Secretary-Treasurer*, immediately issued a letter to the membership demanding Lewis's ouster.

Apparently this came to nothing. The two factions met in Columbus in December, as previously scheduled, and Master Workman Lewis was elected chairman of the *Joint Convention*. Little sentiment for consolidation with the Federation developed, however. When a resolution was offered declaring, in effect, that the truce between the two organizations would be cancelled if the N.T.A. 135 refused to form one Union, many Knights walked out of the hall. The Federation delegates continued in session, and they were joined by Lewis and his followers. The name of the Federation was changed to the *National Progressive Union*. *John McBride*, long active in miners' Union movements in Ohio, was elected *President* and *William T. Lewis, General Secretary*.

Meanwhile, the N.T.A. 135 Delegates returned to their own hall in Columbus, and elected the following officers: *John B. Rae*, of Coalmont, Pa., *Master Workman*; *Robert Linn*, of Kansas, *Worthy Foreman*, and *Robert Watchorn*, of Pennsylvania, *Secretary-Treasurer*.

For the next year the factional fighting was intensified. The two organizations fought each other to exhaustion, losing strategic strikes and, with the loss of strikes, many members. At long

Widman Speaks On Organizing At Ludlow

The annual memorial services commemorating the Ludlow, Colo., massacre of 1914 was held at the site of the Ludlow Memorial Monument on May 16.

On assignment by *UMWA President W. A. Boyle*, the principal speaker was *Michael F. Widman, Jr., Director of the Research and Marketing Department*.

Another who spoke briefly was *Mrs. Mary Thomas O'Neal* who was present during the massacre and who risked her life to protect some of the miners' children who were fleeing Rockefeller gun thugs.

Master of Ceremonies was *District 15 President Fred K. Heflerly*. Also in attendance were *District 22 International Executive Board Member Arthur Biggs*, *International Representative Frank Sacco*, and *District 15 Representatives Earle Stucker, Sylvester Lorenzo and William A. Vaughn*.

In his speech Widman said, "To the working man today, the United Mine Workers of America is still a beacon of strength and labor union inspiration. From the United Mine Workers of America have come the outstanding labor leaders of our time—*John Mitchell, Bill Green, Phil Murray, Tom Kennedy*, and the incomparable *John L. Lewis*. Now, there are men at the head of the United Mine Workers who have been trained in tradition and who carry on the daily fight for the welfare of the working man. These men, *Tony Boyle, Ray Lewis* and *John Owens*, share with their predecessors a dedication to that same dream, to the same sacred goal which enabled the men and women of Ludlow to go to their deaths."

Widman also referred to the UMWA's historical fight for safety in American coal mines. He pointed out that mines employing less than 15 men underground still do not receive full protection of the Federal Coal Mine Safety Act. He said that the Union would continue to fight for the Federal law which would bring all coal miners under the protection of the Federal government. He also said the UMWA was supporting the ore miners in their struggle to secure passage of a Federal Mine Safety law.

Widman briefly described the UMWA's new *Department of Organization*, which is headed by *John T. Kmetz, International Executive Board Member for District 1*. He said the UMWA organizing drive "is being carried on with vigor and determination."

Widman continued, "We will carry on our organization campaign with full confidence in the righteousness of our cause and in the inevitability of our victory."

Widman concluded, "Today, in this field made sacred by the blood of our predecessors, we renew our determination to carry on their fight. We pledge ourselves to bring trade unionism to every corner of this land and to fight repression and exploitation wherever it might be."

"Let us then go forth, renewed in vigor and eager for the tests that are to come. In this way our debt to the martyrs of Ludlow will be repaid and we shall have scored another victory

last, sobered by overwhelming losses, both sides were ready to talk peace.

The initiative was taken by National Trades Assembly 135, in Wilkes-Barre, Pa., in September, 1889. The Delegates instructed their officers to call a *National Convention* of all organized and unorganized miners in the United States to consider consolidation, among other matters of common interest.

The officers of the National Progressive Union joined with the Knights of Labor in an address to both organizations, pointing out the disastrous results from their internecine warfare, and calling for peace. The officers of the respective organizations agreed upon a tentative plan of unification. This was submitted to every Local Assembly of the N.T.A. 135 and to every N.P.U. *Local Union* with a request to send Delegates to a *National Convention* to be held in Columbus, Ohio, starting on January 22, 1890. The delegates were instructed to vote for or against the following plan:

1. To unite the two organizations under one head without sacrificing the essential features of either Union.
2. The Organization to be divided into national, district and local divisions, the meetings to be either secret or open as determined by the members.
3. Equal taxation of all members.
4. One staff of officers for the national, district and local organizations.



LUDLOW SERVICES—Michael F. Widman, Jr., Director of the UMWA Research and Marketing Department, is shown as he made the principal speech at the annual memorializing the 19 men, women and children who were killed at Ludlow, Colo., April 24, 1914. In the background is Mrs. Mary Thomas O'Neal who was at Ludlow at the time of the massacre.

for the cause of worker's welfare and trade unionism."

The Ludlow massacre was a climax of a two-year strike of 11,000 miners in southern Colorado. After several months of restraining themselves in spite of abuses from the companies, the miners called a strike in September 1913. Many of the striking miners were employees of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Co. owned by the Rockefeller family, and the situation was under the direct but remote control of John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

Acting under orders from Rockefeller, the Colorado coal operators evicted the striking miners and their families from their company-owned houses and began to recruit gun thugs. The operator-controlled Colorado National Guard was also used against the strikers. In spite of the general belief that the April 20 massacre was a sudden flare up of violence, the truth is that eight persons had been murdered by the National Guard and gunmen before the massacre itself took place.

Accounts in past years' *Journals* have presented the gory details of the story of the horror on April 20. An army of state militiamen and Baldwin-Phelps thugs launched a full-scale military attack against the tent colony at Ludlow which housed more than 1000 people. Forty armed miners attempted to divert the attack from their wives and children by taking positions removed from the tent colony.

During the period of this gun battle an 11-year-old boy, William Snyder, had his head blown off by dum-dum bullets when he left the dugout shelter to fetch water for his mother, *Mrs. Frank Snyder* and five younger brothers and sisters.

That night, except for two women and 11 children, all others successfully slipped away from the tent colony to the safety of a hidden shelter provided by a sympathetic railroad worker and his wife.

After dark the operator's army of hoodlums and militiamen descended on the camp and burned it to the ground, killing the 13 women and children.

The bodies found the next morning showed that the dead persons in the pit were *Mrs. Pedlina Costa* and her two children, *Lucy*, 4, and *Onafario*, *Mrs. Patria Valdez* and her four children; three children of *Mrs. Mary Petrucci*, the youngest six months old, and *Roderlo Pedrogone*, 6, and his sister, *Coloriva*, 4. They were huddled together in the death trap where they had attempted to hide from the marauders.

Union men killed in the previous day's fighting were *Charles Costa*, the husband of Mrs. Costa who died with her children in the tent colony; *Louis Tinas*, *James Fyler*, *Frank Rubino* and *John Bartoloti*. Another man, an 18-year-old bystander, was also murdered during the massacre.

The horror at Ludlow should always remind coal miners that there are those who have died to save the United Mine Workers of America. This memory should result in a renewal of determination to protect and preserve the UMWA.

UNITED MINE WORKERS JOURNAL

Official Publication
United Mine Workers of America

JUSTIN McCARTHY, Editor
REX LAUCK, Asst. Editor

76th Year

JUNE 1, 1965

No. 11

Boyle Calls For Halt To Plan To Use Gas At Alaskan Bases

The fight by *UMWA President W. A. Boyle* to save coal miners' jobs and to help create new ones is a never-ending battle on all economic and political fronts. The latest example of the kind of thoughtless bureaucratic maneuvering that must be constantly watched in Washington is a proposal to convert two giant military bases in Alaska from coal to natural gas.

Aided by Sen. Robert C. Byrd (D., W. Va.), coal industry and UMWA officials are seeking to delay—and if possible prevent—the conversion by knocking out a proposed authorization of \$1,560,000 for the conversion work at Elmendorf Air Force Base and Fort Richardson Army Base, both near Anchorage, Alaska.

Senator Byrd presided at Senate hearings on May 20 of the Armed Services and Appropriations Subcommittee to investigate the proposal. The coal state Senator said witnesses from the Matanuska Valley in Alaska, which sends 250,000 tons of coal yearly to the bases, charged that loss of these markets would cost the Alaskan coal industry \$2 million annually.

Stephen Dunn, president of the National Coal Association, said the proposed conversion would destroy the coal industry in the Matanuska Valley. Other boosters for Alaskan coal were Sen. E. L. Bartlett (D., Alaska), Mayor Ted Schmidtke of Palmer, Alaska and businessmen.

A careful reading of President Boyle's statement clearly indicates that the proposed conversion is ill-advised and should not be authorized. The text follows.

My name is W. A. Boyle. I am the President of the United Mine Workers of America.

The UMWA is unalterably opposed to the conversion of the Elmendorf Air Force Base and Fort Richardson power and heating plants to natural gas. These conversions are not in the public interest and would strike a damaging blow to the Alaskan coal industry and the people and communities which depend upon it.

We are certain that the decision to convert these bases was made without serious thought for the economic consequences of such an action. We are also sure that little, if any, consideration was given to what would happen to the coal miners of the State of Alaska when their jobs were eliminated and they were forced to live on unemployment compensation and even public dole.

Yet, such factors should be made a part of any decision to convert military bases from coal to other fuels. This is especially true in Alaska, a state where the military consumes 90 percent of the total coal production and where the loss of a military contract means corporate extinction.

Since these factors have not, in our opinion, been correctly evaluated, or probably not evaluated at all, we would like, for the record, to discuss them. We do this, not because of our hostility toward those who decide on fuel conversions in the Penta-

gon, but simply because we feel that these people cannot, or will not, take account of the human factors involved in fuel conversions.

The production of coal in the Matanuska Valley of Alaska provides a payroll of \$1 million annually to the coal miners and their families. An additional \$1 million is spent by the operators in the normal conduct of their business for services and supplies.

The decision to convert these bases under question means that this payroll and these purchases will be stopped. We have not heard any discussion on what will take their place. We have not seen any proposals as to what will fill the vacuum created by what is to us a harsh and arbitrary decision.

Nor are we aware of any plans to provide alternate sources of employment for the coal miners who will be displaced.

But there should be. All of these factors should be taken into consideration.

In a very real and immediate sense, the loss of such jobs represents a price that will have to be paid for the use of natural gas by the military at Elmendorf and Fort Richardson. Perhaps if such costs were considered, the decision which has been made would be reversed and coal would be retained.

We note with interest that the Department of Defense did go so far as to ascertain the cost of unemployment compensation, which would be incurred in the event that the conversion were made. This cost has been set by the Department of Labor at \$215,000. We wonder if this has been figured into the cost of conversions and what effect it has had upon the economics of the situation.

More importantly, what happens to the people when the unemployment insurance runs out? What happens when their families and children have to endure all the rigors of poverty and all of the hopelessness of destitution because the breadwinner cannot secure a job?

We have seen situations like this all across the coal fields of this nation. We have seen long-term unemployment and the misery that it brings. And we say to you today in the strongest possible terms that it should not be allowed to happen. We further contend that every possible resource of the federal government, as well as the concerted action of every person in this nation, should be used to prevent it where possible and wipe away its stain where it exists.

It seems that we as a nation face a question of policy with respect to the bases under question and to a greater extent, on the whole question of military uses of coal. That decision comes, in essence, to the question of jobs. For the continuation of the use of coal in these two installations, as well as other such bases, will mean a continuation of jobs for coal miners. It will mean that men can work at their trade and provide for their families. It will return money into the economy of coal areas and allow business establishments to grow and prosper.

On the other hand, conversions throw men into idleness and place upon the taxpayers of the nation the burden of caring for them and for their families.

There is also the question of the Alaskan railroad. This railroad is a creature of the government, having been built in the interest of national security and maintained in part by a government subsidy. The economic viability of this railroad, however, is insured in large measure by the \$750,000 per year derived from the transportation of coal to the military bases in question. We understand that the loss of this coal freight revenue would force the railroad to close its line to Palmer, thus dealing a serious blow to the Valley's agricultural industry, which together with the coal industry almost totally supports the economy of Palmer and the Matanuska Valley.

The Matanuska Valley coal deposits have provided a reliable fuel supply to the heating plants at Elmendorf Air Force Base and Fort Richardson. These bases constitute about 90 percent of the coal market. If they are converted to gas, the Matanuska Valley coal industry will be lost.

It would seem, therefore, that the government has a special responsibility to the Alaskan coal industry and the men who work in it. But more importantly, the government has a responsibility to use its full resources to provide jobs for Americans who want them and to promote the stability of essential American industries. Apparently the policy of the Administration is to do just that—wipe away the pockets of poverty in our land.

For these reasons, we strongly urge that the decision to convert Elmendorf Air Force Base and Fort Richardson to gas be reversed and that the use of coal be retained at these installations.

Chapter 3

A HISTORY OF THE UMWA

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the third article in George Korson's history of the *International Union, United Mine Workers of America*. The first was published in the May 1, 1965, issue of the *Journal* and the second in the June 1, 1965 issue. These first articles told in general of the early history of coal mining in the United States and of the reasons for the terrible need for organization of coal miners to better their working conditions. The second dealt with the history of early coal miners' organizations in this country which finally, after 50 years of effort, led to the establishment of January 5, 1890, of the United Mine Workers of America. This chapter deals specifically with the formation of the UMWA 75 years ago in Columbus, Ohio.

By George Korson

© George Korson, 1965

Bearing the hopes of their suffering comrades back home in the bleak coal mining camps, the Delegates from the two rival organizations finally gathered in Columbus on a bitter cold day in January, 1890. Behind their beards and mustaches were faces with characteristic blue-black powder marks and the scars of their hazardous work—careworn, pallid, undernourished, serious faces. One of the Delegates was a lad of 16, "a boy with a Union man's head," and while there were several other youths, the majority of the Delegates were older men, fathers of large families, grizzled veterans who knew from bitter personal experience all the sacrifices that coal mining entailed. Many had been members of previous Unions.

This was to be no drummers' convention. It was a solemn meeting full of suspense and fraught with the direct consequences for the men and boys who dug the nation's coal. Would there be peace or war? The folks back home waited anxiously and hopefully for the outcome; everything they held dear was tied up in those deliberations. Not only the coal fields, but the whole country focused attention on Columbus.

During their stay the Delegates lived no whit more luxuriously than at home. Their meagre expense accounts, made up of their fellow workers' pennies, permitted no high living. Some Delegates could not wait for adjournment for lack of means. Few could afford to attend Sir Charles Young's drama, *Jim, the Penman*, then playing at the Columbus Grand Opera House, but many heard a free lecture on *Explosive Mine Gases*. An unscheduled bit of excitement during the Convention week was an explosion of natural gas which destroyed several Columbus homes and resulted in three deaths. This was their first encounter with natural gas, but it was fated not to be the last for them or their successors in the coal mining industry.

The Official Roster of the Joint Convention shows that 198 Delegates were present, about half of them from Ohio Local Unions and Lodges. The *National Progressive Union* had 87 and the *Knights of Labor*, 103, the remainder being independents. All of Pennsylvania's 48 Delegates represented the Knights of Labor, while Ohio's were almost equally divided between the two Organizations. It is interesting to note that the N.P.U. delegates came from four states—*Ohio, Illinois, Indiana* and *Kentucky*. On the other hand, nine states were represented by Knights of Labor delegates, as follows: *Pennsylvania, Ohio, Tennessee, Kentucky,*



Mr. Korson

Alabama, West Virginia, Indiana, Illinois and Kansas.

The Joint Convention was held in the Columbus City Hall overlooking the State House. It was a three-story brick building with a front built of a dark, cream-colored stone. To enter, the Delegates passed under seven lancet archways, the three central ones surmounted by a balcony. On the way to their hall, located on the third floor, they ascended a grand stairway and then a smaller central stairway.

In a hall spacious enough to seat ten times their number, the Delegates took their places under a high ceiling and five great chandeliers, the central one having 60 gas burners, and the others half as many. They faced a very large stage at the north end of the hall and their backs were turned on a balcony having graduated rows of seats capable of accommodating two and a half times their number. The boys felt a little out of place in such luxurious surroundings; but they managed to maintain their composure.

Preparations for the Joint Convention were made by the two Unions at separate meetings held on Wednesday, January 22nd, and by a Joint Committee which struggled for three hours at the Grand Central Hotel over an agenda to reduce the points of possible conflict to a minimum. Even so, as we shall see, the Joint Convention was far from a calm one. There were diehards on both sides, men intensely loyal to the principles of their respective Organizations, who were determined at all costs to prevent the sacrifice of their Union's identity. The greatest obstacle to unity lay in the difference in form of the two Organizations—one secret, the other open. The Convention started with one great asset: the enthusiasm of the Delegates kindled by the prospect of a brighter future for the miners. Another asset was the bigness and the labor statesmanship of the leaders of both factions—of men like the following whose names loom large in the annals of the *United Mine Workers of America*—*John B. Rae, John McBride, Robert Watchorn, Patrick McBryde, William B. Wilson, "Little Phil" Penna, William Scaife, John Kane* and *Chris Evans*.

The history-making Joint Convention began at 9:40 on Thursday morning, January 23rd, when the delegates of the *National Progressive Union*, headed by President John McBride and Secretary Patrick McBryde, marched into the great hall in a body and took the seats reserved for them on the east side. The Delegates of the *National Trades Assembly 135* of the *Knights of Labor* were already seated on their side of the hall.

First Convention Called to Order

Promptly at 9:45 o'clock, in accordance with a procedure adopted by the Joint Committee, *Master Workman John B. Rae*, of the N.T.A. 135, formally called the Convention to order. *Patrick McBryde* of the N.P.U. was elected Secretary, and *Robert Watchorn*, of the N.T.A. 135, Assistant Secretary.

The Officers of the two Organizations were all seated on the platform, "listening with breathless interest to the speeches of the Delegates, and dreading lest some rash orator would excite the two factions."

By pre-arrangement, 20-minute speeches were made by President McBride and Master Workman Rae. Said McBride:

"You will admit that there are men, able and energetic men, who have conscientious scruples which prevent them from entering secret organizations. Now, my friends, I hold that if we can unite our forces, it should be done, even though all of the members of both Organizations are not fully satisfied with the terms. While we differ as to some of the minor details, I say that it is my honest judgment and candid opinion that we should sink all our differences and overcome the obstacles and make the consolidation at all hazards. If you are wise, in the name of God and your craftsmen, make a compromise on these differences. Give and take on both sides. You must do this, and it will be a matter of a very short time until you are consolidated."

Master Workman Rae followed with a statement that he endorsed McBride's sentiments in almost every particular. He spoke in favor of "one Organization with two branches; the Organization to be the means to an end, not the end."

(Continued on Next Page)

A History Of The UMWA

(Continued from Page 5)

The Delegates were then given the opportunity to discuss the subject of consolidation. Following a brief discussion, *Delegate John Nugent*, of Ohio, believed that something should be placed before the Convention to discuss, and in behalf of the N.T.A. 135, offered the following resolution:

"Resolved, That we approve the action of the National Officers, and approve the plan of amalgamation laid down by them."

The discussion was resumed and was directed along the lines of the resolution. Then *Delegate John H. Taylor*, of Ohio, offered a substitute resolution calling for a dissolution of both Organizations to the end that one might be created. Pandemonium broke loose when he read it. The use of the word "dissolution" was like waving a red flag to a bull—it enraged the Knights of Labor Delegates, especially since it represented the official position of the N.P.U. Amidst the uproar, Secretary Watchorn rose and said: "Such a thing cannot possibly take place. Let us be frank and fair. Our Organization will not dissolve. Our Organization cannot dissolve. We can weld the two together, but we do not want to give up anything essential."

In response, *Delegate David Ross* of Illinois, speaking for the N.P.U., declared, "If Mr. Watchorn opposes any change in his form of organization, then we cannot join in a body."

The ensuing discussion took a violent turn and to give the Delegates a chance to cool their tempers and to consult with one another, a recess was declared until the afternoon. When the Convention reconvened, Taylor's resolution was withdrawn and Nugent's original resolution was adopted. The four proposals comprising the plan of amalgamation were voted on separately and finally approved by a vote of 193 to 3.

'The Scene . . . Beggars Description'

"The scene that followed," reported an eyewitness, "beggars description. Delegates shouted themselves hoarse, threw their hats aloft, and tears coursed down the cheeks of gray-haired men."

Now a *Constitution* was to be adopted. As the foundation for the new Organization, it had to be as solid as conglomerate. Yet expediency demanded that it be so framed as to win approval of the Convention. The *Joint Constitution Committee* slaved for seven hours over the document before entrusting it to the tender mercies of the Delegates. Though a compromise, some of its articles evoked bitter opposition, the objectors in nearly every case being the Knights of Labor Delegates, ever suspicious that their beloved Organization was being swallowed up by the new Colossus rising in the hall.

At one point—on the second day—the discussion became so violent it threatened to break up the Convention. The disturbance began when *Delegate Robert Linn of Kansas*, Executive Board member of the N.T.A. 135, and a member of the Constitution Committee, stood up to argue against adoption of that article which required National Officers to become members of both branches before qualifying for their positions.

A scrappy Scotchman, Linn made a violent speech which "was partly unintelligible because of his Scottish accent." He expressed the view that the adoption of this Article would result in the dissolution of the N.T.A. 135. Both sides of the hall disagreed with him and showed their disapproval by shouting and stamping until he was forced to sit down. Before yielding the floor, however, he shouted the threat that if this Article was adopted he would withdraw from the Convention.

The order of business was suspended to permit Secretary Watchorn to answer Linn. He did so in a bitter personal attack. "Why jeopardize this grand consolidation by such remarks?" he demanded. "Upon this article hangs the whole of that we hope and yearn for. This is no time for pessimistic ideas to come into the convention." Cheers and the throwing of hats in the air by Delegates of both Unions followed Watchorn's remarks.

But Linn and his friends persisted in their attack, and the hall being in an uproar, the session was recessed until the afternoon "to give the Delegates an opportunity to rearrange their ruffled feathers," as a Columbus newspaper expressed it.

"The feeling seems to be that if there is a split," commented another paper, "it will be on this Article of the Constitution."

However, when the Convention reconvened, the Article went through without a dissenting vote, the opposition having been smothered in a secret session of the N.T.A. 135 during the recess. But Delegate Linn proved he was a man of his word by withdrawing from the Convention and going home.

Objections were voiced against several other sections of the Constitution. The Executive Board was increased from five to seven members to meet a demand from the floor, but an attempt to reduce the per capita tax from five cents to three cents failed.

The first section of the Constitution read:

"This organization shall be known as the United Mine Workers of America, composed of N.T.A. 135, K. of L., and the National Progressive Union."

The identity of the National Trades Assembly was further safeguarded by the preservation in the Constitution of the high sounding titles of the Knights of Labor, such as "Master Workman" corresponding to "President."

While the new organization became known almost immediately as the *United Mine Workers of America* the hyphenism of name and titles was continued until the Constitution was revised in 1898 when every reference to the Knights of Labor was eliminated. Though the Constitution has been revised periodically since then in order to meet the needs of a fast growing organization, the original preamble has been preserved, in essence, to the present.

It was the general opinion that a defense fund was one of the most important matters to be considered, and many Delegates demanded action. Speaking on the question, Delegate Monahan illustrated his conception of a defense fund in the following homely manner:

"Here is a fruit garden enclosed by a high wall. People climb over the wall, however, and secure the fruit. A bulldog placed in the garden invites the intruders to retreat. The mining craft is the fruit garden; our Organization is the wall about it; and the defense fund is the bulldog."

The defense fund established by the Convention called for a per member tax of 25 cents for each of the ensuing three months, and 15 cents per month thereafter. This fund was to be used only for the support of members locked out or on strike, who would receive \$3.50 per week. *Local and District organizations* were given the power to create defense funds of their own.

In accordance with the plan of amalgamation, the coal fields were divided into 21 Districts, the first embracing the anthracite region of Pennsylvania and the 21st, Texas, Arkansas and Indian Territory (Oklahoma).

Provision was made for the new Union to affiliate with both the *General Assembly of the Knights of Labor* and the *American Federation of Labor*, the secret branches paying tax to the former and the open branches to the A.F. of L.

John B. Rae Was First President

The first officers of the United Mine Workers of America, elected at the convention, were: *John B. Rae, President or Master Workman; W. H. Turner, Vice President or Worthy Foreman, and Robert Watchorn, Secretary-Treasurer.*

Executive Board: *Patrick McBryde, Pennsylvania; William Scaife, Illinois; R. F. Warren, Ohio; John Kane, Indiana, and W. C. Webb, Kentucky.*

The first regularly elected member of the United Mine Workers of America was *John Flannery*, editor of the *Trades Journal*, of Pittsburgh, who took the obligation at the Convention by paying the dollar initiation fee.

The first national auditor was *J. H. Kennedy* of Indiana.

"*Local Union No. 1*" is lost in obscurity, though an inactive *Local Union* in *District 12*, Illinois, has carried the number. The first *Local Union* organized was a joint affair to enable the new officers to qualify for their positions as required by the Constitution. It passed out of existence after serving its special purpose.

As the clock ticked off the final minutes of the historic Convention, on Monday, January 27, two human interest incidents symbolic of the new unity took place.

John Nugent and *Alexander Johnson*, leaders of the rival Organizations in Ohio's Hocking Valley had been bitter enemies. Now they shook hands and together swore allegiance to the United Mine Workers of America. To show his sincerity, Johnson embraced Nugent as their friends cheered.

Just before *Delegate John H. Taylor* of Ohio sang a song "that enraptured the Delegates," and brought the convention to a close. President-elect Rae, *Samuel Gompers*, head of the American Federation of Labor, and John McBride emerged from behind the stage screen and stepped forward. Gompers stood between Rae and McBride, the retiring presidents of the merged unions, as all three repeated:

"United we stand; divided we fall."

And ever since, this has been a slogan of the United Mine Workers of America.

Chapter 4

A HISTORY OF THE UMWA

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the fourth article in George Korson's history of the *International Union, United Mine Workers of America*. The first was published in the May 1, 1965, issue of the *Journal*, the second in the June 1, 1965 issue, and the third in the July 1 issue. The first article told in general of the early history of coal mining in the United States and of the terrible need for Union organization of American coal miners to better their working conditions. The second article dealt with the history of early coal miners' unions leading to the establishment on January 25, 1890—75 years ago—of the UMWA. The third article dealt specifically with the founding of the UMWA in Columbus, Ohio, three quarters of a century ago. The fourth article deals with the pioneer organizers of the Union.

By George Korson

© 1965 George Korson

"Misery and poverty," observed Oscar Wilde, "are so absolutely degrading and exercise such a paralyzing effect over the nature of men, that no class is ever really conscious of its own suffering. They have to be told of it by other people, and they often entirely disbelieve them."

