

LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS AT THE COLORADO
FUEL AND IRON COMPANY: 1892-1918

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ABSTRACT

The subject of this work is the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company between 1900 and 1918, a period when it was beset by urgent labor problems. Though the thesis covers the first two decades of the twentieth century, the main emphasis will be on the years 1913-1918. The former year marks the beginning of the greatest labor crisis in the company's early history and the latter year the end of the trial period of a plan which the company had introduced at its coal mines and steel plant. The causes of the strike are discussed as well as the major incidents of the conflict. I also describe the attempts, both private and governmental, to effect a settlement, and management's resistance to come to any terms with the union. Lastly, I discuss the Industrial Representation Plan, a scheme which effectively eliminated the United Mine Workers of America from the company's coal fields for the next twenty years.

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INTRODUCTION

1

Many historians have analyzed the period in American history covering the first two decades of the twentieth century. In any of their descriptions of this era, they always mention one of these phenomena: concentration of industry, development of labor organizations, social conflict, and state interference with private business. Their consensus on the facts, however, breaks down when they examine the effects. Some have maintained that the results benefited the working class at the expense of big business. Others have advanced the theory that, notwithstanding the benefits accruing to the wage-earners, more important, previous relationships were not significantly altered--big business retained its dominant position. Since this thesis recreates the labor history of only one corporation it does not, consequently, pretend to solve the conflict; but, it will attempt to show that, at least in one isolated case, the viewpoint put forth by the latter historians seems closer to the truth.

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Samuel P. Hays, The Response to Industrialism: 1885-1914 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957).

Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1955).

Gabriel Kolko, The Triumph of Conservatism; A Reinterpretation of American History: 1900-1916 (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963).

Arthur S. Link, Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era: 1900-1917 (New York: Harper & Row, 1954).

George E. Mowry, The Era of Theodore Roosevelt and the Birth of Modern America: 1900-1912 (New York: Harper & Row, 1958).

The advent of the twentieth century coincided with two major developments which materially influenced labor-management relations in Colorado. These were: (1) a vigorous employer movement designed to resist union demands; (2) an increasing demand from Colorado labor organizations for an eight-hour day and other concessions. As a first theme, this thesis will consider the attempts by the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company to organize the resistance to union labor in Colorado.

The company was often accused of wielding excessive economic, political, and social power. Economically, maintained its critics, it dictated not only the miners' wages, but also where they would spend them. Politically, it was criticized for interfering with every aspect of the miner's rights, and socially, for regulating all phases of his life. As a second theme, this thesis will examine the evidence relevant to the company's alleged domination of its employees.

The first major encounter between the company and its men, the 1903-1904 strike, resulted in a complete victory for management. Ten more years went by before the workers once again challenged the company. During the 1913-1914 conflict, the corporate leaders, displaying a firm opposition towards the miners and their demands, were able to defeat the strike. As a third theme, the thesis will consider the outlook of the company's major policy makers, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., L.M. Bowers, and J.F. Welborn, and the reasons for their obstinate refusal to accept any plan of settlement as well as to deal with the union. As a secondary theme, the work will examine the

efforts of both levels of government, federal and state, to effect a settlement and the reasons they failed.

Even before the strike had actually come to an end, management was formulating a plan which it would, once the strike was over, put into effect at the mines. As a fourth theme, the thesis will cover the origins of the Industrial Representation Plan, its main features, management's purpose in introducing it, the conflict within management as regards the proper time to implement it, and the miners' and union's responses to it. Furthermore, the Plan will be contrasted with a similar employee representation scheme in force at McCormick and International Harvester, a producer of agricultural machinery.

Implementation of the Plan introduced a new era in labor-management relations at the company. As a final theme, the thesis will outline the practical changes brought about by the Plan. Also examined will be the reaction of the company, the miners, and the union towards these changes.

CHAPTER 1 - THE COMPANY AND THE UNION: 1892-1913

The coal mining industry at the turn of the century occupied a central position in the Colorado economy. Directly or indirectly, nearly one-half of the state's population¹ depended upon the industry.

Of the many mining corporations operating in Colorado,² the largest was certainly the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, which by 1913 accounted for 32 per cent of the state's total coal output. The company had been formed on October 21, 1892, when a merger of the Colorado Fuel Company, engaged mainly in the business of acquiring coal properties and coal lands, and the Colorado Coal and Iron Company was effected under the name of the CF&I.³ This consolidation was brought about principally through the efforts of John C. Osgood, president of the Colorado Fuel Company. This company and the Colorado Coal and Iron Company, competitors in the coal and coke business, had had a prolonged rivalry in acquiring properties. By having both companies under one management, a large reduction in general expenses was expected as well as an increase in net earnings. Osgood's reward for bringing about the merger

¹ George S. McGovern, The Colorado Coal Strike, 1913-1914 (Doctoral Dissertation: Northwestern University, 1953), p. 1.

² Hereafter referred to as the CF&I.

³ "The Minnequa Works of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company", Scientific American 45 (September 22, 1906): p. 214.

was the presidency of the newly-formed company.¹

At the beginning of the new century there arose a contest for control of the CF&I. From the time of organization, control had rested in the hands of Osgood. In 1901, he learned that John W. Gates, a Chicago broker who in 1897 had organized the American Steel and Wire Company, had bought extensive CF&I stock and it was suspected he was seeking to take over. After a bitter contest, Osgood, with the support of financier and railroad executive George Gould, thwarted Gates's plans. Gould himself had received backing from John D. Rockefeller, Sr., who had succeeded in convincing Gates² to sell his stock to him.

Though victorious against Gates, Osgood sought additional financial backing. The senior Rockefeller gave support, but it turned out to be a mixed blessing for the Colorado operator. After realizing that financial control had passed from him, Osgood resigned.³ His resignation marked the beginnings of Eastern absentee ownership, a perpetual sore spot in the company's labor relations.

The reorganization of the CF&I in 1902 meant that the senior Rockefeller, through a purchase of \$6,000,000 in stocks, became the principal stockholder. At the time of the 1913-1914 strike, the extent of Rockefeller's holdings

¹
The Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, Company Pamphlet, 1970, p. 1.

²
The Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, p. 7.

³
The Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, p. 8.

totalled \$24,109,818, which represented about 40 per cent¹ of all the company's stocks and bonds.

Rockefeller's investment allowed him to name three of the company's thirteen directors. At the time of the strike, these were John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who had been placed by his father in charge of all affairs pertaining to the CF&I, Starr J. Murphy, and Jerome D. Greene. The junior Rockefeller could also count on the support of four other² New York directors. Theoretically, this meant that he could dictate any policy no matter what the other six directors living in Colorado might say. Actually, the most prominent Colorado directors, President J. F. Welborn and Chairman of the Board L. M. Bowers, more often than not took matters into their own hands. Welborn, who had begun in the company's sales department and had steadily moved upward until he had become president in 1907, served the Rockefeller interests well but only when these coincided with his own. The same could also be said of Bowers who had come to Colorado in 1908 after he had been associated for twenty years with the senior Rockefeller in various of his business enterprises. From 1908 until 1916, when he was forced to resign, Bowers, together with Welborn,³ ran the company as he saw fit.

¹

 Testimony of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., United States Senate, Industrial Relations: Final Report and Testimony Submitted to Congress by the Act of Congress, August 23, 1912, 64th Cong., 1st Sess., Sen. Doc. 415, 8, pp. 7765, 7778; hereinafter cited CIR.

²
 Testimony of Rockefeller, Jr., CIR, 9, p. 8694.

³
 Testimony of Rockefeller, Jr., CIR, 8, p. 7779.

The CF&I, engaged in mining throughout the state, had its major mines in the southern part of Colorado, that is, in Las Animas and Huerfano counties. The location of these mines, isolated geographically from the population and industrial centers of Colorado, was instrumental in enabling the CF&I to establish company towns. In such towns, the company owned and maintained property, housing, commercial services, public utilities, and recreational facilities.¹ The Colorado Supply Company, one of the CF&I's subsidiaries, was the administrative foundation of the company town. Incorporated in 1888, this company had as its object "to establish and operate general merchandising stores at the various mining properties of the company for the convenience of its employees."²

One aspect of the company's work which received much publicity before, during, and after the strike was its welfare programme. This programme, which was intended to improve living conditions in the camps, had begun in 1881 when Dr. R. W. Corwin was appointed by the Colorado Coal and Iron Company to organize the Medical Department. Under his guidance the Minnequa Hospital, with a capacity of 40 beds, was built in 1882. Located in Pueblo where the company had an important steel plant, the hospital was enlarged in 1892 and again in 1897 giving it in the latter year a capacity of 90 beds.

