

The Colorado Coalfield War of 1913-'14

How did Colorado become the scene of the most violent strike in U.S. history?
What rights should workers exercise? What rights should employers possess?
And what role should government play when labor and management conflict?

By Thomas Andrews*

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Standards Addressed

A quick-glance overview of social studies standards that teachers might address in 4th grade, 8th grade, and high school using the resources in this set.

(To be prepared by a group of master teachers at the same time – and in conjunction with – the teaching strategies section.)

Background

On an April morning in 1914, bullets began to fly fast and furious near a tiny town called Ludlow in the southern Colorado foothills. By the time the fighting stopped ten days later, more than fifty people had been killed. Dozens more had been wounded, several mine tunnels had been reduced to rubble, two towns lay in ashes, and a tent colony that had housed more some 1,200 people for upwards of seven months lay in rubble.

These events, which people of the time variously referred to as the Ludlow Massacre, the Battle of Ludlow, and the Ten Days' War—marked the most contentious phase in a much longer conflict: The Colorado coalfield war of 1913-'14. On one side of this conflict stood striking coal mine workers, their families, and the the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), the nation's largest labor union. Opposing these strikers were two powerful foes: the Colorado National Guard and coal-mining companies led by the Rockefeller-owned Colorado Fuel & Iron Company (CF&I).

The coalfield war of 1913-'14 brought several decades of conflict between workers, corporations, and the State of Colorado to a contentious head. The most violent strike in United States history, the coalfield war attracted national and even international attention.

Though southern Colorado was relatively remote and isolated, the struggle that erupted there between miners and mining corporations cut to the heart of a broader conflict that stood at the very center of political, economic, and social life. Starting in the 1800s, American workers began to form labor unions to protect and advance their interests. Only by banding together, many workers believed, could common people defend themselves against the growing power of the large corporations that were assuming ever greater control of the U.S. economy as the century advanced.

Starting with the so-called Great Upheaval of 1877 (a huge strike by railroad workers in several states that degenerated into violence), the struggle between workers and their unions, on the one hand, and corporations and their government allies, on the other, assumed national proportions. Thereafter, strikers, corporations, and state and federal troops clashed in a succession of infamous encounters: the Haymarket incident in Chicago in 1886, the Homestead Strike in Pennsylvania and the Coeur d'Alene Mine War in Idaho, both in 1892, the Pullman Strike in Illinois in 1894, and many more.

Though many Americans today think that Colorado was primarily a farming and ranching frontier in the 1800s, the state was no stranger to labor strife. At Cripple Creek in 1894; Leadville in 1896; and the Telluride, Cripple Creek, and the southern Colorado coalfields in 1903-'04, striking workers seeking to unionize the state's mines and smelters had squared off against private armies enlisted by mine operators and the Colorado National Guard. As these events make clear, Colorado occupied the front lines of the larger battle between unions and corporations that Americans of the era referred to as "The Labor Question." Briefly put, that question was who would control the workplace, community life, and the political system: organized workers or capitalists?

In the decades since the Colorado coalfield war, writers, singers, poets, politicians, labor activists, and historians have struggled to understand the causes and consequences of the violent events that erupted in and around Ludlow. Like the sides that squared off in this epic labor-management struggle, they have arrived at very different conclusions about what happened and why. All of the thinkers who have pored over the wealth of primary sources that document the course of the Colorado coalfield war, however,

concur on a few crucial points. First, the strike between mine workers and coal corporations generated no shortage of passion, drama, and tragedy. And second, the conflict that exploded in the remote southern Colorado coalfields constituted a critical historical juncture—not just for Colorado, but for the American nation.

When most Americans think about coal mining, their minds immediately turn to the dusty anthracite region of Pennsylvania, to the hardscrabble mining camps of the Appalachian backcountry, or perhaps to the giant open-pit coal mines that blanket the Powder River Country of modern-day Wyoming and Montana. But in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, southern Colorado became a major coal-mining region. One could travel from Illinois to the Pacific Ocean, and from the Alaskan Arctic to Patagonia without coming upon a single area that produced more coal than the combined production of Colorado's Las Animas, Huerfano, and Fremont Counties.

From the Gold Rush of 1858 through the early 1900s, Colorado experienced rapid industrialization. Today, many Coloradans tend to think of these decades as a time when sturdy pioneers carved out homesteads while cowboys drove cattle across the open range. And indeed, farming and ranching reigned across large stretches of Colorado. The real drivers of economic growth in the state, however, were gold and silver mines, railroads, and cities—all of which depended heavily on energy obtained from coal. In Colorado, as in other parts of the industrializing world, the fossilized energy coal provided enabled people to heat homes, cook meals, power trains and other technologies, and otherwise ease and speed the transformation of the Mountain West from a rugged frontier into a modern American region. It should come as no surprise, then, that by the early 1910s, Coloradans of all sorts were consuming huge quantities of coal—on average, far more than present-day Americans, and even more than Australians, who today lead the world in per capita coal consumption. Without coal, it would have been much more difficult for people to build and operate railroads, mines, factories, and even farms. Yet despite the significance of coal, the boys and men who extracted this humble black rock from deep below the earth labored in difficult, dangerous conditions.

Relatively good wages attracted men and women from around the United States as well as from more than 30 nations in Europe and Asia to the southern Colorado coalfields. Some returned home with their earnings; others moved on to other work; and hundreds died on the job, for coal mining was among the most hazardous occupations in industrializing America. By the time the Colorado coalfield war broke out in September, 1913, more than 10,000 men worked in and around southern Colorado's coal mines.

Large-scale coal-mining expanded into Colorado alongside the railroads. Mine workers clashed with their employers from the outset. The first disputes, in the 1870s, remained small and mostly peaceful. The earliest campaign by coal miners throughout southern Colorado to join forces against the coal companies began in 1884. This dispute was followed by ever-larger strikes in 1894 and 1903-'04. Each time, the corporations crushed the strikers—and each time, coal-company managers thought they had figured out how to quash union activism once and for all.

Even the mighty CF&I, however, failed to remedy the underlying causes that repeatedly prompted mine workers to band together, rise up, and walk off the job, thus starving western industries and consumers of the energy on which everyone had come to depend utterly and absolutely.

We're Coming Colorado (The Colorado Strike Song)
Lyrics by Frank J. Hayes

We will win the fight today, boys,
We'll win the fight today,
Shouting the battle cry of union;
We will rally from the coal mines,
We'll battle to the end,
Shouting the battle cry of union.

CHORUS:

The union forever, hurrah, boys, hurrah!
Down with the Baldwins, up with the law;
For we're coming, Colorado, we're coming all the way,
Shouting the battle cry of union.
We have fought them here for years, boys,
We'll fight them in the end,
Shouting the battle cry of union.
We have fought them in the North,
Now we'll fight them in the South,
Shouting the battle cry of union.
We are fighting for our rights, boys,
We are fighting for our homes,
Shouting the battle cry of union;
Men have died to win the struggle;
They've died to set us free,
Shouting the battle cry of union.

1 / Primary Sources / The Strike Begins “Shouting the Battle Cry of Union”

Citation

Frank J. Hayes, “We’re Coming Colorado” (also known as “The Colorado Strike Song”), *United Mine Workers Journal*, September 18, 1913. For an audio file of the music (but not the lyrics), click here: <http://www.folkarchive.de/werecomi.html>

Annotation

Why did southern Colorado’s mine workers decide in the spring of 1913 to lay down their tools, walk away from their jobs, and confront some of the most powerful corporations in the entire American West? This song provides as good an explanation as any single source can.

It was written by Frank J. Hayes, vice president of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), which was then the largest union in the United States and the driving organization behind the strike. Hayes set his lyrics to an old Union anthem from Civil War days, “The Battle Cry of Freedom.” The ideas expressed by Hayes possessed even longer and more esteemed roots in American social and political thought: hope for the future, faith in collective struggle, and, above all, a commitment to the justness of “fighting for our rights” and “fighting for our homes” against even the most daunting foes.

Among these foes were the “Baldwins”—the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency—a private detective agency based in Virginia. By the time the Colorado coalfield war broke out in 1913, the Baldwins had already earned the enmity of the United Mine Workers for helping coal operators defeat the UMWA in a West Virginia miners’ strike. Colorado coal operators, cognizant of the detectives’ success in earlier labor disputes, hired Baldwin-Felts detectives as they prepared to square off against the mine workers’ union.

WAGE SCALE ADOPTED BY SPECIAL CONVENTION, COLORADO MINE WORKERS, AT TRINIDAD, COLO., SEPTEMBER 16, 1913.

We, the representatives of the mine workers of district 15, after repeated efforts to secure a conference with the operators for the purpose of establishing joint relations and a fair wage agreement, and having been denied such a conference—the operators ignoring our invitation entirely—and believing as we do that we have grievances of great moment that demand immediate adjudication, we submit the following as a basis of settlement:

First. We demand recognition of the union. (State law on this subject, but not complied with.)

Second. We demand a 10 per cent advance in wages on the tonnage rates and a day-wage scale which is practically in accord with the Wyoming day-wage scale. (The present Colorado scale is the lowest paid in any of the Rocky Mountain States. Wage advance is justified.)

Third. We demand an eight-hour workday for all classes of labor in or around the coal mines and at coke ovens. (State law on this subject, but not complied with.)

Fourth. We demand pay for all narrow work and dead work, which includes brushing, timbering, removing falls, handling impurities, etc. (Scale for this work in all other States.)

Fifth. We demand checkweighman at all mines to be elected by the miners without any interference by company officials in said election. (State law on this subject but not complied with.)

Sixth. We demand the right to trade in any store we please and the right to choose our own boarding place and our own doctor. (State law on this subject but not complied with.)

Seventh. We demand the enforcement of the Colorado mining laws, and the abolition of the notorious and criminal guard system which has prevailed in the mining camps of Colorado for many years. (State laws on these subjects but not complied with.)

If you believe in the enforcement of law and a living wage, you will support the miners in this strike.

2 / Primary Sources / The Strike Begins

The Strikers' Demands

Citation

"Wage Scale Adopted by Special Convention, Colorado Mine Workers, held in Trinidad, Colorado, 16 September 1913," in U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations, *Final Report and Testimony* (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1916), p. 7025.