In the case of the American coal miners, the "other people" were the field organizers, real heroes of the UMWA and the labor movement. Without them there could not have been a viable union. As soon as the United Mine Workers of America was established and national headquarters set up in Columbus, Ohio (in the Clinton Building), and dues money had started coming in from the coal fields, organizers were assigned to "every state and territory producing coal in the United States." The first three organizers consisted of *Phil H. Penna, R. F. Warren and Peter Wise*.



Mr. Korson

They soon learned that there were some miners who had a clear understanding of their best interests, and that there were also many who through fear or ignorance did not, despite the organizers' efforts and sacrifices. It fell to these organizers to carry the message of organization. In those primitive times the coal miners could not be reached through ordinary channels of communication, such as newspapers, the pulpit, and the school. The *United Mine Workers Journal* then had a limited circulation. Between the organizers and their prospective Union members stretched a most difficult terrain, a formidable land of coal camps enclosed within company stockades or otherwise isolated by company police guards.

Lacking adequate funds, those pioneer field organizers were literally "walking delegates." When not riding the rods they took the "walkers' express" on railroad ties, tramping for miles at a time. The amount of time spent tramping was incredible. Keeping oneself shod was a pressing problem for each organizer. For food and lodging while out in the field, organizers depended upon the generosity of miners who smuggled them into their shanties

under cover of darkness and sent them off with a hot breakfast before dawn. Often they slept in barns, school and church buildings, and even in the fields. Their clothes were shabby and frayed and, with some, wearing a beard was a necessity because they did not have facilities for shaving.

Many of those pioneer organizers were zealots with a religious approach to their mission. They regarded themselves as prophets of a happier day for coal miners, instruments of immutable forces at work in the world, which would uplift the workingman to a higher plane of living. This compensated them for their suffering, and gave them the courage to tempt fate. Many were beaten by coal operators' hired thugs or the police. They rotted in obscure jails on trumped-up charges. Literally hundreds were scarred or crippled for life or shot dead in cold blood.

There was *David Robb*. Like Robert Burns, immortal Scottish poet, he was a singer of the common people—specifically, the coal miners. Born in Staffordshire, England, of Scottish coal-miner stock, Robb had known of the miners' struggle since childhood. Emigrating to the United States in 1902, he carried two interests with him: unionism and poetry. He started working in a coal mine in Rose Farm, Ohio. Several years later, he moved to West Terre Haute, Ind., which he called home until he died in 1929.

Regarding himself as a miner's bard, he seldom strayed from his main interest—the coal miner and his life. As a folk singer—he had a resonant tenor voice—he was his own most effective song plugger. He sang in the mines, at Union meetings and other places. "Come on, Davie, let's hear you," became a familiar cry at *District and International Conventions* of the United Mine Workers of America. A high water mark of his folk minstrelsy was reached in Tomlinson Hall, Indianapolis, in 1909, when he was called to the stage to sing before the UMWA convention.

His ability to attract, hold, and entertain audiences was a considerable asset as an organizer. The Union's dark continent in those early days included *West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Colorado*, and into the heart of it went Robb and his folk minstrelsy. Unorganized miners might not care to hear speeches but they could not resist his Union songs and stories. Spreading the Union gospel in hostile territory was thus made easier and more effective. Sustained by an unwavering faith in the justice of his cause, Robb accepted discomforts, long absences from his family, and persecutions with rare stoicism.

His greatest personal tragedy came as an aftermath of his participation in the 1913-1914 Colorado miners strike—the time of the Ludlow Massacre. He was convicted of voluntary manslaughter and sentenced to a term of three to five years in the county jail at Canon City. After serving five months he was released on bond and he returned to his home in West Terre Haute, a nervous wreck. As a result of his experience he lost his voice and for two years he spoke only in whispers. Eventually he recovered his speech, but he was never able to sing again.

One of the most distinguished UMWA field organizers was *William B. "Our Billy" Wilson* of Central Pennsylvania. A dropout from school at the age of nine, like so many other miners' sons of that day, he was to become a founding member of the UMWA, *International Secretary-Treasurer* of the Union (1900-1907), serve three terms in Congress, and become the first United States Secretary of Labor, in President Woodrow Wilson's Cabinet (1913-1921).

William Bauchop Wilson was born in Blantyre, Scotland, on April 2, 1862, the son of Adam and Helen Nelson Wilson. A mine strike in Scotland caused the family's eviction from their company house in mid-winter. For shelter the family was forced to live in a stable. This experience decided Adam Wilson to emigrate to America. He had just enough money to pay for his steerage fare across the Atlantic and to settle in Arnot, near Blossburg, Pa. Despite low wages and other disadvantages of the period, Adam Wilson managed to save enough money to enable his wife and their three children to join him in Arnot in 1870.

In the first few years, America was no better for the Wilsons than Scotland had been. They often saw the bottom of the meal barrel. By the time William B. Wilson was 18 years of age he had earned a reputation as a "labor agitator" and he was black-listed by the coal operators. He drifted in the Middle West for

some years and then returned home. As an organizer, Wilson traveled across coal-mining country, out into the scattered coal fields where families, grown men and women, boys and girls, were herded together in degrading proximity, in ignorance, sickness, and poverty. He aroused the unorganized miners out of their apathy, bringing out the good in them, inspiring them with something of his own indomitable courage, and organizing them into **Local Unions** where they could make effectual resistance against a hostile environment.

While in the field organizing, Wilson had to keep a step or two ahead of the coal operators and their agents, for they followed him everywhere. He was tricked aboard a train and taken to Cumberland, Maryland, where he was thrown into jail on a "conspiracy charge," but he was released within three days. Coal operators tried to bribe him in one strike and kidnap him in another. In defying a court injunction, he said:

"An injunction that restrains me from furnishing food to hungry men, women, and children, when I have in my possession the means to aid them, will be violated by me until the necessity for providing food has been removed or the corporeal power of the court overwhelms me. I will treat it as I would an order of the court to stop breathing."

A vivid description of his experiences as a UMWA field organizer is given in a letter of his written from Pocahontas, Virginia, and printed in the *Journal* of November 26, 1891, and reprinted in the *Journal* of September 1, 1963—in honor of the 50th anniversary of the U. S. Department of Labor:

The old song sings:

"Bachelor Hall, what a square lookin' place it is.
"Save me from sich all the days o' me life.
"Thunder an' turf, what a burnin' disgrace it is.
"Niver at all to be gettin' a wife.

"And yet, Brother (M. F.) Moran and myself have to plead guilty to that heinous offense. We are keeping Bachelors' Hall, in a formerly deserted house on the top of a mountain overlooking a magnificent (!) city of shanties commonly called Pocahontas. I had often heard of the Flat Top region and had pictured in imagination a great plain on a mountain top, but it is plainly discernible at first glance that no such plain exists. This region is much like the Scotchman's horse, that was very hard to catch and wasn't worth a blank when you did catch him. It is very hard to reach here and it is doubtful if we will be able to accomplish very much good after reaching here. The great bulk of the miners here are colored people and Hungarians, with a sprinkling of native whites and other nationalities. To the honor of the colored men, be it said, they are the ones who are doing what they can to help us in our work, while the English-speaking white men, boasting of the achievements of their great-grandfathers, lie back upon their oars, stubbornly refusing to pull a single stroke in the ship of unionism, giving as a reason that the 'nigger' is no good as a striker. That may serve very well as an excuse, but it will never reach the dignity of anything else. The truth is that the most persistent unionists here are blacks.

"There is no other region in this country that has been a greater detriment to the miners of Central and Northern Pennsylvania than this. The miners are paid 75 cents for a car of coal that even the company admits contains 80 bushels. In Ohio I believe the legal weight of one bushel is 80 pounds, and in Pennsylvania 76. Let us do a little figuring on this and find out the price these people are actually receiving for mining. 80 bushels at 76 pounds to the bushel equals 6,080 pounds. Now we have the simple question, if 6,080 pounds costs 75 cents how much will one ton or 2,000 pounds cost? $2,000 \times 75 \div 6,080$ equals 24.6 cents, the smallest price paid for mining anywhere in the states and when you take into consideration the statement that a system exists of docking for fine coal about one-fourth of all the coal sent out you have the miserable pittance of 18½ cents per ton for mining and I know of no other place in the world where such cheap production obtains. Is there any wonder then that this region has developed in a decade from a one-horse affair employing a few score of men to it employing as many thousands? Is there any wonder that Central Pennsylvania has felt the depressing hand of an unfair, unequal competition and has had to depend upon its acquired reputation as a steam coal [region] for any contracts it has received. It will take a good deal of hard work to bring this region into shape, but it will pay the miners of this country to do it. Heretofore it has been considered that this region was a competitor in the Seaboard markets only and did not interfere with anything but Maryland, Central and Northern Pennsylvania. Consequently other regions paid no heed to it. But the time is not far distant when it will be a large factor in the lake market and others will have to compete with it. The Norfolk and Western [Railroad] has obtained control of this Scioto Valley Road and are at present busy building a road from Konova, above Ashland, to a point a short distance below Pocahontas thus connecting the two roads and giving an outlet for this coal to the Northwest. It would be better in my opinion to try and place these people on an equal basis with their competitors while their numbers are comparatively small than it would be to wait until their numbers are greater and the competition more keen.

"Shortly after our arrival here, Brother Moran and I took a stroll down to the city of the dead, where lie the mortal remains of a large number of those who gave their lives in the great explosion of 1891, a sacrifice to the ignorance and apathy of corporate greed. We had expected to find some token commemorative of the time, the manner and means of their death. We were disappointed.

"No shaft of granite or of marble rears its lofty peak heavenward in honor of the dead, or records the memory of those they left behind. They died and are forgotten, even by their friends, and only the stranger impelled by a morbid curiosity, as he visits the ground where silence guards with solemn rounds the bivouac of the dead, remembers the frightful calamity that took them hence. Some wooden slabs, numbered from 1 to 112, sticking from the head of as many grassy mounds, is the only sign that marks their humble graves. Nor has it taught the citizens of Virginia a lesson. If there is any law upon her statute books compelling operators to properly ventilate and conduct their mines, I have never heard of it. If

an operator does not see proper to furnish the necessary safeguards around his workmen, there is no law to compel him, and the miner must either submit or go somewhere else.

Fraternally yours,

W. B. Wilson"

In 1910, when W. B. Wilson was serving in Congress, representing the Central Pennsylvania district, he presided over a hearing in Washington on the Mexican Revolution. One of his witnesses was the coal miner's friend **Mother (Mary) Jones**. He asked for her residence.

"I live in the United States," she answered, "but I do not know exactly where. My address is wherever there is a fight against oppression. Sometimes I'm in Washington, then in Pennsylvania, Arizona, Texas, Minnesota, and Colorado. My address is like my shoes: it travels with me."

"No abiding place?" persisted Congressman Wilson.

"I abide where there is a fight against wrong."

Once she was invited to a dinner attended by some 500 women interested in women's suffrage. "You must fight for free speech in the streets," she told them.

"How can we?" asked one of the women, "when we haven't a vote."

"I've never had a vote," retorted Mother Jones, "and I have raised hell all over this country."

That was typical of Mother Jones, heroine of the coal miners. She was born in Cork, Ireland, in 1830, to a family that for generations had fought and died for Ireland's freedom from British oppression. Her father, Richard Harris, emigrated to the United States in 1835. As soon as he became an American citizen he sent for his family, including little Mary Harris who was to become famous as Mother Jones. Her father's work as a laborer with railroad construction crews took him to Toronto, Canada. Here she spent her childhood, but as the daughter of an American citizen. She was proud of her American citizenship. Her first job was teaching in a convent in Monroe, Mich. Later she opened a dressmaking shop in Chicago. Still later she resumed teaching in Memphis, Tenn., where she married a union iron moulder in 1861. She lost her husband and their four children in a yellow fever epidemic in Memphis in 1867.

She Joins The Knights Of Labor

She went back to dressmaking in Chicago. While sewing for the beef barons' wives and daughters, she saw the contrast between their luxurious living and that of the poor huddling along the cold lake front. She was burned out in the famous Chicago fire of 1871 and took refuge in old St. Mary's Church at Wabash Avenue and Peck Court. Nearby in an old tumbledown, scorched building the Knights of Labor (one of the founding organizations of the UMWA) were holding meetings. She attended. Joining the order, she became identified for the first time with the American labor movement. Her first great experience as an organizer was in the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad strike in Pittsburgh during the 1873 panic. From then on she was a part of every great labor struggle including such landmarks as the Haymarket tragedy of 1886, the Homestead strike of 1892, and the UMWA's great anthracite strike of 1902. Her last major effort in behalf of organized labor was the great steel strike of 1919, when she was 89.

While embracing the whole labor movement, it was the coal miners who drew her particular attention. As in England, so it was in the United States: The struggle of the mine workers was to a large extent the struggle of labor as a whole. The most dramatic industrial battles of American history were being fought in the coal fields. To a crusader in whose veins ran the blood of Irish revolutionaries, that made an irresistible appeal. But her imagination was also stirred by the color of the coal fields—primitive environment, isolated coal camps, lonely cabins on mountainsides and numerous islands cut out of the heart of American soil by coal operators. The stories drifting out of this forbidden land must have challenged her deep sense of compassion.

Pennsylvania, Ohio, Colorado, West Virginia, Illinois, Indiana—hardly a coal-producing state but saw her championing the cause of the miners. Everywhere she went it was in response to urgent appeals from the workers themselves. While regarded by many of them as a guardian angel, and sometimes called the "Joan of Arc of the Coal Fields," she was hated as a meddling old witch by the operators and their agents. When she penetrated enemy territory she did so at her own peril. Whole counties, even states, were barred to her. Constables, coal and iron police, deputy sheriffs, and state police met her at every turn and served all manner of papers, warrants, and court injunctions on

(Continued on Page 6)

History Of The UMWA

(Continued from Page 5)

her. With fine contempt she tucked them into her black silk handbag and proceeded about her business.

In 1902 she was tried before a Judge Jackson in the Federal Court at Parkersburg, W. Va., for violating his injunction barring all Union organizers from the state of West Virginia "forever and ever."

"You are not a resident of West Virginia," said Judge Jackson, addressing Mother Jones in the witness box. "Why do you not stay where you belong instead of coming here to stir up trouble among the miners? What business have you here?"

"I am a citizen of the United States," replied Mother Jones, puckering her mouth determinedly, "and as such I think I have the right to come to West Virginia or wherever my duty calls me."

"Have you quit holding meetings or talking to the miners in West Virginia?"

"I have not, and will not. We live in America, not in Russia. They can't muzzle us and keep us from talking."

She carried her militancy along with her wherever she went. "Mother Jones is in the mountains raising hell!" heralded her arrival in a district. Transportation was primitive. When possible she rode about in a buggy usually driven by a miner's son, but she was an experienced horsewoman and could handle the reins herself. In the more remote districts there were not even wagon roads, just mountain paths, and she walked.

How she walked! Her skirts trailing the mud behind her, she climbed steep mountains, ran down dark ravines, tramped over railroad ties, and pushed on through underbrush in the wilderness. The energy of this little female dynamo was truly amazing.

Mother Jones Lived With The Miners

Hotel accommodation was often denied her at coal companies' orders. This made it necessary for her to seek shelter in the miners' wretched hovels. Such hospitality was accepted reluctantly not only because company houses were overcrowded, but for the reason that invariably her host would lose his job after her departure. Often, as many as a dozen souls were crowded into two-and-a-half small rooms in homes where she found hospitality. Children slept six abreast on sour-smelling pillows. In some homes a fretful baby woke up during the night and cried everytime the shift engine passed outside the door. Here even a kerosene lamp was a luxury, and the moon furnished whatever light there was in some of the shacks; in camps where coal was converted into coke, the fierce glare of belching coke ovens filled the shacks with light. Mother Jones slept on the hard, bare floor with her handbag for a pillow. She encouraged the harassed housewives and inspired them with a determination to improve their lot through collective action. Indeed, she was at her best working with miners' wives.

During the UMWA anthracite drive that preceded the great 1902 strike, Coaldale, Schuylkill County, was slow to organize. Mother Jones was determined to do something about it. She called on the Union miners' wives of McAdoo, near Hazleton, to help her.

"Leave your men at home," she counselled. "Put on your kitchen clothes and bring your mops, brooms and tin pans."

The women marched 15 miles across Broad Mountain beating on their tin pans as if they were cymbals. At three o'clock in the morning they were met by the militia patrolling the roads to Coaldale. "Halt! Move back!" came the order out of the darkness.

"Colonel," said Mother Jones, "the workingmen of America will not halt nor will they ever go back. The workingman is going forward."

At dawn, the militiamen, on seeing the women in kitchen aprons, carrying dishpans and mops, laughed and let them go. When the non-Union miners of Coaldale started to go to work they were met by the McAdoo women beating on their pans and shouting, "Join the Union! Join the Union!"

They joined—every last one of them. There was enough enthusiasm left over after organizing the miners to unionize the street car employes who promised to haul no more scabs. As there were no other groups to organize, the women and their leader, Mother Jones, marched back over the mountain to their homes in McAdoo.

Another petticoat revolt led by Mother Jones occurred at a mine near Greensburg, Westmoreland County, Pa. To keep order the state constabulary was sent there. One day angry miners' wives were standing in front of the entrance of a struck coal mine hooting at scabs. The sheriff arrested all the women "for

disturbing the police." On the advice of Mother Jones, the mothers brought their babies and small children into court. While the Judge was sentencing each of them to a \$30 fine, or 30 days in jail, the babies wailed. Scowling, His Honor asked the women if they had someone with whom to leave the children. "Tell the Judge," whispered Mother Jones, "that miners' wives didn't keep nurse maids."

The women were taken by two mounted policemen to Greensburg, county seat, about ten miles away. As their interurban car passed through town the women sang miners' songs. A large crowd followed the car singing along. As the women got off the car in front of the county jail, the crowd gave them a rousing cheer. The state policemen turned the women over to the sheriff. "Mother Jones," said the sheriff, "I would rather you had brought me a hundred men than these women. Women are fierce."

The sheriff took the women upstairs and permitted Mother Jones to stay with them a while. "You sing the whole night long," advised Mother Jones. "You can spell one another if you get tired or hoarse. Sleep all day and sing all night."

The sheriff and his wife and many neighbors complained that they could not sleep because of the women's singing. "Those women howl like cats," complained a hotel keeper.

"That's no way to speak of women who are singing patriotic songs and lullabies to their little ones," said Mother Jones.

The women were released five days later to the relief of everybody in the neighborhood of the county jail.

"Pray for the dead, but fight like hell for the living!" was a favorite slogan of Mother Jones, and how well it expressed her philosophy! With her, as with John Brown, the purpose was the moving force while the means of accomplishment was of less importance. She was direct in action and blunt of speech. She used the vernacular at all times, and her harangues were peppered with "dams" and "hells" and terms drawn from her rough associations.

Despite accusations against her, no one, not even her worst enemies, denied her sincere sympathy for the miners and their cause. In that great heart of hers, which had once felt the grief of losing her four children in a yellow fever epidemic, there beat a deep and glowing compassion for the children of the miners.

In a coal camp on Standford Mountain, W. Va., in February, 1903, several miners were murdered in their sleep by company gunmen. In one of the shacks, Mother Jones saw a baby boy and his mother sobbing over the father's corpse. "Mother Jones," said the little fellow, "bring back my papa to me. I want to kiss him."



FROM THE ARCHIVES—The picture above was taken in 1920 when the mine workers were engaged in a life-and-death struggle with the coal operators in Mingo County, W. Va. Those in the picture are a few of the brave men who risked their lives for the UMWA in that bloody struggle. They are, seated, from left: Charley Workman, the legendary Mother Jones, the also legendary Sid Hatfield, and Ezra Fry. Standing from left are: Red Doyle, Warren Hutchinson, Andrew Wilson and Dave Phillips.

Chapter 5

A HISTORY OF THE UMWA

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the fifth article in George Korson's history of the *International Union, United Mine Workers of America*. The *Journal* is publishing the series in honor of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the International Union on January 25, 1890, at Columbus, Ohio. The first article, published on May, 1, 1965, told in general of the early history of coal mining in the United States and the terrible need for Union organization of American coal miners. The second, on June 1, dealt with the history of early coal miners' unions leading to the founding of the UMWA. The third, on July 1, dealt specifically with the founding of the UMWA. The fourth on August 1, dealt with the pioneer organizers of the UMWA. This article concerns the convict labor system and some of the other early struggles.

By George Korson

© George Korson, 1965

Many years ago two coal miners from Indiana came to Alabama to work in the mines. When they found working conditions there far worse than in Indiana they quit their jobs. While waiting for a northbound train at a way station near Birmingham, one of them chalked the following verse on his trunk:

*Farewell, Alabama, and Governor Comer, too,
We bid you both a long adieu.
We may go to hell some day,
But we'll never come back to you.*

*This may have been a reference to the days when coal miners in Alabama had to compete against convicts under the state's antiquated convict-leasing system.**

In the spring of 1940, while on a tour of Alabama coal camps, I visited Flat Top, a relic of Alabama's convict-leasing era. A two-story frame shack, it was the only



Mr. Korson

remaining wing of a convict miners' T-shaped cell house. After climbing creaky wooden stairs to the upper story and passing through a heavy door, I entered a barn-like room whose dinginess was accentuated by the rusty iron bars still remaining on its windows. This was one of the rooms where the prisoners were locked up when not working in the Flat Top coal mine. Occupying the middle of the floor were a table, several rough benches, and a small bell-shaped stove. This former abode

of human degradation was in 1940, the meeting place of *Flat Top Local Union 6255, United Mine Workers of America*. Could one ask for a more striking symbol than this of *Freedom Now?*

Alabama was not the only state to farm out its prisoners to coal operators. At one time or another most of the Southern states exploited their prison labor in this manner. The system took root shortly after the end of the Civil War when the South was demoralized and financially bankrupt. Crime was rampant, and prisons were filled. In their extremity, the states turned to their own account and profit the labor of convicts. This was accomplished by two methods: first, the contract system, by which the convicts' labor was leased within prison walls; secondly, the contract leasing system by which prisons, their management, and the prisoners were all farmed out to coal mining and other private corporations. The lease assigned to the lessees the entire custody and discipline of the convicts, even their medical care. In other words, sovereign states sold not only their prisoners but their penal institutions to private corporations who made enormous profits from them. What at first was endured as an expediency, was continued year after year as an economic boon; not only was the expense of maintaining penal institutions underwritten thereby, but a neat profit was made for the general fund. Whenever the churches and other organizations became worried about the moral wrong of such a system, politicians and interested corporations pointed out that it saved taxes. The South had lost the Civil War over the issue of black slavery, yet by an ironic economic twist it was exploiting a form of human slavery involving whites as well as blacks which was as indefensible as the system that it had been forced to give up by force of arms.

The *agent provocateur* was a necessary concomitant of the convict lease system. Once a state abdicated its sovereign right to control its penal institutions and abandoned its solemn duty to see that its wards and prisoners were properly treated, then it closed its eyes and stopped its ears to all the moral, social, and economic implications of such a system. Revenue for the state and rich profits for the contractors—this was the aim. So high was the mortality rate in convict mines that soon there were not enough long-term prisoners to go around, and the miners charged that sheriffs, deputies, court clerks, and jailers conspired with the privileged interests to keep sending up a steady supply of short-term prisoners. The South thus reverted to a custom prevalent in Scotland in the 17th century when coal-mine owners had legal sanction to round up men, women, and children on the streets and force them to work in their pits. In Alabama, for example, sheriffs were paid for arrests on a per capita basis, and one of their tricks was to send out decoys to start crap games among free laborers, white and black, and then haul them in for gaming. Fines and costs were generally too much for the prisoners to pay and so they worked them out in coal mines. A common cause of arrest was walking on a railroad right-of-way, called trespassing, a misdemeanor which led directly to the coal mines. There is the story of a boy in Anniston, Alabama, trespassing on the railroad tracks, for which he was arrested, convicted, and sentenced to 60 days at hard labor. He was then leased out to a coal operator although he had never seen the inside of a mine. A few days later he met with an accident at his work and lost a leg. In 1915 an Alabama legislative committee reported the case of two boys, sons of respectable Kentucky mountaineer families, who, while on a foolish juvenile adventure, had stolen a ride on a train. Arrested and convicted, they were sentenced to jail. Their youth and inexperience did not deter the state from handing them over to a coal operator as leased articles. On the second day in the mine they were killed in an explosion.

Regarded strictly as a business proposition, the convict-lease system was operated solely for profit. In the absence of a labor organization, the mines were as primitive as the operators dared keep them. Decency, justice, and the amenities of civilization were simply non-existent.

Even geology conspired against the convict miners. These men were forced to endure physical conditions which free miners refused. The convicts labored in a burrow of blackest pitch which the dim rays of their small tin lamps barely penetrated. For 12 hours or more daily they performed their tasks, lying on their side or on their backs in a space too low to stand up in, or even to sit in, and too narrow to turn around in. In mines having headroom there was so much rock to be removed

(Continued on Page 16)

that their tasks were made doubly hard. Their eyes and lungs were filled with coal dust; they gasped for air because generally ventilation was of the most primitive sort; perspiration made their tattered mining outfits sodden wet and sticky with coal dust. And all the while they were sick with fear—fear of tons of rock falling down upon them, fear of an imminent gas or dust explosion, fear of those spying eyes slinking in the dark recesses, the eyes of “check runners,” or straw bosses, who goaded them with lethal weapons, and finally, the fear of the dungeon, the doghouse, the water hole, the vat, and other medieval punishments meted out regularly to those who failed to pour out their last ounce of energy.

The factor which balanced the convict's inexperience was mechanization. With undercutting machines and other mechanical equipment operated by a few experienced men, the prisoners were used as loaders. The state of Alabama recognized differences in individual physical capacities and created four classifications of convict miners, with a different task assigned to each. First-class convicts were required to produce ten tons of coal a day; second-class, eight tons; third-class, six tons; and the fourth-class, four tons. This fourth class was perhaps the most pathetic of all, for it was made up of the flotsam and jetsam of the convicts who were sent to prison for short terms and whose health was ruined in the mines. The prison hospitals were filled with them—men with one foot gone, partly blind, tubercular—casuals all of the convict system.

Classifications were determined each month by a prison doctor after an examination. Once a man was placed in the highest category he could not escape its obligations except for reason of serious illness or injury. In actual experience, however, the prisoners were so regimented once they descended into the black hole that they were all producing the limit of ten tons a day whether first-class supermen or fourth-class, broken-down hulks of humanity. The check runners saw to that. The tonnage of a convict mine was run on their numbers, a practice known as “running the check.” They, the most hardened criminals of the prison population, convicted man-killers serving life terms, were the taskmasters. It is too great a strain on human nature to vest brutal power over other men's bodies in any group of officials, and this is certainly true in the case of such desperate characters as these straw bosses. Yet so enormous was the greed of the mine contractors that they offered a bonus to check runners as an incentive to drive their hapless charges to work beyond the point of human endurance, and the convicts themselves received a sop in the form of a pittance if they exceeded their tasks.