¹ George P. West, United States Commission on Industrial Relations, Report on the Colorado Strike (Washington, 1915), p. 56; hereinafter cited West Report.

² The Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, p. 5. Italics mine.

Even this proved inadequate and hospital tents were added for temporary needs until the proposed new buildings would be erected. The increased number of employees occasioned by the opening of new coal and iron mines and the building of new mills at the steel plant made it necessary to expand hospital accommodations. Completed in 1902, the new hospital had a capacity of 228 beds. In 1917 a two-story building was constructed for the Nurses home; the following year, additions to the laundry equipment and fire protection were made.¹

Closely connected with the hospital service was the Sociological Department. In the 1880's the company had established kindergartens in two of its mining camps. The success of the project had prompted the company to enlarge it. Consequently, in 1901 the department, with Dr. Corwin in charge, was formed.² The order creating the department stated: 'It shall have charge of all matters pertaining to education and sanitary conditions and any other matter which would assist in bettering the conditions under which our men live.'³

Besides exercising control over education, the department had also under its auspices company and club

¹ The Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, pp. 10-11.

² John A. Fitch, "The Steel Industry and the People in Colorado", Survey, 3 February, 1912, p. 1712.

³ John W. Mills, "Coal Trust", Arena, 6 January, 1906, p. 616.

houses, recreation rooms, and all religious activity in the
¹
 camps.

The company's motives in creating the department were more often praised than questioned. The Outlook, pleased to note the good feelings existing between management and the miners, concluded: "the sense of responsibility thus shown by this Western mining company in seeking to ameliorate the condition of its employees and to beautify their surroundings furnishes an example which Eastern operators might well emulate."² The sociological work, maintained one journalist, was not designed to throw a sop to the men or to the unions since the company operated on the open shop system, which meant that no individual was hired or discharged for belonging to a union. This work, he went on, found its reward in the loyalty of the great majority of the employees and in the cooperation which they gave in all the company's efforts to improve their condition.³ Though it may have been true, as he contends, that the majority of the men were content with that particular department, it was not true, as he implies, that they were happy with all other company-initiated projects. Certainly the majority were unhappy with the company store and payment in scrip. Charlotte Teller, one of the better-known welfare workers of the time, came closer to the truth

¹
 Fitch, pp. 1712-3.

²
 "A Western Mining Company's Sociological Work",
Outlook 72 (September 20, 1902): pp. 149-150.

³
 Lawrence Lewis, "Uplifting 17,000 Employees",
World's Work 9 (March 1905): p. 5950.

when she lauded the company's kindness and "high sociological consciousness" but took issue with the paternalistic nature of the venture. She felt that the workers were dissatisfied because they had no clear voice in its administration, but at the same time they were "its involuntary supporters."¹

Colorado labor history in the first decade of the twentieth century is a story of hope, defeat, frustration, and renewed hope. The United Mine Workers of America² played a central role in this story.

The UMWA had made its appearance in Colorado in the last years of the nineteenth century. Surmounting many difficulties attendant on a fledgeling organization, it had organized District 15, including Colorado, in 1900. Paid-up membership for its first year was close to one thousand.³ These early successes had prompted the union to make certain demands. Among others, the union had asked for checkweighmen, abolition of the company store system, and compliance with the state law on semi-monthly payment in cash. These demands represented the then major complaints of Colorado miners. With great celerity, the companies had refused all the union's requests.⁴

¹ Charlotte Teller, "The Labor War in Colorado", Harper's Weekly 48 (January 9, 1904): p. 55.

² Hereafter referred to as the UMWA.

³ United Mine Workers Journal 11 (January 24, 1901): p. 7; hereinafter cited UMWJ.

⁴ F. J. Warne, "Organized Labor in the Anthracite Coal Fields", Outlook 71 (May 24, 1902): pp. 275-6.

This early setback did not dismay the union. One trade unionist admitted that conditions had not yet reached the degree of perfection desired, but his comparison of conditions in 1901 with those of years before showed that organization had done much for the worker.¹ Others, however, did not share his buoyant optimism. District 15 Secretary-Treasurer John Simpson decried the CF&I's anti-union practices which made many workers desirous of leaving the state,² but remained behind because they hadn't the means to do so. District President Ralph Prukop continued the attack on the CF&I. He inveighed the company for its store system, its use of scrip, and its control of public officials.³ The union's pessimism was heightened by lack of finances. This state of affairs persisted until 1903, at which time the international decided to send monetary and physical help. The latter came in the form of Vice-President Thomas L. Lewis who, together with the new district president William Howells, began an organizational campaign. The results were meagre with only 15 per cent of the 11,000 state miners joining and,⁴ of these, most were from the northern area, whereas the major corporations had their mines in the southern district.

Despite the paucity of its membership, the union, when summer came, felt sufficiently strong to make public

¹ E. P. H. Green, UMWJ 12 (December 12, 1901): p. 3.

² J. Simpson, UMWJ 12 (February 6, 1902): p. 6.

³ R. Prukop, UMWJ 13 (May 3, 1902): p. 6.

⁴ Elsie Gluck, John Mitchell (New York: The John Day Company, 1929), p. 167.

its grievances and demands. In an open letter to Governor James Hamilton Peabody and the public, Howells enumerated the miners' grievances: company store, violation of state labor laws, employment of immigrants. He then outlined the miners' demands: eight-hour day, checkweighmen, 20 per cent increase in wages, abolition of the scrip system. The letter concluded with a virtual ultimatum: either the coal operators would meet representatives of the union or else a strike would ensue.¹

It will be observed that in its early demands, the union did not include union recognition, which would become the root cause of the 1913-1914 strike. The omission was not fortuitous. Realizing its limited strength, the union, if it hoped for any kind of success, could not but stick to bread and butter issues. This line of attack would not immediately bring about the desired end, but it would firmly implant the union among the miners. From this base, it could, at a time when it had acquired more experience and resources, make the demand for recognition.

Displaying great alacrity, the CF&I, through one of its top executives, tersely refused to be represented in a conference with officials of the UMWA, though it would be willing to meet a committee of its own employees. It was the company's contention that it had, until then, successfully settled differences with its own men without the inter-

¹ William Howells to James Hamilton Peabody and the Public at Large, August 27, 1903, UMWJ 14 (September 10, 1903): p. 4.

ference of any third party and would thus continue this policy. The company was thoroughly complacent: should the miners strike, it would have enough men in its employ to produce sufficient coal for its smelters.¹

The CF&I's clear exposition of its intention did not augur well for the union. Soon, other small operators came out against the demands. Temporarily dismayed, the local officials quickly recovered. They brought the miners together to vote on strike action. After receiving a mandate from the workers, they travelled to Indianapolis in order to secure the approval of the national organization.² Before assenting, the latter attempted to settle by inviting the CF&I to a conference. On behalf of the company, General Manager J. F. Welborn wired President John Mitchell:

We do not think your organization is authorized to represent our miners, as very few of them belong to it. If you understand the situation as it really is, you no doubt regard the inciting of any further industrial disturbance in Colorado as ill-advised and criminal.³

The company's blunt refusal left the national organization hesitant. The local officials, uncertain of the outcome,⁴ returned home. Finally, in October, Mitchell wrote Howells that since he had exhausted all means to meet the operators and settle the issue, he gave the district the authority to

¹
J.F. Welborn, Denver Post, cited in UMWJ 14 (September 17, 1903): p. 1.

²
Gluck, p. 168.

³
J.F. Welborn to J. Mitchell, October 7, 1903, cited in McGovern, p. 117.

⁴
Gluck, p. 168.

call the strike. At the same time, Mitchell reminded Howells that the men should conduct themselves well, that they "should be admonished to observe the law, and under no circumstances should they permit themselves to be provoked into the commission of unlawful acts."¹

Such strong backing from the national organization restored some of the local union officials' confidence; the workers' response to the strike call certainly restored the rest. Though the card-carrying members were few, fully 95 per cent of the state's miners quit work. Even in the CF&I, a notorious bastion of the open shop, two-thirds of the 3,000 miners joined the strike.²

The northern operators immediately made some wage concessions, but the miners, in convention, rejected them. On November 21, the operators reiterated their previous offer. This time, the national organization conducted a secret vote among the miners. The results showed that a majority of the miners wished to return to work. By the end of the month, the northern men were back on their jobs.³

While the strike was settled in the north, the struggle continued in the south. The operators there began to forcibly import strikebreakers and evict miners from their homes. Even the State, by making recourse to martial law and jailing

¹
UMWJ 14 John Mitchell to William Howells, October 26, 1903, (November 12, 1903): p. 1.

²
 "The Colorado Coal Strike", Outlook 75 (December 5, 1903): p. 763.