Annotation

"Industrial democracy" stood at the core of the UMWA's vision for reorganizing Colorado's coal industry. Because the union was committed to democratic principles, and because it believed that it drew its authority from its members and their fellow mine workers, the UMWA could only pursue a strike through a formal convention governed by parliamentary procedures. In mid-September, 1913, mine workers and union activists from throughout Colorado gathered in Trinidad, the largest town and commercial center of the southern coalfields, to decide whether to pursue the walkout union diehards had been clamoring for throughout the previous months. Over the course of two long days, delegates at the convention listened to speeches by Frank Hayes, Mother Jones, and other leaders, as well as shorter talks in which various delegates spoke about local conditions in the mines they represented. The real business of the convention, though, was to propose and vote upon a set of strike demands.

COAL STRIKE CERTAIN TUESDAY IF OWNERS FAIL TO ARBITRATE

By United Press.

Trinidad, Colo., Sept. 17.—Between 9000 and 10,000 coal miners of Southern Colorado were today waiting to obey the commands of the district convention of the United Mine Workers of America, which last night voted unanimously to strike next Tuesday unless the operators consent to arbitrate their grievances.

The strike was delayed a few days to give the operators one more chance to avert a great and disastrous strike by going into conference with the miners.

Little hope was expressed here today that the operators will meet the miners. They have announced their determination to force the issue to settle once and for all whether men or money is to be paramount in Southern Colorado.

Mother Jones Enthuses Them.

The unanimous vote of the convention for a strike followed an impassioned speech by Mother Jones, angel of a hundred coal strikes.

The announcement of the result was greeted by the miners with wild cheers.

Then suddenly silence fell over the hall. The delegates realized they had said the word that would throw 9000 men out of work. They were awed by the greatness of the approaching struggle. Their faces became grave and stern.

Sing Battle Song.

A man's voice from the rear of the hall began chanting the Colorado strike song.

"We will win the fight today, boys. We will win the fight today. Shouting the battle cry of union."

The song was taken up by row after row of the delegates. The men rocked in their seats as they sang it. The thunder of it shook the hall.

And so the convention adjourned.

The delegates started immediately for their homes; the northern delegates to return to the fight that has been going on for three years; the southern delegates to prepare for the fight that is to come.

Miners Retain Wrongs.

The delegates came after a weary afternoon of listening to grievances.

Delegate after delegate from the

(Continued on Page 7, Col. 6.)

(Continued from Page 1.)

southern camps has risen and told the convention of the wrongs the men in his camp had suffered, of low wages, of long, back-bending hours, of miners forced to buy groceries and household goods at company stores at exorbitant prices, of loads of coal underweighed by company officials, that miners might be cheated out of their just pay, of the hideous brutality of the mine guard thugs, of men cruelly beaten because it had been whispered that they "belonged to the union," of other men driven from their homes and their wives and their little ones at the point of the mine guards' guns.

What Miners Ask.

The policy committee retired to draw up a report. It suggested that the convention adopt the following as the demands of the union:

Recognition of the union.

A 10 per cent advance in wages on tonnage rates and a daily wage scale on the same basis as that of Wyoming.

10 per cent advance on wages paid coke oven workers.

An 8-hour day for all classes of labor in the mines and coke ovens.

Pay for all narrow work and dead work, including brushing, timbering, removing falls, handling impurities, etc.

Check weighman at all mines to be elected by the miners without any interference by company officials.

Right to trade in any store that mine workers choose, the right of miners to choose their own boarding houses and physicians.

Enforcement of the Colorado mining laws.

Abolition of the notorious and criminal guard system which has existed in the mining camps of Colorado for years.

The demands were adopted unanimously. The policy committee then presented the resolution authorizing the strike. It read:

In view of the failure of our efforts of our differences and in view of the fact that the operators have refused to answer any of our invitations for a joint meeting, we hereby instruct the district policy committee to issue a strike call to all mine workers in Colorado, to take effect Tuesday, Sept 23, 1913.

We further recommend that any person discharged because of affiliation with our movement be promptly supported by the organization. In conformity with the past policy of the organization, which has worked so successfully in other districts, we recommend that we sign up with all companies that agree not to furnish coal or fill contracts for companies on strike and that companies signing up must do so for all the mines they operate.

The resolution was signed by John R. Lawson, district member of the international board; Frank J. Hayes, international vice president; John McLennan, president of District 15, and E. L. Doyle, comprising the policy committee.

It was received with cheers and passed with cheers.

Telegram Arouses Mother Jones.

Mother Jones' dramatic speech followed the reading of a telegram to the convention from Frank G. Hoag, a Pueblo business man.

The telegram urged the miners to go slow about calling a strike, pointing out how such a strike would "hurt business."

The policy committee laid the telegram before the convention, merely pointing out how long and wearily the United Mine Workers had striven to induce the mine operators to enter into conference with them and thus prevent a strike.

Strike for Freedom.

"Rise up and strike," cried Mother Jones, the woman whom the coal operators of West Virginia blame for the victory of the miners there.

"If you are too cowardly to fight for your rights, there are enough women in the country to come in and heat hell out of the operators for you."

"Strike, and knock off the shackles of slavery! Strike and regain your manhood! Strike and stay with it until the last man of you drops into his grave, if need

be. Strike, and may God help you to hoist the banner of industrial freedom over Colorado's coal fields."

"And let me tell you one thing—"

the little old woman leaped tensely forward—"the man among you who will not protect his own home, his own womenfolks, his own fireside, from the Baldwin-Feltz thugs, has no right to be on the free soil of America."

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Voting to Strike

Citation

“Coal Strike Certain Tuesday If Owners Fail to Arbitrate,” *Denver Express*, September 17, 1913

Annotation

After Mother Jones harangued the delegates by questioning their manhood (quoted toward the end of this excerpt), the convention culminated with a formal vote to approve the call to strike.

This newspaper account captures the drama, passion, and foreboding that prevailed throughout the Trinidad Convention. It also reveals the important role that Frank Hayes’s song, “We’re Coming Colorado,” played as the UMWA squared off against the coal operators.

Newspapers from southern Colorado, Denver, and beyond covered the convention and the ensuing strike extensively. This account comes from the *Express*, which was generally sympathetic to the strikers’ struggle.

Excerpt

The unanimous vote of the convention for a strike followed an impassioned speech by Mother Jones, angel of a hundred coal strikes. The announcement of the result was greeted by the miners with wild cheers. Then, suddenly, silence fell over the hall. The delegates realized they had said the word that would throw 9000 men out of work. They were awed by the greatness of the approaching struggle. Their faces became grave and stern.

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We will win the fight today,
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The delegates started immediately for their homes; the northern delegates to return to the fight that has been going on for three years; the southern delegates to prepare for the fight that is to come.

The strike came after a weary afternoon of listening to grievances. Delegate after delegate from the southern camps had risen and told the convention of the wrongs the men in his camp had suffered, of low wages, of long, back bending hours, of miners forced to buy groceries and household goods at company stores at excessive prices, of loads of coal underweighed by company

officials so that miners might be cheated out of their just pay, of the hideous brutality of the mine guard thugs, of men cruelly beaten because it had been whispered that they 'belonged to the union,' of other men driven from their homes and their wives and their little ones at the point of the mine guards' guns. . . .

. . . 'Rise up and strike,' cried Mother Jones, the woman whom the coal operators of West Virginia blame for the victory of the miners there. 'If you are too cowardly to fight for your rights, there are enough women in the country to come in and beat h—l out of the operators for you.

Strike, and knock off the shackles of slavery! Strike and regain your manhood! Strike and stay with it until the last man of you drops into his grave, if need be. Strike, and may Gold help you to hoist the banner of industrial freedom over Colorado's coal fields.' And let me tell you one thing—the little old woman leaned tensely forward—'the man among you who will not protect his own home, his own womenfolks, his own fireside . . . has no right to be on the free soil of America.'"

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Mr. Avens: I do not understand the situation. You may believe me, but I will tell you the truth. I was in that convention, and as I told you we have Grievances and I have stated some of them and I can state more. We still have Grievances and they ought to be settled. If not, there will always be some disturbances; but when I went to that convention, I never dreamt -- understand me, I am telling you the truth -- I was never looking for a strike; I did not believe it would come to that; I thought we would be able to come together, and I will say this, as true as I am telling you now, that I fell to see where our officers encouraged the strike at all; but the evidence that was given by the delegates representing the different camps was heart-breaking. I know, gentlemen, that neither of you three would approve of what I heard; I do not believe you would for a moment. Now gave evidence of how they were treated; it was something fierce. There was one man there who spoke pretty fair English. He said he had a partner and the boss told him, "Now, you have got to take this mule to-day and drive." The fellow said, "I cannot drive; I never drove a mule in my life." The boss told him he had to do it and he went to take that mule and the mule balked on him and in fighting with the mule he was caught between the car and the ribs, and

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it squeezed him and broke something on his inside and he lay there, I guess, four hours, and he died. I thought that was fierce. I got that man's word for it. I did not see why it should occur, and such cases as this. Now, gentlemen, it is a fact I never heard anything so heart-breaking as was said there that night. So after I heard all the evidence, how he was treated, I know very well things have not been as they should be, but it is a pity. But I do not believe that you people would approve of it. If you would allow me to go back, if I did not break down crying, I could tell you of things I saw working, that I do not believe you would approve of them.

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Remembering the Strike Call

Citation

Testimony of T. X. Evans, "Proceedings of Joint Conference. Held in the State Capitol, Denver, Colorado, at 10 o'clock A. M., November 26, 1913." Typescript, no folder, box 26, Office of the Messrs. Rockefeller, Business Interest Series, RG II 2 C, Rockefeller Archive Center, Pocantico Hills, NY.

Annotation

Two months after the strike began, Colorado Governor Elias Ammons attempted to broker a settlement between the owners of Colorado's three largest coal producers and striking miners. Because the coal companies refused even to consider the question of union recognition (demand #1 of the strike resolution passed in September, 1913), and because Ammons himself had misgivings about the desirability of unionization, the governor refused to invite UMWA officials to the meeting. Instead, he asked that strikers in Fremont, Huerfano, and Las Animas counties each send one representative to parlay with the mine owners.