A Staggering Task

Only an experienced miner, and one familiar with seam conditions in Alabama and other southern states, can appreciate the staggering proportions of these tasks. Ten tons of coal a day! Why, in the state of Alabama at that time the productivity was about three tons per man, a rate maintained under fairly good Union conditions. What vastly increased the convicts' labor was the unfairness and the cruelties they suffered. In the Flat Top Mine, for example, convicts worked under an 11-foot roof—seven feet of coal and four of rock. About half the day was taken up gobbing the rock, yet no credit for this deadwork was given the convicts who were expected to produce their assigned task just the same. Electric locomotives were run into the rooms at regular intervals, and when a loaded car was not ready for a locomotive the miner was beaten and kicked unmercifully. And with no checkweighman on the tippie, there was no way of knowing how many cars a man loaded—the company's word was final. A first-class convict might produce 20 tons, and if the bosses credited him with only nine he would still suffer the lash.

The sheer physical labor took several pounds daily off a man's weight, yet the prison fare was far from adequate. Convicts constantly complained of being hungry, and the pittance they earned for exceeding their tasks served as an incentive because it bought a little extra food. At the Flat Top mine in the '20s, the menu consisted of the following: breakfast—four biscuits, a piece of cornbread, two small pieces of meat, some syrup, and a cup of coffee; lunch—four biscuits, a piece of cornbread about three inches square, two pieces of meat, and some syrup; supper—cornbread and several boiled vegetables like beans, cabbage, and collards. It will be observed that breakfast and lunch provided the heaviest menus, for they were calculated to sustain the men at their work. Yet so tight was the schedule under which they worked that they barely had time to eat. Rising time in the Flat Top cell house was five o'clock. From that hour until they were

led through a narrow enclosure to the vertical black hole leading into the mine, exactly twenty minutes elapsed—twenty minutes in which the men washed, dressed, and breakfasted.

Said the Alabama Legislative Committee of 1923:

“The imposition of tasks from 10 to 14 tons of coal each day and from one to four tons added to guard against rock in the coal, required the enforcement of these tasks by treatment so brutal that in some instances brought to the committee's attention, the skin was literally beaten from the back, causing scars that will be carried to the grave; ill-prepared and insufficient food, their burial in roughly constructed boxes made from lumber taken from old houses, at a cost not exceeding \$2.50 a funeral, are all illustrations of man's inhumanity to man.”

This inhumanity was also reflected in the imposition of punishments so ingenious and diabolical as to compel comparison with the thumb-screw and rack of the darkest days of the Inquisition. Flogging with a three-ply leather strap, head-splitting or bone-breaking, or kicking were the milder, more conventional forms of punishment.

At the Flat Top mine there was a “doghouse.” This was a box built of pine planks and shaped like a coffin into which a recalcitrant prisoner was packed. So tightly did he fit into this box that there was no room whatever in which to move. Yet he was compelled to remain there all night, after a day in the mines, with only a drink of water at midnight to break the monotony and ease the torture. Often the prisoner was fastened inside by his hands and feet and left there until he sagged insensible. Even when not fastened, the torture proved unbearable to many. After some hours in the doghouse, the flesh began to swell and break, and bleeding resulted. Then the victim had to be given treatment at the prison hospital to save his life.

Many Attempts Made To Escape

Many attempts were made to escape from these convict mines, but few were successful. Aside from their own financial investment in each convict, the contractors were liable to a penalty for every long-term prisoner who escaped. Hence, every precaution was taken to prevent escapes. The prison mine property was enclosed by a stockade, with gates and sentry boxes strategically distributed to thwart them. Guards on watchtowers had a clear view of the surrounding country, and at night electric lighting and powerful searchlights were switched on.

Even when a convict escaped, his freedom was likely to be short lived, thanks to the foxhounds set on his trail. They were not the ferocious bloodhounds of the pre-Civil War days, nor the hounds celebrated in harrowing tales of southern fiction in later years. On the contrary, these foxhounds were small, slender-limbed little fellows which in appearance were not very different from the lazy “yaller dog” of the back alleys. But their scent for a fugitive was relentless. They passed up the trail of a fox or a deer but never let go of a man's trail.

The effect of the convict-lease system on the coal markets and on free miners was devastating. Fifteen hundred inexperienced convicts working like slaves with machines adversely affected the wage scale and working conditions of 20,000 free miners in Alabama. Operators of convict mines obtained their coal at such a low cost that they undermined the whole business. While convict mines worked full blast, mines employing only free labor were cut down to two or three days a week, and some were shut down altogether.

Aside from the rich profits accruing to them, the corporations fought to perpetuate the convict-lease system because it was a powerful weapon against Unionism. So long as convict mines continued producing coal, no strike could be successful. It was this factor that doomed the big strikes of 1908 and 1920 and broke the back of Unionism in the Alabama coal fields for many years.

The first important exposé of the system came in 1915 when a joint committee of the Alabama State Legislature came up with a thoroughgoing indictment and recommended that it be abolished. But the legislature refused to carry out the recommendation. Four years later such a law was finally passed but the legislature changed its mind before the law took effect in order to defeat the miners' 1920 strike. In 1923 the system was extended for another four years, or until 1927, and as a sop to public opinion the legislature transferred control of the penal institutions back to the state. But this was considered a subterfuge inasmuch as the system's basic evils remained.

Then in 1926 came the Knox case which revealed the horror

of the convict-lease system and started an exhaustive investigation, under direction of State Attorney General Harwell G. Davis. For years grand juries of Jefferson County (where the convict mines were located) had been refused admission to the mines. The Knox case was the first concrete case to be uncovered which gave hope of exposing the system in all its sickening details. A transcript of the evidence adduced by Attorney General Davis' investigation attracted nationwide attention.

James Knox was a West Virginia Negro, abnormally fat for his five feet five, who had been convicted in Mobile County, Alabama, on an indictment charging him with having forged a \$30 check. On August 14, 1924, less than a week after he had been transferred from Kilby Prison, Knox died on the Flat Top mine property. The death certificate stated he had committed suicide by swallowing bichloride of mercury. Seventeen months went by before the facts were brought to light by convicts who had served their time or were free on parole or by governor's pardon. Disposing of the suicide claim attested by the prison doctor, the report of Dr. Walter C. Jones, of the Birmingham-Southern College, contained the following statement:

"It seems most likely that James Knox died as a result of heart failure, which was probably caused by a combination of unusual exertion and fear acting upon an abnormally small heart, which, in turn, was weakened by an extra large load of body fat and which was inefficiently controlled by a weak and depressed nervous system. . . . After death it seems that a discoloring poison was injected artificially into his stomach through the natural passages in order to simulate accidental death or suicide."

The investigation's star witness was a white man, Wiley Pugh, who was chief steward of the hospital at the Flat Top convict mine when Knox died. He testified that Knox was short and fat and because of his girth could not perform the task assigned to him—to load ten tons of coal a day, the amount required of a first-class convict. Some convict flunkies countered with the testimony that Knox had refused to work. Whatever the cause, Knox, according to Pugh, was beaten each day in the mine, and on August 14, his last day of life, was brought to the top, dragged along the ground, "just like dragging a dead carcass," and then dumped into a laundry vat. Hot and cold water was turned on him alternately until the shock of the ordeal killed him.

Governor Brandon instructed Jefferson County's Solicitor James Davis to impanel a special grand jury to investigate the Knox case. Six weeks later the warden was indicted for murder, as were his assistant and several straw bosses. When the warden was acquitted, the other cases were not-prossed.

The whole scandal at the Flat Top convict mine served to arouse the people of Alabama as perhaps nothing had since the Civil War. In 1927 the legislature was forced to bow to a universal demand that this thing be wiped out and the state's good name be restored. June 30, 1928, at 6 p.m. was the time set for the doom of the convict-lease system.

Several days before the deadline the white prisoners were removed to other state prisons, leaving 499 Negro convicts behind. Then early Sunday morning, July 1, these Negroes lined up before the office window to turn in their lamps and picks. The look of happiness on their faces was indescribable.

"Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," they sang, and also, "All My Troubles Are Over."

And one of the convicts, in sheer ecstasy, said, "Boss, I'm no longer in slavery."

* Reprinted from *Coal Dust on the Fiddle*, copyrighted 1943 by George Koison.

Melhado, Gompers Opponent, Dies

MIAMI BEACH, Fla. (PAI)—When Jack Melhado, a long-time trade unionist died here recently at 86, students of labor history recalled the time he almost defeated Samuel Gompers, founding president of the AFL, for president of the Cigar Makers Union.

Melhado received a majority of the votes in the United States but when the Cuban votes were received Gompers won.

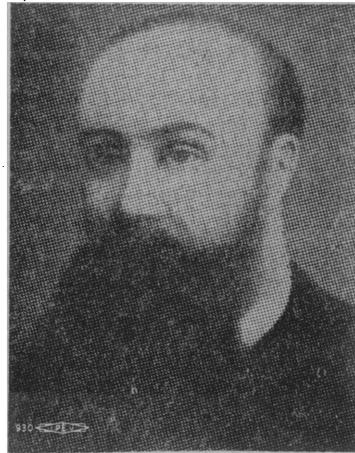
Born in England, Melhado lived in Holland before migrating with his family to the U. S. He was an apprentice cigar maker and, along with Gompers, was an officer of Local 144, Cigar Makers, New York City.

Through the years, Melhado was active in the socialist and trade union struggles. He helped in the organizing efforts of the famous Patterson, N. J., silk strike in 1916.

He retired here in Miami Beach two years ago.

'... Onward To Victory:' John B. Rae—1891

We receive from the past that we may use, improve and hand down to those who shall come after us. Everyone receives as a legacy from his ancestors certain physical conditions,



John B. Rae

healthy or otherwise, and physiological traits and peculiarities which constitute the basis of his mental make-up, as well as his inheritance of affluence, moderate means or dire poverty, as the case may be. The legacy does not always come direct. Frequently many of the causes that determine conditions of health, mental capacity, peculiarities of temper or social opportunities belong to the remote generations; so remote, indeed, that it is often difficult to gather up all the connecting links. Yet it is true that we are all largely indebted to the

past for what we are. What is true of the individual is true of the community, as society is the aggregation of individuals. It is more especially true of social customs, forms of government and industrial forces and opportunities. The different forces, therefore, whether near or remote, that have combined to make things what they are, become to us questions of much interest and importance, and we are inclined to enter upon an examination with consideration and respect. The legacy of the ages becomes sacred to us. . . . A new era has been born. Labor is not now the despised outcast. Labor is the coming king and will surely come to its inheritance. Through suffering labor is surely gaining the crown, the inheritance of the ages. Compare the past with the present and note the progress made. Less than a hundred years ago the toiler was regarded as closely related to the criminal. Note the terms used. Take your dictionaries and you will find that the word villain originally meant a farm worker, a common laborer. It gradually gathered the idea of the criminal and vicious because of the estimation in which labor was held and because of labor's opportunities. The phrase, "doomed to toil," is of similar import as implying punishment for the crime. The world has always asked, "Can any good 'come out of Nazareth?'" The estimate of labor's possibilities had always been: "Is not this the Carpenter? How has He this learning?" Less than 50 years ago an apology had to be offered for belonging to certain occupations—particular mining. . . .

Were I asked to point out what particular set of forces has done more to improve the condition of the toiler more than any other, I would say the labor organizations of the past. The history of labor organization is the history of civilization itself. The organizations have educated and trained, and encouraged and taught self-respect as no other agencies have. Moreover, they have agitated reforms and compelled improvements that no other forces could. These organizations came down to us freighted with the benefits of past achievements, and say to us: "Here, take what we have to give; use and enjoy, and employ us to secure further improvements." As in the past, so in the future much opposition will have to be met. Every reform has been opposed, every inch of progress has been contested, but never was labor so well equipped or so hopeful, and never were her opportunities so great. Up, then, and forward! No faltering, but onward to victory.

—First UMWA President John B. Rae (1890-1891)
(From a Labor Day speech, September 7, 1891.)

Chapter 6

A HISTORY OF THE UMWA

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the sixth article in George Korson's history of the *International Union, United Mine Workers of America*. The *Journal* is publishing the series in honor of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the International Union on January 25, 1890, at Columbus, Ohio. The first article, published on May, 1, 1965, told in general of the early history of coal mining in the United States and the terrible need for Union organization of American coal miners. The second, on June 1, dealt with the history of early coal miners' unions leading to the founding of the UMWA. The third, on July 1, dealt specifically with the founding of the UMWA. The fourth on August 1, dealt with the pioneer organizers of the UMWA. The fifth dealt with the convict labor system and some of the other early struggles. This article deals with the early UMWA struggle to win an eight-hour day in America's coal mines.

By George Korson

© George Korson, 1965

HAIL THE EIGHT-HOUR DAY*

*Ye miner lads, come gather round,
And listen to my roundelay;
Ye lads who labor underground,
Where never shines the light of day.
We fought and won a gallant fight,
Threw our enslaving chains away;
United labor's peerless might,
Bought shorter hours and longer pay.*

CHORUS

*Then make the welkin loud resound,
Triumphant came we from the fray;
Unfurl our flag, let mirth abound,
And joyful hail the eight-hour day.*

Bituminous miners celebrate the Fourth of July and other national holidays with their fellow Americans. But



Mr. Korson

they observe one national holiday that is uniquely their own—April First. This commemorates the winning of the eight-hour day in 1898. Long a dream of coal miners, the eight-hour day was an event well worth rejoicing over. The celebration was held year after year even though the eight-hour day could not be enforced except in organized Districts. It did not become uniform in the bituminous industry until 1933 when it was embodied in the first Appalachian wage contract,

negotiated by *UMWA President Emeritus John L. Lewis*.

In the anthracite industry the ten-hour day was the rule until the advent of the *United Mine Workers of America*. The Anthracite Coal Strike Commission on March 18, 1903, recommended the eight-hour day for water-hoisting engineers and firemen, and

the nine-hour day for all other anthracite mine workers. In 1916 negotiations reduced company men's workday to eight hours. In 1923 all employes in the anthracite industry were placed on a uniform eight-hour day. The seven-hour day, five-day week in the same industry went into effect on May 1, 1937.

The struggle for shorter workdays came along with the machine. In early times the workday ran from sunrise to sunset, or as it used to be called, "from can to can't." Nature set a limit to the average workday. When daylight ended, work stopped. Just as it had on the farm. It took American industrial workers a long time to realize that they could not stand the strain of keeping pace with modern machinery for the same number of hours a day that they had labored on the farm.

Organized Labor's long struggle for the eight-hour day was part of a larger movement in the United States and in other countries to improve all working conditions, and to establish some control over jobs in coal mines, factories, and on the railroads. Fighting on two fronts, directly, for better terms on the job, and also for state and Federal legislation, Labor had sought to limit hours of work first, for women and child workers, then for all workers. At every stage of the struggle it met organized opposition from employer groups. Bosses gave many reasons for bitterly resisting shorter hours, usually concealing the profit motive. In early years employers tried to justify the long workday on moral grounds, arguing that "Satan finds mischief for idle hands to do."

As in other phases of the coal industry, impetus for the eight-hour movement came from England. As early as 1817 Robert Owen, British philanthropist, wrote to the London newspapers expressing his conviction that industrial workers should not be expected to work more than eight hours a day. At that time there existed a tradition that Alfred the Great had divided the twenty-four hours of the day and night into three parts: eight hours for work; eight hours for recreation; and eight hours for prayers. This concept came down from the Ninth century in the reign of King Alfred. This may have been the source of Owen's idea for an eight-hour workday. Anyway, he appears to have been the first of the modern thinkers to propose it.

The struggle for an eight-hour day is a vital chapter in American labor history. The 150 years or more of the main movement may be divided roughly into three periods. From 1791 to 1825 12 to thirteen hours were the prevailing standard workday. The second period ran from 1825 until the Civil War, a time of the introduction of the coal-cutting machine and the development of big mines with large capital investment in machinery, which depended upon a maximum production for profits. The third period extended from the Civil War into the Depression of the 1930's—a span that saw the United States become the most powerful industrial nation on earth. The growth of trusts during these years gave employers greater power in opposing the demands of labor, but labor was developing its own strength. Unions were better able to relate the demand for a shorter workday. The struggle on both sides came to a climax in 1938 when Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act establishing by law the 40-hour week in interstate commerce, whose Constitutionality was later upheld by the Supreme Court in an epoch-making unanimous decision. This ended a quarter of a century of conflict over the power of Congress to regulate working conditions in private industry.

Shortly after the second *UMWA National Convention* in 1891, a delegation of miners met a committee of operators from the competitive fields in Pittsburgh in what was to have been a revival of the Interstate Joint Conference which had brought peace to the industry from 1886 to 1889. Backed by the American Federation of Labor and the Knights of Labor, the miners made their chief demand, the eight-hour day. The operators, with the exception of W. P. Rend, of Ohio, seemed to have come to the conference with a determination to fight the eight-hour movement to a finish. They were successful. Seeing the futility of continuing the demand, the miners moved that the scale be taken up and disposed of. It turned out that the operators were not even willing to discuss a scale. The Interstate Joint Conference was wrecked.

This set in motion once again the vicious cycle of cutthroat competition, starvation wages and oppressive working conditions leading to the inevitable result, a wave of local strikes that swept

every coal field in the country. Year after year the union sought to persuade the operators to resume negotiations, but without success. The panic of 1893 brought in its wake intensified want and suffering as a result of industrial paralysis all over the land. With the coal market glutted and the bituminous industry stagnant, the mine workers were forced to accept a series of wage cuts in the Pittsburgh district where rates went down from 79 cents per ton to as low as 43 cents in central Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio and other states. As a means of depleting the market of overstocked coal, *UMWA President John McBride* (1892-1894) favored a series of national suspensions. Following his recommendation, the fifth annual Convention, held in Columbus, April 10 to 12, 1894, authorized a general suspension to begin Sunday noon, April 21.

There were only 13,000 members in the Union at the time, but so desperate was the condition of the nation's mine workers, that more than 125,000 miners responded to the strike call, and eventually their ranks were swelled to a peak of 180,000. Neither the financial condition of the Union nor the impoverished state of the mine workers gave any hope for a successful outcome of the strike. Strikers subsisted on a crust of bread and water, and their wives and children went hungry, too. They were pledged to peaceful methods by their Convention, but violence broke out and the militia was called out in four states. After eight weeks' struggle, the strike collapsed. The strikers were beaten back to their pits.

The hard times unloosed by the panic of 1893 lingered for several unforgettable years. Starvation stalked through the nation's bituminous coal fields and despair filled men's hearts. Conditions were dramatized in the summer of 1895 by a group of miners in Spring Valley, Illinois who offered to go into voluntary slavery in return for reasonably comfortable homes, some fuel, clothing and enough food to keep themselves from starving. Newspapers carried stories of miners' children driving dogs from garbage piles to devour the garbage themselves. In Pennsylvania, a legislative commission reported miners in many cases living worse than beasts—"herded together like cattle and in many cases wallowing in their own filth."

What were the effects of such conditions on the fortunes of the United Mine Workers of America? After the '94 failure, members had continued dropping out, and having no funds, the Organization could scarcely maintain organizers in the field. By 1897, the paid-up membership had dropped to 3,973, the lowest in the union's history.

When the eighth annual Convention was held in Columbus on January 12th, the organization was a mere shadow. *Michael D. Ratchford* was elected President, succeeding *Phil H. Penna* who was not a candidate for reelection. Bravely, the Delegates adopted a new wage scale, but owing to the state of the coal trade, they postponed immediate action and empowered the *Executive Board* and *District Presidents* to enforce the demands at a more opportune time.



Michael D. Ratchford

On June 26, President Ratchford summoned the Executive Board and District Presidents to Columbus, and as the Union treasury was empty they came at their own expense. After two days' deliberation they called a general strike to begin on the Fourth of July.

It was an act of sheer desperation, but to call a national strike on Independence Day was dramatic. When 150,000 miners responded, the amazed leaders could aptly say that this was the "spontaneous uprising of an enslaved people." It caught the imagination of the public and quickened its sympathy. The governors of Ohio and Illinois publicly praised the conduct of the strikers and helped raise relief funds. Cities and farming districts—in fact, every part of the country and every walk of life responded to appeals for donations. A series of great mass meetings in large cities solidified labor support of the strike.

Its treasury replenished, the Union was now able to send organizers into the non-striking West Virginia and western Pennsylvania coal fields. To the dismay of the operators, thousands of unorganized miners, many of them recent immigrants working under ironclads, a euphemism for "yellow dog contracts," joined the strike.

By skillful generalship, President Ratchford kept the operators

constantly on the defensive. They were betrayed by their own overconfidence. In July they had "nothing to arbitrate," but by August they were making overtures for peace. At their request, a Joint Conference was held in Pittsburgh on August 23, but it came to nothing. A second conference on September 2nd resulted in an agreement, the most important feature of which was a provision calling for an interstate joint conference to be held in Chicago in January, 1898. In winning this concession the strikers gained their most important point. For years they had been trying to persuade the operators to meet them in peaceful negotiations. This revolutionized labor relations in the bituminous industry.

Coal operators and miners' delegates from the Central Competitive Field—western Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana—sat down together to negotiate a Joint Wage Agreement. The industry had just emerged from the disastrous 1897 strike which left both sides covered with wounds. Relations were strained and tempers short. The daily sessions were marked by charges and counter-charges and much bickering.

The miners' principal demand was the eight-hour day. The Indiana mine owners favored granting it and for this reason were kept out of the operators' caucus. A rule that no resolution could be adopted without a unanimous vote caused the deadlock.

A whole week was taken up with talk until the conferees became weary of it all. This, and the intense cold which gripped Chicago, tempted many of them to pack up and return home. Calmer and more responsible men counseled patience in order to keep the conference alive, for failure might have meant a resumption of warfare. Yet, it seemed that only a miracle could end the suspense.

The miracle appeared in the form of *Pat Dolan*. While a great labor leader, Dolan essentially was a minstrel. Oratory welled out of him in a stream of rich idiom such as one finds in the dialect verse of Burns, his countryman. If the occasion demanded, he could also dance a jig, crack jokes, sing or fight. At UMWA Conventions he affected a black sombrero and a long frock coat. But it was his own personality, and not merely his dress, nor his powerful and rugged figure, that made him stand out in a crowd.

This was the legendary *Pat Dolan* who emerged the hero of the Chicago Joint Conference. Dolan was sitting in the rear of the hall, reflectively puffing away at his cornucob, when an operator concluded one of the many long-winded speeches that had assailed his ears that day. As the speaker left the platform, *Pat*, still smoking, walked up the aisle to the front of the hall. He emptied his pipe, stuck it in his pocket, and fixed his gaze on the operators. Then in a rich Irish-Scottish burr, with a tremor in his voice and tears welling in his eyes, he spoke these words:

"You coal operators and that side of the house may have all your boasted education, but I tell you you haven't common sense. We miners over here know what we're here for. We've been here for days and days and it's about time we did something, or else go to our homes, which would be a crime. I tell you, gentlemen, this is sad. Over there in the mining villages of western Pennsylvania and in other states the women and children are waiting to hear something from Chicago. They've suffered for months and now won't this convention give them their bread and feed their weak and hungry bodies? Oh, gentlemen, let's not be guilty of such a crime, let's settle this thing and settle it quick. And again I say, in the name of humanity and in the name of God, let's bury our differences and come to an agreement."

There was no applause when *Pat Dolan* got through. The heart of every last man in that stuffy hall was touched by his few homely words.

Suddenly, the towering form of *Francis L. Robbins*, Pittsburgh coal operator, came up the aisle.

"Mr. Chairman," he thundered, "I move you that on and after April 1, 1898, that the miners in the states represented be granted an eight-hour working day, for which they have been contending."

The motion was promptly seconded, and when put, was the first germane motion to be carried unanimously. After many years' agitation, the eight-hour day was a reality at last!

Other motions were also carried unanimously, once the key log was removed from the logjam. And two days later, when the agreement had been whipped into final shape, the joint conference adjourned amid shouts of gladness and with operators and miners joining in the singing of "America."

Chapter 7

A HISTORY OF THE UMWA

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the seventh article in George Korson's history of the *International Union, United Mine Workers of America*. The *Journal* is publishing the series in honor of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the International Union on January 25, 1890, at Columbus, Ohio. The first article, published on May, 1, 1965, told in general of the early history of coal mining in the United States and the terrible need for Union organization of American coal miners. The second, on June 1, dealt with the history of early coal miners' unions leading to the founding of the UMWA. The third, on July 1, dealt specifically with the founding of the UMWA. The fourth on August 1, dealt with the pioneer organizers of the UMWA. The fifth dealt with the convict labor system and some of the other early struggles. The sixth dealt with the early UMWA struggle to win an eight-hour day in America's coal mines. This article deals with the historic role of the UMWA in the field of legislation.

By George Korson

© George Korson, 1965

"But there is one fact that stands out like a mountain against a clear sky, and that is, that the United Mine Workers of America led the way, all the way, in the great fight to secure beneficial labor legislation. . . . It is true that this Union was directly and specifically interested in securing legislation that would bring prosperity and happiness to those engaged in the coal industry, but in accomplishing this great reform this Union is bringing deliverance to all labor of every craft in America. . . ."

The *United Mine Workers' Journal* is speaking here of the intimate part played by the Union in bringing about the enactment of the National Industrial Recovery Act, popularly known as the NRA. But this quotation may also be accepted as an accurate summary of the Union's legislative accomplishments throughout its history.



Mr. Korson

From its very inception, the United Mine Workers of America has been aware of the maxim, "Equity aids the vigilant, not those who slumber on their rights." Strikes and joint conferences may bring their victories, but without equitable legislation labor is seriously handicapped on the march toward a more just and happier world. And so, the coal miners' Union has been knocking on the doors of Congress and the various state legislatures—knocking, and demanding "Justice—not Charity."

The contribution of the United Mine Workers of America toward industrial democracy and social progress through promoting legislation has been an extraordinary one. This phase of its activity forms a significant chapter in American social-political-eco-

omic history. Its philosophy, its principles, and many of its objectives are written indelibly in the country's statute books. All labor, not mine workers alone, share the benefits of this legislation. The United Mine Workers of America, long one of the nation's largest and strongest Unions has discharged its duty to the whole labor movement. In legislation as in other spheres, its money, its prestige and its leadership have been at the disposal of all the workers. In Pennsylvania where the Union once had a quarter of a million members, as in other coal mining states, its legislative committees have been the backbone of labor lobbies. In Washington, as we shall see later in this article, the United Mine Workers of America has been one of the determining influences behind the labor and social legislation passed under the New Deal. The NRA, the Guffey coal stabilization bills, the Wagner Labor Relations Act, the Social Security Act, the Walsh-Healey Act, the Wagner-Steagall Housing Act, the Fair Labor Standards Law, better known as the "minimum-wage and maximum hours law," the investigations of the La Follette Civil Liberties Committee—the United Mine Workers of America was closely identified with all this legislation.