³
 Gluck, p. 170.

union men, came to the aid of the operators.¹

The seriousness of the situation brought Mitchell to Colorado. After reassuring the strikers that Indianapolis would continue to support them, Mitchell, hoping to get some sympathy and help, held a conference with the governor. The meeting quickly convinced Mitchell that Peabody was no friend of labor. Mitchell could have avoided the dead end if he had consulted with Howells who, before the strike had begun, had received an unequivocal letter from the governor. Peabody had written:

If you wish to idle, that is your right, but you should not compel some other person who desires to labor, to remain idle with you. You are looking at the labor question from an entirely erroneous point of view, and so long as you maintain your present feelings of belligerency and of opposition to law and order, you will find life an unpleasant one to live.²

The governor was personally warning organized labor that if it interfered with men willing to work it would be prosecuted. Mitchell returned East empty-handed.

With the operators and the State presenting a united front against it, the union stood on weak ground. The optimism of 1903 gave way to the anguish of 1904. By the summer of the latter year, the local union officials found themselves minus another ally, more correctly, without the funds of the national organization. Simpson issued a call to organized

¹
Charles E. Stangeland, "The Preliminaries to the Labor War in Colorado", Political Science Quarterly 23 (March 1908): p. 1.

²
J.H. Peabody to W. Howells, August 14, 1903, cited in Melvin Dubofsky, We Shall Be All (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), pp. 48-9.

labor and sympathizers to send funds, but the response was not quite what he had hoped for.¹ Once this eleventh hour effort to salvage the strike had failed, the Union had no other alternative but to admit defeat and call off the strike. By the autumn of 1904, the situation in Colorado mines was back to normal.²

At the 16th Annual Convention of the UNWA, delegates, district officers, and national officials tried to assess the reasons for the failure of the strike. In their analysis, they concluded that the forces opposing them, the operators and the State, were too overwhelming to be overcome.³ However, further discussions revealed that blame could not be solely attributed to the opposition. Robert Randell, one of the northern local leaders and part-time organizer for the more radical Western Federation of Miners, accused Mitchell of first selling out the northern miners by arranging an agreement with the northern operators and second by withdrawing the funds of the national office.⁴

Virtually every national board member came to the defense of the president, but no one did it so effectively as Vice-President Tom Lewis. He reminded the convention that Mitchell, even though against the extension of the strike to the southern district, went along with the local officials

¹ J. Simpson, UMWJ 15 (July 24, 1904): p. 2.

² Chris Evans, UMWJ 15 (November 24, 1904): p. 1.

³ UMWJ 15 (February 9, 1905): pp. 2-7.

⁴ UMWJ 15 (February 9, 1905): p. 2.

so as not to collide with them. Both the decisions to settle in the north and to cut off the funds to the local were the responsibility of all the board members, added Lewis. Moreover, Mitchell had not stopped UMWA locals in other states from sending contributions. By March, concluded Lewis, the strike in the south should have been called off since there was no prospect for victory.¹ Indirectly, the Vice-President was claiming that the southern conflict was lost even before it had started.

Mitchell, present at the convention and the one most directly concerned, had the final word. Essentially, he seconded Lewis. Settlement in the north, he added, was the correct policy considering the market conditions at the time. Mitchell in turn accused Randell of being misinformed and implied that Charles Moyer, president of the Western Federation of Miners, was the agent provocateur.²

The position and action of the WFM during the strike might be the key to the question of whether Mitchell was guilty or not. According to Elsie Gluck, Mitchell's biographer, the WFM disagreed with the president's "conservative approach" towards labor problems.³ This approach manifested itself when Mitchell effected a settlement in the north. As a retaliatory measure, the WFM could picture the president as a friend of the operator and thus discredit him with the miners.

¹
UMWJ 15 (February 9, 1905): p. 4.

²
UMWJ 15 (February 9, 1905): p. 5.

³
Gluck, p. 167.

Most probably this is what the organization, through its spokesman Randell, attempted. Unfortunately for the Federation, Randell was not believed. More important, the possibility of an amalgamation of the two organizations was indefinitely laid aside.

The UMWA recovered slowly from its resounding defeat. Between 1905 and 1910, its organizers made few inroads in Colorado, especially in the southern fields. Unionists and local officials frequently complained of the Federation's attempt to establish dual unions, or of the CF&I's political domination of Las Animas and Huerfano counties and its hiring of deputy sheriffs to banish incoming organizers.¹ By 1910, the union's progress in the south was anemic, but the prospect in the north looked brighter.

On April 2, 1910, after it had decided to make a full-fledged organizational drive in Colorado, the UMWA called a strike in the northern fields. Much to its chagrin, the conflict dragged on for two years. The union had originally hoped for a speedy victory after which it would have concentrated all its forces in the south. By March 1912, the union had settled with three of the companies, but most operators continued the struggle.²

Meanwhile, conditions in the southern fields were improving for the miners and the union was also making some

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John McLennan, UMWJ 16 (July 27, 1905): p. 1.
 Louis Nuenthel, UMWJ 16 (May 5, 1906): p. 5.
 Thomas Kirby, UMWJ 17 (May 9, 1907): p. 1.

²

UMWJ 22 (March 14, 1912): p. 2.

progress. The miners received an increase in wages and were allowed to use several checkweighmen.¹ Union organizers, however, were experiencing such difficulty in entering the coal camps that one prominent unionist advised miners to stay away from Colorado.² Despite this difficulty, the UMWA was able to open offices in Trinidad, Florence, Walsenburg, and Aguilar, all located at the heart of the CF&I properties. It was the belief of Edward L. Doyle, Secretary of District 15, that the mine operators, feeling the heat, granted the miners an eight-hour day, two-weeks pay, and abolished the scrip system.³

By early 1913, the strike in the north was at a standstill. The national and local officials were faced with two alternatives: either allow the strike to die a natural death or find some new line of attack. Agreement on the latter course brought international Vice-President Frank J. Hayes to Colorado.⁴

Immediately upon his arrival, Hayes took matters into his own hands. His first action was to set up a policy committee, consisting of himself, Doyle, District President John L. McLennan, and international board member John R. Lawson. Hayes then successfully bridged the gap between local and national officials. Finally, he set himself the task of

¹ Edward L. Doyle, UMWJ 22 (May 9, 1912): p. 6.

² John R. Lawson, UMWJ 23 (August 1, 1912): p. 6.

³ Edward L. Doyle, UMWJ 24 (July 24, 1913): p. 8.

⁴ UMWJ 23 (April 24, 1913): p. 1.
UMWJ 23 (May 8, 1913): p. 7.

finding a way to stave off defeat in the north. A quick survey of the region led him to the conclusion that the conflict in the north could never be won until it was extended to the entire state. One of the major causes for the long duration of the struggle and the apparent defeat of the union, reasoned Hayes, was the relative facility with which strike-breakers could be imported from the southern fields.¹

Hayes's solution was welcomed not only by his subordinates but also by the national executive. By mid-August, Hayes and his team were ready to test the idea. On August 26, 1913, the committee sent a letter to every operator in the state requesting him "to meet us in joint conference for the purpose of amicably adjusting all points at issue in the present controversy." Opposition to the union movement, continued the committee, could not last forever; moreover, all operators who had bargained with the union had remained satisfied.² Unfortunately for the union, its first overture went to naught with only two small operators caring to answer.³

Undaunted, the committee made another proposal two weeks later. On September 8, they sent a letter giving notice of a joint convention of miners and operators to be held at Trinidad. Calling the meeting for September 15, they requested

¹
² UMWJ 24 (August 24, 1913): p. 1.

² United Mine Workers of America Policy Committee to Operators, August 26, 1913, Testimony of Edward L. Doyle, CIR, 8, p. 7031.

³ Edward Berman, Labor Disputes and the President of the United States (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), p. 77.

that every operator be present.¹ The convention met on the established date, but, not surprisingly, no company sent any representatives. Despite the refusal, the miners went on with their meeting. During the two-day convention, the miners took turns denouncing the operators. The convention closed on a positive note with the miners making public their demands. First on the list of union demands was recognition of the UMWA. Secondly, the union asked for a ten per cent increase in wages. The other five demands called for the companies to obey state laws with respect to the eight-hour day, checkweighmen, and freedom to trade in any store.²

Meanwhile, as the union was laying out its plans of attack, CF&I officials, though seeking to retain their composure, were plainly disturbed by the labor agitation. On September 4, Bowers wrote Rockefeller that "union agitators" were threatening to call a strike; their actions were keeping company officials "in a state of unrest."³ Two days later, in his letter to director J. H. McClement, Welborn emphasized that under no circumstance would the operators recognize the "lawless" UMWA. All was not bad news, Welborn reassured him, for only a small percentage of the company's men belonged to the union and, what was more important, the public and the

¹
United Mine Workers of America Policy Committee to Operators, September 8, 1913, Testimony of J. L. McLennan, CIR, 7, p. 6515.