In this excerpt of the transcript from the resulting meeting, T. X. Evans, a Welsh-born miner representing the strikers of Fremont County, remembered how the testimony he had heard at the strike convention in Trinidad in September 1913, changed his mind.

Excerpt

You may [not] believe me, but I will tell you the truth [W]hen I went to that convention, I never dreamt [sic] — understand me, I am telling you the truth — I was never looking for a strike; I did not believe it would come to that; I thought we would be able to come together, and I will say this, as true as I am telling you now, that I fail to see where our officers encouraged the strike at all; but the evidence that was given by the delegates representing the different camps was heart-breaking. I know, gentlemen, that neither of you three would approve of what I heard; I do not believe you would for a moment. Men gave evidence of how they were treated; it was something fierce. There was one man there who spoke pretty fair English. He said he had a partner and the boss told him, 'Now, you have got to take this mule to-day and drive.' The fellow said, 'I cannot drive; I never drove a mule in my life.' The boss told him he had to do it and he went to take that mule and the mule balked on him and in fighting with the mule he was caught between the car and the ribs, and it squeezed him and broke something on his inside and he lay there, I guess, four hours, and he died. I thought that was fierce. I got that man's word for it. I did not see why it should occur, and such cases as this. Now, gentlemen, it is a fact I never heard anything so heartbreaking as was said there that night. So after I heard all the evidence, how he was treated, I know very well things have not been as they should be.



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The Rockefeller Dynasty

Citation

American Press Association, photograph of John D. Rockefeller, Sr. (left) and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., 1915, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2005685460/>

Annotation

Firms ranging from minuscule mom-and-pop operations to immense corporations vied to meet the rapidly rising energy demands of consumers throughout the Mountain West. Far and away the largest coal operator in the entire region, though, was Colorado Fuel & Iron (CF&I). By 1913, CF&I was one of the largest corporations in the entire United States. It owned more than a dozen coal, iron ore, and limestone mines, as well as hundreds of thousands of acres of land; operated the largest steel manufacturing plant west of Chicago; and maintained a range of subsidiary enterprises that stretched across several states.

CF&I had been formed in 1892 through a merger of several previous companies masterminded by Colorado-based capitalist John C. Osgood. Osgood's firm expanded rapidly thereafter, weathering the deep depression of the 1890s to become a hot commodity among Wall Street types during the early 1900s. John D. Rockefeller, the richest man in America and quite possibly the most hated, emerged from the fray as CF&I's largest shareholder. From that point up to the Colorado coalfield strike of 1913-'14, Rockefeller was grooming his son and presumptive heir, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to take over the family empire.

[The Colorado Fuel & Iron Co., Denver, Colo. Executive department. L. M. Bowers, chairman.]

SEPTEMBER 19, 1913.

DEAR MR. MURPHY: Your favor of the 16th is at hand and has been read by both Mr. Weilborn and myself with great satisfaction. You handled the matter raised by Mr. Stewart with exceptional skill, and it leaves us unhandicapped in event there is a strike among the coal miners in southern Colorado. For the information of your office, I will state as briefly as possible the demands of the organizers and agitators of the United Mine Workers of America and our relation at the present time in connection therewith.

We have spent a great deal of time and studied with a good deal of care all the questions in connection with labor unions among miners and men employed by industrial corporations during the past two or three years, anticipating in time having to meet the demands of union labor. We follow the eastern rules of mining as to wages, prices per ton, and the several different features that obtain in the mining industries, both where union and nonunion labor is employed. This applies to our steel works as well as to our mining operations.

We have found it desirable to take up from time to time these questions that were likely to lead to controversy and study them from every angle, and where we could meet them by making certain economic changes without loss we have taken the initiative in their application in this mining district. We have been opposed by some of our competitive operators, whose notions of fairness are, in our opinion, somewhat lopsided, but our position among them was such that we have been able to inaugurate and carry out these changes without serious criticism on the part of these competitors. To-day they are patting us on our backs.

We studied the eight-hour problem, which we knew would come up in the form of bills in the legislature and would be pushed through by agitators on the ground who were backing them, so we anticipated these matters and ex-

(continued)

perment with eight-hour labor. For instance, we have a large percentage of employees who work by the day—timbermen, drivers, carmen, men outside on tipples, etc.—at all of our mines. These men were on hand at 7 o'clock in the morning and stayed throughout the entire day, while the coal miners work by the ton, some coming at 7, some at 8, and some at 9, some working until 1, others until 3, others all day, averaging, however, not more than about seven hours' work per man. Generally speaking, we found that working our mines eight hours saved us in overhead expenses and in other ways enough to offset any loss than might come from an 8 instead of a 9 or 10 hour day in many of our mines. After this had been thoroughly settled in our minds we established an eight-hour day for all coal miners, complying with the union rules in that respect, but operating as nonunion mines.

Another question that we know would come up in case of agitation was the semi-monthly pay. All the mining companies in Colorado paid monthly, and there was great opposition in regard to semi-monthly pay on the part of some of our competitive operators. We never had any demand from our miners for a change, with one exception. In a little remote section of the State, where we had a small mine in operation, they spoke to our superintendent, asking if it would be objectionable to us if we could send their money up twice a month, so that their women-folks could go out of town some distance to trade if they wanted to do so, or possibly take a trip to their home land without the necessity of waiting until the end of the month. No demand was made; it was simply a request on the part of a few miners there. This led us to take up the question, knowing that if we paid at one mine we would have to pay at 20 or 30 mines, and in order to satisfy these people at this place we not only made a semi-monthly pay day there, but at all of our mines, very much to the delight of our employees—wholly unasked, as you see, but it was done as a matter of policy, anticipating that these questions might arise sooner or later as well as because of our willingness to accommodate our employees, even at some extra cost to us.

Another matter was the weighmen employed at the mines. For several years our company has raised no objection but has requested our miners to select their own weighmen, as is done in eastern mines where union labor is employed. This weighman has to be paid by a small assessment against each miner. Trifling though it is, our men would perhaps employ a weighman for a month, and then becoming satisfied that our own weighman was giving them correct weights, they invariably refused to continue the one selected by them. As our miners shift more or less and new men are coming all the while, about a year ago Mr. Welborn and the writer were discussing these questions, because one or two competitive companies (both of whom tried to interest Mr. Cooper in their bonds) were cheating their miners by false weights, which some newspapers had taken up, and we agreed to post-circulars at all our mines stating that we had always encouraged miners to employ their own weighmen, which our old employees were all familiar with, but for the benefit of newcomers we posted the notice to advise them that they were welcome to and urged to select their own weighmen. So far as I know not a single man was selected.

Another question was the accusation that miners were forced to trade at the company stores. In order to settle this we had our storekeepers and all interested say to our employees that they were welcome to trade at our stores or go anywhere they wished, as the money was their own; that we would be glad if they would trade with us, though they were perfectly free to trade where they pleased, and no man's standing would be changed if he saw fit not to trade with us. During the past few months, since the agitators have been in the State, we have had men make a careful canvass of our camps and we have yet to find a single case of dissatisfaction on this account.

The above covers every demand being made now by the agitators, with the exception of recognition of the union and a trumped-up demand of a 10 per cent advance, which is entirely unworkable, as our scales of wages practically conform to those of other bituminous-coal sections, and the average wages of our men are higher than in any other soft-coal mining section we know of. This is included in their demand to fool the public and to inspire our miners to unite with the union.

The main question, and, in fact, the only matter up between the United Mine Workers of America and the Colorado Fuel & Iron Co., is recognition of the union, which we flatly refuse to do, or even meet with these agitators to discuss or take up this question directly or indirectly.

Northern Colorado has had a strike for three and a half years. The companies were handicapped for a year or more, but have whipped the organization and are operating to full capacity without any serious difficulty as nonunion mines. They formerly employed union miners, whose rules became so oppressive that the operators were compelled to rid themselves of union dictation.

I will not undertake to enumerate these objections to union labor here. They are many. One is the quality of the output under union domination, which is inferior. It is impossible to discharge incompetent labor without the matter being brought up for investigation by officials of the union, both in and out of the State, and numerous requirements that practically take away the mines from the control of the owners and operators and place them in the hands of these, in many cases, disreputable agitators, socialists, and anarchists.

In canvassing our numerous mines we find practically all of our miners opposed to a strike or any disturbance in the relations existing between the company and themselves, including possibly 5 or 10 per cent who are inactive members of unions. These labor agitators have caused to be circulated throughout the United States false statements, which Mr. Welborn says are 100 per cent lies. In other words, they claim that all the things above enumerated, which have been put in operation by our company without demands or solicitation, are unobserved in southern Colorado. While they may be able to find a few little operators who are unable to meet all the requirements and who are not doing as well for their miners as we are, they make no distinction and give the impression broadcast that all the coal mines of southern Colorado, including our own, are guilty of violating all of these rules which the unions have been able to secure in many sections of the country. So far as we are concerned, every single word is false. We have the good will of our men, and they are perfectly satisfied. Not more than 10 per cent belong to unions, and these are old miners who have belonged to unions in the Eastern States for many years and retain their membership as a matter of sentiment, rather than of protection.

It is difficult to tell what the outcome of the threatened strike will be, as letters are being sent to our miners demanding that they quit their jobs or it will go hard with them. Fear of the Black Handers, especially among these foreigners, is far from being phantoms, but is a real thing. Though we hope to be able to keep a large number of our men, many of those who do go out will, after a few days when they find we are able to protect them, return to their work. The strike is called for the 23d, but it is thought on the part of a good many operators that the officials, anticipating being whipped, will undertake to sneak out if they can secure even an interview with the operators, which so far they have been unable to do, thus boasting before the public that they have secured the principal point, namely, recognition of the union.

This covers practically the whole matter, so far as the Colorado Fuel & Iron Co. is concerned.

In behalf of Mr. Welborn and myself I want to thank you again for the exceptionally able manner in which you discussed this question with Mr. Stewart.

Yours, very truly,

L. M. BOWERS.

STARR J. MURPHY, Esq.,
26 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

6 / Primary Sources / The Strike Begins

The View from 26 Broadway

Citation

“Lamont Montgomery Bowers to Starr Murphy, Sept. 19, 1913”, from U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations, *Final Report and Testimony* (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1916), p. 8414-8416.