Before the establishment of the United Mine Workers of America there was little mining law of value. The first attempt in the United States to have a mining law passed was made in 1858 by the anthracite miners of Schuylkill County, Pa. A mine inspection bill was introduced in the lower House of the Pennsylvania Legislature in that year, but it died in committee. Reintroduced in 1866, it passed the House but was lost in the Senate. Finally, as a result of pressure exerted by the *Workingmen's Benevolent Association*, a forerunner of the UMWA, then rising to power, the legislature adopted the "Ventilation and Inspection Act" in 1869. The law provided for the appointment by the governor of one mine inspector. *John Eltringham*, an inside foreman of Ashland, was appointed and thus became the first public coal mine inspector in American history.

Law Applied Only To One County

The weakness of the law was that it applied only to Schuylkill County. During the debate the statement was made that time would prove that such a law was needed in the entire anthracite region. This was corroborated on September 6, only five months later, when the Avondale mine disaster, taking a toll of 110 lives, shocked the civilized world. The flames of the Avondale shaft cast a lurid light on the perils of the coal mines. This led to the enactment of an act in 1870 which extended the provisions of the first law to cover the whole anthracite region, and also touched off agitation for mine safety legislation in the bituminous coal states. A bill providing for regulation, ventilation and inspection was introduced in the Ohio Senate in 1870, but not until 1873 was a law finally passed. Strengthened the following year, it became the first state-wide mine safety law in the country. Appointed state mine inspector, *Andrew Roy*, who years later wrote an excellent history of the coal miners, became the first man in the United States to hold such a position. The Illinois law was passed in 1872, but it restricted mine inspections to counties; the catastrophe of the Diamond mine, near Braidwood, in 1883, causing a loss of 77 miners, spurred the lawmakers to place mine inspection on a state-wide basis in the following year. *Walton Rutledge*, one of the first five state inspectors, is honored as the father of Illinois mine safety legislation. In 1876, Maryland passed its first mining law, and in 1877 the Pennsylvania Legislature created inspection districts in the soft coal areas. Indiana, Colorado, Iowa, Missouri and Kansas followed with legislation that was based on the Ohio and Pennsylvania laws.

The emergence of the United Mine Workers of America as a force to be reckoned with in coal mining state capitals goes back to the 1897 session of the Pennsylvania Legislature. Out of the 16 distinctive labor bills introduced, all but two became laws—a record so surprising that it was considered a miracle. Among the laws passed were an anthracite miners' certificate law, the first in the country, and another creating the state Department of Mines. The author of these and other anthracite bills, and the spark-plug behind the whole labor program was the late *John*

(Continued on Page 10)

Fahy of Columbus, Ohio, an able organizer of the United Mine Workers of America, who had preceded *John Mitchell* in the great drive to unionize the anthracite region. For a number of years Fahy served as president of *District 9* in the anthracite region.

The 1910 session of the Illinois legislature was also a memorable one. The Cherry, Ill. mine fire in which 259 coal miners died on November 13, 1909, had exposed weaknesses in the Illinois' mining laws. Bills to strengthen them and prevent, if possible, recurrences of such a disaster as that at Cherry, were introduced. But the legislature, under pressure of powerful coal mining and other corporation lobbies, seemed to waver in regard to these bills. Then it was that the Union's state legislative agent, a young man with a leonine head, bushy eyebrows, a booming voice and a fighting heart, took the floor of the legislature, and with that "logic on fire" which was to make him famous, made one of the most eloquent pleas for human legislation ever heard there. Not only did he force the adoption of necessary protective measures for the Mine Workers, but from that reluctant lawmaking body he also wrested the state's first Workmen's Compensation Act. The name of the legislative agent was *John L. Lewis*.

When Tom Kennedy Was Lieutenant Governor

A high water mark in state labor legislation was reached in 1937 by the Pennsylvania Legislature when the late *Thomas Kennedy*, tenth president of the UMWA, was lieutenant governor. The Workmen's Compensation Act was liberalized, carrying the state from its position as the 33d in the nation to a place near the top; privately paid deputy sheriffs (the infamous coal and iron police), the curse of the coal fields, were abolished; the use of injunctions in labor disputes was limited; and a "little Wagner Act" was passed. These were only a few of the progressive laws adopted under the Earle-Kennedy administration, Pennsylvania's first Democratic government since the Civil War and the most liberal since the days of William Penn. This administration owed its election largely to the support of the United Mine Workers of America. When certain high-placed Democratic politicians forgot this fact and refused the gubernatorial nomination in 1938 to Lieutenant-Governor Kennedy who probably would have led the party to victory, the way was opened for the election of a reactionary Republican regime. For Mr. Kennedy, the Union's secretary-treasurer, the 1937 session marked a high point in his distinguished career. Ever since his youth, when *President of UMWA District 7*, he had been demanding progressive legislation from the Pennsylvania legislature. As it was dominated by corporate interests, he was not always successful. As lieutenant-governor, he occupied the most exalted legislative office in Harrisburg—presiding officer of the state senate. This enabled him to lend a strong and influential hand toward translating into laws many of his own ideals and the principles of his great Union. His leadership was a major factor in making of that 1937 session the most progressive in Pennsylvania history.

In the 40-year span between the 1897 and 1937 sessions, a mass of beneficial labor laws, reflecting the Union's vigilant efforts, came out of the legislative hoppers of the various coal mining states. Comprehensive mining codes and miners' certificate laws requiring miners to establish their competency by passing examinations were adopted by Pennsylvania, Illinois and other states. Many states now have anti-injunction laws—and have outlawed the vicious "yellow dog" contract, covered also in New Deal legislation. The screen, long a source of complaint among soft coal miners, is now a part of history. Payment in scrip and the company store, twin evils as old as coal mining itself, were outlawed or regulated in many states. The anachronistic convict-leasing system in coal mining was wiped out in 1927 by Alabama, the last state to profit from it. In Pennsylvania, the brutal Coal and Iron Police no longer harass coal mine workers with impunity, and the use of privately paid deputy sheriffs is now illegal.

For adequate workmen's compensation acts in the various coal mining states, the United Mine Workers of America waged a relentless campaign.

It was in the 1920s that the United Mine Workers of America began to concentrate its energies on securing Federal legislation to stabilize the bituminous industry.

Its officers knew that the public was becoming aware that the industry's plight was an economic menace not merely to the operators and mine workers, but to the whole nation. Broken up in several thousand producing units, the industry was scattered all over the country. Overexpanded as a result of the war-time demand, it suffered from overproduction which was degrading free competition into economic anarchy. The railroads and other large industrial consumers depressed coal prices to a point below the

cost of production and the operators cruelly slashed wages and trampled upon their workers' rights in a desperate attempt to cling to receding markets. Meanwhile the Union was being driven out of one coal field after another until its very life hung in the balance.

UMWA officials felt that the Federal government had the power to regulate the economic structure of the bituminous industry because it was engaged in interstate commerce. Regulated utilities like the railroads consumed more than two-fifths of all soft coal production, and soft coal shipped across state lines made up more than 25 percent of the nation's freight traffic. Moreover, most of the coal tonnage was owned by non-resident operating companies, incidentally, a major source of the industry's sickness. In West Virginia, for example, about 80 percent of the coal production was shipped outside the state, and even the mine workers' pitiable small pay checks crossed half a dozen state lines before reaching them. And the United Mine Workers of America, representing the workers, was nationwide and even international in scope. In brief, investment, management, control, markets and the men who dug the coal all were interstate in their most important relations. This fact enabled many of the non-resident operators to obtain anti-Union injunctions from Federal Courts until the Norris-La Guardia Anti-Injunction Act was passed in 1932. And yet, the same operators, supported by big business spokesmen like the United States Chamber of Commerce, opposed Federal regulation of the bituminous industry on the grounds that it was a local business. A question asked by the *United Mine Workers Journal* was, if the Federal government had the power to protect property rights at coal mines controlled by absentee owners, why did not the Federal government also have the power to protect human rights at the same mines?

Senator Hiram Johnson Initiates Investigation

On January 9, 1928, U. S. Senator Hiram Johnson, Republican of California, introduced a resolution in the Senate directing the Interstate Commerce Committee to investigate the coal fields of central and western Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Ohio. A sub-committee, appointed by Chairman James E. Watson, Republican of Indiana, toured the region, accompanied by newspaper reporters and photographers, and in that way the sordid conditions received nationwide front page publicity. Exposed were the intense suffering of striking miners and their families; the shameless brutality of the operators' coal and iron police; the heartless evictions of thousands of families in midwinter; and the unspeakable orgy of vice and crime seething in the scab camps maintained by some of the largest companies who had repudiated their contracts with the Union.

A public hearing before the full Interstate Commerce Committee in Washington followed the first-hand survey, and for ten weeks, the nation was treated to an airing of the whole problem of the bituminous industry. Pitted against Charles M. Schwab, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., R. B. Mellon and other coal operators, were UMWA President John L. Lewis, *Vice President Philip Murray*, Secretary-Treasurer Thomas Kennedy, *General Counsel Henry Warrum* and other high officials of the Union. The hearing developed into the most exhaustive survey of the soft coal industry up to that time. The Union succeeded in amply proving its main contention that the operators themselves could not rehabilitate the industry, only Federal intervention could accomplish it.

The hearing ended on May 17, and the next day, Senator Watson introduced a bill, known to history as the Watson Bill, which had been drawn up by UMWA Counsel Warrum. In writing this piece of legislation, Mr. Warrum evolved the theory that Congress had the power to license corporations engaged in interstate commerce. He was also the first to suggest and insist that industry be relieved of the restraints of the antitrust laws upon their acceptance of the right of labor to organize into Unions and bargain collectively for wages and working conditions through representatives of their own choosing. Thus Mr. Warrum was the legal philosopher behind the various coal stabilization bills, the Davis-Kelly Bill, the original Guffey-Snyder Bill, the NRA with its codes, the Wagner Act and other beneficial labor legislation passed under the New Deal.

The Watson bill did not come to a vote, but in stirring up public interest in the problems of the bituminous industry, and breaking new legislative ground, it served a useful purpose. With the nation-wide depression intensifying the industry's particular distress, the Union continued its campaign of education. Parenthetically, not until 1933 did operators representing a substantial tonnage evince an interest in the Union's legislative efforts (from which they stood to benefit) and when they began to cooperate

they seemed content to follow the leadership of the United Mine Workers of America.

In 1932 the Davis-Kelly Bill, a slightly revised version of the 1928 Watson Bill, was introduced in Congress. Many Representatives and Senators approved it and it probably would have been passed had not the session adjourned before it could be considered. The administration of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, when it came into office in March, 1933, regarded the Davis-Kelly Bill with great favor. In fact, high administration officials not only were convinced that it would stabilize the bituminous coal industry, but felt that if broadened, such legislation could help all the industries then suffering from the effects of the depression. An agreement was reached between the United Mine Workers of America and the Roosevelt administration whereby the Union agreed to put aside the Davis-Kelly Bill and throw its whole weight behind the new legislation which became the National Industrial Recovery Act, on receiving assurance that it would lose none of the benefits contained in the Davis-Kelly Bill. Largely drawn up in the Union's offices, the NRA not only contained Mr. Warrum's legal philosophy, but many of its provisions were taken from the Davis-Kelly Bill, including the famous *Section 7(a)* giving labor the right to organize and bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing. "We pioneered the way," recalled the *Journal* in a review of the NRA. "The ground has been plowed and the seed planted by the United Mine Workers of America, so that it became necessary only for a grand push by labor to reap the harvest."

This is the story of the origin of the NRA which, though declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in less than two years after its enactment, nevertheless marked the longest step that had ever been taken in this country toward improvement of industrial relations. Section 7(a) lived on in the Wagner Act and subsequent legislation.

Some Stabilization Achieved

Under the NRA bituminous coal code, the industry achieved a fair measure of stabilization, while the Appalachian Joint Wage Conference, outgrowth of the NRA, brought industrial peace to the soft coal fields for the first time in years. However, relentless pressure of powerful interests and lax enforcement had their effect in undermining the code. It became apparent that a new law, directly affecting the bituminous industry, was necessary. Then there followed a series of joint legislative conferences between the Union's Officers, coal operators, wholesalers, retailers and consumers' representatives which resulted in the drafting of the Guffey-Snyder Bill. This legislation continued the labor guarantees of Section 7(a), created a National Bituminous Coal Commission, provided for a sales tax on coal producers with a drawback of 90 percent to producers accepting the new code and abiding by its provisions. It was introduced in both houses of Congress in January, 1935. After protracted public hearings before Congressional Committees, and with the support of the Union and over 200 operators representing 60 percent of the nation's tonnage, the bill was passed that summer.

The Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional by a divided vote in May, 1936, holding that coal mining was a local business and therefore Congress lacked the power to regulate its labor relations. Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes, while agreeing with the majority that the labor provisions were unconstitutional, held the price-stabilizing features of the act constitutional.

This was a source of some encouragement to the Union and to forward-looking operators. There was still urgent need for government regulation in the interstate marketing of bituminous coal and for the establishment of minimum prices at not less than production cost. Without them the future of the Appalachian Joint Wage Conference was placed in jeopardy as the pressure of surplus production, the domination of prices by the railroads and other large industrial consumers and cutthroat competition, directly affected the miners' wage structure and working conditions at the mines.

These circumstances, together with the fact that labor relations were covered by the Wagner Act, persuaded the United Mine Workers of America to support the Guffey-Vinson bill, which was introduced in Congress the day after the Supreme Court decision. This bill carried over the price-stabilizing features of the old law, and in place of the labor provisions contained a simple declaration of national public policy favoring the negotiation of wages by collective bargaining. The House passed the bill by a handsome majority, but Senator Rush D. Holt, Democrat of West Virginia, talked it to death in the Senate. However, it was reintroduced



IN COOLIDGE'S TIME—The year was 1927—November 21—when John L. Lewis (left), William Green (center) and Frank Morrison, the latter two president and secretary of the American Federation of Labor, visited the White House to seek the help of President Calvin Coolidge in adjudicating a coal strike.

in the next session of Congress, was passed, and became a law with the President's approval on April 20, 1937.

On the National Bituminous Coal Commission created by this new law served two veteran members of the United Mine Workers of America, *Percy Tetlow*—of Ohio, chairman, and *J. C. Lewis*—of Iowa. Under President Roosevelt's reorganization plan, the Commission expired on July 1, 1939, and its functions were transferred to a new bituminous coal division in the Department of the Interior.

Next to the coal stabilization laws and the Wagner Act, no New Deal legislation received more enthusiastic support from the United Mine Workers of America than the Social Security Act passed in 1935. This Union was probably the first in the country to declare unequivocally for old-age pensions and unemployment compensation. Time after time *International Conventions* of the Union declared for these two great reforms, and, largely as a result of a nation-wide campaign promoted by the organization through an old-age pensions committee, 28 states had adopted old-age pension laws before the Social Security Act was passed by Congress.

Recollections Of Strikebreakers In 1873

Strikebreaking has long been one of the problems faced by organized labor. How coal miners met the problem in 1873 during a Pennsylvania strike is described by historian Chris Evans in his *History of the United Mine Workers of America!*

"After several weeks' idleness a number of Swedes, as strikebreakers, were brought into the field, placed in barracks at Arnot by the operators and given all the protection possible under the circumstances mentioned.

"The old miners, not to be outdone, made persistent efforts to talk with the new men in order to explain the situation to them, but were refused this privilege. A Swedish interpreter, however, soon solved the problem, and in a very short time had all the strikebreakers and strikers marching together on the road for Blossburg, about four miles distant, with a Scotch bagpipe artist leading them, and to the inspiring tune of *McGregor's Gathering*, landed them at Blossburg, where a mass meeting was held for jollification over their success.

"After the meeting closed the imported men were given food and shelter until the next day when they left the field, with the result that satisfactory conclusions were entered into with the operators and miners that gave the miners all for which they had been contending. It was a manly effort and deserved well the victory achieved."

Chapter 8

A HISTORY OF THE UMWA

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the eighth article in George Korson's history of the *International Union, United Mine Workers of America*. The *Journal* is publishing the series in honor of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the International Union on January 25, 1890, at Columbus, Ohio. The first article, published on May 1, 1965, told in general of the early history of coal mining in the United States and the terrible need for Union organization of American coal miners. The second, on June 1, dealt with the history of early coal miners' unions leading to the founding of the UMWA. The third, on July 1, dealt specifically with the founding of the UMWA. The fourth on August 1, dealt with the pioneer organizers of the UMWA. The fifth dealt with the convict labor system and some of the other early struggles. The sixth dealt with the early UMWA struggle to win an eight-hour day in America's coal mines. The seventh dealt with the historic role of the UMWA in the field of legislation. This article deals with the great anthracite strike of 1902.

By George Korson

© George Korson, 1965

The Great Anthracite Strike of 1902 was a struggle that commanded the attention of the entire world. It continued for more than five months involving a loss of millions of dollars to the mine owners and the miners. It was finally ended when both parties to the dispute agreed to settlement by a commission appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt.



Mr. Korson

At the turn of the century the anthracite region of northeastern Pennsylvania was a dreary, God-forsaken place. Except for a few towns and cities, it was made up largely of mine patches, many of them isolated by mountain barriers, where the miners and their families lived in bleak, primitive surroundings. More than 150,000 coal mine workers were at the mercy of the operators who dictated their wages, working hours, conditions of employment, and even their way of life.

Not only were their wages generally below the subsistence level, but the men were cheated of what little they did earn through excessive dockages, dishonest weighing, or measuring of the coal they produced; through overcharges for powder, mining supplies, medical services, of which they received little or none at all; and through exorbitant prices charged in the company ("Pluck Me") stores. The work day was ten hours long with no compensation for overtime. Work was irregular and uncertain, and so were pay days. Often miners worked years without receiving any cash because of their indebtedness to company stores. Impoverished and degraded, they were forced to submit to employment of their young sons in coal breakers, and their daughters in silk mills.

A miner's epitaph in a Hazleton cemetery sums up the miners' mood in the latter part of the 19th century:

*"Forty years I worked with pick and drill
Down in the mines against my will
The Coal Kings slave but now it's passed
Thanks be to God I am free at last."*

Anthracite mine workers were about as safe in the mines as on battlefields. In the 30 years preceding the 1900 anthracite strike nearly 10,000 anthracite mine workers were killed and more than 26,000 were injured. These deaths and injuries did not cost the mine operators a single cent in workmen's compensation. Until the Catlin Bill was passed on June 1, 1915, the operators had been able to avoid financial responsibility for mine accidents through a loophole in the Mine Act of 1891.

The Pennsylvania State Workmen's Compensation Act, passed the day after the Catlin Law, finally fixed that responsibility. As for protests against abuses, or the stirring of Unionism among these downtrodden souls, there was the blacklist which hounded good miners into exile, and the threat of eviction, which hung like Damocles' sword over their heads. The whole sordid, heartrending story of those conditions may be found in the ten thousand typewritten pages of testimony preserved in the record of President Theodore Roosevelt's *Anthracite Coal Strike Commission* which heard more than five hundred witnesses between October, 1902 and February, 1903.

The earliest contact made by the *United Mine Workers of America* with the anthracite miners was somewhat accidental. During the national bituminous strike of 1894, a number of Central Pennsylvania miners came to try to collect money in support of their strike. One of them was *John Rinn* of Gearhartsville, Clearfield County. Moved by the plight of the anthracite men, and responding to their cries for organization, Rinn appealed for help to *UMWA Secretary-Treasurer Patrick McBryde*, and immediately received a Commission as the union's first organizer in the anthracite region. Arriving shortly afterward was keen-witted "*Little Phil*" *Penna* of Columbus, Ohio, "the handsomest man in the Union," who was then on the *National Executive Board*. With Mahanoy City as the base of operations, the trio in three weeks organized 13 Local Unions, and gave the obligation to some 2,000 miners.

Penna, after forming a temporary *District* organization in Gephart's Hall, Mahanoy City, on August 24, 1894, departed for National Headquarters, leaving *John Fahy* behind as chief organizer. With *Miles Dougherty*, another soft coal man, as an able assistant, Fahy led the spying coal and iron police a merry chase through the mine patches. Resourceful and courageous, and an eloquent speaker, he prepared the ground for the coming of the Union's youthful *National President*, a man destined to become an immortal legend in the region—*John Mitchell*.

Many years later, *John L. Lewis* gave the following thumb-nail sketch of Mitchell:

"Mitchell's sincerity illuminated the charm of a personality heretofore unequalled in the American labor movement. His priestly appearance and rare poise endeared him to the entire population of the anthracite region. He was genteel without exaggeration, capable of strenuous endeavor and great perseverance, and although he traveled slowly, he progressed surely and steadily. . . . His generalship was invariably predicated upon the sound value of contemplation, aided by his will power and his confidence in his judgment. Possessed of a practical personality, developed by hard work into an originality, he was at all times himself."

Mitchell brought with him not only a highly effective technique or organization, but a new spirit. With the great power and prestige of the United Mine Workers of America behind him, his presence offered the prospect of future security, and gave fresh hope to a people bent low with despair. From the abortive *Bates Union* of 1849 to the last feeble efforts of the *Knights of Labor* in 1888, all the anthracite unions, including the *Workingmen's Benevolent Association* of the 70s, had in common one fundamental weakness; namely, their local restricted character. This had isolated them from the mainstream of the miners' national Union

activity. Now for the first time they had the opportunity to affiliate with a great national organization.

When Mitchell arrived in the anthracite region in 1899 under mandate of the *National Convention* of that year he found the anthracite miners seriously divided. High on Mitchell's priority list was his campaign to win the good will and support of the clergy. He won over Bishop Hoban of Scranton, made a strong ally of Father J. J. Curran of Wilkes-Barre, and became a friend of Father Phillips of Hazleton. This trio of Catholic leaders had great influence not only with the miners but with the operators. He also won over many Protestant ministers.

The greatest obstacle to effective organization was the mutual distrust existing between the English-speaking miners—English, Irish, Welsh, Scots and Pennsylvania Dutch—and the more recent immigrants. The nationality change among mine workers began about 1880 when the Polish, Lithuanians, Slovaks, Italians and other non-English-speaking peoples began to settle in the anthracite region. By 1890, the latter constituted 26.67 percent of the foreign-born persons engaged in anthracite mining, and in 1900 they formed 46.36 percent. They differed in tradition, customs, standards of living, and language. At least 20 nationalities made up the mosaic of anthracite miners while 20 different languages were spoken within that small area.

John Mitchell made a point of breaking down national barriers. "The coal you dig," he would say over and over again, "is not Slavish coal, or Polish coal or Irish coal. It is coal." At every opportunity he urged the Welsh and Irish miners to be tolerant toward their Slavic brothers. It took time and much persuasion to dissipate the mutual prejudices and distrust existing among these groups. Gradually he accomplished his purpose, and Slavs mingled with English-speaking fellow miners at mass meetings, picnics, in parades on terms of equality. The Slavs grew to love John Mitchell. When he finally issued the call to strike, there was no doubt in his mind as to where they stood. The ballad, *Me Johnny Mitchell Man*, composed by his friend Con Carbon of Wilkes-Barre, swept the region. The chorus went like this:

Me no 'fraid fer nottink
Me dey nevair shcare,
Sure me shtrike tomorra night,
Dat's de bizness, I dunt care.
Righta here me tellin' you—
Me no Shcabby fella,
Good Union citizen—
Johnny Mitchell man.

Mitchell spent a hard year organizing the miners into a disciplined body. He crowned his year's work with a call for a Convention, where a set of modest demands was drawn up. He then invited the operators to meet him. When they ignored him he issued a strike call on September 17, 1900. This call came in the midst of the McKinley-Bryan presidential campaign. Mark Hanna, National Chairman of the Republican Party, urged J. P. Morgan, head of one of the two money combines controlling the anthracite industry, to settle with the workers to avoid the development of an issue of social injustice in the campaign. Mitchell called another Convention at which the miners' demands were modified. The operators still refused to meet their miners around the conference table, but quietly posted notices on their bulletin boards abolishing the sliding scale and granting the men a 10 percent increase in wages to April 1, 1901. Since these were among their major demands the miners joyfully regarded this as a victory for the new Union. The strike was called off officially on October 29, and the jubilant miners established the date as *Mitchell Day*, an annual holiday that is still observed.

The miners sang:

It came from J. P. Morgan, that great official organ.
He said, "I'll give you 10 percent of increase in your pay.
He saw we were united, that our wrongs must be righted,
And now for brave John Mitchell, we will give three cheers,
hooray."

April, 1902, came almost too soon for comfort and Mitchell sought to negotiate a new agreement. The operators announced they had renewed the scale for another year.

As April, 1902, approached, the fear grew that a showdown between the miners and their employers could be avoided no longer. Mitchell, desperately aware that he was not yet prepared for a real test of strength, continued to seek mediation. Instead of granting the Union a few concessions, the operators actually drove the workers into its arms by their arrogance. Mitchell, still

pursuing a policy of conciliation, invited the operators to a conference in February, 1902. While they did not ignore him altogether this time, their replies were uniformly unsatisfactory to Mitchell and his followers. A *Tri-District Convention* of miners was called at Shamokin during which Mitchell sent the operators telegrams offering to mediate the men's demands. Once again he was rebuffed. The Convention then voted a temporary suspension on May 12, 1902. One hundred and forty thousand men and boys answered the call. Two days later another Convention was held at Hazleton. Mitchell was still hopeful for peace, as were a majority of the Delegates. Hazleton took on a holiday appearance with bunting and flags flying and bands serenading the Delegates. Some of the men from remote mine patches had brought homing pigeons in pasteboard boxes ready to fly back home with the news to their anxious families. But there was no good news. After a bitter debate on the floor, the Convention, by a narrow margin, authorized Mitchell to call a strike.

In the beginning the miners and their families took the strike in a holiday spirit. Women dressed up in their Sunday best and went visiting. The men puttered around the house or in their gardens.

In time, however, the threat of all-out industrial war hung over the region. The first sign of the operator's stiffening attitude appeared when the mules were brought out of the mines and turned loose in pastures. Workers living in company houses received quit notices. Strikebreakers were brought in to augment the few thousand miners who had remained at work, thereby enabling the partial operation of some collieries. These were fortified with electrified moats and stockades, and with garrisons of coal and iron police. Mounted national guardsmen appeared in the towns where they were joined by state troopers and local police. Mitchell and the priests urged the men to be peaceable.