²
Testimony of Edward L. Doyle, CIR, 8, p. 7025.

³
L. M. Bowers to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., September 4, 1913, CIR, 9, p. 8413.

press were generally favorable to the employers.¹

On the eve of the strike, anxiety and insecurity mounted. Four days before the strike, Bowers expressed his concern to director Starr J. Murphy; at the same time, he attempted to justify the company's position. The men had no reason to strike, he wrote, since the company had already met their demands, including the contentious eight-hour day. The only question which still divided the men and the company was union recognition, something which the CF&I flatly refused to do.²

These diametrically opposed positions did not augur well for a peaceful settlement of the issue. Views had become so polarized that they could engender but one result: a strike. On September 23, the southern Colorado miners, numbering about 8,000, joined their northern brethren. At the CF&I, about 70 per cent of the 6,000 miners struck.³

¹ J.F. Welborn to John H. McClement, September 6, 1913, CIR, 8, p. 7116.

² L.M. Bowers to Starr J. Murphy, September 19, 1913, CIR, 9, pp. 8415-6.

³ West Report, pp. 43-4.

CHAPTER 2 - CAUSES OF THE STRIKE

All Colorado operators, and the CF&I in particular, had to contend with many accusations which held them responsible for the outbreak of the strike. These accusations were usually broken down into three categories: social, political, and economic.

John Lawson revealed, before the Commission on Industrial Relations, the importance of absentee ownership as a cause of the strike. He pointed out that no prominent company official or director had visited the mines recently; this factor had caused management to lose contact with the aspirations of the grass roots element. He concluded his attack by voicing a sentiment probably shared by countless other miners:

An employer who is never seen, and whose power over us is handed down from man to man until there is a chain that no individual can climb; our lives and our liberties passed over as a birthday gift or by will; our energies and futures capitalized by financiers in distant cities; our conditions of labor held of less account than dividends; our masters too often men who have never seen us, who care nothing for us, and will not, or can not, hear the cry of our despair.¹

Welborn's testimony corroborated this charge. The top management of the CF&I, he told the Commission, consisted of thirteen directors, six of whom resided in Denver and the rest in New York. Meetings, which were the exception

¹

Testimony of John R. Lawson, CIR, 8, p. 8006.

rather than the rule, were held in these two cities. An executive committee composed of five members, four of whom lived in Denver, acted upon most of the matters that might otherwise have come before a board, and their actions were later approved by full meeting of the board. Very little communication existed between Denver and New York, and absolutely no communication as to labor conditions at the company's properties. Furthermore, at stockholders' meetings, general trends of the business were discussed but labor matters were never brought up.¹

The junior Rockefeller repeatedly admitted before the Commission his failure to maintain an interest in labor problems before the strike. Though he acknowledged his ignorance of labor conditions in Colorado, Rockefeller felt that this was justified since such matters were the prerogative of the executive officers. As he told the Commission: labor matters, "so far as they are within the control of a corporation, are matters for which the officers of the corporation are primarily responsible."²

In no uncertain terms, the testimony given by the president and chief stockholder of the CF&I reflected the company's indifference towards its own men, an indifference fostered by local officials who did not consider labor matters sufficiently important to bring them before board meetings, and by New York directors who did not have the time or who

¹ Testimony of J.F. Welborn, CIR, 7, pp. 6552-3.

² Testimony of Rockefeller, Jr., CIR, 8, p. 7765.

were unwilling to take it to visit the mines.

The company town was responsible for other social evils. Housing, frequently mentioned by the miners as one of their basic grievances, was a significant indication of the deplorable condition in which they lived. Reverend Eugene S. Gaddis, superintendent of welfare work at the CF&I for many years until he resigned following the strike, was in a good position to describe the situation. The company, he testified, owned and rented "hovels, shacks and dugouts" which were unfit for human beings and which were "little removed from the pigsty make of dwellings."¹ The population was so congested at the Sopris mine, reported the camp doctor there to Gaddis, that whole families were crowded in one room.² Moreover, the company's housing scheme left the miner little independence. If, for example, a miner would go on strike, he and his family were immediately thrown out of their home.³ Lawson's suggestion to alleviate the latter problem, that the miner be given the right to buy his own home, was never taken up by the company.⁴

Though operators acknowledged the existence of the problem, they offered a justification for it. If, as was testified, housing conditions were so bad, stated J. C. Osgood, now president of the Victor-American Fuel Company,

¹ Testimony of Eugene S. Gaddis, CIR, 9, p. 8492.

² Testimony of Eugene S. Gaddis, CIR, 9, p. 8492.

³ West Report, p. 54.

⁴ Testimony of John R. Lawson, CIR, 7, p. 6436.

he had never received any complaints on the subject.¹ The nature of the mining camps, contended Welborn, rendered it necessary to build houses for the miners, though he did not explain why they could not own them. However, he did admit that this system did not have to be permanently maintained, specially in some camps which had homes more than thirty years old.²

The company's tight control of all aspects of social life in the town was also felt in the religious sphere. This disproportionate influence was revealed by an incident which Reverend Daniel McCorkle, minister of the CF&I camp at Sunrise, told the Commission. By publicly denouncing the part played by the operators in the Ludlow battle, he had incurred the wrath of company officials.³ Four months after the cleric had delivered his sermon, Welborn wrote Murphy:

We have thought some of changing the minister at Sunrise, but have reffained from taking a course that would be unfair to him, or would indicate a prejudice against him because of what may have been simply indiscreet statements in connection with the Ludlow outbreak.⁴

His reaction is rather restrained, but the letter does show that Welborn had not forgotten the episode. Ultimately, the only reprimand received by McCorkle was from his religious superior, who told him: "We sent you to Sunrise to preach

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Testimony of J.C. Osgood, CIR, 7, p. 6436.

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Testimony of J.F. Welborn, CIR, 7, p. 6557.

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Testimony of D.S. McCorkle, CIR, 9, pp. 8540-1.

⁴

J.F. Welborn to Starr J. Murphy, October 31, 1914, CIR, 7, p. 6696.

the Gospel and not Socialism."¹ The incident was enough to convince McCorkle that the company's attitude went far in explaining the dying out of the churches in Colorado camps.²

Another flaw in the social structure of the coal communities was the disparate number of foreign employees. Agitators were largely to be blamed for the occurrence of the strike, admitted Lawrence M. Larson, history professor at the University of Illinois. But, went on the academic, the operators, through the hiring of a disproportionate number of immigrants, furnished the soil and conditions in which agitators could not fail to succeed.³ Thomas M. Patterson, formerly United States Senator from Colorado and part owner for the last ten years of two small mines, believed that it was the deliberate policy of the CF&I to fill its mines with foreigners of different countries. This system was set up so as "to keep down as much as possible the cooperation of the men toward any given end."⁴ The employers hired a variety of nationalities, stated John McLennan, to prevent the men from getting together and discussing their grievances.⁵ About 70 per cent of its workers were immigrants acknowledged the CF&I in its defense; however, this figure, Welborn reminded the Commission was applicable to the entire mining industry of

¹ Testimony of D.S. McCorkle, CIR, 9, p. 8542.

² Testimony of D.S. McCorkle, CIR, 9, p. 8546.

³ L.M. Larson to E.B. Greene, June 28, 1914, King Papers, 23 (Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada), p. 20741.

⁴ Testimony of T.M. Patterson, CIR, 7, pp. 6499-6500.

⁵ Testimony of J.L. McLennan, CIR, 7, p. 6531.

the United States.¹

To the physiographic and social conditions of the coal camps can also be attributed the most frequently mentioned grievance, the company store. The Colorado Supply Company, operating a number of stores at the camps, faced no competition at more than half of these camps. On a capital of \$700,000,² the company made an annual profit of 20 per cent. The miners' basic grievance against the system was not so much the high prices as against the manner in which they were made to patronize the stores. Thus, Gaddis testified that the manager of the fuel department, E. H. Weitzel, "instructed the superintendent, and so he informed me about three months ago, to use his influence to have employees trade at the store." In addition, one store manager had warned a housewife that her husband would be discharged if she did not buy her groceries from him.³ This evidence led George P. West, the Industrial Relations Commission investigator, to the following conclusion: "the miners risked the displeasure of the local officials, and the possibility of discharge, if they did not trade at the company stores."⁴ One company spokesman denied that the miners were compelled to trade at the company store or discharged for trading with outsiders, but he did admit that the company reaped large profits.⁵

¹ Testimony of J.F. Welborn, CIR, 7, pp. 6550-1.

² Testimony of J.F. Welborn, CIR, 7, pp. 6554-5.