Annotation

From offices at 26 Broadway in midtown Manhattan, the Rockefellers attempted to keep track of an immensely complicated corporate empire. Neither the Rockefellers nor their underlings in New York knew much about the day-to-day operations of the firms whose stock the family controlled. Instead, the Rockefellers relied on trusted subordinates like Lamont Montgomery Bowers, a long-time associate, to keep track of concerns like CF&I.

Bowers, like the Rockefellers and the family’s other men in Colorado, despised unions. Indeed, the Rockefellers were among the most powerful and forceful opponents of the American labor movement. In this letter to Starr Murphy, a key Rockefeller advisor based in the New York office, Bowers gave his take on the strike call. He also articulated a range of objections to unionization—some of them based largely on the economic threat labor organizations posed to industrial corporations like CF&I, others based on loftier principles.

Excerpt

I will state as briefly as possible the demands of the organizers and agitators of the United Mine Workers of America and our relation at the present time in connection therewith.

We have spent a great deal of time and studied with a good deal of care all the questions in connection with labor unions among miners and men employed by industrial corporations during the past two or three years, anticipating in time having to meet the demands of union labor. ...

The main question, and, in fact, the only matter up between the United Mine Workers of America and the Colorado Fuel & Iron Co., is recognition of the union, which we flatly refuse to do, or even meet with these agitators to discuss or take up this question directly or indirectly.

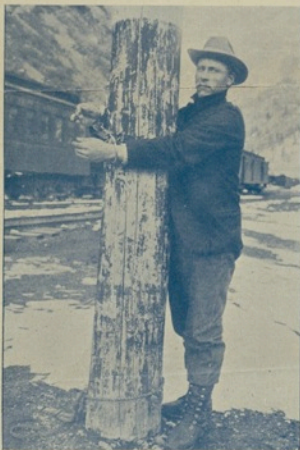
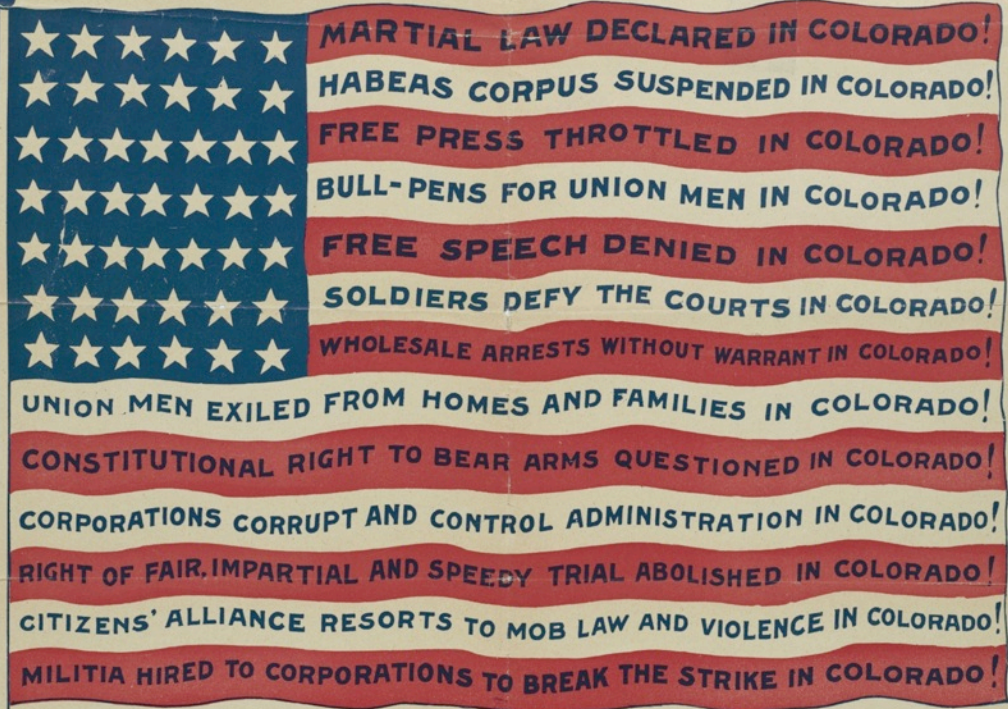
Northern Colorado has had a strike for three and a half years. The companies were handicapped for a year or more, but have whipped the organization and are operating to full capacity without any serious difficulty as nonunion mines. They formerly employed union miners, whose rules became so oppressive that the operators were compelled to rid themselves of union dictation.

I will not undertake to enumerate these objections to union labor here. They are many. One is the quality of the output under union domination, which is inferior. It is impossible to discharge incompetent labor without the matter being brought up for investigation by officials of the union,

both in and out of the State, and numerous requirements that practically take away the mines from the control of the owners and operators and place them in the hands of these, in many cases, disreputable agitators, socialists, and anarchists.

In canvassing our numerous mines we find practically all of our miners opposed to a strike or any disturbance in the relations existing between the company and themselves, including possibly 5 or 10 per cent who are inactive members of unions. ... We have the good will of our men, and they are perfectly satisfied. Not more than 10 per cent belong to unions, and these are old miners who have belonged to unions in the Eastern States for many years and retain their membership as a matter of sentiment, rather than of protection. ... Though we hope to be able to keep a large number of our men, many of those who do go out will, after a few days when they find we are able to protect them, return to their work.

IS COLORADO IN AMERICA?



UNDER THE FOLDS OF THE AMERICAN FLAG IN COLORADO!



EVERY WORD inscribed upon the stripes of "Old Glory" is the truth. If this flag is desecrated, the Republican Governor of Colorado is responsible for the acts that profane the emblem of liberty.

THE PICTURE represents Henry Maki, a union miner of Telluride, who was arrested for vagrancy---had money in his pocket and was being supported by his union. He was shackled to a telephone pole because he refused to work in a filthy cess-pool under the bayonets of the state militia.

WE ARE GOING TO BREAK his chains and the chains that are binding the working class of Colorado.

OUR STRUGGLE is for an eight-hour day, to establish the right to organize for mutual benefit, and to prevent discrimination against union men.

IF YOU DESIRE to assist the striking Miners, Mill and Smeltermen of the Western Federation of Miners of Colorado in this battle for industrial and political freedom, send donations to Wm. D. Haywood, Sec'y-Treasurer, 625 Mining Exchange Building, Denver, Colorado.

Charles Moyer

PRESIDENT

Wm. D. Haywood

SEC'Y-TREASURER



7 / Primary Sources / Roots of Conflict

Class Conflict in Turn-of-the-Century Colorado

Citation

Western Federation of Miners, "Is Colorado in America?" broadside (c. 1902-1904). Available online from Denver Public Library:

<http://digital.denverlibrary.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15330coll22/id/84101>

Annotation

In late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century America, no contest attracted as much attention or provoked as many misgivings, fears, and hopes as that between "Capital" (corporations, the people who owned them, and their allies) and "Labor" (workers organized into unions and their supporters). Between the 1870s and 1910s, Colorado served as an important battleground in this national struggle. A string of earlier disputes between corporations and unions in Colorado's mining regions set the stage for the coalfield strike of 1913-'14 and shaped its every contour.

Colorado's bitter and ongoing class conflicts stemmed from several factors. First, corporations enjoyed considerable power in the state. They faced few government regulations, and they easily flouted sporadic efforts by state and local governments to control their actions. Corporations found it especially easy to assert their will over isolated and vulnerable communities of workers such as mining camps.

Second, Colorado's labor organizations were active, diverse, and sometimes quite radical in their economic, social, and political goals. While many Colorado trade unionists remained relatively conservative, seeking largely to secure "bread and butter" gains such as shorter hours or higher wages, other labor organizations spearheaded by the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) expressly sought to transform or overthrow America's capitalist system. The WFM enjoyed widespread support in many of Colorado's rollicking gold- and silver-mining districts, where the union repeatedly squared off against the corporations that dominated Colorado's hardrock mines.

Last but hardly least, the state government became increasingly involved in the state's worsening labor struggles. In 1894, militiamen ordered in by Populist Governor Davis Waite effectively tipped the balance of a huge strike at Cripple Creek in the WFM's favor. Thereafter, though, more conservative governors repeatedly placed the weight of the National Guard behind mine operators and other corporations, directly contributing to decisive defeats of the WFM at Leadville in 1898 and Cripple Creek in 1903-'04. During the latter struggle, militiamen also helped to defeat the UMWA in southern Colorado's coalfields.



THE WIND OF THE SNOWS.



WOMEN AND MACHINES.

THE SNOWS AT CREDIT BUTTE, COLORADO.—From Photographs by George E. Warren.—[See Page 111.]

8 / Primary Sources / Roots of Conflict

Workplace Dangers

Citation

Graham, Charles. "The Disaster at Crested Butte, Colorado." *Harper's Magazine*, February 16, 1884.

Annotation

Well into the twentieth century, coal mining ranked among the most dangerous occupations in the United States. The hazards of coal mining contributed to labor organization under unions in several ways.

The perils of coal mining stemmed from the very nature of the enterprise. First, the whole reason consumers demanded coal was because it contained so much readily accessible energy. This meant that coal was flammable. Moreover, many coal deposits in Colorado also contained high concentrations of methane and other explosive gases. Second, almost all of the coal mined in Colorado lay in sedimentary deposits known as strata. Coal strata comprised entire layers of the earth's subsurface. As miners systematically took coal out of the earth and into the market, they faced the difficult task of removing one layer of earth without the layers above falling on top of them. Finally, the labor mine workers performed worsened underground dangers in various ways. Miners introduced dynamite and other explosives into highly flammable underground spaces. Picks, drills, and other tools, meanwhile, also put huge quantities of another explosive substance, coal dust, into the mine atmosphere. No wonder that between 1884 and 1912, more than 1,600 Colorado coal miners died on the job.