Strikers found release from restlessness in parades. Led by bands and bugle and drum corps and carrying home-made banners which bore such legends as *We are slaves now but Mitchell will soon set us free*, these processions went on singing, laughing and cheering.

They stopped to serenade the homes of scabs. There were daylight parades, before-breakfast, and after-midnight parades. Effigies of strikebreakers were hung everywhere, and at one point 50 of them dangled from one telegraph pole. There was one effigy of a man dressed in mining clothes and hob-nailed shoes which bore a placard, "J. P. Morgan."

As the summer wore on and no sign of an early settlement appeared on the horizon, there developed a flight for the big cities of the East where strikers sought work to tide them over. Peniless, they used freight trains which were jocularly known as "Johnny Mitchell's specials." The strikers had a song about this free transportation which ended as follows:

I'll bid you all adieu now,
Let you bid me the same.
The strike is nearly o'er
With joy I'm near insane.
Here's health unto the Union,
Which is very strong they say,
Likewise the conductors
On Johnny Mitchell's train.

With the passing of the summer and no relief from the cities yet in sight, starvation threatened the families of many of the 140,000 strikers. Realizing that the lowly potato was a staple item of the miners' diet, President Mitchell hoped and prayed for a bumper crop that fall. With potatoes plentiful and cheap he knew that his strikers could hold out indefinitely until he got the operators around the collective bargaining table.

In September, John Mitchell's prayers were answered when he heard of the bumper crop of potatoes raised by the Pennsylvania Dutch farmers of the Hegins Valley potato-raising center of Schuylkill County. At the same time he learned that the top man there was John Schrope, who had a yield of about 500 bushels to the acre. An agricultural expert estimated that Schrope's crop was the equivalent of 30,000 pounds, enough, he said, to sustain 150 large families for a month.

Mitchell made a special trip from Wilkes-Barre to see the mound of potatoes in John Schrope's barn, and he had his picture taken standing on top of it. Many Pennsylvania Dutch coal mine strikers walked miles to shake hands with their leader. Mitchell stopped off at nearby Tremont where he received an enthusiastic reception. The strikers spread a carpet from his train to the

(Continued on Page 6)

History Of The UMWA

(Continued from Page 5)

Reading Railroad depot. Then, led by the Tremont Cornet Band, Mitchell walked to the baseball grounds where he made a speech to a crowd of wildly enthusiastic strikers.

Ironically, it was a Pennsylvania Dutchman, George F. Baer, spokesman for the powerful coal mining corporations, who was responsible for turning public opinion against the coal operators. Answering a letter from a Wilkes-Barre correspondent, Baer, in part, replied as follows:

"The rights and interests of the laboring man will be protected and cared for—not by the labor agitators, but by the Christian men to whom God in His infinite wisdom has given the control of the property interests of the country, and upon the successful management of which so much depends."

At length the country was beginning to see the specter of a coalless winter with its attendant suffering. Stores faced bankruptcy as banks refused to carry them any longer. Public opinion in and out of the region called for an end to the long strike. John Mitchell as usual was prepared to negotiate, but the operators remained obdurate until Theodore Roosevelt, then President, threatened to take over their collieries.

Finally President Roosevelt appointed an Anthracite Coal Commission. All questions in dispute were submitted to it, and the strikers resumed work in the pits October 23, 1902, thus ending "the greatest industrial conflict in American history." The Commission organized in Washington and then moved to Scranton where the hearings were held.

On March 18, 1903, it handed down its findings, awards and recommendations. In the intervening period it heard 558 witnesses. The record of testimony covers more than 10,000 legal pages in typewritten form, besides a vast number of statistical tables and other exhibits.

John Mitchell held that the most important feature of the Commission's Award was the creation of the *Anthracite Board of Conciliation*. It was the Commission's ruling that when grievances under the Award could not be settled with the superintendent of a colliery, they were to be referred to a permanent Board of Conciliation made up of six individuals, three to be selected by the miners and three by the operators.

The Board was to consider any question referred to it by either side. Any decision made by a majority vote was to be final and binding on both parties. If the Board was unable to agree, the case before it was to be referred to an Umpire to be selected by one of the Judges of the Third Judicial Circuit of the United States. The Umpire's decision was to be final and binding.

Carroll D. Wright, the Board's first Umpire, explained its real function as follows:

"The spirit of the Award of the Anthracite Coal Strike Commission is not solely to carry out literally the Award but to find some means by which peace and harmony shall prevail in the anthracite region."

Creation of the Board of Conciliation was the answer.

The 50th anniversary dinner honoring the Board was held at Lakewood, Pa., October 1, 1953.

The anthracite strike of 1902 left an indelible impression on the American public. It clearly showed that the old relations between capital and labor were on the way out, and that all men had certain minimum rights, the right to provide for themselves and for those dependent upon them as befits the dignity of man; the right to opportunity up to the limits of their capacity; and the right to civil liberties.

Harvey Hilbert, Retired Mine Inspector

POTTSVILLE, Pa. (UMWA News)—Harvey Hilbert, a retired State Mine Inspector, died at his home here November 13 following a lengthy illness. He was 77.

Hilbert, who started his mining career as a breaker boy in 1901, rose to become a miner and then a foreman at a number of collieries in the *UMWA District 9* area.

The veteran mining man, who retired 15 years ago, is survived by his widow, two daughters, two sons, eight grandchildren and seven great grandchildren.

Funeral services were held November 17 from the Allen Funeral Home. The Rev. K. R. Boehm, pastor of the First Methodist Church, officiated. Interment was in Friedens Cemetery, Llewellyn.

506 Million Tons Of Soft Coal Will Be Used This Year: NCA

Consumption of U. S. bituminous coal will reach a 14-year high of 506 million tons in 1965, up 5.6 percent from the 479.1 million tons used in 1964, the National Coal Association predicts.

The NCA Economics Committee forecast an 8.5 percent increase in coal's dominant market, electric utilities. Electric generating stations burned 223 million tons of coal in 1964 and are expected to use 242 million tons this year.

Lester E. Langan, chairman of the NCA Economics Committee and assistant to the president of Pittston Clinchfield Coal Sales Corp., New York, said the committee expects the upward trend in electric utility coal consumption to continue through 1966.

Electric utilities burn coal for 65 percent of the power produced at their steam generating plants, which is more than half the U. S. electric power total.

One of the NCA committee's most significant forecasts looks for general industry to boost its coal use for steam production to 104 million tons, for a 4.3 percent gain over the 99.7 million tons burned in 1964. The new total would indicate coal's return to strength, after many lean postwar years, among such major fuel consumers as the chemical, automotive, food processing, paper and primary metals industries.

Use of high-grade coal to make coke, principally for the steel industry, is expected to require 90 million tons this year, a 1.4 percent increase over 1964. The committee based its favorable outlook on a good 1966 start in the automobile industry and the steelmakers' need to replenish stocks.

Exports of bituminous coal to overseas markets, which reached 33.8 million tons in 1964, are expected to continue their climb to 35 million tons for a 3.6 percent improvement. Exports to Canada are predicted at 16 million tons, up 12.7 percent from the 14.2 million tons shipped across the border in 1964. U. S. coal exporters are generally optimistic about their potential in foreign markets. Coal exports, currently valued at about \$500 million annually, are making a substantial contribution to an improved balance of payments situation for the United States.

Retail deliveries of coal, declining for several years, are expected to dip slightly under the 1964 total of 19.6 million tons to 19 million.

NCA studies indicate that U. S. coal production this year will easily keep pace with the increasing demand for coal here and abroad. The United States, with more than 830 billion tons of coal and lignite in readily recoverable reserves, can expand production almost without limit, NCA said.

The Start Of The Labor Movement In U. S.

The period from 1820 to 1840 may rightly be named the Awakening Period of the American Labor Movement. True, there were organizations of labor prior to this period. The printers as early as 1786 and the cordwainers as early as 1796 are known to have had aggressive societies in New York and Philadelphia.

But it was not until 1827 that the real movement began with the organization in Philadelphia of the Mechanics' Union of Trade Associations. Previous to that time organization had been limited to merely separate trades and there had been no union of trades and no working men as a class for a common subject. The unskilled laborers were inarticulate and the skilled workmen were separated by divergent trade interests. Separately each society was only a trade club until they were a social class.

An isolated society might create a disturbance—not until it united with others could it create a "movement."

"This is the first time," said the earliest American labor paper, the *Mechanics' Free Press*, in 1828. "That the working men have attempted in a public meeting, to inquire whether they possess, as individuals or as a class, any right to say by whom they shall be governed."

Warren G. Harding was the first U. S. President to invite the Vice President to hold a seat in the Presidential cabinet.

Chapter 9

A HISTORY OF THE UMWA

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the ninth article in George Korson's history of the *International Union, United Mine Workers of America*. The *Journal* is publishing the series in honor of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the International Union on January 25, 1890, at Columbus, Ohio. The first article, published on May 1, 1965, told in general of the early history of coal mining in the United States and the terrible need for Union organization of American coal miners. The second, on June 1, dealt with the history of early coal miners' unions leading to the founding of the UMWA. The third, on July 1, dealt specifically with the founding of the UMWA. The fourth on August 1, dealt with the pioneer organizers of the UMWA. The fifth dealt with the convict labor system and some of the other early struggles. The sixth dealt with the early UMWA struggle to win an eight-hour day in America's coal mines. The seventh dealt with the historic role of the UMWA in the field of legislation. The eighth dealt with the great anthracite strike of 1902. This article deals with John L. Lewis in the 1920s and early 1930s.

By George Korson

© George Korson, 1965

*Now don't forget John L. Lewis no matter what you do,
He's for you in the mornin' an' in the evenin' too.
We're forever on his mind; he's workin' all the time
While the union's growin' strong in this land.*

—This verse is from a coal miners' song recorded by George Korson in 1940, and is found in his book, *Coal Dust on the Fiddle*.

John L. Lewis is the best known labor leader in the world, beloved by his miners and publicly admired, now that he has retired, even by former adversaries. He led his miners through some of the bitterest and most violent labor-management struggles in American history, raising their wages and living standards to the highest standards in the process.



Mr. Korson

ton, D. C. or Alexandria, Va., where he lives.

His long and brilliant career as *President* of the *United Mine Workers of America* is summed up in the following citation by Georgetown University which, in 1960, awarded Lewis an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters:

"For upwards of 40 years he has been engaged in unflinching battle for the rights and dignity of the workingman—and for the just rewards of management as well; and the present pros-

perous position of both is in no small part attributable to his labors."

An eloquent tribute to Lewis may be found in the novel, *Black Fury* by Michael A. Musmanno. The author, Justice Musmanno of Pennsylvania, describes a fictional debate between Harry Spooore, as President of the Local Union, and a communist agent, in Miners' Hall, "Coaltown." In the course of the debate, the author puts the following words in Spooore's mouth:

"John L. Lewis has been to the coal miner what Abraham Lincoln was to the slaves of his day. It was a providential coincidence that he was born on the anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, the Emancipator, because John L. Lewis is our emancipator. He is one of us! He is a coal miner, and by the fact that he actually toiled in the depths of the earth, he smashed the notion, propagated by mine owners, that there is something inferior in the intellect and character of the coal miner. There is no better Christian-living man and no more intellectual person in the whole labor movement of today than John L. Lewis.

"He has lived with but one objective, and that is the advancement, progress and best welfare of the coal miner. He has brought human dignity to the profession of coal, he has compelled respect for the digger of coal. In character, courage, intellect and achievement in behalf of the workingman, Mr. Lewis represents a mountain peak of grandeur that is beyond the reach or the target of any particle of mud thrown in his direction by any critic."

In his retirement Lewis now and then must reflect on the many significant changes in the miners' lot that have taken place as the result of his leadership. One of the changes relates to technology. As one writer has put it, "He lifted the miners from their knees in the coal pits to technological uprightness, and made them the highest paid workers in the United States."

Technology has brought to the American coal industry the highest man-day productivity of any coal industry in the world. Average production per-man per-day in the United States is ten times that of British coal miners. Lewis' philosophy on the subject of mechanization is summed up as follows:

"I am proud of the contributions that the UMWA has made to the coal industry of America. For long years before the United Mine Workers of America completed the organization of the industry, the coal companies paid no taxes, comparatively speaking, to the United States Treasury. They had no profits. They had no earnings. They were living on their reserves and eating up their capitalization paying salaries. "The American coal operators never would have mechanized their mines unless they had been compelled to do so by the organization of the mine workers. The UMWA holds that labor is entitled to a participation in the increased productivity due to mechanization. We decided the question of displacement of workers by mechanization years ago. We decided that it is better to have a half million men working in the industry at good wages and under high standards of living, than it is to have a million working in the industry in poverty and degradation. There can be no increase in the standard of living in America except as we create new values by increased productivity."

Nothing gives Mr. Lewis more satisfaction and pride than the mention of the *United Mine Workers Welfare and Retirement Fund* for which he led the fight, and which he still heads as *Chairman of the Board of Trustees*. The Fund is financed by a 40-cent a ton royalty tax paid by the bituminous coal operators. An idea of the magnitude of the Fund is the fact that since its beginning in 1946 almost \$2 billion have been spent for benefits, more than \$960 million of which was for miners' pensions.

The anthracite industry has a Fund of its own known as the *Anthracite Health and Welfare Fund*.

Fortunately, John L. Lewis came on the national scene when the coal miners most needed a man of his leadership and strength of character. In 1919, when *UMWA President Frank J. Hayes*

(1917-1919) took leave on account of illness, Lewis, then *Vice President*, became acting President. In the following year he was elected *President*.

Almost immediately Lewis faced a major problem. It was the so-called "Washington Agreement." As a patriotic service, and in line with the World War I policies of other national labor unions, the United Mine Workers of America had signed an agreement with the coal operators under auspices of the wartime United States Fuel Administration on October 6, 1917. The UMWA had agreed to extend that contract "during the continuation of the war and not to exceed two years from April 1, 1918." In effect, the UMWA had pledged not to cease work while the war was being fought to assure the country an uninterrupted flow of coal desperately needed by the war industries.

Parenthetically, this was not the only patriotic service performed by the United Mine Workers of America in World War I. Its officers went up and down the country selling Liberty Bonds and its members bought them as generously as any other class of citizens. In addition, more than 80,000 union members served in the armed forces, 3,000 of whom died in uniform.

In the light of this patriotic service, the Union mine workers felt entitled to better consideration from the government after the war. The Washington Agreement had frozen their wage scale at a time when the cost of living was skyrocketing and while operators were making enormous profits. In August, 1918, the United Mine Workers of America appealed directly to U. S. Fuel Administrator Harry A. Garfield for an increase in wages to offset the ever rising living costs. The request was granted to the anthracite mine workers, but denied to the soft coal miners. On November 15, the Union appealed to President Woodrow Wilson and again was refused because the government was "stabilizing wages." By 1919 the miners' dissatisfaction with the Washington Agreement had become intense. The Union argued that a new agreement was necessary because the war actually had ended with the Armistice on November 11, 1918. The Union pointed out that the Fuel Administration, having been abolished on January 21, 1919, no longer controlled prices and wages. The operators, resisting the men's demands, held that a "state of war" legally existed until the Senate had ratified a treaty of peace. This was the technicality on which the government itself rested in its attempt to hold the Union to the Washington Agreement.

A Stormy International Convention

Meanwhile, the ranks of the United Mine Workers of America seethed with unrest. Their discontent found full expression in stormy sessions at the *International Convention* of September, 1919. It was at that Convention that John L. Lewis as Acting President, displayed those qualities of leadership that were to carry him to his commanding position as a leader of labor. Among the demands voted by the delegates were a 60 percent increase in tonnage and yardage pay rates for day men, and a six-hour, five-day week.

The operators being adamant in opposition to the miners' demands, and joint negotiations having been broken off, an official call for a coal strike was issued on October 15 to take effect on November 1st. Prospects for the successful outcome of the shutdown were excellent in view of a world-wide coal shortage. The government, however, intervened. On October 21, the same day that Secretary of Labor William B. Wilson had called the operators and miners' representatives together into his office, Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer petitioned U. S. District Judge A. B. Anderson in Indianapolis for an injunction restraining the officers and members of the United Mine Workers of America—from carrying on the proposed strike, the petition being based on the Lever Act. His argument—the same as the operators'—was that the Armistice had not ended the war and the emergency statutes therefore were still in effect.

From the sick bed of President Woodrow Wilson, on October 25, a statement was issued declaring the pending strike "not only unjustifiable but unlawful," and demanding the withdrawal of the strike call. On October 31—the zero hour for the strike—Judge Anderson granted a temporary restraining order operative until November 8. On that date, after a hearing, he issued a drastic injunction against the Union and its officials, not only ordering a cancellation of the strike call by November 11, but prohibiting the *International, District, and Local Unions* from using any of their funds to pay strike relief or to supply aid to the members of the Union in need or distress.

Acting President Lewis immediately summoned to Indianapolis International Officers, District Representatives, the International Executive Board, and the scale committee of the Central Com-

petitive Field for an emergency meeting. After being in almost continuous session for 48 hours, they decided that there was no other alternative but to comply with the court order and call off the strike.

But the rank and file strikers refused to give up the cause. More than 400,000 workers representing 67.2 percent of all bituminous employes tied up 71 percent of the country's coal producing capacity. Not even Federal troops in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and seven other states could drive them back into the pits.

On December 3, 84 International and District Officers were cited for contempt of court by Judge Anderson. Many of them were arrested and placed under heavy bond. It took two years to free them, and then not until after the Lever Act was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

On December 6, the International Officers were summoned to the White House where they received the President's plan for the settlement of the strike. It called for the miners resuming work with a 14 percent wage increase, the same amount offered previously under the so-called Garfield Award, and with the promise that President Woodrow Wilson would appoint a three-man commission whose report, after an investigation, would form the basis of a new wage agreement. Reluctantly, the International Officers accepted the proposal and their decision was later ratified by an International Convention. The commission's majority award granted the miners increases of 24 cents a ton for mine run coal, pick and machine; 20 percent for yardage and dead work; and a \$1 a day to day shift men, but turned thumbs down on a six-hour day. This award was incorporated in an agreement reached at a joint interstate conference held in New York on March 29, effective from April 1, 1920, to March 31, 1922.

1922 Strike Was Biggest

The United Mine Workers of America under President Lewis, waged its greatest strike in 1922. All its members, bituminous and anthracite, took part. Considering the number of men engaged, the nation-wide scope of the battleground, the powerful financial and industrial interests supporting the operators, the elaborateness and efficiency of the organization's strike machinery, and the great fundamental issues at stake, this is believed to have been the greatest industrial struggle ever fought on the American continent.

For a clear perspective on the strike, we must view it against the background of a postwar nation-wide campaign, promoted by big business, and aimed at destruction of the whole American labor movement. Millions of dollars were spent on propaganda to influence public opinion against the mine workers, and in behalf of the so-called "American Plan," another term for the anti-union open shop. And to confuse and intimidate the workers themselves, wage cuts were systematically imposed in all parts of the country. How did this affect the United Mine Workers of America? As the strongest and most militant trade union of that day, it was early marked for a concerted attack. Had this labor citadel been destroyed, then the whole organized labor movement in the United States would have been placed in jeopardy. Thus, the UMWA fought not only for its own life, but in behalf of all labor.

The strike was foreshadowed in 1921 when coal operators, taking advantage of the post-war depression, broke their contracts with the Union, and attempted to impose wage cuts. The 1920 wage agreement called for an interstate joint conference of the Central Competitive Field to be held prior to April 1, 1922. In conformance with this agreement, President Lewis invited the operators to a preliminary conference on January 6. Indiana and Illinois operators accepted conditionally, but other big operators refused to attend. Because of the inadequate representation the meeting was called off. The operators declined other invitations to enter into negotiations for the fixing of a basic wage.

Following the instructions of the reconvened International Convention held in February, President Lewis issued an official strike call on March 20, and on April 1 the strike began. More than 400,000 workers, or 67 percent of the total number employed in the bituminous industry, including nearly 100,000 unorganized miners in the non-Union areas of Connellsville and Somerset in Pennsylvania, were engaged in the strike. Reinforcing this army were 158,000 anthracite mine workers who also struck on April 1 when their employers sought to impose a reduction in the various mining pay schedules of an average of 21½ percent for all men employed in the anthracite industry. Thus, the total number taking part in the 1922 strike exceeded 600,000—the broad-

(Continued on Page 10)

A History Of The UMWA

(Continued from Page 7)

winners of about three million persons—a mighty phalanx of labor on the march!

Both the anthracite and bituminous strikers gave a remarkable exhibition of solidarity. Despite privation their morale was high, and in the face of provocation they kept the peace. One of several incidents of serious violence occurred at a strip pit near Herrin, Ill., where on June 21 a score of scabs and armed guards were killed after two strikers had been shot.

Agents of struck bituminous operators were exposed trying to induce anthracite strikers to accept work in their mines with promises of "good wages and lots of moonshine."

The Harding Administration pursued a hands-off policy, as the country's accumulated coal reserves diminished and non-Union operators, especially in the South, reaped a harvest.

Protestant, Catholic and Jewish religious bodies united in urging President Harding to call a national conference and initiate a Federal probe of the coal mining industry. It was the first time that the three churches had taken joint action in an industrial dispute.

President Harding finally invited the operators' and miners' representatives to meet at the White House on July 1. Another meeting was held on the 10th. The basis of the settlement proposed by the President being unacceptable to President Lewis and the organization's *National Policy Committee*, it was rejected.

'You Can't Mine Coal With Bayonets'

Thereupon, President Harding invited the operators to reopen their mines with strikebreakers under Federal government protection. He sent telegrams to the governors of all the coal producing states urging them to afford protection to the operators. The Pennsylvania Governor ordered out a large part of the state's National Guard. With a flourish of trumpets and rattling of bayonets, the soldiers invaded coal fields in central and western Pennsylvania. Still the strikers remained unawed. "You can't mine coal with bayonets," they said.

Meanwhile, the anthracite and bituminous industries were tied up tightly. Production in non-Union areas of West Virginia, Pennsylvania and the South had fallen off to about 3,600,000 tons in the 16th week, which was far below the country's needs.

Throughout the long struggle, the operators' strategy was to try to negotiate with the separate units of the Organization, but the best they would offer was the 1917 scale.

But Lewis outwitted them.

On August 7, he called a joint conference in Cleveland where an agreement was signed with operators representing 60 million tons annual production. With this settlement as a basis, resistance of the other operators crumbled, and within ten days virtually the whole tonnage in the organized territory had capitulated.

Under the terms of the agreement, the 1920 wage scale was continued until March 31, 1923. The organization had won a great victory—wages were not reduced! In the words of President Lewis:

"Thus ended the most memorable struggle in the annals of the United Mine Workers of America from which we emerged with outstanding success having maintained our position against concentrated opposition involving all the equations of industry, finance, and politics."

The anthracite mine workers won their strike on September 2, when the operators agreed to continue the wages and working conditions of the 1920 contract until August 31, 1923.

At the request of President Harding, Congress created a commission for another investigation of the bituminous industry. Following the commission's suggestion, a joint meeting of bituminous operators and union representatives was held January 17-21, 1923, resulting in the existing wage scale being extended to April 1, 1923.

This scale was extended for another three years by the famous Jacksonville Agreement concluded in February, 1924. Within a year, however, many of the large operators had repudiated their signatures, cancelled their contracts and were operating on a non-Union basis with all the anti-social concomitants of such a policy. When the three-year term of the agreement was about to expire in February, 1927, operators and Union representatives met in Miami for the purpose of negotiating a new contract. But that conference collapsed. Having no contract, the United Mine Workers of America struck on April 1. The strike was most effective in Illinois and Indiana where the Union still maintained a comparatively strong position; but it proved disastrous in western



CIO DAYS—This photograph taken during the early days of the Committee for Industrial Organization (later the Congress of Industrial Organizations) shows CIO leaders conferring on the question of peace with the American Federation of Labor. The ten unions that originally made up the CIO were suspended from the AFL for their action in forming the Committee. In the picture (from left) are Charles Howard of the International Typographical Union, Max Zaristky of the Hat Workers and John L. Lewis, then chairman of the CIO.

Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, and other soft coal fields. The Union in these areas fought for its very life under the slogan, "No Backward Step!" The whole industry seethed with unrest, and certain factions took advantage of the desperate situation to lead insurrections against the Union. Dual unions broke out in several sectors.

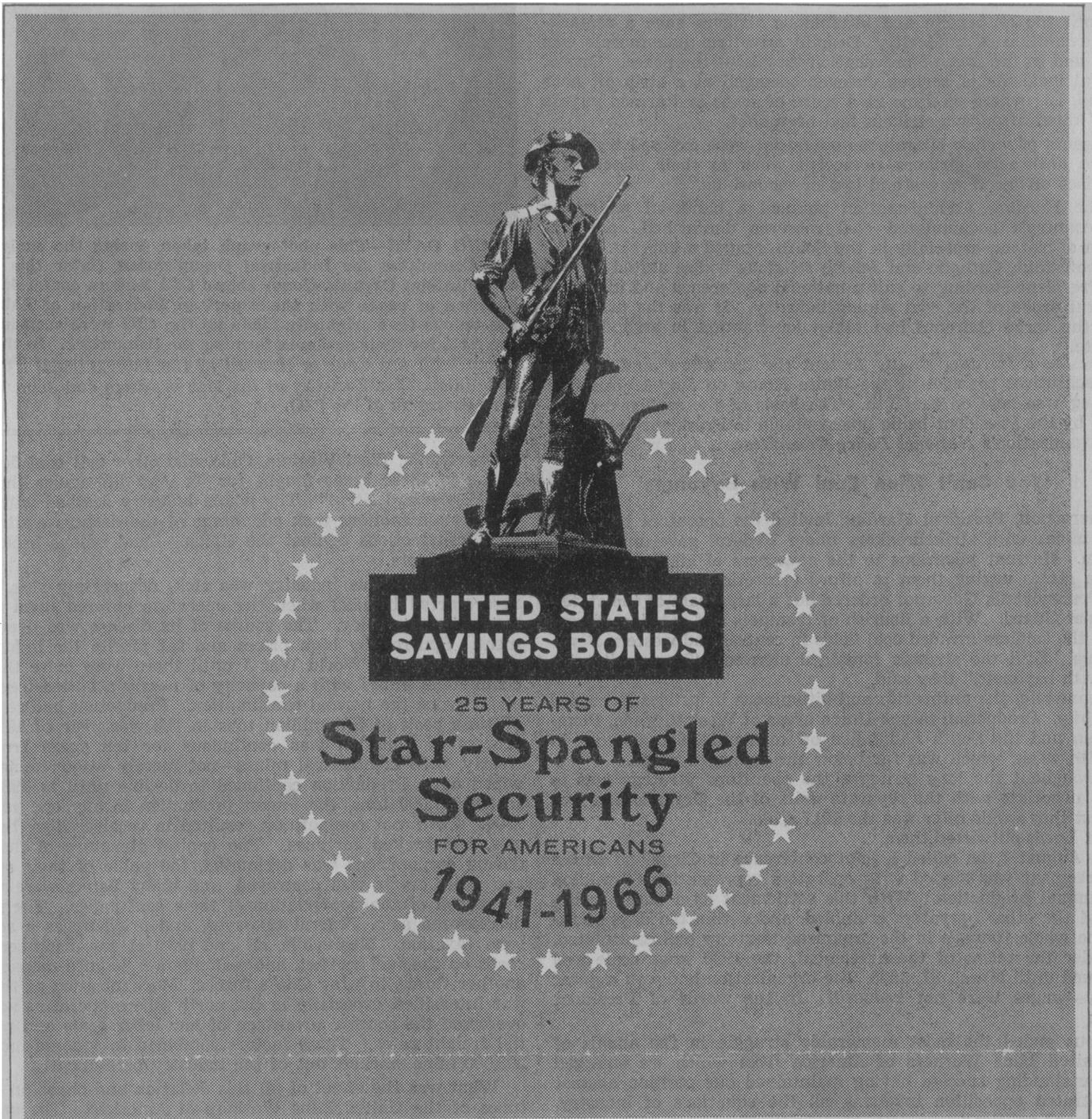
The bituminous industry was sick, desperately sick. Its illness started in 1923 when the operators entered upon a severe retrenchment policy. The source of its disease was overdevelopment. Spurred by high prices and fat profits the industry had expanded during World War I until there were more than 9,000 commercial mines with a capacity of nearly a billion tons a year, about twice the normal consumption. Production had reached an all-time peak of 579 million tons in the war year of 1918. The process of deflation was continuous for ten years from 1923. Nearly 4,000 commercial mines—not merely wagon mines—were wiped out. Production continued to decline until in 1932 it fell to 308,907,000 tons, the lowest production in any one year since 1904. Cutthroat competition resulted in receiverships, bankruptcies, and broken fortunes. The capital structure of many producing corporations was decimated, the value of their securities and their credit was destroyed, and many banks were wrecked by reason of the depreciation of their coal paper. The industry disappeared as a Federal taxpayer, and dried up as a source of local taxation. Meanwhile, oil and natural gas made serious inroads on the fuel market, and water power loomed menacingly as another threat to King Coal's future. Mechanization at the mines was intensified, especially in the north where operators sought to overcome the south's advantage of low labor costs and preferential freight rates. These factors combined to squeeze more than 200,000 mine workers out of the industry permanently.