³ Testimony of Eugene S. Gaddis, CIR, 9, p. 8501.

⁴ West Report, p. 68.

⁵ Testimony of E.H. Weitzel, CIR, 7, p. 6721.

Already accused of fostering certain economic and social evils, the companies were also severely criticized for their interference with state politics. Helen Ring Robinson, who represented the city and county of Denver in the Colorado senate, accused the CF&I of exerting political control over Las Animas and Huerfano counties. All companies, she stated,

reached out beyond the boundaries of their principality and made and unmade governors; men who desire positions of high place in Colorado would be very loath to antagonize them, whether they lived in Las Animas or Routt County, or in Denver, and it would not matter in that case to which political party they belonged.¹

The practice of backing those candidates who furthered their measures was illustrated in the gubernatorial campaign of 1914. In that election, the operators succeeded in electing a Republican for governor and a Democrat for attorney general. At the same time, while publicly campaigning for a Prohibition amendment to the state constitution, they were privately urging the candidates to accept a law and order platform.²

Fred Farrar, the Colorado attorney general, reported the existence in Las Animas and Huerfano counties of "a very perfect political machine, just as much a machine as Tammany in New York."³ The political boss in these two counties was Sheriff Jefferson Farr. The CF&I, "in common with other coal companies in Colorado, worked jointly with Sheriff Farr with

¹ Testimony of H.R. Robinson, CIR, 8, p. 7126.

² Testimony of L.M. Bowers, CIR, 9, p. 8773.

³ Testimony of Fred Farrar, CIR, 8, p. 7179.

a view to controlling the political situation in that part of Colorado", admitted Bowers. Furthermore, he acknowledged that the CF&I was party to the "unscrupulous" and "notorious" system, and was "very instrumental in establishing that deplorable condition in southern Colorado."¹

Control of the political machine achieved certain objectives which proved very beneficial to the company. One of these was the exclusion of union organizers. Senator Patterson declared: "I have no doubt but that just as soon as those in charge of working those mines discovered that there was a union man there he was discharged, not giving as the reason that he was a union man; but for some other reason."² Weitzel, contradicting what Welborn had told the Commission on the matter,³ admitted that the charge was true.⁴

Political power also meant that those miners who complained of some grievances were severely dealt with by the camp marshals in the companies' payroll. A federal grand jury at Pueblo reported in November, 1913:

Many camp marshals, whose appointment and salaries are controlled by local companies, have exercised a system of espionage and have resorted to arbitrary powers of police control, acting in the capacity of judge and jury and passing the sentence: 'Down the canyon for you', meaning thereby that the miner so addressed was discharged and ordered to leave the camp, upon miners who had incurred the enmity of the

¹ Testimony of L.M. Bowers, CIR, 9, pp. 8740, 8764.

² Testimony of T.M. Patterson, CIR, 7, p. 6478.

³ Testimony of J.F. Welborn, CIR, 7, p. 6567.

⁴ Testimony of E.H. Weitzel, CIR, 7, p. 6733.

superintendent or pit boss for having complained of a real grievance or for other cause. These, taken with brutal assaults by camp marshals upon miners, have produced general dissatisfaction among the latter. Miners generally fear to complain of real grievances because of the danger of their discharge or of their being placed in unfavorable positions in the mines.¹

Under such a system, the miner's civil rights were practically non-existent. Farr's mastery was so overwhelming that he could go so far as appointing jurors who could not even speak English. In that kind of a situation, a miner had no chance of getting justice, something to which even Bowers concurred.²

Political control had its greatest reward in the outright evasion of state labor laws. That the lack of law enforcement was an important issue was revealed by the fact that five of the striking miners' seven demands were for law violations. If the companies had obeyed the laws, asserted one official, the strike would not have occurred.³

One of these laws was the use of scrip in the payment of wages, the scrip to be used later in buying merchandise at the company store. The Colorado legislature had made the system illegal in 1899 but the companies had continued to violate the statute. The CF&I had used scrip until the early part of 1913, but it had been kept so long "entirely for the convenience of the miners."⁴ The company spokesman neglected

¹ Pueblo Federal Grand Jury Report, November 1913, cited in Samuel Yellen, American Labor Struggles (New York: S.A. Russell, 1956), p. 207.

² Testimony of L.M. Bowers, CIR, 9, pp. 8781-2.

³ Testimony of Edward P. Costigan, CIR, 9, p. 8123.

⁴ Testimony of E.H. Weitzel, CIR, 7, p. 6732.

to add the advantages of the system for the CF&I. When one becomes aware of all the legal violations perpetrated by the operators, it seems ironical to notice that they objected to the UMWA because it was a "lawless" organization.¹

The charges of political control made against the coal companies could be doubted if they had not been verified by the private correspondence of the most important operator. Four months before the strike, Bowers had sent to director Charles O. Heydt a revealing letter on the CF&I's political practices.

The Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, [wrote Bowers], for many years were accused of being the political dictator of southern Colorado, and in fact, were a mighty power in the entire state. When I came here [1908] it was said that the CF&I Co. voted every man and woman in their employ, without any regard to their being naturalized or not, and even their mules, it must be remarked, were registered, if they were fortunate enough to possess names. Anyhow, a political department was maintained at a heavy expense. I had before me the contributions of the CF&I Co. for the campaign of 1904, amounting to \$80,605, paid out personally by President Hearne. ... The decent newspapers everlastingly lampooned the CF&I Co. at every election, and I am forced to say the company merited, from a moral standpoint, every shot that was fired into their camp.

This state of affairs, continued the Chairman, had ceased when Welborn had become president in 1907. After that, no money was paid to any politician or political party. Moreover, no politician was allowed to enter the camps, and all subordinate officials were forbidden to influence the workers to vote for any particular candidate. Fundamentally, while attempting to whitewash the present administration of which

¹
Testimony of J.F. Welborn, CIR, 7, p. 6590.

he formed an integral part, Bowers felt no qualms about driving a nail in the coffin of the previous one. But, as his letter further revealed, it was untrue that the company no longer meddled in politics. Stated Bowers: "We have not lobbied in the legislature but have gone directly to the governor and other able men and have demanded fair treatment"¹ Going directly to the governor, he might have added, saved money and trouble. This modernization of corporate politics was well demonstrated during the strike when Governor Elias M. Ammons was pressured into rescinding an order prejudicial to the operators.

Not surprisingly, CF&I spokesmen, vis-a-vis the outbreak of the strike, attempted to vindicate the company. The CF&I had so well discharged its duty towards the miners, asserted Welborn, that the majority was satisfied with company policy. In an arrogant and complacent tone, he summarized:

We had ... for years spent a great deal of time and money in improving conditions about our plants, and the men had come to realize that wages, living conditions and general treatment accorded them by superintendents - in short, all working conditions at CF&I mines - were not only better than they had found in other states, but were more favorable than at mines of other companies in this state.²

Indeed, working conditions were so much "better" that the majority was not satisfied but went on strike.

Having no other reasons to exonerate the CF&I and its

¹
L.M. Bowers to Charles J. Heydt, May 13, 1913, CIR, 9, p. 8411.

²
J.F. Welborn to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., August 20, 1914, CIR, 7, p. 6679.

men, company spokesmen tried to discredit the union and the entire idea of collective bargaining. First they dealt with the tangible. Weitzel believed that many good men belonged to the UMWA, but he condemned the organization as a whole because it taught "class hatred."¹ Bowers, having nothing good to say about the UMWA, simply labeled it a "criminal organization." After this sweeping generalization, he went on to state his reasons for objecting to union recognition: (1) the quality of output was inferior; (2) the operator lost the right to control his business.² Likewise, Welborn had many good reasons, which he made known to both the Commission and Rockefeller, for disliking the union and consequently, for not acceding to the miners' first demand, union recognition. The UMWA, said the president, had violated contracts made with operators in other states; it had brought to Colorado a "lawless element" which had railroaded through the strike; and, most important, a majority of the miners at the CF&I preferred working under open shop conditions.³

The company's attitude towards collective bargaining was on the same plane as its attitude towards the UMWA. The junior Rockefeller conceded to labor the right to organize, but with one proviso, the worker's freedom to associate or

¹ Testimony of E.H. Weitzel, CIR, 7, p. 6759.

² L.M. Bowers to Starr J. Murphy, September 19, 1913, CIR, 9, p. 8416.

³ Testimony of J.F. Welborn, CIR, 7, pp. 6588, 6590, 6625, 6631-2.