Falls of rock and call generally killed one or two workers at a time. These small-scale "accidents" were so common that newspapers only sporadically reported them. But Colorado's coal mines were also subject to much larger-scale disasters. Three mine disasters in Las Animas County in 1910 killed more than 200 mine workers. Progressive reformers and union activists successfully parlayed public outrage over these explosions into two primary channels, both of which contributed to the 1913-'14 coalfield strike. First, a blue-ribbon commission appointed by the governor after the 1910 explosions resulted in the revision of the state's mine safety law; enforcement of the new regulations (passed in 1913) constituted one of the UMWA's strike demands. Second, in the wake of tragedies that many observers blamed on the coal companies' negligence and arrogance, the UMWA, which had been roundly defeated in a bitter strike in 1903-'04, found a receptive audience among many mine workers. Union organization surged in response to the 1910 disasters.

Illustrator Charles Graham adapted two photographs taken in the wake of Colorado's first major coal-mine disaster, the Jokerville Mine explosion, which killed 59 workers just outside of Crested Butte in 1884. This pair of images appeared in one of the leading national magazines, *Harper's*. The top illustration shows the scene outside the mine mouth following the explosion; the bottom image shows miners' wives searching for their husbands amongst the corpses laid out before burial in a makeshift morgue.



9 / Primary Sources / Roots of Conflict

The Company Town or “Closed Camp” System

Citation

“Street Scene, Rouse, Colorado” (ca. 1900 to 1920), negative X-4310, History Colorado, Denver. Online at <http://digital.denverlibrary.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15330coll21/id/9653/rec/41>.

Annotation

Most of southern Colorado’s coal mines were located in remote areas far from existing settlements. During the 1870s and ‘80s, some coal-mining companies established towns to house their workforce. Most miners, however, lived in houses they built for themselves. Many of these dwellings were located on land owned by the mining companies. But mine workers generally owned the structures and paid only a nominal ground rent (usually \$1 a year). With a few exceptions, most of the region’s early coal-mining communities resembled similar-sized towns outside the coalfields. Storekeepers, doctors, and other businesspeople and professionals serviced these so-called “open camps,” which also elected municipal governments and established police forces.

In 1894, Colorado mine workers joined a nationwide strike. This event was important for two reasons. It was the first walk-out of Colorado coal miners to be led by the United Mine Workers of America, which was formed in Ohio in 1890 by delegates who represented several earlier coal-miners’ unions. Second, the 1894 strike demonstrated to mine owners the benefits of “closed camps”—company towns in which the coal operators owned every piece of ground and all housing. In closed camps, moreover, the coal companies controlled all commercial and social services. All authority and all decision-making rested in the hands of local coal-company managers, who assumed the roles the local governments and police forces had previously served.

Colorado Fuel & Iron led the push for closed camps. Through a company magazine and widespread publicity efforts, CF&I tried to portray its new company town system as a high-minded campaign to improve living conditions in the West’s hardscrabble coal camps. The main motivation for establishing closed camps, however, was to eliminate the threat of unionization in the coalfields. In the short term, these company towns succeeded in blocking the spread of the UMWA (as well as rival unions such as the Western Federation of Miners). Over the long run, though, company towns exacerbated discontent among mine workers and their families. In the closed camps, after all, frictions and resentments that would otherwise have been diffused amongst various storekeepers, doctors, mayors, policemen, landlords, and employers became focused on the coal companies.

Rouse, located in Huerfano County, midway between Walsenburg and Ludlow, was one of the first closed camps built by Colorado Fuel & Iron. It served as a model for the company towns CF&I and its competitors would build throughout the southern coalfields in the wake of the 1894 strike.



10 / Primary Sources / Life in the Union Tent Colonies Rebuilding Community

Citation

“Zanetell Tent at Forbes Tent Colony” (1914), negative X-60448, Denver Public Library Western History and Genealogy Collection. Online at <http://digital.denverlibrary.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15330coll22/id/35204/rec/1>

Annotation

The majority of those who joined the strike in September 1913, lived in company housing. Coal companies had long included clauses in the lease contracts mine workers signed that permitted the companies to evict any workers who went out on strike. The onset of the coalfield strike in September 1913, then, meant that thousands of mine workers lost the roofs over their heads.

Some workers crowded into the homes of relatives or friends in open camps, in larger towns like Trinidad, or on the farms and ranches that covered much of the southern Colorado landscape. A few thousand more tried to leave Colorado in search of work elsewhere. Despite these efforts, though, tens of thousands of strikers faced the prospect of homelessness.

The UMWA responded by building more than a dozen tent colonies throughout the strike zone. The union rented land from ranchers and other landowners; imported tents from a recent (and unsuccessful) strike in West Virginia; purchased tents and other supplies from local hardware dealers; and laid out neat “colonies” consisting of canvas tents.

Conditions in the tent colonies were rudimentary at best. As winter descended, an already tough situation worsened. One of Colorado’s infamous blizzards, for instance, heaped three or more feet of snow upon strikers’ tents in December 1913.

This photograph shows members of the extended Zanetell family posing with friends and comrades outside their tent at the UMWA’s tent colony outside the company town of Forbes, in Las Animas County.



11 / Primary Sources / Life in the Union Tent Colonies Making Do

Citation

“Ludlow Strike” (1913 or ’14), negative Z-215, Denver Public Library Western History and Genealogy Collection. Online at <http://digital.denverlibrary.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15330coll22/id/13254/rec/1>.

Annotation

The union tent colonies reflected the tremendous diversity of southern Colorado’s mining population. The largest colony, Ludlow, housed some 1,200 men, women, and children drawn from almost two dozen national and racial groups. Though strikers carried into the tent colonies the various social divides that had long fragmented the peoples of the southern coalfields, daily life in Ludlow and the other colonies tended to draw strikers together.

Men, women, and children of all sorts joined together to prepare meals and perform other necessary chores at Ludlow’s “Big Tent.” To pass the time, strikers turned to a range of leisure activities including snowball fights, gymnastics contests, musical jam sessions, and baseball games. Later in the twentieth century, some tent colony inhabitants looked back with great fondness on life at Ludlow, recalling the sense of community that prevailed there.



12 / Primary Sources / Life in the Union Tent Colonies Organizing Resistance

Citation

“Speakers at the Ludlow Strike” (1913 or ’14), negative X-60372, Denver Public Library Western History and Genealogy Collection. Online at <http://digital.denverlibrary.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15330coll22/id/33971/rec/1>

Annotation

Strike leaders envisioned the tent colonies as much more than temporary places of refuge. The success of the UMWA’s campaign depended, after all, on the union’s ability to starve southern Colorado’s coal operators of the labor power required to operate the mines.

The Ludlow colony, located near a railroad junction where major north-south lines connected with tracks servicing some of the state’s most productive coal mines, was intended to serve an especially critical strategic function. Union leaders correctly predicted that CF&I and its competitors would attempt to import strikebreakers to the coal camps above Ludlow by train. As the conflict intensified, strikers from Ludlow tried to intercept trains carrying strikebreakers. Using persuasion and threats, throwing rotten tomatoes and even the occasional punch, men, women, and children from Ludlow all hoped to advance the UMWA cause.

Union stalwarts spoke frequently to the inhabitants of Ludlow and other colonies, reminding them of the strike’s goals, organizing forays against strikebreakers, and otherwise cultivating solidarity and militancy. Given the diversity of the tent colony population, communication posed constant difficulties. In this image, two union orators address a crowd of miners at the same time, presumably speaking different languages.

Mr. THOMPSON. You may proceed with your story.

Mrs. JOLLY. I want to take up just as little time as I can, so I will tell this story of the strike.

Chairman WALSH. Tell it in your own way, taking up as little time, but giving all the details that you think are pertinent.

Mrs. JOLLY. Yes, sir. Well, a week previous to the strike my husband went to Trinidad to do a little shopping down there. When he came back from Trinidad he put on his clothes and went to the mine on the following morning. They asked him where he had been. He told them to Trinidad.

Chairman WALSH. Who asked him?

Mrs. JOLLY. The superintendent. They wanted to know what his business was in Trinidad. He told them he was down there on private business. They asked him if he was a delegate to the convention at Trinidad that the United Mine Workers had held before there. He said no. They told him that they did not need him there any more; that he was to get out of camp. I think it was 15 minutes that they gave him to move his furniture and everything and get out of camp. He moved. I went down to a farmhouse below and spent the week there, until the Ludlow tent colony. On the 23d day of September the strike was called and we all moved into the tent colony. From my first experience in the Ludlow tent colony the gunmen would come there and would try in every way to provoke trouble. They were trying to cause a battle between the miners and the gunmen, but we knew that and we did not want to have any trouble. At one time the gunmen came to the Ludlow tent colony, just as near as they could get, fired two shots into the tent colony. Our men took their rifles and went to the hills, thinking that by so doing they would lead the fire that way and keep them from firing on the colony, where the women and children were. There was no way to protect the women and children. After that our men took and dug pits under the tents, so that if the same thing should happen again there would be some means of escape for those women and children. Following that, the militia came into the field. When the militia came in there we made them welcome; we thought they were going to treat us right. They were escorted into the camp with a brass band. They attended all of our dances. They came down and took dinner with us two or three different evenings, but when they were in there two or three days they turned, and we could see that, but we did not want to have any trouble with them. One of the women, I believe, told them that they could not be on two sides at once. So following that they would come into our tent colony and searched about once a week or more. When they came there our arms were all turned over to the militia.

13 / Primary Sources / Life in the Union Tent Colonies Violence

Citation

Testimony of Pearl Jolly, in U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations, *Final Report and Testimony* (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1916), p. 6348.

Annotation

From start to finish, the Colorado coal strike was an extraordinarily violent conflict. The first blood had been shed in August 1913, before the strike had even officially begun. By October, ambushes, gunfights, and even assassinations had become commonplace. Colorado Governor Elias Ammons, a ranchman from Douglas County who had been prevailed in the gubernatorial election of 1912 in no small part because of heavy support from labor unions, acceded to pressure from local government officials in Las Animas and Huerfano Counties, as well as from UMWA leaders, and dispatched soldiers from the Colorado National Guard to the southern Colorado coalfields.

Residents of the Ludlow colony initially welcomed state militiamen, hoping that the soldiers would serve as a neutral peacekeeping force. But the good feelings between the union and the National Guard eroded over time.