What was the effect of all this deflation and chaos on the fortunes of the United Mine Workers of America? The answer is found in the Joint Report of the International Officers to the 33d Constitutional Convention in 1934:

"The United Mine Workers of America were driven from one field after another by the law of injunctions and the rule of gunmen; the right to collectively bargain for their wages was denied the mine workers and there was substituted the individual system of employment in which the worker foreswore his right to belong to a union; wage rates were arbitrarily posted at the tippie; the right of the mine workers to check-weigh their own coal was denied; wages were cut time and time again, and further sweated by the rent of company houses and prices charged at the company stores. The free hand which the corporation thus exercised in labor relations was the chief cause for the increasing demoralization of the industry."

Elmer Hrobuchak, 36, of Gravel Pond Road, Clarks Summit, near Scranton, died in University of Pennsylvania Hospital, Philadelphia, six days after he was severely burned when a propane gas heater exploded while he was inspecting cargo in a trailer. The victim, Secretary of Richard Freight Lines, Scranton, is survived by his widow and five children.

This is an editorial for the New Year and all through 1966.



- ★ Twenty-five years ago on May 1, 1941, the U. S. Treasury issued the first Series E Savings Bond to Franklin D. Roosevelt.
- ★ That purchase, in the words of Lyndon B. Johnson, "set into motion the greatest thrift program the world has ever known."
- ★ Since that day in 1941, Americans have bought more than \$150,000,000,000 worth of Series E and H Savings Bonds.
- ★ From these savings have come new homes, college educations, dream vacations, paid-up hospital bills, more satisfying retirements.

- ★ Americans still own almost \$50 billion in Savings Bonds... \$50 billion worth of personal security... security from want... from fear... from loss of independence.
- ★ \$50 billion worth of security from loss of freedom in today's troubled world.
- ★ Join the greatest thrift program in the world. For your future and your family's future. And your country's future.

Buy U. S. Savings Bonds

The U. S. Government does not pay for this advertisement. It is presented as a public service in cooperation with the Treasury Department and The Advertising Council.

Chapter 10

A HISTORY OF THE UMWA

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the tenth monthly article in George Korson's history of the *International Union, United Mine Workers of America*. The *Journal* is publishing the series in honor of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the International Union on January 25, 1890, at Columbus, Ohio. The first article, published on May 1, 1965, told in general of the early history of coal mining in the United States and the terrible need for Union organization of American coal miners. The second dealt with the history of early coal miners' unions leading to the founding of the UMWA. The third dealt specifically with the founding of the UMWA. The fourth dealt with the pioneer organizers of the UMWA. The fifth dealt with the convict labor system and some of the other early struggles. The sixth dealt with the early UMWA struggle to win an eight-hour day in America's coal mines. The seventh dealt with the historic role of the UMWA in the field of legislation. The eighth dealt with the great anthracite strike of 1902. The ninth article dealt with John L. Lewis in the 1920s and early 1930s. This article, No. 10 in the series, continues the story of Lewis in the 1930s when the reorganization of the UMWA in the early days of the New Deal sparked the beginning of the great organizing drives in the nation's mass-production industries.

By George Korson

© George Korson, 1966

*John L. Lewis is our leader,
We shall not be moved
John L. Lewis is our leader,
We shall not be moved.
Just like a tree dat's planted by de water,
We shall not be moved.**

In 1933 a virtual miracle occurred in the fortunes of the *United Mine Workers of America*. One day it was almost out of business as a viable union and the next day it was the fastest growing labor organization in the country. **John L. Lewis** explained the miraculous change in a speech delivered in 1934:



Mr. Korson

the principles laid down in the pending Davis-Kelly Coal Stabilization Bill. The now famous Section 7(a)

of the recovery act was taken directly from the labor provision of that bill."

The section stated for the first time that it was the policy of the U. S. government that labor could organize and bargain collectively through representatives of its own choosing.

Section 7(a), brainchild of the UMWA, was mainly the work of Lewis, *Henry Warrum*, the Union's *General Counsel*, and *W. Jett Lauck*, *UMWA Economist*. After "40 revisions and emasculations" as Lewis described it, labor's Magna Carta was written into the *National Industrial Recovery Act*, and signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on June 16, 1933.

This law, and especially Section 7(a), opened two psychologically significant doors to the UMWA. With characteristic boldness and courage, Lewis quickly took advantage of them. How, was told to the *1934 UMWA International Convention*:

"Coincident with the signing of the act by the President, the United Mine Workers of America conducted a vigorous organizing campaign in all the mining Districts of the United States. Systematic plans were laid out, meetings were addressed by able Field Representatives, and the enrollment of new members took place upon an unprecedented scale. It was easily demonstrated that the mine workers employed in the non-Union areas of the mining industry would enthusiastically join the UMWA if they were privileged to do so. Local Unions were established, local Officers selected and installed, supplies furnished the Local Unions, and in less than 30 days from the signing of the act by the President, the complete organization of the bituminous industry was effectuated. The accomplishment was so rapid and so spectacular that many people, including some officials of the government, refused to concede it as an actuality."

In an enthusiastic greeting to the same Convention, Lewis said:

"This Convention will have Delegates from every coal field in the North American continent, north of the mines of Mexico; they are here from every section of this great land.

'Truly A Great Accomplishment'

"Truly a great accomplishment; Truly marvelous progress! Greater progress, may I say with pardonable pride, than has been made by any other trade union organization in America. A maximum degree of accomplishment under the conditions which prevailed since we last met in biennial Convention.

"The fact that the United Mine Workers of America has made more progress under the policies of the [National] Industrial Recovery Act than has, perhaps, been the case with other basic industries is merely indicative of the fact that, having promoted the legislation, we, perhaps, understood its potentialities and its possibilities to a greater degree than others; we, perhaps, worked longer days and longer nights in carrying the message to our people and encouraging them to join in the great undertaking.

"Be that as it may, the United Mine Workers of America has substantially accomplished the task to which it has been dedicated through the years and attained the goal which it has persistently sought through the 44 years of its history. It has at last succeeded in bringing into the fold of our Union and under the banner of our organization practically all the mine workers on our great North American continent."

The Southern Appalachian region, which had long operated on a non-Union basis, displaced the old Central Competitive Field of Pennsylvania and the Midwest as the largest coal producer in the nation. The Appalachian operators formed a group with which the United Mine Workers of America negotiated the first *Appalachian Agreement* covering about 70 percent of the national tonnage and about 314,000 mine workers. It contained a provision for a \$5 daily wage for mines north of the Ohio River and \$4.60 a day in the South. Under the National Industrial Recovery Act, the Agreement became the basis for a *Code of fair competition* for the

*Song texts used with this article are from George Korson's book, *MINSTRELS OF THE MINE PATCH*, recently reprinted by Folklore Associates, Inc., Hatboro, Pennsylvania.

bituminous coal industry. It was signed in Washington on September 21, 1933. Lewis reported to the 1934 UMWA Convention as follows:

"A schedule of minimum wages for skilled inside labor and for common outside labor was determined by the Code, with the provision that other classifications should maintain their customary differentials above or below these basic rates, and that piece work and tonnage rates of pay should maintain their customary relationship to the basic minimum rates provided in the Code for day labor. These wages represent an increase in various Districts of from 20 to 300 percent in the wages of mine workers and will add annually many millions of dollars to the purchasing power of the families of our membership.

"The wage structure of the bituminous coal industry, with its employe classification and especially with District and Local differentials, made it necessary for the Code to fix certain basic minimum rates and refer to the various Districts the working out of a completed agreement."

As remarkable as the wage rates were the social gains and improvements in working conditions which the UMWA won. The Union won the first industry-wide eight-hour day and the right of workers to select their own checkweighman to inspect the weighing of the coal at the tippie. Company scrip, or token money, was banned. Miners no longer had to live in a company house or trade in a company store as a condition of employment. Boys were required to be at least 16 years of age to be employed about a coal mine, and at least 17 years to work in any hazardous occupation inside a mine. All contracts with the Appalachian operators carried a provision for settling grievances arising under the contract.

John L. Lewis, *Vice President Philip Murray*, and *Secretary Treasurer Thomas Kennedy* had not only fought for the passage of the Recovery Act, but afterwards became active in its administration.

Lewis Reviews NRA Accomplishments

In an address before the American Academy of Political and Social Science in Philadelphia on January 6, 1934, Lewis reviewed *National Recovery Administration* accomplishments.

"Organized labor is a single unit in its approval of the objectives of the National Industrial Recovery Act," said Lewis. "Labor may differ with the National Recovery Administration in its interpretations and policies, but as to the Act itself, the support of organized labor, in a fundamental sense, is without reservation. From the standpoint of human welfare and economic freedom, we are convinced that there has been no legal instrument comparable with it since President Lincoln's Proclamation of 70 years ago."

"On the other hand, the practical application of the Law up to the present time has, in the opinion of organized labor, been too restricted and too lacking in uniformity and comprehensiveness. Hours of labor have not been sufficiently reduced; employes exempted from the provisions of industry codes have been numerically excessive; price and production controls have been as far as possible, ignored; the full cooperation of labor, as contemplated by the Act, has been prevented by placing labor on the defensive in the formulation of Codes and also by forcing labor to use its economic strength, or the strike, in order to secure the mandatory guarantee of Section 7(a) of the Act.

"The representatives of organized labor realize fully that Section 7(a) of the Recovery Act does not impose any direct obligation on the part of the government to organize industrial workers. While we recognize the difficulties of this situation from the standpoint of the NRA, we do believe that the present procedure, which permits trade associations (employers) to submit the labor provisions of a Code, places labor not in a cooperative but in a defensive position in connection with the consideration of these labor provisions. The labor provisions under these conditions become a matter of controversy and tradition through the medium of a deputy administrator.

"This being the fundamental situation, it seems to me that the NRA should put aside temporizing measures, and fearlessly apply a constructive plan for permanent economic recovery. I say this because I sincerely believe that the NRA is the only agency of the New Deal which can save us at this time. All necessary powers are lodged in the Act. All that is required for the deliverance from the existing economic tragedy and the attainment of real economic recovery is for the NRA to use boldly the powers which it possesses."

After the passage of the NIRA some coal mining corporations hastily formed company unions which were called "brotherhoods." To attract employes to their meetings, they staged entertainments, and served ice cream, cake and popsicles. This led to the use of the term "popsicle man" to denote miners who attended brotherhood meetings.

Of the comparatively few miners who refused to join the UMWA after 1933, it was said that they tasted the spices of Araby yet never felt the scorching sun which brought them forth; in other words, they enjoyed the benefits of unionism without contributing to its support. No strike had a chance of success unless supported by a majority of the workers affected. To create a community of interest and to inform public opinion, strikers held mass meetings where they listened to their local leaders, exchanged information and opinions, and sang miners' songs.

Particularly rhythmic and stirring were the songs striking miners sang and marched to. In the early days pickets made their way on foot; pickets, their wives and children, took part in interminable processions up and down the mountain roads in an effort to persuade defectors. Few could resist the band music and the marching songs. Processions grew larger and larger. Sometimes marches lasted into the evening. Such physical exertion required stirring music to give a lift to the feet and spirit. What a moving spectacle—several thousand untrained voices singing among the mountains! Their contagious spirit swept many a wavering mine worker from the sidelines into the Union ranks.

Some miners who had joined the Union during the initial organizing drive that followed passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act later yielded to the blandishments of management and dropped out. They lived to regret their defection, as told in a song, "*John L. Lewis Blues*." Following is a verse and the refrain:

*Union, take me back, got the John L. Lewis blues,
Please now take me back, I need a new hat and shoes,
The operators told me if I'd listen to them
I'd always be eaten' fried eggs and ham.*

Union, take me back, got the John L. Lewis blues.

The great majority of the miners who remained loyal to the organization, idealized their Union, as reflected in their Union songs. After experiencing the trials and harassments of a feudal-industrial hegemony, they thought of the Union as a little bit of heaven. The Union loomed as tomorrow's compensation for today's suffering; a reward for faith in the ultimate triumph of right over the operators' might. The feeling is well expressed in a Negro miners' song of which the following is the chorus:

*I can tell de world 'bout dis,
I can tell de nation I bin blessed,
Tell 'em what John Lewis has done,
Tell 'em dat de Union has come,
An' it brought joy, great joy, unto my soul.*

It is interesting to observe that so many of the topical Union songs in the Appalachian region were composed by Negroes. The term "union" was a traditional part of their lingo, and so offered a convenient bridge on which to cross from spirituals and the blues to mining ballads. For example, in a church a Negro Union Organizer could sing the following lines from a spiritual in the presence of a mine boss without arousing suspicion:

*Get in the union, Jesus is a-listenin',
Get in the union, Jesus die.
Well, won't you get in the union,
Jesus is a-listenin', Jesus die.*

Late in April, 1934, Lewis appeared before the Senate Committee on Education and Labor in support of a bill introduced by Sen. Robert F. Wagner of New York to strengthen the labor provisions in the NIRA. While the bill did not become law, yet it put teeth into the labor provisions written into the Wagner Labor Relations Act which was passed in 1935 after the Supreme Court had declared the NRA unconstitutional. "The basic principles of Senator Wagner's bill," said Lewis, "have been recognized by Congress in at least two statutory enactments, namely, the Norris-La Guardia Act and the National Recovery Act." Lewis added:

"This bill undertakes to put in precise form certain of these rights and privileges in a manner that will protect the purpose of the bill and prevent workers from being denied in their application the privileges accorded by the enactment of the measure. The right of organization and of collective bargaining

(Continued on Page 8)

is now understood by all industrial workers, but the continual denial of that right and its evasions by company unions is creating unrest and will breed revolt among the workers in industry, apart from any question of wages.

"The bill introduced by Senator Wagner does not presume to make the government a party to the formation of unions of the workers; but it does undertake to protect the workers in the formation of such unions if they elect to take that action."

When the NRA had been in operation for some 14 months without satisfactory results as far as saving the coal industry was concerned, John L. Lewis decided that the situation required two courses of action, one to stabilize the coal industry, and the other to organize the unorganized in mass production industries. The former called for Congressional help. While before the House Labor Committee in support of the Guffey-Snyder Coal Bill, Lewis cited some startling facts associated with the coal industry and the men who dug the coal underneath the ground.

"I speak not for the dollars invested," the labor leader said.

"I speak not for the inanimate tons of coal; I speak for the human beings who go down into these coal mines and serve the public interest by getting the coal.

"This industry is a hazardous industry, the most hazardous of any industry of record. The Department of Labor reports that from 1896 to 1933 inclusive, accidental deaths to all coal miners of the country numbered 79,270—a yearly average of 2,085. In 37 years this industry killed 79,270 of my people. The number of injuries during that same period may be conservatively computed by using the factor of 14 and multiplying the fatal accidents by 14. It amounts to 1,109,780 men that were injured during that period.

"There are variations in the extent of those injuries. Some of them merely had their hands injured, their fingers mashed, or lost fingers, and others had their eyes shot out. Others had all the flesh burned from their skulls, and forever afterwards had to carry around grotesque masks to face other men. Others had their backs broken. Some lost legs, some lost arms, some were paralyzed, some sustained minor injuries of a minor nature. They had to take their chances as to what the character of their injuries might be.

"The men I represent during this 37-year period have carried out of these mines, on stretchers, 79,000 dead men. Some of them were mashed into a pulp, others had their flesh so cooked by explosions that the flesh cleaved from the bone when they were picked up, and they were carried up the cinder paths of these mining communities on stretchers and into the homes of the lamenting widows and weeping children.

No Greater Scene Of Human Agony

"Were the Congressmen ever in a mining community where all the men in the community were killed in a mine explosion? I do not know of any greater scene of human agony than to be in a community where such a thing as that occurs. Just a couple Christmases ago, on Christmas Eve, I went to the scene of an explosion in Illinois that killed all the men in the mine. It was not a large mine, but an ancient, old, high-cost, obsolete, uneconomical mine to the operator, and the men were trying vainly to continue in operation against competition that they could not meet. They had no timber in it; they had no air in it; they had gas in it; and the inevitable happened—and it blew up. And for a Christmas Eve gift, the families of that community gathered around the pithead, waiting for their dead to be brought out of the mine.

"The mine workers want this industry operated upon a modern basis that at least comprehends some degree of humanity. I wonder who killed these people of mine for 37 years? Who manages these mines? Talk about the rights of management, the inherent right to do as they please. Why, yes, with their own dollars; yes, with their own tongues. But I protest to the Congress of the United States against their right to do this with the lives of my people."

The Guffey-Snyder Bill passed the Congress and became a law with the signature of President Roosevelt. It established a fair trade code for the bituminous coal industry. Its principal aim was to put an end to cut-throat competition within the industry. It

also had a section patterned after Section 7(a) protecting labor's right to organize and bargain with management.

Speaking at the 1936 UMWA Convention, Lewis said:

"The enactment of the Guffey-Snyder Law by the Congress was the achievement of a dream on the part of the men in the mines, and the enactment of this great measure was the first constructive act in history enacted by a government in the interests of its people for the alleviation of depression, the economic distress and the hopeless, tragic condition of the miners in this benighted coal industry."

Delegates to the 1936 UMWA Convention heard from the Union's three International Officers about the passage of another important piece of legislation, the National Labor Relations (Wagner) Act. This act provided an opportunity for labor in industries engaged in interstate commerce to organize free of employer domination; outlawed company unions; and guaranteed the right of honest collective bargaining. A National Labor Relations Board was established for the enforcement of these fundamental rights.

This Wagner Act strengthened the provisions of Section 7(a). And its enactment, together with that of the Guffey Act, provided adequate insurance against the rulings of the Supreme Court, which on May 27, 1935, declared the National Industrial Recovery Act unconstitutional.

A recurrent theme with John L. Lewis in the '30s was the urgent need to organize workers in the mass production industries into industrial unions. Addressing the 1936 UMWA Convention, Lewis had this to say on this point:

95% Signed Up In The Union

"The records of the United Mine Workers of America show that 95 per cent of all workers in the anthracite and bituminous coal industries are now members of our Union.

"Our membership must keep in mind the dangers that constantly beset the United Mine Workers of America, and the trade union movement as a whole, while other great major industries remain unorganized. There can be no feeling of permanent security for trade unions in our country so long as the major portion of the workers of the nation remain unorganized.

"The safety of our nation and the welfare of its people are dependent upon the establishment of true industrial democracy. The country cannot achieve the solution of its economic problems until this has been accomplished. Industrialists are not going to rehire the 11 million unemployed. Their chief interest is the profit motive. Ample opportunity has been given them during the period of depression to do so. Their obvious interest is mass production through increased use of machinery, the lowering of taxes and the general condemnation of the government's plan to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and shelter the poor.

"Production has reached 95 per cent of the 1923-1925 level, and yet these 11 million people remain unemployed. Profits have increased, while wages are kept at exceedingly low levels.

"In the absence of any relief from the burdens of unemployment, it seems reasonable that the only real remedy for this deplorable state of affairs lies in complete industrial democracy. Unionism of the workers will bring about economic reform. Collective bargaining upon a basis of equality will solve unemployment. It will give human beings an opportunity to control the machine. It will exact an equitable share of the tremendous profits derived by industries through the increased use of mechanical devices. Organization will assist amply in the solution of our political as well as our economic problems."

When John L. Lewis's voice was raised for the organization of the workers in the mass production industries there were some who asked why he had not been heard from earlier. His answer was that he had to win victory in the coal industry before he was strong enough to offer assistance and extend the hand of fellowship to "brother" workers in the unorganized industries. Once he felt secure he offered money, leadership, and field representatives without stint. Lewis was candid enough to say that this help was not altogether altruistic. There was a good bit of enlightened self-interest in it. The UMWA realized that its position would be stronger if collective bargaining and industrial democracy could be established all over the United States.

(To be continued)

Chapter 11

A HISTORY OF THE UMWA

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the eleventh monthly article in George Korson's history of the *International Union, United Mine Workers of America*. The *Journal* is publishing the series in honor of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the International Union on January 25, 1890, at Columbus, Ohio. The first article, published on May 1, 1965, told in general of the early history of coal mining in the United States and the terrible need for Union organization of American coal miners. The second dealt with the history of early coal miners' unions leading to the founding of the UMWA. The third dealt specifically with the founding of the UMWA. The fourth dealt with the pioneer organizers of the UMWA. The fifth dealt with the convict labor system and some of the other early struggles. The sixth dealt with the early UMWA struggle to win an eight-hour day in America's coal mines. The seventh dealt with the historic role of the UMWA in the field of legislation. The eighth dealt with the great anthracite strike of 1902. The ninth article dealt with John L. Lewis in the 1920s and early 1930s. The tenth dealt with the story of Lewis in the 1930s when the reorganization of the UMWA in the early days of the New Deal sparked the beginning of the great organizing drives in the nation's mass-production industries. This article, No. 11 in the series, deals with the establishment of the Committee for Industrial Organization and the great organizing drive in the nation's basic steel industry.

By George Korson

© George Korson, 1966

Organize the unorganized!

This was the battle cry in the 1930s. But before **John L. Lewis** could take on the powerful mass production industries like Big Steel, General Motors, and others he had to overcome the negative attitude of the American Federation of Labor toward industrial-type unions. By instinct and experience he was sure that the right way to organize the unorganized in these industries was in industrial unions (one union to an industry) like his own *United Mine Workers of America*.



Mr. Korson

Lewis frequently cited the failure of the 1919 steel strike as an example of what happens to an attempt to organize industrial workers by craft unions rather than as monolithic organizations to which all workers belonged. He knew about the 1919 steel strike from personal observation and experience. The center of that strike was in Chicago. As a representative of the American Federation of Labor he was assigned there by **Samuel Gompers**, *AFL President*, to give whatever assistance he could to the strikers. But when he arrived on the scene he found many craft unions competing against one another. Disunion and confusion made the strikers easy marks for the companies' strikebreaking tactics. If any work-

ers desperately needed an effective industrial union it was these oppressed, overworked and terribly underpaid steel workers.

Not until he was elected *President* of the United Mine Workers of America in 1920 did Lewis realize fully how many mine workers were employed in the so-called captive mines owned and operated by the steel companies. In Harlan County, Ky., for instance, the United States Steel Corporation owned a big coal mine at Lynch from where it furnished anti-union leadership. In the negotiations leading to the approval of the Code of Fair Competition for the bituminous industry, the various steel companies operating coal mines refrained from associating themselves with the commercial operators of the coal industry. They hoped thereby to continue immune from the coal code, and at the same time be free from the code for the iron and steel industry. However, the National Recovery Administration (NRA) ruled that captive mines came under the provisions of the NRA to the same degree as the commercial operations. Some of the steel company subsidiaries strongly opposed their miners becoming members of the United Mine Workers of America. The UMWA insisted that the captive mines be brought under the same agreement as that covering the commercial operations in the districts where they were located. Of course, what the companies were really afraid of was unionism spreading to their steel workers.

The United Mine Workers of America sent a Delegation, headed by Lewis, to the *1934 American Federation of Labor Convention* in San Francisco pledged to vote for a resolution favoring industrial unionism. For six days and as many nights the Committee on Resolutions wrestled with this problem. It finally came up with a compromise between the two extreme viewpoints. The Committee reported to the Convention for the issuance of charters in mass production industries without impairing craft unions already established in other industries. The Convention, adopting the Committee's report, gave express direction to the *Executive Council* of the American Federation of Labor to issue that kind of charter in at least three industries.

Three months after the Convention, a meeting of the enlarged Executive Council was held. Instead of implementing the resolution, the Council developed a difference in interpreting the 1934 Convention resolution as to the type, character and scope of the charters and jurisdictions which should be granted workers in these industries. There were those who held that under no circumstances should charters be issued that in any way deprived certain organizations of the right to come into these industries for the purpose of signing up new members. After considerable debate this idea prevailed.

"Well, a year ago at San Francisco," said John L. Lewis, "I was a year younger and naturally I had more faith in the Executive Council. I was beguiled into believing that an enlarged Executive Council would honestly interpret and administer this policy—the policy we talked about for six days in committee, the policy of issuing charters for industrial unions in the mass production industries. But surely *Delegate (Matthew) Woll* would not hold it against me that I was so trusting at that time. I know better now. At San Francisco they seduced me with fair words. Now, of course, having learned that I was seduced, I am enraged and I am ready to rend my seducers limb from limb, including Delegate Woll. In that sense, of course, I speak figuratively.