J.F. Welborn to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., August 20, 1914, CIR, 7, p. 6679.

not with labor organizations.¹ In other words, the head of the CF&I, through a firm enunciation of the freedom of contract theory, was clearly saying that no union was welcomed at his company. His sentiments were corroborated by Welborn. Collective bargaining in the form advocated by the unions, he claimed, would not create better conditions for the workmen at the CF&I and "would work great injury" on the operator. However, some form of collective bargaining already existed at the company--the men were free to go to company officials with their grievances or with their suggestions.² That may have been so, but there was also the possibility that an outspoken critic, without a union to give him leverage, ran the risk of losing his job.

It has been seen that company feelings towards the UMWA and collective bargaining reflected the absolute authority of the employer. The arguments put forth to justify this were primarily negative: a plethora of words expounding the evils of unionism and of workers who did not cooperate with their employer.

Union spokesmen, like their company counterparts, attempted to dispel some of the opposition's claims. Vice-President Hayes, in direct rebuttal to a CF&I statement that the workers had not freely chosen to go out on strike, told

¹
New York Times, 7 April 1914, sec. 1, p. 1.
 Rockefeller held the same belief five years after the strike was over. Cf. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., "Representation in Industry", Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 81 (January 1919): p. 172.

²
 Testimony of J.F. Welborn, CIR, 7, pp. 6588-9.

the Commission that the national organization had not led the local one by the nose. Instead, the executive board had done everything to avoid conflict, but the operators' obstinate refusal to meet the miners had forced the latter to resort to their last weapon--the strike.¹ To the company's contention that the UMWA was a contract violator, Lawson had the following answer: before the company could make such a statement, it should itself stop violating every labor law in the state. The company had made the claim, not so much for its aversion to the union, but because it did not want to enter into a contract with it. Such a condition, concluded Lawson, would have meant a compliance with the state's labor laws, the elimination of the company store, and an increase in wages for the worker.² Samuel Gompers, President of the American Federation of Labor, wrote that the freedom of contract clause advocated by the CF&I was a device used by the said company not to further the interests of the non-union workers, as it claimed, but to eliminate union miners.³

Essentially, the root cause for the occurrence of the strike was a basic divergence on collective bargaining. On the one hand, the companies argued that, had they surrendered this right, they would have lost control of their business. On the other hand, the worker, fully aware, or being made

¹ Testimony of Frank J. Hayes, CIR, 8, p. 7190.

² Testimony of John R. Lawson, CIR, 9, p. 8206.

³ Samuel Gompers, "Organizing Despite the Grim Spectre", American Federationist 21 (June 1914): p. 480.

aware, that acting as an individual had led him nowhere, decided to join forces with others to make his demands more effective. Because of these two irreconcilable positions, the companies' die-hard opposition to collective bargaining and the miners' die-hard commitment to the same, the strike followed.

CHAPTER 3 - THE STRIKE: FROM THE OUTBREAK TO LUDLOW

Even before the strike had begun the Federal government had made an attempt to avert it. On the same day that the miners held their convention in Trinidad, Ethelbert Stewart, chief statistician of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the United States Department of Labor, called at 26 Broad way, the junior Rockefeller's New York office. As Rockefeller was absent, Stewart conferred with Murphy. The federal envoy told Rockefeller's secretary about the policy committee's letter to the operators, the latter's refusal to reply, and the miners' appeal to the Secretary of Labor to appoint a mediator. He then asked if it would be worth while for him to go to Colorado since he did not wish to make a fruitless trip. Murphy's answer was unequivocal: the matter "would have to be handled by the executive officers in Colorado", as the eastern directors "knew nothing about the conditions and would be unwilling to make any suggestions to the executive officers." To Stewart's objection that Rockefeller could determine policy, Murphy insisted that his boss would not interfere unless Bowers or Welborn requested it. Through the mouth of his closest aide, the blueprint for Rockefeller's future policy had become clear.

Failing in his efforts in the East, Stewart travelled

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Berman, pp. 79-80.

On the same day, Murphy reported the conference to Bowers. Cf. Starr J. Murphy to L.M. Bowers, September 16, 1913, CIR, 9, pp. 8413-4.

West. Though by the time he arrived the strike had begun, Stewart remained hopeful. His first step, to bring the operators together in conference, failed miserably; his second move, to hold separate meetings with Bowers, J.C. Osgood, and D.W. Brown, president of the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company, and the miners, proved more successful. Securing a meeting was one thing but obtaining positive results was something else as Stewart quickly discovered in his discussion with Bowers. The Board Chairman not only cold-shouldered Stewart's proposals but also emphasized that the CF&I would continue to work whatever mines it could and would stand out against the union "until our bones are bleached white as chalk in these Rocky Mountains." "We are right from every standpoint", concluded Bowers in reporting the conference to Rockefeller, "and in justice to ourselves and our loyal men we shall never recede an inch from the stand we have taken."¹ In no uncertain terms, Bowers had made his company's position crystal clear: it was not interested in bargaining.

While Stewart was trying to effect a settlement in the weeks following the outbreak of the strike, Bowers was maintaining a regular correspondence with New York. Writing to Rockefeller in early October, Bowers gave a general account of the strike situation. Some men were returning to work, he stated, but others, afraid of violence, were staying away. The union had brought to Colorado "a large number of sluggers

¹

Berman, p. 80.

L.M. Bowers to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., September 29, 1913, CIR, 9, p. 8418.

and black hand foreigners from West Virginia", concluded Bowers, and these, together with some miners, had attacked a few coal camps. However, "our armed guards have so far been able to protect our mines." Changing the subject, Bowers reaffirmed his determination to stay in the fight "until we regain our right to manage this great industry for the best interest of all concerned."¹ This letter discloses two facets of Bowers' personality and neither augured well for a union victory: he was tremendously loyal to the company's interests and, as one liberal magazine asserted, "obviously a survival from a former economic age."² His utterances on labor-management relations scarcely showed advancement over what was said the previous century. Bowers, like many nineteenth century employers, neglected the working man and was unwilling to recognize that the worker had any stake in the enterprise. He was willing to socially uplift the worker, but this betterment could only be achieved through the employer's benevolence; any other agency was anathema.

Bowers' stand received the immediate support of New York.

We feel wrote Rockefeller that what you have done is right and fair and that the position which you have taken in regard to the unionizing of the mines is in the interest of the employees of the company. Whatever the outcome may be, we will stand by you to the end.³

¹
L.M. Bowers to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., October 3, 1913, CIR, 9, p. 8419.

²
"The Closed Mind", New Republic 2 (May 1, 1915): p. 317.

³
John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to L.M. Bowers, October 6, 1913, CIR, 9, pp. 8419-20. *Italics Mine.*

No doubt, this letter was very encouraging to the Colorado officials. At the same time, it also strengthened the stand of other operators, who, after the letter was shown them, realized that the young tycoon was placing himself unreservedly¹ behind them.

In his subsequent letter, Rockefeller once again approved and encouraged the executive officers' position. "The actions of the management", he said, "are watched with great interest by this office, and its strong and just position will not lack backing at this end."² Though, in theory, enjoying a maximum of power, the company's chief stockholder was willing, in practice, to have a minimum of responsibility.

Rockefeller explained to Frank P. Walsh, Chairman of the Commission, that the nature of a corporation made mandatory a subdivision of power and responsibility. "Directors", stated Rockefeller, "attend principally to the financial matters of the corporation, leaving the actual conduct of operations to the officers. ... Labor policies are initiated and determined by the officers." And again: "The hiring and discharging of men and the framing of agreements as respects the same are functions which I have regarded as rightfully belonging to the management and not the stockholders or directors." Delegating responsibility meant relying fully on local officials' reports. Since Bowers and Welborn had been selected for their "expert

¹ John A. Fitch, "What Rockefeller Knew and What He Did", Survey, 21 August, 1915, p. 464.

² John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to L.M. Bowers, October 10, 1913, CIR, 9, p. 8420.

knowledge and familiarity" with labor matters, their reports¹ on such questions would be unquestionably accepted.

Rockefeller's position was typical behavior in the corporate world. George W. Perkins, director among others of the United States Steel Corporation and International Harvester, believed "in placing power and responsibility with executives and holding them to a strict responsibility." Labor issues were "an executive matter", he continued, "and somewhat in the nature of administrative work."² The directors' duty "is to select, as far as they know it, the proper men to run the company, and then let the people run it", testified John Pierpont Morgan, a director in several corporations including United States Steel. Those officials who have been selected have³ "entire authority" on labor matters. A. Barton Hepburn, chairman of the Board of Directors of the Chase National Company and director in several other corporations, was of the same opinion. Executive officials have "full authority" over labor questions, he stated, and as a director, "I have discharged my duties in the selection of the officers ... and given them that authority."⁴

In the meantime, Stewart's efforts to bring about a settlement were not getting positive results. On October 9, a committee of operators formed by the presidents of the three

¹ Testimony of Rockefeller, Jr., CIR, 8, pp. 7764-5, 7792-3.