In this document, Pearl Jolly, a nurse who had recently married a Scottish coal miner, recalled the deteriorating situation at Ludlow, where she lived. This excerpt is drawn from the much lengthier account of the Ludlow Massacre Jolly gave before the U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations in May, 1914. Thereafter, Jolly traveled across the country recounting a UMWA-friendly account of the events she had witnessed and experienced on April 20th.

Excerpt of Interest

From my first experience in the Ludlow tent colony the gunmen [guards employed by the coal companies and state militiamen] would come there and would try in every way to provoke trouble. They were trying to cause a battle between the miners and the gunmen, but we knew that and we did not want to have any trouble. At one time the gunmen came to the Ludlow tent colony just as near as they could get, fired two shots into the tent colony. Our men took their rifles and went to the hills, thinking that by so doing they would lead the fire that way and keep them from firing on the colony, where the women and children were. There was no way to protect the women and children. After that our men took and dug pits under the tents, so that if the same thing should happen again there would be some means of escape for those women and children.



14 / Primary Sources / The Dogs of Industrial War Polarization

Citation

“Women’s March” (Jan. 1914), Negative X-60505, Denver Public Library Western History and Genealogy Collection. Online at <http://digital.denverlibrary.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15330coll22/id/29196/rec/1>

Annotation

By January of 1914, all hopes for a quick or painless settlement of the differences between the strikers and the coal operators had vanished. The drift of the Colorado National Guard from neutrality to support of CF&I and its fellow mining corporations further aggravated an already sharply polarized situation.

A pair of factors explain why a military force initially dispatched by Gov. Ammons to keep the peace increasingly stood at the center of conflict. First, keeping the National Guard in the strike zone proved expensive. State Treasurer Roddy Kenehan, who sympathized with the union cause, wanted to block the militia from intervening on the coal companies’ behalf. Kenehan, whose distrust of the National Guard was based on the decisive role they had played in tilting the outcome of previous strikes in the mine operators’ favor, refused to pay the militia’s bills from state funds. CF&I and its allies wisely stepped in to fill the gap. Colorado’s largest banks, all of which staunchly opposed unionization, began to bankroll the Guard. Second, as a citizen militia, the National Guard was intended to serve only relatively minor, short-lived functions. For most guardsmen, tours of duty lasted only 90 days. By early 1914, regular guardsmen began to muster out of the force. Guards, mercenaries, and so-called “gunmen” employed by the coal companies increasingly took their place.

No event better symbolized the National Guard’s descent from peace-keeping neutrals to war-making partisans than the women’s march and ensuing riot on January 22. On that day, a group of women marched through the streets of Trinidad to protest the detention of Mother Jones by National Guardsmen, who proceeded to hold her without filing formal charges. In this photo, women hold signs expressing their solidarity with Jones.



15 / Primary Sources / The Dogs of Industrial War Polarization

Citation

“Women’s March” (Jan., 1914), negative X-60516, Denver Public Library Western History and Genealogy Collection. Online at

Annotation

National Guard commander General John Chase ordered his troops to break up the women’s march. This photograph captures the clash that followed.

It shows mounted militiamen fighting with women and other strike supporters not far from where the UMWA convention had voted to strike four long months before. Mother Jones, the irascible “angel of the miners” and one of the most influential UMWA orators, was captured by Guardsmen and held incommunicado for several weeks. Chase, claiming authority under martial law (which Ammons had never clearly declared), declined to file charges. This move outraged defenders of civil liberties throughout the United States. UMWA publicists, meanwhile, turned the women’s march debacle into a ready-source of pro-union copy: “The French revolution,” the *United Mine Workers’ Journal* hissed, “carries no more cowardly episode than the attack of the gutter gamin [a pejorative term commonly used at the time to refer to street urchins] soldiery on a crowd of unarmed and unprotected women!”



16 / Primary Sources / The Dogs of Industrial War Fighting Erupts

Citation

"The Ludlow Colony after the 'Massacre,'" negative X-60558, Denver Public Library Western History and Genealogy Collection. Online at <http://digital.denverlibrary.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15330coll22/id/35484/rec/1>

Annotation

Conditions in the southern coalfields seemed to improve in February and March. By April, Governor Ammons had withdrawn most National Guard units, leaving only a skeleton force of militiamen in the strike zone by mid-April.

The key event in the Colorado coalfield war erupted on the morning of Monday, April 20th, in and around the always-contentious Ludlow colony. After the local militia commander interrogated Louis Tikas, "captain" of Ludlow's Greek contingent, gunfire broke out between National Guardsmen and strikers. To this day, historians disagree over who fired the first shot. As strikers and Guardsmen exchanged fire, both sides made sense of the fighting through the lens of their own experiences and expectations. Guardsmen had long feared that union fighters would go on the offensive, and they felt especially vulnerable because Ammons had called so many of their comrades back from the strike zone. Strikers, meanwhile, were convinced that the company-controlled state militia had plans to force them out of the tent colony at any cost.

By mid-afternoon, several strikers and one militiaman lay dead. Most were struck by the bullets that flew fast and furious through the Colorado air on that April morning. Tikas, though, was shot at short range, reportedly in the back.

Striking miners attempted to protect women and children through a sensible strategy that culminated in an unexpected and tragic outcome. Armed union fighters attempted to divert the National Guard's might away from the Ludlow colony by scurrying into a nearby arroyo, from which they subjected the militiamen to scathing fire. Women, children, and males too young or too old to take up arms stayed in the colony. Most hid themselves in the cellars strikers had dug into the soil as violence intensified in the fall of 1913.

Not long after National Guardsmen succeeded at taking the union tent colony, Ludlow caught fire under suspicious circumstances. The resulting carnage thrust the events at Ludlow into national newspaper headlines. Whether militiamen intended to set fire to the colony or not—the existing sources are unclear on the matter—the result was undeniable: The fire that raged through the colony consumed all the oxygen in a cellar occupied by several women, children, and babies. By nightfall, a total of 19 people had been killed—one militiaman, one bystander, and seventeen strikers, including fourteen women and children. This photo offers a posed shot of Guardsmen keeping watch over the ruins of the Ludlow colony, where cast iron cook stoves and bedsteads offered almost the only remnants of a community that more than 1,000 strikers had inhabited just hours earlier.

1,000 MINERS GATHER TO FIRE ON MILITIA

Troop Train Arrives on Scene and Finds
Whole District in Terror; Women Flee
to Cellars When Threat to De-
stroy Mines Is Made.

BY HARVEY V. DEWELL,

Staff Correspondent of The Rocky Mountain News.

TRINIDAD, Colo., April 24.—(Friday)—One thousand armed strikers from the Union colony at Aguilar early this morning were gathering below Walsenburg to oppose the advance of General Chase and 389 national guard reinforcements who left Denver Thursday at noon. Behind the strikers lay the smoking ruins of eight great coal properties in the field between Delagua and Rome over which fighting raged all day.

One striker was shot in a battle in the streets of Walsenburg in the evening. The list of known dead in the Ludlow district has grown to twenty-nine and it is believed at least a score more lie dead in the fields over which the fighting raged today. Scores are wounded.

At 1:30 o'clock this morning General Chase and the troop train from Denver had halted at Walsenburg and horses were being unloaded. The train will advance at daybreak under cavalry guard.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN RUSHED TO CELLARS.

Women and children in Walsenburg are being hurried to cellars and places of safety in the fear of an immediate attack by strikers.

Strikers are patrolling the line of the Colorado & Southern from Rugby to Wynne, fifteen miles below Walsenburg, and parties armed with dynamite and picks are reported moving toward Walsenburg.

TRINIDAD, Colo., April 23.—Late tonight John McLennan was taken from a train en route from Ludlow to Trinidad by soldiers acting on the command of Major Hamrock. McLennan is being held in the military camp at Ludlow.

A striker was shot during a street battle which raged between mine guards, militia and strikers in the streets of Walsenburg early tonight. In the fight which raged from Delagua to Rome today, the known death list climbed to twenty-nine and it is probable that a score more dead are scattered through the hills. Scores have been wounded.

STRIKERS DETERMINED TO WAGE WAR ON MILITIA.

The fate of the district tonight in effect hangs in the balance. Carried away by a sudden sense of their power, the strikers, according to a statement at Aguilar headquarters, are determined to brook interference by none but United States troops.

All non-combatants have fled Aguilar and the surrounding towns for safety in the cities of Walsenburg, Trinidad and Pueblo. The telegraph, postoffice and bank at Aguilar have been closed, and according to one report received here, they are deserted.

A state of terror on the part of the non-combatants caught in the war zone prevails.

MEN GIVEN ARMS AND HURRIED TO MEET TROOPS.

The strikers' call to arms was sounded tonight by the ringing of a bell in the union headquarters. Leaders of the men immediately ordered all men to report for duty and to proceed at once in the direction of Lynn, two and one-half miles from Aguilar, on the Colorado & Southern main line, to meet the troop train.

The men began to file down the road immediately pouring at the headquarters to receive their supply of ammunition from boxes containing cartridges of all calibers.

Reinforcements arrived constantly at the headquarters and canvas bandollers and belts for the cartridges and the guns themselves were given out. In the glare of the headquarters' light the men presented a weird picture.

Following the departure of the main strikers' body at 10:00 o'clock, stragglers continued to leave the camp for more than an hour.

The special train in charge of Gen. John Chase, left Pueblo at 8 o'clock tonight and at midnight was near Canon, a few miles north of Walsenburg. The train was not expected there for an hour.

Camp fires gleam along the ridges and at Aguilar, scenes of the burning of the Empire mine property yesterday, 500 men are gathered for what it is supposed will be the first concerted attack. By

(Continued on Page 6, Column 1.)

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE.)

virtue of the fighting today, the strikers hold possession of all the country between Ludlow, where 100 men and two machine guns, under Major Hamrock are stationed, and the coal camp at Rouse, twelve miles south of Walsenburg, to which fugitives from the burning camps taken by the strikers have fled. The strikers were seen tonight on Hog Back between the Denver & Rio Grande and

Colorado & Southern tracks, toward their tent colony at Wynna, which commands the tracks from a promontory, where a battle will likely occur tomorrow.

House Is Surrounded.
At a late hour House was reported to be completely surrounded and 200 men who hold the camp with their machine guns and a machine gun, were preparing for an immediate attack. If these facts are correct, it is conceded that the mine at Lester, Cameron and Walsenburg will be abandoned. Property damage to a street of \$1,000,000, it is estimated, has been done.