"At San Francisco, as I say, I was younger and more gullible, but I put in some time in the past year attending some meetings of the Executive Council. I am convinced that the Executive Council is not going to issue any charters for industrial unions in any industry."

In his appeal to the American Federation of Labor convention to change its stand to favor organization by industrial unions, John L. Lewis said:

"Then, as now, practically every attempt to organize those workers broke upon the same rock that it breaks upon today

—the rock of utter futility, the lack of reasonableness in a policy that failed to take into consideration the dreams and requirements of the workers themselves, and failed to take into consideration the recognized power of the adversaries of labor to destroy these feeble organizations in the great modern industries, set up in the form of federal labor unions or craft organizations functioning in a limited sphere.

"For twenty-five years or more, the American Federation of Labor has been following this precise policy, and surely in the absence of any other understanding of the question, a record of 25 years of constant unbroken failure should be convincing to those who actually have a desire to increase the prestige of our great labor movement by expanding its membership to permit it to occupy its natural place in the sun. . . .

"The organization I represent has an interest in this question. Our people work in a great base industry, basic in its service to the American people and the economic and commercial processes of the nation. They struggle against great odds and against great influence, and that intensity of their struggle and the weight of their burden is greatly increased by reason of the fact that the AFL has not organized the steel industry and a few industries similarly situated.

"We are anxious to have collective bargaining established in the steel industry, and our interest in that is, to that degree, selfish because our people know that if the workers were organized in the steel industry and collective bargaining there were an actuality, it would remove the incentive of the great captains of the steel industry to destroy and punish and harass our people who work in the captive coal mines throughout this country owned by the steel industry. . . .

"Why not make a contribution toward the well-being of those who are not fortunate enough to be members of your organization? The United Mine Workers of America wants to make a contribution and wants to do no man and no union ill. We are willing to make a contribution in men and money to the success of a policy of organizing these industries upon an industrial basis. We are willing to take our young men and send them into these industries to organize them. We have demonstrated that before and we are demonstrating it again. We want to work in cooperation with you, if you can be led to cooperate. If you hold aloof merely because you suspect the intentions of those who promote this policy to the convention, then I can only say that you do yourselves more of an injustice than you do those of whom you think ill.

"Now prepare yourselves by making a contribution to your less fortunate brethren; heed this cry from Macedonia that comes from the hearts of men: *Organize the unorganized!*"

This turned out to be the last address that John L. Lewis was to direct at the American Federation of Labor on the subject of industrial unionism. That same evening he held a meeting with the presidents of seven other unions who felt as he did about industrial unions, and formed a "*Committee for Industrial Organization.*"

The following presidents of eight national and international unions formed the original CIO: *John L. Lewis, United Mine Workers of America; Charles P. Howard, International Typographical Union; Sidney Hillman, Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America; David Dubinsky, International Ladies Garment Workers Union; Thomas F. McMahon, United Textile Workers of America; Harvey C. Fremming, Oil Field, Gas Well and Refinery Workers of America; Max Zaritsky, Cap and Millinery Department, United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers International Union; Thomas H. Brown, International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers.*

John L. Lewis was elected chairman of this Committee and Charles P. Howard, head of the ITU, was chosen secretary. *John Brophy* was later appointed Director to supervise the committee's activities. The CIO established headquarters in Washington, D. C.

Soon after Lewis received a letter from *William Green*, president of the American Federation of Labor, in which Green charged that the CIO was a dual organization which would generate "bitterness and strife." Prior to his election to the presidency of the AFL, Green had been for many years *Secretary-Treasurer* of the United Mine Workers of America. He was a coal miner by trade, yet on the question of industrial unionism at this time he sided with the American Federation of Labor against his own Union, the UMWA. Green fell out of favor with the rank and file coal miners as indicated by the following verse of a miner's song:

*Roll along, united miners,
Roll along, roll along,
To the tune of our organizing song,
For our union it is fine
Old Bill Green we will outshine
Roll along, united miners, roll along.*

To Green's "bitterness and strife" letter, John L. Lewis sent the following reply:

"My Dear Green:

"Mr. Charles P. Howard, secretary of the Committee for Industrial Organization, and other members of the Committee have replied categorically and conclusively to the statements contained in your public letter. I associate myself with their replies.

"Now of other things: Your official burdens are great; I would not increase them. I do not covet your office; in proof, I submit the record of years of support of your personal and official fortunes. It is bruited about, however, that your private sympathies and individual inclinations lie with the group espousing the industrial type of organization, while your official actions and public utterances will be in support of their adversaries. Such a policy is vulnerable to criticism and will hardly suffice to protect you against attacks from those who may feel rightfully that more is due them than perfunctory support.

"Why not return to your father's house? You will be welcome.

(Continued on Page 16)



CIO LEADERS—This November 9, 1936, picture shows founders of the Committee for Industrial Organization. Seated, from left, are: M. F. Tighe, Steelworkers; John L. Lewis, UMWA; Charles P. Howard, Printers. Standing, from left are: Sherman Dalrymple, Rubber Workers; Phillip Murray, UMWA; Max Zaritsky, Hat Workers; Sidney Hillman, Clothing Workers; Thomas McMahon, Textile Workers; David Dubinsky, Ladies' Garment Workers.

A History Of The UMWA

(Continued from Page 15)

If you care to disassociate yourself from your present position, the Committee for Industrial Organization will be happy to make you its chairman in my stead. The honorarium will be equal to that you now receive. The position would be as permanent as the one you now occupy. You would have the satisfaction of supporting a cause in which you believe inherently, and of contributing your fine abilities to the achievement of an enlarged opportunity for the nation's workers.

Sincerely yours,
(Signed) John L. Lewis."

William Green declined this tempting offer. He appeared before the UMWA *Convention* held in Constitution Hall, Washington in January, 1936. What happened there was extraordinary, according to the *United Mine Workers Journal*:

"President Green addressed the Convention for nearly two hours in an endeavor to induce the *Delegates* to reverse the policy they had previously adopted. He should have known better. He should have known, and no doubt he did know, that he would fail. He used everything he had—voice, oratory, argument and gesture. He pleaded, cajoled, intimidated and practically threatened the Convention in his effort to carry his point. He even gave a history of his life. But it all got him nowhere. He was 'booed' two or three times, but President Lewis stopped the outburst. When it was all over, Green stood a badly defeated and beaten man, and his organization, the AFL, had gone down a little bit further in the estimation of the 1,700 delegates and the hundreds of spectators who filled Constitution Hall. Surely, it was a humiliating experience for the President of the Federation.

"But the climax of the drama came at the conclusion of Green's speech. No sooner had Green said 'Thank you,' to the convention than President John L. Lewis arose on the stage amid a great demonstration by the delegates standing in their places. They cheered and applauded President Lewis until the windows rattled. When quiet had been restored, President Lewis spoke slowly, deliberately, but with intense earnestness. He said:

"The President of the United Mine Workers of America will permit the Delegates to the *Thirty-fourth Constitutional Convention* of this Organization to render their answer to President Green of the AFL. Let me call upon all delegates in this Convention who have changed their minds on this issue on account of the address of President Green to rise to their feet."

'The Chair Sees Two Delegates'

"The chair sees two delegates."

"Again, the question recurs upon the fiat of the Executive Council of the AFL, read to this Convention as an ultimatum by President Green. It demands that the President of the United Mine Workers of America, with his associates on the Committee for Industrial Organization, like quarry slaves at night, scourged to their dungeon, dissolve, disband, cease and desist with reference to the CIO. Let those Delegates of this Thirty-fourth Constitutional Convention who believe that the President of the United Mine Workers of America should comply with that request rise to their feet."

"The chair sees one delegate arise."

"Again, let those Delegates of this Convention who believe that the policies enunciated by this Convention should be carried out by the President of their Organization and his associate officers rise to their feet."

("The delegates arose and applauded.")

"President Green, you have received the answer of the United Mine Workers of America to your ultimatum. It is not for the President of the United Mine Workers of America to amplify with mere words an expression of a principle and a conviction so deepseated, so pronounced, and so traditional as exists with reference to this question."

"You come as an ambassador from another organization to the United Mine Workers of America. I hope, sir, that you have been treated with all the courtesies and honors due an ambassador, but you have and you may carry back to your organization the answer of the United Mine Workers of America that has just been given by this convention."

"Never before in any convention of the United Mine Workers of America did anyone witness a scene like this one. Every man in the house was on his feet, clapping hands, cheering and through the medium of noise giving evidence of the depth of his enthusiastic approval of President Lewis' words. In the deep seriousness of the moment, President Lewis, his jaws set and his face a picture of determination and finality, faced the frenzied enthusiasm of the vast crowd which was thus pledging the support of more than half a million coal miners to their leader. Green, red of face and almost voiceless after his long speech, sat there with his gaze fixed upon the cheering throng. What was passing through his mind can only be surmised. After several minutes of the demonstration, the crowd became quiet, and Green left the hall, and the routine work of the Convention was resumed. But no one who was fortunate enough to be present at that historic occasion will ever forget the scene and its significance."

Despite rebuffs, the CIO still wanted to work within the framework of the American Federation of Labor, but the AFL made this impossible by its tactics against the CIO. During 1936 the AFL kept ordering the CIO to disband, and finally decided to bring to trial the unions making up the CIO. The members of the Executive Council who voted for a trial represented a total membership of 882,700 as against a CIO membership of more than a million members. It was a case of a minority suspending a majority. When Lewis heard about this action he described it as "an act of incredible and crass stupidity, an act dictated by personal selfishness and frantic fear." A week after the CIO had been formed, John L. Lewis made a nationwide radio address in which he defined the aims and hopes of the CIO:

"The millions of workers in our mass production industries have a right to membership in effective labor organizations and to the enjoyment of industrial freedom. They are entitled to a place in the American economic sunlight. If the labor movement and American democracy are to endure, these workers should have the opportunity to support families under conditions of health, decency, and comfort, to own their own home, to educate their children, and possess sufficient leisure to take part in wholesome social and political activities. How much more security we would have in this country if we had a virile labor movement that represented, not merely a cross-section of skilled workers, but the men who work with their hands in our great industries, regardless of their trade and calling. "It is for the purpose of enabling them to acquire and enjoy these rights, that the eight international unions of the AFL, including the United Mine Workers of America, have formed the CIO."

The Big Drive Gets Underway

Soon after this nationwide radio address, the massive organizing campaign got under way. Rubber workers in Akron, Ohio, were among the first to stage a sit-down in a strike against the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. for union recognition in January, 1936, a strike they won on March 22. The United Automobile Workers joined the CIO in April bringing in a membership of 35 thousand.

The most difficult organization task was Big Steel which the CIO launched in June, 1936 with an appropriation of \$500,000. Some 200 organizers, most of them coal miners, were given this most difficult assignment. Among the leading organizers were *Philip Murray*, UMWA Vice President, who became *Chairman of the Steelworkers' Organizing Committee*, with his assistant, *David J. McDonald* as *Secretary-Treasurer*. *Clinton Golden* was assigned to the Pittsburgh area and UMWA's *Van A. Bittner* to Chicago; *John Owens* (now *UMWA International Secretary-Treasurer*) took charge of Ohio, and *William Mitch* (*UMWA District 20 International Executive Board member*) of Alabama.

On July 6, 1936, John L. Lewis announced the campaign to organize the steel industry over a nationwide radio broadcast.

"I salute the hosts of labor who listen. I greet my fellow Americans. I salute the members of my own Union as they listen tonight in every mining community on this continent. To them, whose servant I am, I express my pride in their courage and loyalty. They are the household troops of the great movement for industrial democracy and from their collective sentiment and crystallized power I derive my strength.

"In their daily calling the mine workers toil with the spectre of death ever at their side, and the women of the mining camps share their Spartan fortitude. Enduring hardship, injured to danger, contemptuous of death, breathing the air of free-

dom—is there anyone who believes that the men of the mines will flinch in the face of battle for industrial democracy which now impends in America?

“The American Iron and Steel Institute last week published a full-page advertisement in 375 newspapers, at an estimated cost of one-half million dollars. Its purpose was to justify the outmoded labor policy of the Institute and to announce the determination of the steel corporations to oppose the campaign now in progress for the organization of the workers in the iron and steel industry. That statement is sinister in its implications. It is designed to be terrifying to the minds of those who fail to accept the theory that the financial interests behind the steel corporations shall be regarded as the omnipotent overlords of industrial America. That statement amounts to a declaration of industrial and civil war.

“It contravenes the law! It pledges the vast resources of the industry against the right of the workers to engage in self-organization or modern collective bargaining.

“The American Iron and Steel Institute boasts that it includes 95 percent of the steel production of the country and represents an associated corporate investment of \$5 billion. This gigantic financial and industrial combination announces that its members are ready to employ their resources to the full to prevent the independent organization of their employees. It contravenes the law.

“The industry has constantly sought to give the impression that it pays exceptionally high wages, and so far-reaching and efficient are its means of publicity that this idea is widely accepted.

“Actually, there is no basis for this belief. When comparisons are made between the earnings of workers in the steel industry and the earnings of workers in other industries of a comparable character, the standing of the steel industry is at best no more than mediocre and at worst no less than disgraceful.

“Our Committee would bring to the steelworkers economic and political freedom; a living wage to those lowest in the scale of occupations sufficient for the support of the worker and his family in health and modest comfort, and sufficient to enable him to send his children to school, to own a home and accessories, to provide against sickness, death, and the ordinary contingencies of life; in other words, a wage sufficient for him to live as an independent American citizen, with hope and assurance in the future for himself and his family. Above this basic wage, our Committee believes that differentials should be paid to other workers according to skill, training, hazard, and responsibility.

“There is but one other fundamental motive which the CIO has for unionizing the steel industry. It is simple and direct. It is to protect the members of our own organizations. We know, although we are now free men and women, that so long as millions of other industrial workers are without economic and political freedom, a condition exists which is a menace to our freedom.

“Organized labor in America accepts the challenge of the omnipotent overlords of steel to fight for the prize of economic freedom and industrial democracy.”



SAFETY TALK — UMW Safety Director Charles Ferguson (center) confers with International President W. A. Boyle (right) at the recent National Policy Committee meeting. Looking on at left is International Secretary-Treasurer John Owens. To the right rear of Ferguson is William Turnblazer, District 19 President.

How To Buy

The March Buying Calendar; And Some Advice On Your Income Tax

By Sidney Margolis

Consumer Writer for the Journal

With living costs at an all-time record high, moderate-income families need to watch especially three fast-rising expenses: food and shoe prices, and interest rates.

Food prices have gotten really drastic. Meats have reached the highest levels in history, with many cuts 20-25 percent above a year ago.

Shoe manufacturers this year have raised many prices 50 cents to \$1, blaming the boosts on higher prices of hides. Another increase is expected this spring. In actual fact, the rise in hide prices does not justify the boost in retail prices. Untanned hides comprise only about 5 percent of the retail price of a pair of shoes, or about 50 cents on a \$10 pair. Even the 40 percent rise in hide prices this past year means manufacturers' true costs have gone up only about 20 cents a pair.

Rising interest rates already have affected loans, with many lenders raising rates on both personal and car loans one-half of 1 percent, or 50 cents per \$100 of debt. This is a time to avoid taking on new loans and installment debts, and if you must, put down the most you can, and pay back as soon as you can. Credit union and bank rates, usually \$4.50 to \$6.50 per \$100, or true annual rates of approximately 9 to 12 percent, still are lower than finance company or store credit charges, such as the 1½ percent a month, or 18 percent a year, on revolving credit accounts.

The increase of one-fourth of 1 percent in the FHA mortgage rate recently announced by the Federal Housing Administration is another blow to families who may be seeking mortgages. The jump from 5½ to 6 percent means a family actually would pay \$864 more in interest on a \$15,000 mortgage for 30 years.

The FHA rate increase especially affects buyers of lower-price houses. Ironically, the new FHA 6 percent rate (including one-half of 1 percent for mortgage insurance guaranteeing lenders against loss), now is higher than the average rate on conventional (non-FHA) mortgages in many areas. The conventional mortgages usually do require a large down payment.

This means mortgage-seekers need to shop more widely among local lenders, and try to make larger down payments, to beat back the rather premature FHA increase. Do your mortgage shopping even before you settle on the house. You see the difference in your total cost that even a saving of one-fourth of 1 percent can make.

If you can't make a substantial down payment now, try to get a favorable "right to prepay" clause in your mortgage. This will permit you to reduce your mortgage by making additional payments without a severe penalty. For example, some lenders permit prepayment of any amount after one year, with no penalty charge. Others may permit pre-payment of up to 10 percent of the mortgage in one year without penalty, which is still a fairly favorable provision.

If you put down a large down payment you can protect yourself in case you need to retrieve some of that money later, by getting an "open end" clause in your mortgage contract. This permits you to reborrow on your mortgage at the rate then prevailing.

The rise in shoe prices hits moderate-income families especially hard since shoes are usually their largest clothing cost, often taking 20 percent of the family's clothing budget.

Children's shoes are a special concern. Parents sometimes pay as much for kids' shoes as their own.

As well as construction, proper fit is an important factor in determining how much wear you get from shoes. In fact, while cheaply-made shoes should be avoided, the most expensive shoes may not be the best buy for children either. They may wear so well that parents neglect to check the fit. Children's shoes should be checked for fit four times a year, not merely twice, as many families do.

But beware shoddy quality in promotionally-priced shoes this year. The boost in U. S. manufacturers' prices is encouraging a flood of imported shoes, many of dubious quality.

Price increases have been especially sharp on men's shoes.

In comparing values, look for:

(Continued on Page 18)

Chapter 12

A HISTORY OF THE UMWA

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the twelfth monthly article in George Korson's history of the *International Union, United Mine Workers of America*. The *Journal* is publishing the series in honor of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the International Union on January 25, 1890, at Columbus, Ohio. The first article, published on May 1, 1965, told in general of the early history of coal mining in the United States and the terrible need for Union organization of American coal miners. The second dealt with the history of early coal miners' unions leading to the founding of the UMWA. The third dealt specifically with the founding of the UMWA. The fourth dealt with the pioneer organizers of the UMWA. The fifth dealt with the convict labor system and some of the other early struggles. The sixth dealt with the early UMWA struggle to win an eight-hour day in America's coal mines. The seventh dealt with the historic role of the UMWA in the field of legislation. The eighth dealt with the great anthracite strike of 1902. The ninth article dealt with John L. Lewis in the 1920s and early 1930s. The tenth dealt with the story of Lewis in the 1930s when the reorganization of the UMWA in the early days of the New Deal sparked the beginning of the great organizing drives in the nation's mass-production industries. The eleventh dealt with the establishment of the Committee for Industrial Organization and the great organizing drive in the nation's basic steel industry. This article, No. 12 in the series, deals with the signing of the first labor-management agreements in the steel and automobile industries and Lewis' continuing work to better the lot of his own coal miners in the UMWA.

By George Korson

© George Korson, 1966

"If you stop the *United Mine Workers*, you stop the *CIO*." This was the watchword of the nation's industrialists in the latter 1930s. It proved, if proof were needed, that **John L. Lewis** and his coal miners were the backbone of the new labor movement.



Mr. Korson

Coal miners are a breed apart. It probably explains why they were able to lead the Committee for Industrial Organization so well for so long. The nature of their occupation is, in itself, a battle for survival, a constant battle for life and production. When coal miners emerge from the pits they may battle others, each other and especially the "bosses." This is their history. They are doing what comes naturally to them because of the type of men they are and the kind of industry they work in.

The CIO was born when John L. Lewis decided that it was time to organize the unorganized. He picked the right time to accomplish his purpose. As always, his timing was superb. Working people who had lost everything in the Great Depression of the early 1930s were desperately yearning for a leader to bring them out of the wilderness. They wanted an end to unemployment and starvation. No more pushing around for them!

It was quite obvious to them that the corporation bosses would not raise wages, cut hours, and improve working conditions without a struggle. They had no intention of sharing profits with the American working people. Quite the contrary. All signs pointed to their keeping wages down, and squeezing every ounce of work out of their employes. The benefits of mass production all were going to executives and other stockholders rather than being shared with working people and the public. John L. Lewis was aware of the widespread unrest. If there was no social conscience in the corporate setup, the men and women who actually produced the goods and services must join into unions to wrest from the big corporations what they felt rightfully belonged to them.

The spectacular sit-down strikes of 1936 and 1937, especially those in the automobile factories, were the result of such "employer trouble." "The sit-down strike," John L. Lewis said, "is the fruit of mismanagement and bad policy toward labor. Employers who tyrannize over employes with the aid of labor spies, company guards, and the threat of discharge, need not be surprised if their production lines are suddenly halted."

Lewis Comments On GM Policy

Again, John L. Lewis:

"Mr. Alfred P. Sloan, Jr., president of General Motors Corporation, in his published year-end (1936) summary, refers to the possibilities of industrial strife in industry. Is it possible that Mr. Sloan is predicting continued hostility on the part of his corporation towards the demands of its employes for fair consideration? The giant General Motors Corporation is at present pursuing the dangerous course of refusing to answer the request of the United Automobile Workers for a national conference for collective bargaining purposes. The union has repeatedly requested such a conference, but was told by a vice president that any grievances should be taken up with plant managers or general managers in the various localities. It is absurd for such a corporation to pretend that its policies are settled locally. Everyone knows that decisions as to wages, hours, and other conditions of employment are made at a central point for all the plants controlled by General Motors. Huge corporations, such as United States Steel and General Motors, have a moral and public responsibility. They have neither the moral nor legal right to rule as autocrats over their hundreds of thousands of employes.

"Organizing efforts of the CIO expanded in the summer of 1937, and at the very time when Girdler (Tom Girdler, head of Republic Steel Corp.) and his brutal henchmen were shooting and gassing the steel workers and claiming that they had stopped the CIO, a million more organized workers were brought into the CIO.

"At its Atlantic City conference in October, 1937, the CIO was able to report that it had organized more than 3,800,000 workers, that it had 32 national and international unions, as well as hundreds of directly affiliated local industrial unions.

"Its organizational achievements were reflected in the winning of more than a billion dollars of wage increases; the winning of shorter working hours for 2 million workers; and innumerable improvements in working conditions, including vacations with pay for the first time throughout many industries. More than 30 thousand companies had been induced to sign union agreements with CIO unions during this period."

One of the bitterest sit-down strikes was that which closed General Motors' Chevrolet plants for 44 days in mid-winter. GM's hard-boiled negotiators were determined not to sign a contract. The company showed no mercy toward the strikers holed up in the plants in freezing weather or outside performing picket duty.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins tried to conciliate the strike without success. One of the GM negotiators, William Knudsen, produced a telegram from *William Green*, president of the American Federation of Labor, demanding a part in the negotiations. Green's request was turned down when John L. Lewis suggested that Haile Selassie of Ethiopia be invited to participate because he represented the same number of General Motors employes as the AFL.

The strike could have been broken if Gov. Frank Murphy of Michigan had yielded to pressure to call in the Michigan National Guard. He did not and a wage agreement granting union recognition was finally signed in Detroit on February 11, 1937. The last few hours of the strike were memorable. Here is some of what Lewis remembers of them in his inimitable style:

"At three o'clock in the morning, on one of the high floors of the Statler Hotel (in Detroit) Mr. Knudsen, GM president; Donaldson Brown, chairman of the finance committee of the Board; and John Thomas Smith, (members of the GM negotiating committee), walked into my room when I was in bed. And they had on their overcoats, and they held their hard hats in their hands, and their gloves were on because the room was cold. I didn't get up. And they said that they would sign the contract at 11 o'clock that morning in Governor Murphy's office. And they did. And they did. And how!"

The biggest surprise of the struggle between the CIO and the giant industries occurred on March 2, 1937 when newspaper headlines announced that the United States Steel Corporation had signed a wage contract with the CIO's *Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC)* without a fight. The agreement evolved from a series of conversations between John L. Lewis and Myron C. Taylor, head of U. S. Steel. On the day of the signing, Lewis described it as a "fine example of an intelligent approach to a great economic problem."

Lewis Praises U.S.S.'s Taylor

Lewis' statement went on to say:

"It has been made possible by the vision and industrial statesmanship of Mr. Myron C. Taylor. From time to time over a period of several months in New York and in Washington, Mr. Taylor and I have engaged in conversations and negotiations. We were each conscious of the great responsibility and the far-reaching consequence attached to our decisions. Labor, industry and the nation will be the beneficiaries."

How did the conversations between Lewis and Taylor start? Over a period of many years John L. Lewis took his luncheon at the Carlton (now the Sheraton Carlton) Hotel around the corner from the *International Headquarters* of the United Mine Workers of America in Washington. Often he ate alone. Occasionally he had guests. Many UMWA projects originated in the Carlton's dining room. One day Lewis was lunching with the late U. S. Senator Joseph Guffey, (D., Pa.) At another table sat Mr. and Mrs. Myron C. Taylor. Lewis had met Taylor socially in Washington several times, but never on business. The labor leader greeted Taylor and met Mrs. Taylor whom he found to be a delightful person. It was not long thereafter that Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Taylor became friends. One day Mrs. Taylor said to her husband, "Mr. Lewis is no ogre. He is a fine gentleman, and you ought to talk over your labor problems with him." This was the origin of the series of conversations between the industrialist and the leader of the CIO. The conversations were carried on in the greatest secrecy to prevent any publicity. Only a handful of men in the top echelons of both the CIO and "Big Steel" knew what was going on behind the scene. Taylor and Lewis respected each other as civilized men and this mutual respect made it easier to reach an agreement.

Many people believed the "Little Steel" companies would follow the example of U. S. Steel and sign a contract without further struggle. But this was not the case except for Jones & Laughlin which allowed a labor board election, won by the Union. Most "Little Steel" companies were led by union-hating men like Tom Girdler, president of the Republic Steel Corp. who was determined not to recognize the new Union. Republic, Bethlehem, Youngstown Sheet and Tube, Weirton and Inland—"Little Steel"—took part in a bitter, long-drawn out struggle. Eighteen steel pickets were killed, hundreds wounded, and thousands arrested.

The most brutal outburst against the steel workers occurred near Chicago in the "Memorial Day Massacre" of 1937. Chicago police killed ten pickets in cold blood in a classic case of police brutality. Eight were shot in the back and one had his brains clubbed out while he was trying to run away from the massacre.

Chicago was not the only place to have violence. In Johnstown, Pa., the mayor deputized thugs and bought ammunition at company expense to help Bethlehem Steel break the strike. Only the threat by Gov. George Earle and Lt. Gov. *Thomas Kennedy* (of the UMWA) to send in state troops made him stop his anti-union activities.