² Testimony of G.W. Perkins, CIR, 8, pp. 7599, 7602.

³ Testimony of J.P. Morgan, CIR, 9, pp. 8088-9.

⁴ Testimony of A.B. Hepburn, CIR, 9, pp. 8248-9.

largest companies involved in the dispute met Stewart at the office of Governor Ammons. During the meeting, Stewart put forth three proposals and asked the committee to accept any one of them: (1) the operators and strike leaders to hold a conference together; (2) the operators meet Ammons, officials of the UMWA and himself for an informal discussion; (3) the operators give him their side¹ of the story and suggest some method of ending the strike. After the committee had rejected each one of these proposals, Stewart warned that he would report to the Secretary of Labor and make recommendations for² a Congressional investigation.

In spite of Stewart's efforts to find a solution to the conflict, he incurred the enmity of the operators, especially Bowers. Two days following the conference, Bowers disclosed this animosity to Rockefeller. He began his letter by expressing his appreciation of Rockefeller's endorsement of the companies' position; the rest of the letter was an attack on Stewart for his conciliatory policy towards organized labor. The federal mediator was biased, stated the Chairman, "for he showed more concern in hearing the union's side rather than listening to the operators' side unless it was in conference with union officials."³ Bowers' remarks were grossly unfair since not once did he mention Stewart's proposals.

¹
UMWJ 24 (October 16, 1913): p. 2.

²
 Berman, p. 81.

Testimony of J.F. Welborn, CIR, 7, pp. 6595-6.

³
 L.M. Bowers to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., October 11, 1913, CIR, 9, p. 8420.

Rockefeller, relying entirely on this one-sided report, could not but concur with the stand of his subordinate.

During the rest of October, Ammons and Patterson continued where Stewart had left off. On the 26th of that month, the Governor met separately with the operators' committee, the UMWA international President, John P. White, and other union officials. The latter declared themselves ready to waive union recognition and wage increases if the operators would meet them in conference. Ammons reported this willingness to Welborn, Osgood, and Brown, but their answer was unanimous: they would make no concession whatsoever.¹ The next day, the Governor asked the operators' committee to draw up a statement whereby the companies would respect the state labor laws and, pending termination of the strike, would rehire the miners who had quit their work. Once again, the committee, taking no time² to consider this latest offer, flatly rejected it.

Meanwhile, conditions in the strike district had worsened. Pitched battles between mine guards and strikers had resulted in the death of at least nine men. The courts or the civil peace officers were unable to handle the situation. By mid-October, conditions had so deteriorated that the civil authorities had asked the Governor to send the militia.³ Ammons, acceding to their demand on October 28, dispatched state troops under the command of Adjutant General John Chase

¹ Testimony of Alias M. Ammons, CIR, 7, p. 6412.

² Testimony of Thomas M. Patterson, CIR, 7, pp. 6480-6.

³ Report of the Commanding General to the Governor, Colorado, 1914, pp. 8-9; hereinafter cited Chase Report.

of the Colorado National Guard. The Governor ordered Chase to use the soldiers to protect the coal properties and any miner who wanted to return to work, but not to assist the operators in the importation of strikebreakers.¹

Ammons' instruction forbidding state troops to escort strikebreakers was bad news to the operators. It was not long before the Governor was subjected to strong pressure to rescind this order. Bowers gave Rockefeller a lengthy report of how the various groups in the state operated:

You will be interested to know that we have been able to secure the cooperation of all the bankers of the city [Denver], who have had three or four interviews with our little cowboy governor,² agreeing to back the State and lend it all the funds necessary to maintain the militia and afford ample protection so that our miners could return to work, or give protection to men who are anxious to come up here from Texas, New Mexico, and Kansas, together with some from States farther East. Besides, the bankers, the chamber of commerce, the real estate exchange, together with a great many of the best business men, have been urging the Governor to take steps to drive these vicious agitators out of the State. Another mighty power has been rounded up in behalf of the operators by the gathering together of fourteen of the editors of the most important newspapers in Denver, Pueblo, Trinidad, Walsenburg, Colorado Springs, and other of the larger places in the State. They passed resolutions demanding that the Governor bring this strike to an end, as they found, upon most careful examination, that the real issue was the demand for recognition of the union, which they told the Governor would never be conceded by the operators as 90 per cent of the miners themselves were non-union men, and therefore that issue should be dropped. ...

There probably has never been such pressure brought

1

Berman, p. 81.
 Testimony of Elias M. Ammons, CIR, 7, pp. 6410-2.
Chase Report, pp. 69-70.

2

The Governor had once been a ranchman.

to bear upon any governor of this State as has been brought to bear upon Gov. Ammons.¹

Bowers correctly reasoned, as did other operators, that if the Governor were persuaded to reverse his command, sufficient strikebreakers could be imported and the strike could then be defeated. Moreover, in light of this letter, Bowers' repeated assertions, both publicly and privately, that the CF&I was no longer involved in politics after Welborn had become president, don't hold much water.

Ammons did rescind his original instructions on the 28th of November, but before this date another attempt to effect a settlement was made. In the middle of November, Secretary of Labor William B. Wilson, while making an official tour of the West, stopped over at Denver. The former UMWA officer, like Stewart, made his first overture to Rockefeller. Immediately upon his arrival, Wilson wired Rockefeller and asked him to use his "influence" to have representatives of the operators meet representatives of the miners with a view to finding a mutual basis for settlement.² Rockefeller's reply could have been foreseen: the matter was entirely in the hands of the local management. However, he did attempt to justify the company's refusal to meet union representatives. Since only a few of the workers employed by the CF&I were members of the UMWA, he stated, the union was unqualified to represent

¹
L.M. Bowers to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., November 18, 1913, CIR, 9, pp. 8421-2.

²
William B. Wilson to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., November 20, 1913, CIR, 9, p. 8422.

¹
the men.

With the closing of the Rockefeller avenue, Wilson had no choice but to deal with the executive officers. On November 20, he arranged a conference between the operators' committee and three of their former employees, now striking miners but not union officials. At the close of the meeting, Ammons drew up a letter calling for a settlement on the promise that the operators would obey the state labor laws if the miners would return to work.² This proposition, unanimously rejected by the miners, not only came too late to have the effect desired but it was also an admission that the charges of law violations were true.³

Despite the miners' refusal to accept Ammons' proposal, Wilson did not give up. Drawing up a letter of his own, he recommended that the following disputed points be referred to a board of arbitration composed of representatives of both sides: the question of an increase in wages and, in lieu of the proposition of union recognition, the question of devising a method by which future grievances and disputes might be adjusted without resorting to strikes. Finally, pending the decision of the board,⁴ work be resumed at the mines.

From the outset, the local management was suspicious

¹
John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to William E. Wilson, November 21, 1913, QIR, 9, p. 8422.

²
Testimony of Elias M. Ammons, CIR, 7, pp. 6413-4.

³
John A. Fitch, "The Colorado Strike", Survey 31 (December 20, 1913): p. 334.

⁴
UMWJ 24 (December 4, 1913): p. 1.

and intransigent towards the Secretary of Labor. After the committee had rejected Wilson's recommendations, Bowers wrote to Rockefeller:

I can see no particular objection to the formation of an arbitration board as suggested by Secretary Wilson, providing the 3 miners are nonunion men who have remained in the employ of the coal operators during the strike, but to this I am sure that neither Secretary Wilson nor the labor leaders would consent.¹

Welborn, in reporting to McClement, came straight to the point:

We reached no direct understanding; in fact, we wanted none, as we were almost sure that had an understanding between the miners and ourselves been reached it would have received the stamp of approval of the officers of the organization and in that way would have been twisted into an arrangement between us and the organization.²

These two letters quite clearly reveal the uncompromising viewpoints of both Welborn and Bowers. Notwithstanding the rigidity of their position, they felt that it was the correct one and, because of this, no one would shake them from it. In other words, so long as they were in charge of the CF&I, the possibility of an understanding and/or agreement with any trade union was quite remote.

After turning down Wilson's peace offer, Bowers privately disclosed his reasons for objecting to every compromise that had been or would be put forward.

This strike [he informed Rockefeller] has brought to the front an issue which will secure the attention and I believe the cooperation of the business men of the country regardless of political affiliations--to force candidates for office to

¹
L.M. Bowers to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., November 28, 1913, CIR, 9, p. 8424.

²
J.F. Welborn to John H. McClement, December 4, 1913, CIR, 8, p. 7118.

come out into the open and declare their attitude toward the rights of employees to run an 'open shop'.