Strike leaders said their ranks continually were being augmented by the arrival of fresh forces. They deplored the lack of enough rifles to arm all the men who they said were ready to battle with the mine guards or the militia.

Numerous strikers declared they would gladly yield to United States regulars, but not to state guardsmen.

Twenty-Five Deaths in Mine.

J. W. Siple, Denver, president of the Southwestern Fuel company, and twenty of his men are facing death tonight in the Empire mine as the result of their refusal to surrender to the strikers at Agullar early this afternoon.

Three women, two children, and two wounded men have been removed from the mine pit, preparatory to the resumption of the fighting.

A supply of air sufficient to last the miners about twelve hours remains in the mine, it is said. Unless aid reaches them by that time they will be the alternative of dying by suffocation or throwing themselves on the strikers' mercy.

Those who have been taken from the pit are William Waddell, mine superintendent, shot through the shoulder, his wife, and Legia Waddell, their 15-year-old son, Matthew Waddell, mine clerk and also Waddell's son, shot through the foot; the younger Waddell's wife, and their 9-month-old daughter, and Mrs. John McIntyre, wife of the camp blacksmith.

J. W. Church, the mines chief engineer, reported to have been killed yesterday's fighting, is within the mine and safe. The only condition imposed by the strikers was that the men should surrender their arms and abstain from any conduct from the district.

The wounded men, women and children who accepted it were conducted to a place outside the danger zone and if possible will be placed on a train for Pueblo this morning.

At the Southwestern mine, which broke into flames early this afternoon, battle is raging between guards and a strong force of strikers. The tipple and the camp have been destroyed, according to a report which reached here tonight, and the guards have been fired back into the mouth of the mine.

Don Vigil and Nick Schumlich, were killed and a mine guard either killed or wounded.

The force of strikers about the entrance to the mine grew rapidly in number, but it was the spread of the flames to the tipple house which finally drove its defenders to abandon it and retreat further into the mine. A few moments later the strikers, according to R. D. King, one of the mine owners, who witnessed the engagement from his residence a quarter of a mile away, effectively closed the entrance with dynamite. Shortly thereafter the wrecking of the fan cut off the circulation of air through the workings and the air shaft was blocked.

Communication Cut Off.

The flames, which spread through the camp until every building was ablaze, cut off communication with the entombed persons until, shortly after noon.

It was then that E. N. Snyder, one of the Agullar strike leaders, announced over the telephone to Trinidad that an effort to reach Siple and his companion for the purpose of liberating them from their hazardous position, provided they would surrender their arms, was to be made.

Snyder said tonight that Siple had refused to consider the proposal of surrender, though he had intimated that he might change his mind. Snyder also said that personally he "didn't care what he did." "The only quarter asked by Siple," he declared, "was protection for the women and children."

According to reports which have been received from the younger Waddell, he received his wound when he ventured from the mine stope, in which his father and the others were imprisoned, to recover a bank book which had been abandoned in his house.

While he was in the house the place was surrounded by strikers and he was taken prisoner. On his way to a boiler-house, where he was to be detained, he was shot in the foot. His captors declared the affair was an accident. The elder Waddell received the bullet in the shoulder in attempting to go to his son's assistance. He succeeded in crawling back to the mouth of the stope, into which he was drawn. None of those in the custody of the strikers complained last night of the treatment they had received.

The fighting this morning began shortly after 8 o'clock, when from the Empire property and the town of Agullar the strikers' forces surged northward carrying everything before them. Their numerical strength at various places was estimated at between 700 and 1,200 men. For the most part little or no resistance was offered.

Primrose Property Fired.

The Primrose property, from which the women and children had been removed to House during the night, was the first to be consigned to the flames.

and the camp have been destroyed, according to a report which reached here tonight, and the guards have been fired back into the mouth of the mine.

Flames All Along Came.

The fire is spreading rapidly all along Green canon, in which both the Empire and the Southwestern mines are located.

Virtually the whole strike zone is in a state of terror. Should the troops be in running the eighteen-mile packet spread for their reception, more damage may be done to property. Should the militia succeed, it is possible that the guerilla warfare will exist for weeks.

John Lawson, international board member of the United Mine Workers of America, announced definitely this afternoon that he would refuse to order the strikers to surrender their arms until they had been assured that they would receive fair treatment at the militia's hands. "There can be no peace without justice," he said.

Communication into the war district from Trinidad has been completely interrupted, and grave fears for persons in the mine company-properties are entertained.

Enormous Loss Is Feared.

The mines now known to be ablaze are the Primrose of the Colorado Fuel & Iron company; Mine No. 4 of the Southern Colorado Fuel company; the Empire and Southwestern mines of the Southwestern Fuel company; the Green Canon mine of the National Fuel company and the Rugby mine of the Colorado Fuel & Iron company. In addition to the Royal and Broadhead mines, both operated by independent companies, are in ashes.

Major Hamrock at the Ludlow camp announced late tonight that he was seriously contemplating the sending of at least a substantial proportion of his force in the direction of Agullar, so serious did he consider the situation there.

Agullar in Flight Center.

The storm center of the trouble virtually shifted today to Agullar, and the liberation of the three women and two children from the pit of the Empire mine marked the first cessation in the fighting in more than twenty-eight hours. According to the reports of the trouble which have reached Trinidad the shooting commenced at about 5 o'clock yesterday morning, when the strikers began to pour shots into the camp from the surrounding hills.

In anticipation of trouble, the women and children, under the direction of President Siple and the other mine officers, had been removed to the tipple, about which the fight immediately centered.

Fire in the houses of the camp broke out almost immediately and, fanned by a light breeze, spread rapidly. The fire meanwhile redoubled and the shots ripped through the tipplehouse until it soon became untenable. The women are crowding in the stope, the entrance which Siple and his companions attempted to hold.

Three Strikers Killed.

Primrose Property Fired.

The Primrose property, from which the women and children had been removed to House during the night, was the first to be consigned to the flames. Before volleys from the hills its defenders fell back, from building to building, until finally they were forced to flee to the hills.

A moment later the mine tipple and other wooden structures were ablaze and at 9 o'clock reports of dynamite heard at House gave evidence that the stope and probably the air shaft had been destroyed.

Strikers surged over the ridges next in the direction of Rugby, which was evacuated by the few men who remained within the buildings without a struggle. Shortly thereafter, according to report, it also burst into flames.

Strikers Ready for Attack.

The strikers then marched on Rouse, which is still unattacked, according to the best information obtainable. The last message sent out by its superintendent before communication with the rest of the district was cut off was directed to the Colorado Fuel & Iron company's offices here.

"For God's sake, send help," it read. Since House forms the key to the mines at Lester, Cameron and Walsenburg, it is feared that a determined effort to take it may be made.

At Cameron, as a precautionary measure, women and children have been placed in a concrete cellar, and similar steps have been taken to insure their protection at the other menaced points.

The last of the camps to report fear of attack were Primero and Segundo, operated by the Colorado Fuel and Iron company. All the women from the strikers' Segundo tent colony have been removed, according to the superintendent's report, and a large party of armed men is visible on the hills. Neither of the camps could withstand a determined assault. Similar forces of men are visible on the heights above Berwind and Tabasco in the immediate vicinity of Ludlow, but no fear for their safety is entertained in view of the proximity of the militia men who occupy the Ludlow depot.

The Black Hills, held by the strikers, and Cedar Hill, on which the militia's machine guns are mounted, exchanged shots yesterday, at long range, but no close fighting occurred. So far as is known no one was hurt.

The women and children in the vicinity of Segundo have nearly all left. The strikers' families have been brought to Trinidad and the families of the railroad workers at that place have been taken to Weston.

Funerals of Primo, Larrie, Frank Robino and William Flyer were held today. The bodies were accompanied to the graves by long processions.

A general funeral will take place today over the remains of sixteen of those who lost their lives at Ludlow. Separate services will be held for Louis Tikas, leader of the Greek colony at Ludlow who was killed by militiamen near the close of the day's fighting.

An Italian fraternal order has been organized for the relief of Ludlow

17 / Primary Sources / The Dogs of Industrial War

The Strikers Strike Back

Citation

The Ten Days' "War", *Rocky Mountain News*, April 24, 1914.

Annotation

As the Ludlow tent colony still smoldered, striking miners throughout southern Colorado took up arms. The resulting fighting, known by contemporaries as the "Ten Days' War," constituted one of the most remarkable outpourings of labor militancy that Colorado has ever seen.

Mine workers, sometimes reinforced by fighters arriving from Denver and beyond, launched well-coordinated attacks in Las Animas, Huerfano, and Fremont Counties. Their primary targets were closed camps and mine tunnels. UMWA officials, most of whom feared that the fighting would get out of hand, signed a truce agreement with Colorado's state government on April 25. John Lawson and other union leaders zigzagged through the southern coalfields, advising union fighters to lay down their arms—but to no avail.

This news account portrays how successfully the mine workers fought back against the coal companies and their allies.

Excerpt

Women and children in Walsenburg are being hurried to cellars and places of safety in the fear of an immediate attack by strikers. . .

The fate of the district tonight in effect hangs in the balance. Carried away by a sudden sense of their power, the strikers, according to a statement at Aguilar headquarters, are determined to brook interference by none but United States troops. All noncombatants have fled Aguilar and the surrounding towns for safety in the cities of Walsenburg, Trinidad and Pueblo. The telegraph, postoffice and bank at Aguilar have been closed, and according to one report received here, they are deserted. A state of terror on the part of the non-combatants caught in the war zone prevails. The strikers' call to arms was sounded tonight by the ringing of a bell in the union headquarters. . . .

The men began to file down the road immediately pausing at the headquarters to receive their supply of ammunition from boxes containing cartridges of all calibers. Reinforcements arrived constantly at the headquarters and canvass bandoliers and belts for the cartridges and the guns themselves were given out. In the glare of the headquarters' light the men presented a wierd [sic] picture. . . .