It should be pointed out that at the time of the winning of a contract from the United States Steel Corp. the Steel Workers' Organizing Committee (SWOC) did not have a single important officer who had risen from the steel workers' ranks. There simply were no union men in the steel industry. Virtually everyone in the SWOC was an ex-coal miner who had taken leave from the United Mine Workers of America. U. S. Steel had kept such a tight control over its workers that not one had dared to talk about unionism even in his own home. Consequently, at the time of victory there was no steel workers' leadership. The coal miners' John L. Lewis and *Philip Murray* had to start building a Steel Workers' Union from the top down. The Steel Workers' Constitution, for the most part was borrowed from that of United Mine Workers of America.

When the SWOC became the United Steel Workers of America Philip Murray, then UMWA Vice President, was elected first President, and Mr. Murray's secretary, *David J. McDonald*, also a UMWA man, was elected Secretary-Treasurer, and after Mr. Murray's death, he became President of the Steel Union. Other high officers borrowed from the United Mine Workers of America included *Allen Haywood*, *John Brophy*, *Van A. Bittner* and *John Owens*, currently UMWA secretary-treasurer. In due time the steel workers developed officers of their own who learned well how to stand on their own feet.

Six striking steel workers were killed in Ohio where John Owens directed the strikes. Blood was also shed at Youngstown, Canton, Cleveland, and Massillon. Gov. Martin E. Davey, who had had UMWA support when he ran for governor, called out the state militia in an effort to break the strikes. In a radio speech on November 22, 1937, John Owens called the attention of Ohio voters to the part that Governor Davey was playing in the steel workers' strikes.

Lewis On 'Little Steel' Strikes

Mr. Lewis commented as follows regarding the "Little Steel" strikes:

"In the steel industry, the corporations generally have accepted collective bargaining and negotiated wage agreements with the Committee for Industrial Organization. Eighty-five percent of the industry is thus under contract and a peaceful relationship exists between the management and the workers. Written wage contracts have been negotiated with 399 steel companies covering 510 thousand men. One thousand thirty-one local lodges in 700 communities have been organized."

On September 3, 1937, John L. Lewis spoke to a nationwide CBS radio audience in these words:

"Out of the agony and travail of economic America, the Committee for Industrial Organization was born. To millions of Americans, exploited without stint by corporate industry and socially debased beyond the understanding of the fortunate, its coming was as welcome as the dawn to the night watcher. To a lesser group of Americans, more fortunately situated, blessed with large quantities of the world's goods and insolent in their assumption of privilege, its coming was heralded as a harbinger of ill, sinister of purpose, of unclean methods and non-virtuous objectives.

"The workers of the nation were tired of waiting for corporate industry to right their economic wrongs, to alleviate their social agony and to grant them their political rights. Despairing of fair treatment, they resolved to do something for themselves. They, therefore, have organized a new labor movement, conceived within the principles of the national Bill of Rights and committed to the proposition that the workers are free to assemble in their own forums, voice their own grievances, declare their own hopes, and contract on even terms with modern industry for the sale of their only material possession—their labor.

"The Committee for Industrial Organization has a numerical enrollment of 3,718,000 members. It has thirty-two affiliated national and international unions. Of this number, eleven unions account for 2,765,000 members. This group is organized in the textile, auto, garment, lumber, rubber, electrical manu-

(Continued on Page 10)

facturing, power, steel, coal and transport industries. The remaining membership exists in the maritime, oil production and refining, ship building, leather, chemical, retail, meat packing, vegetable canning, metalliferous mining, miscellaneous manufacturing, agricultural labor, and service and miscellaneous industries. Some 200 thousand workers are organized into 507 chartered local unions not yet attached to a national industrial union. Much of this progress was made in the face of violent and deadly opposition which reached its climax in the slaughter of workers paralleling the massacres of Ludlow and Homestead.

"In the steel industry, the corporations generally have accepted collective bargaining and negotiated wage agreements with the Committee for Industrial Organization. Eighty-five percent of the industry is thus under contract and a peaceful relationship exists between the management and the workers. Written wage contracts have been negotiated with 399 steel companies covering 510,000 men. One thousand thirty-one local lodges in 700 communities have been organized.

"Five of the corporations in the steel industry elected to resist collective bargaining and undertook to destroy the steel workers' union. These companies filled their plants with industrial spies, assembled depots of guns and gas bombs, established barricades, controlled their communities with armed thugs, leased the police power of cities and mobilized the military power of a state to guard them against the intrusion of collective bargaining within their plants.

"During this strike, eighteen steel workers were either shot to death or had their brains clubbed out by police or armed thugs in the pay of the steel companies. In Chicago Mayor Kelly's police force was successful in killing ten strikers before they could escape the fury of the police, shooting eight of them in the back. One hundred sixty strikers were maimed and injured by police clubs, riot guns and gas bombs, and were hospitalized. Hundreds of strikers were arrested, jailed, treated with brutality while incarcerated, and harassed by succeeding litigation. None but strikers were murdered, gassed, injured, jailed, or maltreated. No one had to die except the workers who were standing for the right guaranteed them by the Congress and written in the law.

"The infamous Governor Davey of Ohio, successful in the last election because of his reiterated promises of fair treatment to labor, used the military power of the commonwealth on the side of the Republic Steel Company and the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company. Nearly half of the staggering military expenditure incident to the crushing of this strike in Ohio was borne by the federal government through the allocation of financial aid to the military establishment of the state.

"The steel workers have now buried their dead, while the widows weep and watch their orphaned children become objects of public charity.

"The men in the steel industry who sacrificed their all were not merely aiding their fellows at home but were adding strength to the cause of their comrades in all industry. Labor was marching toward the goal of industrial democracy and contributing constructively toward a more rational arrangement of our domestic economy.

"Labor does not seek industrial strife. It wants peace with justice. In the long struggle for labor's rights it has been patient and forbearing. Sabotage and destructive syndicalism have had no part in the American labor movement. Workers have kept faith in American institutions. Most of the conflicts have occurred when labor's right to live has been challenged and denied.

"Unionization, as opposed to communism, presupposes the relation of employment; it is based on the wage system and it recognizes fully and unreservedly the institution of private property and the right to investment profit.

"The organized workers of America, free in their industrial life, conscious partners in production, secure in their homes, and enjoying a decent standard of living, will prove the finest bulwark against the intrusion of alien doctrines of government."

Soon after the agreement between the CIO and U. S. Steel, a month-old strike of 65 thousand workers at several plants of the Chrysler Corporation was settled. John L. Lewis, Walter P. Chrysler and representatives of the *United Automobile Workers of America* signed a contract that wiped out Chrysler's company

union and its industrial spy system that had been used to oppress its workers. CIO organizers were also hard at work in fields other than automobiles and steel. Packing house workers, seamen, quarry workers, electrical workers and textile workers were joining the new unions. John L. Lewis went all over the country addressing membership rallies, counselling the young union leaders and their unions and always inspiring them to greater efforts in organizing the unorganized.

While leading the CIO, John L. Lewis by no means neglected the United Mine Workers of America. An official circular from the *International and Anthracite Tri-District Officers* informed the Union membership that negotiations for a new contract were taking much longer than ever. A settlement was finally made on May 7, 1936. Under the new contract the work day was changed from eight to seven hours a day, and the work week from six days to five days a week.

Under the agreement the operators granted the principle of equalization of working time, but only after a long and bitter debate. The principle of equalization enabled the UMWA to take jurisdiction over equalization problems and insure proper distribution of available working time. The agreement also provided for the complete standard dues check-off arrangement to apply to the anthracite region.

Goaded by the powerful financial interests dominant in steel, automobile and other major industries, the coal operators of the Appalachian bituminous coal area, representing three-fourths of the nation's bituminous coal tonnage, on December 15, 1936, formally notified the UMWA that they had decided upon new wages, hours and conditions of employment affecting their mine workers. This unilateral action stunned John L. Lewis and his fellow officers inasmuch as the current contract was not to expire until February 15, 1937. Despite the Appalachian operators' premature proposals, a new contract was signed on April 1, 1937 and it was quite favorable to the UMWA.

UMWA Wins Union Shop

This Appalachian Agreement expired in two years, April 1, 1939, with the operators determined to cut wages. But wages were not cut. The UMWA won a union shop (requiring coal miners to join the UMWA) in soft coal for the first time in history. About 80 percent of the coal operators were in favor of a union shop proposed by the union. Dr. John R. Steelman, director of the U. S. Conciliation Service, Department of Labor, suggested that they sign contracts and resume operations promptly in order to relieve the grave coal crisis facing the nation. This was done. Those operators who found the union shop unacceptable were asked to continue negotiating until a mutually fair contract could be negotiated.

Six operator associations withdrew from the conference. Five of them returned to their respective fields and met with District Unions of the United Mine Workers of America. Within ten days all but one signed the Appalachian Agreement. The exception was the Harlan County Coal Operators' Association. However, on July 19, 1939, this association, too, signed an agreement.

Union recognition by the Harlan County Coal Operators' Association of the 1939 Appalachian Agreement brought an end to an operator reign of terror that lasted for almost ten years in "Bloody Harlan" County, Ky.

Harlan, Ky. was one of the bloodiest battlegrounds in the long warfare between Union Mine Workers and coal operators' thugs. Men died for their Union principles. Many of the targets were union organizers who risked their lives for freedom. *George J. Titter* who, recently, became *International Vice President* of the UMWA, was one of them. Others were *William Turnblazer*, *Paul Reed*, and *John Saxton*. There was also *T. C. Townsend*, UMWA lawyer, who fought for his men in and out of the courtroom.

Bosses' hirelings clubbed and shot in the name of "law and order." The gruesome story is told in the records of the La Follette Civil Liberties Committee and in the records of the Harlan County Courthouse—outside of which this sign was displayed:

"All persons must be searched before entering court room. Check guns in sheriff office."

Students can now get bookcovers with a union label by writing to the Union Label Department, Room 102, AFD-CIO Building, 815 16th St. N.W., Washington, D. C. 20006. The book covers are a new promotional item for the Department and contain a message about organized labor as well as the theme, "Building a Better America Through Education." They're free in reasonable quantities.

Chapter 13

A HISTORY OF THE UMWA

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the thirteenth monthly article in George Korson's history of the *International Union, United Mine Workers of America*. The *Journal* is publishing the series in honor of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the International Union on January 25, 1890, at Columbus, Ohio. The first article, published on May 1, 1965, told in general of the early history of coal mining in the United States and the terrible need for Union organization of American coal miners. The second dealt with the history of early coal miners' unions leading to the founding of the UMWA. The third dealt specifically with the founding of the UMWA. The fourth dealt with the pioneer organizers of the UMWA. The fifth dealt with the convict labor system and some of the other early struggles. The sixth dealt with the early UMWA struggle to win an eight-hour day in America's coal mines. The seventh dealt with the historic role of the UMWA in the field of

legislation. The eighth dealt with the great anthracite strike of 1902. The ninth article dealt with John L. Lewis in the 1920s and early 1930s. The tenth dealt with the story of Lewis in the 1930s when the reorganization of the UMWA in the early days of the New Deal sparked the beginning of the great organizing drives in the nation's mass-production industries. The eleventh dealt with the establishment of the Committee for Industrial Organization and the great organizing drive in the nation's basic steel industry. The twelfth dealt with the signing of the first labor-management agreements in the steel and automobile industries and Lewis' continuing work to better the lot of his own coal miners in the UMWA. This article, No. 13 in the series, describes the political break between Lewis and Franklin D. Roosevelt and also the long dispute over the union shop in mines owned by steel companies.

By George Korson

© George Korson, 1966

As the song on Page 10 indicates, the nation's coal miners had two heroes in the post-depression area—Franklin Delano Roosevelt and *John L. Lewis*.



Mr. Korson

The *United Mine Workers of America* and its great leader gave all-out support to President Roosevelt in the 1936 national elections. The UMW donated a half million dollars to the Democratic campaign. John L. Lewis contributed his time, energy and eloquence. He stumped throughout the East, including the bituminous and anthracite coal fields. From railroad train observation platforms, in public halls and over radio networks, he urged his followers to sup-

port Roosevelt.

On May 11, 1936 he organized *Labor's Non-Partisan League* to work from the grass roots up. The league was the forerunner of the CIO Political Action Committee and the AFL's League of Political Education. John L. Lewis was chairman of the board; Major George Berry of the Pressmen's Union was president; and Sidney Hillman, treasurer. *Labor's Non-Partisan League* proved an effective adjunct of the industrial organization. Although the immediate purpose was the re-election of President Roosevelt, its founders announced that it would be continued after 1936 to support progressive and labor legislation, as well as to insure labor's recognition in any realignment which might later develop.

The Roosevelt-Lewis honeymoon lasted through the 1936 Presidential campaign. In view of the enormous contributions to the Roosevelt campaign, Lewis did not like the neutral stand that the President was taking with respect to the series of strikes that took place in 1936 and 1937.

Roosevelt's timing was off. Soon—too soon—after the Memorial Day massacre of steel workers the President said: "A plague on both your houses!" This remark cut Lewis deeply, especially as the La Follette Civil Liberties Committee was accumulating evidence that the violence had been management-inspired. Lewis had believed that President Roosevelt would be friendly to labor or he would not have recommended that the UMWA contribute a half million dollars to his re-election campaign.

To the President's "A plague on both your houses!" John L. Lewis had his vivid answer: "It ill behooves one who has supped at labor's table and who had been sheltered in labor's house to curse with equal fervor and fine impartiality both labor and its adversaries when they become locked in deadly embrace."

There were other reasons to account for Lewis' disenchantment. One of them was the recurrence of the economic depression of 1937-1939 which caused high unemployment. On October 15, 1937, Lewis told the CIO convention in Atlantic City that the country was not yet out of the woods as far as the depression was concerned.

"There are certain fundamental economic questions in this country which need attention from the American people and from the American Congress" is the way he expressed it. "President Roosevelt has said that one-third of Americans are ill-housed, ill-clothed and underfed. Let us do something about that. What has been done about it so far? Nothing! Americans cannot live on platitudes or musical phrases. They want buying power. They want shorter hours. Give them buying power and shorter hours and they will improve their economic and social status. They will learn to improve their leisure, to avail themselves of it."

In Columbus, Ohio, in January, 1940, the UMWA celebrated its golden anniversary. *John Owens*, then *President of the Ohio miners*, now *International Secretary-Treasurer*, made the keynote speech and introduced John L. Lewis. The mood of the delegates was jubilant. There was praise for the fewer than 200 delegates who had had the vision and courage to form this union against great odds, and there was praise for those who, following the founding fathers, were able to keep the union alive through many vicissitudes.

There was uncertainty early in the convention as to whether John L. Lewis would recommend endorsement of President Roosevelt for re-election for a third term. But in good time he said: "It would be unwise, in my judgment, for this convention, at this time, to bestow its endorsement upon any candidate for the Presidency of the United States." Lewis charged President Roosevelt

with broken promises to labor and with failure to solve the unemployment problem. He was also convinced that the President was leading the nation toward war.

"In the face of the economic deal in America," he said "many of our statesmen are more concerned and agitated over the political quarrels in Europe. Labor in America wants no war nor any part of war. Labor wants the right to work and live, not the privilege of dying by gunshot or poison gas to sustain the mental errors of current statesmen."

Despite Lewis' aversion to war, he recognized that the power lust of Hitler and Mussolini might force the United States to fight against Germany and Italy. In his opening address to the first CIO convention, he said:

"We are appalled today at what we witness in Europe. Whose heart can fail to become anguished as he reads in the daily press of the terrible abuses and atrocities and indignities and brutalities that are now being inflicted by the German government and some of the German people on the Jews of that nation?"

The day dreaded by labor—the final break between John L. Lewis and President Roosevelt came in September, 1940. Over a nationwide radio network, Lewis recommended the election of Wendell L. Willkie as President of the United States. He said:

"I address all Americans. Our country is at one of the crossroads of its political destiny. The issues run deep and will inevitably affect the well-being and lives of every American. They will also affect the population of every other civilized country, and may well determine the stability or instability of all free institutions of our present-day culture.

"The words I utter tonight represent my mature convictions. They are expressed because I believe that the men and women of labor, and all other Americans, are entitled to know the truth as I see it.

"I think the re-election of President Roosevelt for a third term would be a national evil of the first magnitude. He no longer hears the cries of the people.

"It is obvious that President Roosevelt will not be re-elected for a third term unless he has the overwhelming support of the men and women of labor. If he is, therefore, re-elected it will mean that the members of the Congress of Industrial Organizations have rejected my advice and recommendation. I will accept the result as being the equivalent of a vote of no confidence, and will retire as president of the Congress of Industrial Organizations at its convention in November. This action will save our great movement, composed of millions of men and women, from the embarrassment and handicap of my leadership."

When President Roosevelt was re-elected, Lewis, true to his word, resigned his leadership of the CIO. He was succeeded by *UMWA Vice President Philip Murray*. On his first appearance on the platform at the CIO convention, Lewis received an ovation lasting forty minutes which moved his daughter, *Kathryn* to tears. When the spontaneous demonstration came to an end, Lewis delivered his farewell address to the CIO. In part, he said:

"Now my friends, I came to this convention to make a report of my stewardship as your president. I have done my work. In just a day or two I will be out of this office, which at the moment I occupy. I shall hope that whomever you elect as my successor you will give him your support without stint. Tomorrow is yesterday gone and tomorrow is also a day. I am concerned with tomorrow; and I care not what happened yesterday except insofar as the events of yesterday may bring wisdom to us to guide our steps tomorrow.

"We cannot stop to weep and wear sackcloth and ashes because something that happened yesterday did not meet with our approval or because we did not have a dream come true. Tomorrow is the day that always faces men and women; and among the masses of this country are those who would be workers if they had jobs and a right to participate in our internal economy.

"In their homes always is the problem of tomorrow. Will the family eat tomorrow, and will they have shelter from the inclemency of the weather? And tomorrow, as they go down the years of life's brief existence, there falls on every man and woman the shadow and the menace of the tomorrow that brings the evening of life and whether they will become public charges, or perhaps just be one of those people who die on a pallet without medicine or a physicians.

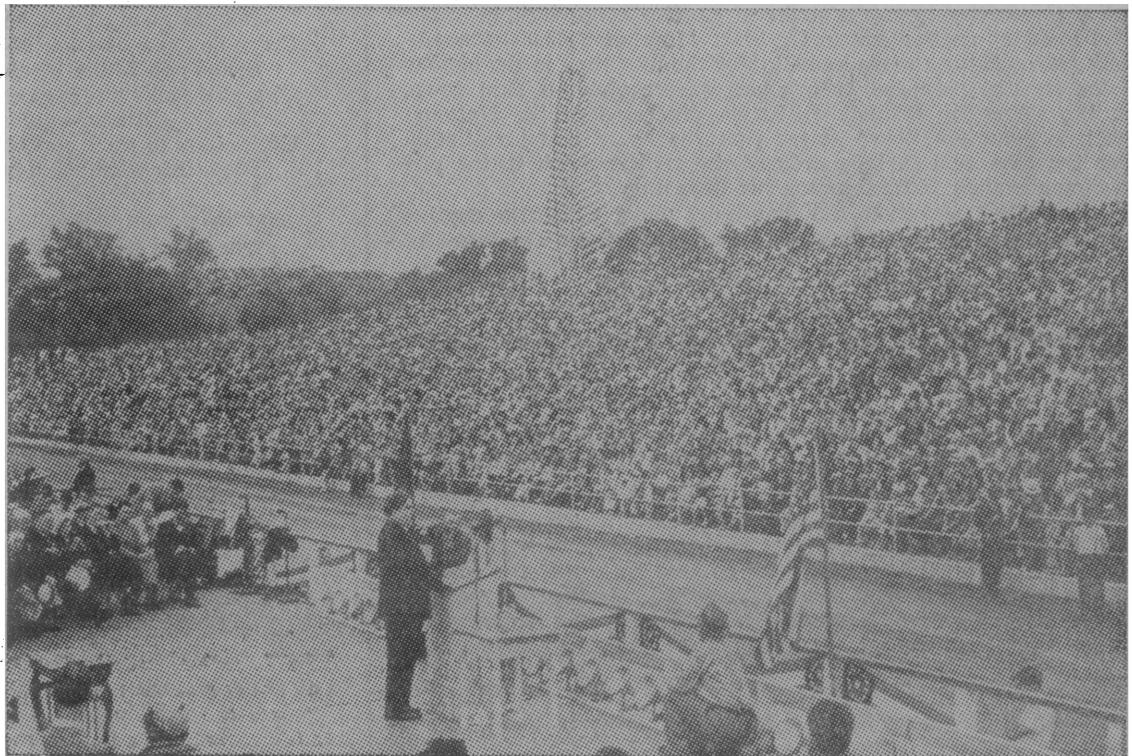
"There is a dark cloud that hovers over the minds of men and women of America. And this movement of ours can do something to remove the menace of being brave and being forthright, by being diligent and by demanding consideration for those human requirements that we all know, by every method and means, are virtuous and justifiable.

"Keep your organization alive and strong! And you can perhaps do more on those things than any other instrumentality in American life, because, after all, you represent the common people of this country who, without you, are inarticulate and a subject of constant exploitation to the point of life itself.

"While I have served you, I have told you the truth as I saw it, according to my light and understanding. I have been doing that for a long time; I don't think I shall change. You

(Continued on Page 10)

BIGGEST—The largest Labor Day rally in history gathered in Pittsburgh, Pa., in 1937, to hear John L. Lewis report on progress in the drive to organize the nation's steelworkers and other workers in mass production industries.



A History Of The UMWA

(Continued from Page 9)

know when you first hired me I was something of a man, and when I leave you in a day or two, I will still, in my own mind, be something of a man. So thank you, my friends, thank you for the reception you gave me. I appreciate it."

Lewis had one or two other reasons for resigning from the leadership of the CIO. With World War II threatening to drag the United States into the war, he had some "chores" to perform for the United Mine Workers of America which he thought might be difficult to carry off in a war-time climate. They would mean more bread and butter on the kitchen table of every coal miner in the country.

The first fruit of the individual effort of the miners' "one-union man" came in March, 1941, when Congress passed a mine inspection law. Lewis spearheaded the drive to get this law on the books, and was ably assisted by the late *John T. Jones*, who had become head of the Non-Partisan League. This new law required the Secretary of the Interior to find the causes of mine explosions and mine accidents, and to recommend measures for improving the health and safety conditions in the nation's coal mines.

In 1941 John L. Lewis was quite busy. He had to negotiate new wage agreements in the anthracite and bituminous industries. The soft coal negotiations, long and bitter, finally resulted in the elimination of the 40-cent differential between the North and South. The universal basic daily wage became \$7; a token annual vacation payment of \$20 was obtained; and the union shop became universal in the commercial coal mines, even in "bloody" Harlan County. The northern Appalachian operators signed a new agreement on June 19 while southern Appalachian operators took until July 5.

While negotiating with two groups of Appalachian coal operators, Lewis was obliged to take on the anthracite coal operators too. The union's anthracite membership won a 7.5 percent wage increase from May 1, 1941. This was increased to 10 percent on October 1, 1941. The anthracite miners also won a \$20 payment for an annual vacation. A new contract was written on May 24, 1941, accepted by the union membership and finally signed in Hazleton on June 20, 1941.

Fight Over The Union Shop

Not long after the new Appalachian Agreement had been signed by the Northern and Southern commercial mines, as well as by 70 percent of the public utilities, railroads, and steel manufacturing and other companies, 11 of the large steel corporations operating captive mines employing 50,000 miners refused to accept the agreement because of its union shop provisions. Of the large steel corporations, only Jones & Laughlin signed the new contract.

After prolonged negotiations on this issue without the prospect of success, Lewis obtained the authorization of the union's *National Policy Committee* to call a strike of captive mine workers in the steel industry on September 15, 1941. More than 45,000 immediately responded to the strike call. For the first time in the history of the steel corporations their mines were completely shut down. On the same day William H. Davis, chairman of the National Defense Mediation Board stated that the board had jurisdiction over the case, and thereby ordered the strikers back to the pits pending a hearing in Washington two days later.

The UMWA agreed to a 30-day truce under which the captive mines in the steel industry would be operated under the terms of the Appalachian Agreement without the union shop provision, provided that collective bargaining would be carried on meanwhile.

At President Roosevelt's suggestion, Lewis and Myron C. Taylor, former board chairman of U.S. Steel, conferred in the latter's hotel on October 29. They were later joined by William H. Davis. The trio later visited the White House to report directly to President Roosevelt. As a result of this meeting, Lewis agreed to recommend the reopening of the steel companies captive mines pending a decision by the full National Defense Mediation Board, such a decision not to be binding on either party to the dispute.

The next afternoon Lewis and Taylor held a press conference at which Lewis praised Taylor for his constructive attitude. "The entire basis of this agreement," he pointed out, "was the conference between Mr. Taylor and me yesterday. It may be recalled that seven years ago Mr. Taylor and I settled the captive mine controversy. In 1937 we substantially negotiated the contract covering present relations in the steel industry. At that time I stated in a public statement that Mr. Taylor was an industrial statesman of far-seeing vision. I reiterate that today."

(Continued on Page 11)

This What the Union Done

In nineteen hundred an' thirty-three,
When Mr. Roosevelt took his seat,
He said to President John L. Lewis:
"In union we must be.
Come, let us work together
Ask God to lead the plan
By this time another year
We'll have the union back again."

CHORUS

Hooray! Hooray!
For the union we must stand,
It's the only organization
Protects the laborin' man.
Boys, it makes the women happy,
Our children clap their hands,
To see the beefsteak and the good pork chops,
Steamin' in those fryin' pans.

There's one law President Roosevelt passed,
It made the operators mad:
Gave all the men the right to organize,
Jine the union of their choice.
When the President had passed this law,
We all did shout for joy,
When he said no operator, sheriff or boss,
Shouldn't bother the union boys.

In nineteen hundred and thirty-two
We was sometimes sad and blue,
Travelin' round from place to place
Tryin to find some work to do.
If we's successful to find a job,
The wages was so small,
We could scarcely live in the summertime—
Almost starved in the fall.

Befo' we got our union back,
It's very said to say,
Old blue shirts an' overalls
Was the topic of the day.
They was so full of patches
An' so badly torn,
Our wives had to sew for 'bout a hour
Befo' they could be worn.

Now when our union men walks out,
Got the good clothes on their backs,
Crepe de chine and fine silk shirts,
Brand new Miller block hats;
Fine silk socks an' Florsheim shoes,
They're glitterin' against the sun,
Got dollars in their pockets, smokin' good cigars—
Boys, this what the union done!

Befo' we got our union back,
Our wives was always mad,
When they went out to the church,
A print dress was all they had.
But since we got our union back,
They're happy all the while,
Silk an' satin of every kind,
To meet with ev'ry style.

Now when our union women walks out,
Got their hair all slick an' fine,
Good silk dresses on their back,
Shoes and stockings fine.
Got dollars in their pockets,
Silk parasols in their hands,
You hear them singin' as they go:
"My husband is a union man!"*

*By Uncle George Jones, blind ex-miner; Recorded by George Korson in Trafford, Alabama, 1940.