Camp fires gleam along the ridges and at Aguilar, scene of the burning of the Empire mine property yesterday, 500 men are gathered for what is supposed will be the first concerted attack. By virtue of the fighting today, the strikers hold possession of all the country between Ludlow, where 100 men and two

machine guns under Major Hamrock are stationed, and the coal camp at Rouse, twelve miles south of Walsenburg, to which fugitives from the burning camps taken by the strikers have fled. . . . Virtually the whole strike zone [is] in a state of terror. . . .

The fighting this morning began shortly after 5 o'clock, when from the Empire property and the town of Aguilar the strikers' forces surged northward carrying everything before them. Their numerical strength at various places was estimated at between 700 and 1,200 men.

Colorado's Proud of Them.

Quietly determined Colorado women, their hearts rung by the unnecessary bloodshed and suffering in the southern Colorado coal fields, Saturday compelled the chief executive of this state to ask President Wilson to detail federal troops to supersede the state militia in the strike district. Where men had failed, they succeeded.

President Wilson, humanitarian and student of conditions, doubtless will order troops into Colorado today, thus making permanent the armed truce now existing in practically all of the affected district.

Should he fail so to do, by any chance, it is feared that the hundreds of armed strikers, now well entrenched and deployed, and the state militia will clash again, with probable loss of life and property.

Such a possibility is difficult to contemplate, but if it does come to pass there can be no doubt that the women of Colorado again will make history and will continue their demands, supported by the best and the most unselfish element in the state whose desire is only for peace and the prevention of unnecessary bloodshed, and will take further steps toward securing federal aid.

The action of the wives and mothers, sisters and daughters who gathered at the statehouse Saturday did more to prove the worth of women as voters and as citizens—did more to prove their right to equal suffrage with men—than any movement heretofore chronicled in history. Henceforth the women of the state should be a unit in working for the betterment of industrial and social conditions, regardless of political faiths or affiliations.

Resolutions dictated by interested parties had no place in their council. The women profited by the fact that men had "resolved" without avail and they, the women, decided to act and to let their actions speak for themselves.

The women wanted something and, quite after the fashion of women, they ACTED and GOT WHAT THEY DEMANDED.

18 / Primary Sources / The Dogs of Industrial War

Denver Women Bring Peace to the Southern Coalfields

Citation

“Colorado’s Proud of Them,” *Denver Times*, April 27, 1914.

Annotation

A coalition of Denver women responded to the strikers’ counteroffensives by marching on the State Capitol. Governor Ammons initially refused to meet them. But the women would not be ignored. Through their persistence, they secured an interview with Ammons. The women convinced the governor that the only way to halt the bloodshed was by wiring President Woodrow Wilson to send in federal troops.

As U.S. Army soldiers hurried from Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, the strikers’ battalions executed one last series of attacks. By April 30th, the mine workers finally stopped fighting, but not before having killed some 30 strikebreakers, mine guards, mine officials, and state militiamen.

In this editorial, the *Denver Times* offered unqualified praise for the women who marched on the Capitol.

Excerpt

Quietly determined Colorado women, their hearts rung by the unnecessary bloodshed and suffering in the southern Colorado coal fields, Saturday compelled the chief executive of this state to ask President Wilson to detail federal troops to supersede the state militia in the strike district. Where men had failed, they succeeded. . . .

The action of the wives and mothers, sisters and daughters who gathered at the statehouse Saturday did more to prove the worth of women as voters and as citizens—did more to prove their right to equal suffrage with men—than any movement heretofore chronicled in history. Henceforth the women of the state should be a unit in working for the betterment of industrial and social conditions, regardless of political faiths or affiliations. Resolutions dictated by interested parties had no place in their council. The women profited by the fact that men had ‘resolved’ without avail and they, the women, decided to act and to let their actions speak for themselves. The women wanted something and, quite after the fashion of women, they ACTED and GOT WHAT THEY DEMANDED.

The
MASSES

JUNE, 1914

10 CENTS



Drawn by John Sloan.

IN THIS ISSUE
CLASS WAR IN COLORADO—Max Eastman
WHAT ABOUT MEXICO?—John Reed

**19 / Primary Sources / The Legacy of Ludlow
Public Response**

Citation

John Sloan, cover of *The Masses*, June 1914. Available online from Brown University Library:
http://library.brown.edu/cds/mjp/render.php?id=1367343438486604&view=mjp_object

Annotation

The Ludlow Massacre received national news coverage by an American press characterized by sharp ideological divides. In this dramatic color image published in *The Masses*, a monthly affiliated with the Socialist Party and published in New York City, artist John French Sloan interpreted the Colorado coalfield war as an effort by manly, militaristic miners to avenge the deaths of women and children martyred to the union cause. This issue of the magazine also contained an article by Max Eastman on the Colorado struggle.



20 / Primary Sources / The Legacy of Ludlow Aftermath

Citation

Photograph in *New York Times*, Oct. 3, 1915, captioned “John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (Second from the Left) and Party Coming Out of the Frederick Mine at Valdez, Colo.”

Annotation

Months before strikers and militiamen clashed at Ludlow, CF&I and its competitors had resumed production at most of their mines. The decision by U.S. Army officers not to interfere with the arrival of additional strikebreakers essentially doomed the UMWA strike to failure. The enormous union had other battles to fight—in Ohio, British Columbia, West Virginia, and elsewhere. By late 1914, UMWA leaders prepared to withdraw the financial support upon which strikers in Colorado had depended for well over a year. The union called a second strike convention, this time in Pueblo. After passionate speeches for and against ending the dispute, delegates finally cast their ballots. After convention officers announced the decision to call off the strike, UMWA delegates broke once more into Frank Hayes’s “We’re Coming Colorado.” This time, however, they belted out this ode to “union forever” with tears streaming down their cheeks. The Colorado coalfield war was over.

The events of 1913-’14, however, ultimately cast a long shadow. Public outcry over Ludlow eventually led John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to break from his father’s often callous and heavy-handed labor policies. In 1915, Junior hired Canadian labor mediator William Lyon Mackenzie King to help him improve the underlying conditions Rockefeller had come to understand as the true causes of the strike. Most notably, they sought to improve conditions in CF&I’s company towns and create representative bodies of employees and managers to mediate workplace disputes in the company’s mines and steel mills. Touted as the “Rockefeller Plan,” these measures earned Rockefeller widespread praise. But they failed to quell unrest in the southern Colorado coalfields. Several strikes led by the UMWA signaled that the region’s mine workers remained unimpressed by Rockefeller’s mild reforms.



21 / Primary Sources / The Legacy of Ludlow Ludlow Today

Citation

Photo of Ludlow Massacre Memorial, by Mark Walker. Taken on April 28, 2005. Available online at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/84132439@N00/11360031>

Woody Guthrie, "Ludlow Massacre," 1958, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDd64suDz1A>.

Annotation

In the final reckoning, the Colorado coalfield war contributed to a slow, circuitous, but inexorable shift in the relationship between workers, employers, and the state. In the wake of the strike, Colorado legislators created an Industrial Commission intended to subject future labor-management conflicts to mediation and, if necessary, arbitration. Memories of Ludlow also played a part in an even more significant change—the passage by Congress in 1935 of the National Labor Relations Act (also known as the Wagner Act). This law established a system whereby workers wishing to establish a union could hold a binding election; if a majority of workers voted to unionize, then federal law mandated that employers recognize the union. Southern Colorado's mine workers promptly moved to have the UMWA recognized by CF&I and its remaining competitors as the collective bargaining agent for all wage workers in and around the coal mines and coke ovens. By 1950, unions had made huge gains, and American workers enjoyed the highest standard of living in the world.

The Ludlow Massacre has generated ongoing interest and controversy. Beginning with the publication of Upton Sinclair's novelized dramatization of the Colorado coalfield war in 1917, and continuing through the folk ballads of Woody Guthrie (though not always historically accurate, Woody Guthrie's "Ludlow Massacre" nonetheless presents a moving version of the Colorado coalfield war; as usual, Guthrie's sympathies lay with the working people of the United States). It has also been the focus of popular scholarship in the works of Howard Zinn, George McGovern, and others, the epic battles waged in 1913-'14 have continued to trouble, inspire, and instruct.

Today, the massacre is commemorated by a granite monument. Unveiled by the United Mine Workers of America in 1918, when John D. Rockefeller, Jr., happened to be visiting the southern Colorado coalfields, the Ludlow memorial bears the following inscription:

IN MEMORY OF
THE MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN
WHO LOST THEIR LIVES
IN FREEDOM'S CAUSE
AT LUDLOW, COLORADO
APRIL 20, 1914
ERECTED BY THE
UNITED MINE WORKERS OF AMERICA

In 2003, vandals—their identity is still unknown—used a rock saw to slice off the heads and arms of the monument's human figures. Thanks to the efforts of the UMWA, local historic preservationists, historians, descendants of strike participants, and others, the statue was repaired and rededicated in 2005. The incident helped build support for the 2009 designation by the U.S. government of the Ludlow Massacre Memorial Monument as a National Historic Landmark.

Additional Resources

Websites

Colorado Bar Association, *Historical Background for the 2003 Colorado Mock Trial Competition*, <http://www.cobar.org/index.cfm/ID/581/dpwpf/Historical-Foreward-and-Bibliography/>

University of Denver, *Teach Ludlow: An Archaeological Teaching Tool*, <http://teachludlowco.com/dotnetnuke/Home.aspx>

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Papanikolas, Zeese, *Buried Unsong: Louis Tikas and the Ludlow Massacre* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1982), 207-256.

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Matewan (Cinecom, 1987)

Out of the Depths: The Miner's Story (1984; New York: Films Media Group, 2010).

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Sinclair, Upton, *King Coal* (1917).

Poem

Mason, David, *Ludlow: A Verse Novel* (Los Angeles: Red Hen Press, 2007).

Song

Woody Guthrie, "Ludlow Massacre" (1944).

Young Adult Books

Ruby, Lois. *Strike! Mother Jones & The Colorado Coal Field War* (Palmer Lake, Colo.: Filter Press, 2012).

Teaching Strategies

General Instructional Strategies for using primary sources in classrooms followed by grade-level-targeted suggestions for essential questions, inquiry questions (including writing prompts and discussion starters), activities, and assessments aligned to specific state academic standards for 4th grade, 8th grade, and high school.

(To be prepared by a group of master teachers.)