The Wilson administration was using the strike as a "test case", which, if successful, would "warrant a national campaign to force the closing of open shops." Under no circumstances would the operators stand idly by and let that happen but would fight to the finish in order to retain the open shop principle.¹

While the Secretary of Labor was endeavoring to end the strike without achieving success, the President of the United States was also getting nowhere. To his suggestion that the operators agree to arbitration by an unbiased board (along lines similar to those proposed by Secretary Wilson), Bowers had curtly answered that the CF&I "arbitrated matters only with its own employees."²

Murphy, writing on behalf of Rockefeller, approved Bowers' answer, but his letter revealed the first signs of not merely acknowledging the Colorado reports. Murphy proposed a plan whereby the strike would be investigated by a body of men to be appointed by the President. "Please understand", Murphy carefully added, "that this is merely submitted for your consideration, without any attempt whatever to influence your action in the matter if for any reason you deem it wiser not to follow it up."³ Replying on December 6, Bowers rejected

¹ L.M. Bowers to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., November 28, 1913, CIR, 9, p. 8424.

² Ibid

³ Starr J. Murphy to L.M. Bowers, November 28, 1913, CIR, 9, p. 8425.

the idea.¹ Murphy not only accepted the fait accompli but also wrote words of encouragement: "As we have said many times before, we leave this matter entirely in your hands, having the utmost confidence in your judgement and the way you are handling the matter."²

During the winter, efforts to effect a settlement continued. All went to naught due mainly to the resistance of the operators who justified their position by pointing out to the strikers' rejection of Ammons' plan of November 17. One of these attempts was made by Illinois Representative Martin D. Foster, Chairman of the Congressional Sub-Committee on Mines and Mining. Hoping to convince Rockefeller to have the strike arbitrated, Foster wrote to him but, receiving no answer, went to New York. Rockefeller refused to intervene since, as he explained to Foster, the matter was being handled in Colorado. When Foster turned to the executive officers, they also rejected arbitration on the grounds that the miners had refused the November terms and consequently, the latter were to blame for all the subsequent disorder.³

In the meantime, the National Guard had made its appearance in the strike district. At the beginning, it had the ostensible welcome of the miners. But it was not long before relations between strikers and troops took a turn for the

¹
CIR, 9, p. 8426. L.M. Bowers to Starr J. Murphy, December 6, 1913,

²
CIR, 9, p. 8426. Starr J. Murphy to L.M. Bowers, December 9, 1913,

³
West Report, p. 93.

worse. One of the initial causes of friction was the creation on November 20 of a military commission to conduct hearings on strike cases. According to Chase, he had selected only men of "irreproachable integrity" to this judicial body; however, in civilian life these individuals were bankers, professionals, businessmen, and manufacturers. If the Adjutant General was convinced of the impartiality of this body, the miners who came before it were not. Though the Commission did wield considerable power, it did not replace the civil courts. Instead, as an advisory board, it could only make recommendations pertaining to prisoners. During the strike, the Commission investigated 172 cases, most of which dealt with charges of murder, assault, and rioting.¹

Ammons' decision to reverse his command on November 28 added more fuel to the already tense situation. With the troops escorting miners willing to work, the process of importing strikebreakers was increased. This move definitely severed relations between strikers and soldiers. Even Welborn noted the change:

As soon as the men from the outside of the State commenced to arrive and the militia prevented the interference on the part of the strikers with those men going to work the feeling by the strikers toward the militia immediately changed.²

The new policy brought jubilation in the operators' camp. From the outset, they had maintained that the strike could have been easily quashed if strikebreakers were allowed entrance from other states. Following the Governor's sur-

¹ Chase Report, pp. 42-45.

² Testimony of J.F. Welborn, CIR, 7, p. 6489.

render on this point, Bowers explained to Rockefeller the operators' tactics: "We used every possible weapon to drive him into action, but he was glove in hand with the labor leaders and is today, but the big men of affairs have helped the operators in whipping the agitators, including the Governor." Bowers was confident that within a week the¹ company would return to normal operations.

While the companies were manifestly happy with the change in policy, the union evidenced frustration and resentment. However, despite the grim outlook, the UMWA, now faced by the combined opposition of State and operators, remained confident of ultimate victory. Even as late as Christmas, the prospects of a favorable settlement, noted one labor journalist, seemed "more encouraging than at any [other] time² during the strike."

Throughout the course of winter the enmity between miners and militia augmented sharply. As if it wasn't enough to aid the operators in running the mines with strikebreakers, the troops also originated incidents which antagonized the miners even more. One such episode was the incarceration and deportation of Mary Harris Jones, better known as "Mother" Jones, the dean of UMWA organizers and at the time more than³ eighty years old. This latest outrage led the Colorado union committee to advise the strikers to arm themselves in order

¹
L.M. Bowers to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., December 22, 1913, CIR, 9, p. 8427.

²
Adolph Germer, "Colorado Notes", UMWJ 24 (December 25, 1913): p. 2.

³
Chicago Tribune, 5 January, 1914, p. 6.

to resist any attempt at deportation. In the same communique,¹
the committee asked for a federal inquiry of the strike area.

Two weeks after the committee had made its request, Congress agreed to conduct an investigation. Under the supervision of Martin D. Foster, the investigation disclosed many facts which certainly harmed the companies before the public. Among others, Foster and his team had discovered that the operators had brought arms and ammunition into the fields, citizens had been arrested and tried contrary to the laws and Constitution of the United States, and CF&I officials had exercised political control in Las Animas and Huerfano counties.² The climax of the investigation came with the appearance of Rockefeller. When questioned by the Chairman, Rockefeller clearly stated his loyalty to the officers of the company and his unyielding adherence to the open shop:

We believe the issue is not a local one in Colorado. It is a national issue whether workers shall be allowed to work under such conditions as they may choose. As part owners of the property our interest in the laboring men in this country is so immense, so deep, so profound that we stand ready to lose every cent we put in that company rather than see the men we have employed thrown out of work and have imposed upon them conditions which are not of their seeking and which neither they nor we can see in our interest. ...³ We expect to stand by the officers at any cost.

February and March passed without any major incidents in the strike district. This comparative quiet persuaded

¹
New York Times, 6 January, 1914, sec. 1, p. 10.

²
New York Times, 10 February, 1914, sec. 1, p. 3.
, 11 February, 1914, sec. 1, p. 7.

³
New York Times, 7 April, 1914, sec. 1, p. 1.

Ammons to recall the militia though a small detachment of 35 men was left near Ludlow. Another force, cavalry Troop A, supplemented the detachment. Bowers informed Rockefeller that Troop A, formed the week preceding April 20, consisted of 100¹ volunteers who were under the command of the county's sheriff. He failed to add, however, that these volunteers were economically dependent on and subservient to the will of the operators.² On April 20, Troop A would play a leading role in the burning of the strikers' tents at Ludlow.

¹ L.M. Bowers to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., April 18, 1914, CIR, 9, p. 8429.

² Testimony of Lieut. Col. Edward J. Boughton, CIR, 7, p. 6731.

CHAPTER 4 - THE STRIKE: FROM LUDLOW TO ITS DEFEAT

The Ludlow tent colony, the largest of the union camps, had a population of close to 1,000. Established on the day the strike was called, the colony was under the command of the Greek miner Louis Tikas, regarded by one observer as "the greatest single agent for peace during the strike."¹ For a few weeks after its formation, the colony had kept friendly relations with the soldiers.² This state of affairs had changed following November 30 when the importation of strikebreakers was legally sanctioned. From that date until the outbreak at Ludlow, conditions had so deteriorated that by April 20, stated an investigating board of militia officers, a fierce battle of some kind was practically certain.³

On the morning of April 20, Troop A, together with the regular militia under the command of Lieutenant Karl E. Linderfelt, took position on a hill above Ludlow. While occupying the hill, the militia mounted a machine gun and detonated two bombs "as a signal to inhabitants of the coal-mining towns up the canyons that the attack had begun."⁴ The strikers, fearing an assault on the colony, seized their rifles and determined

¹ Testimony of Edward P. Costigan, CIR, 9, p. 8121.

² Testimony of Philip S. Van Cise, CIR, 7, p. 6806.

³ Ludlow: Being the Report of the Special Board of Officers Appointed by the Governor of Colorado, cited in McGovern, p. 274.

⁴ Testimony of Edward J. Boughton, CIR, 7, p. 6366.

to make a stand. In the ensuing battle, no one agreed as to who fired the first shot, but soon machine gun fire came down on the colony. Many women and children escaped from the tents and sought shelter in the hills. However, some, failing to flee, hid in pits underneath the tents to protect themselves from the bullets. The militia then launched a frontal attack on the colony. Pouring coal oil on the tents and setting fire to them, the soldiers swept everything on their way. Those women and children who had hidden in the pits found themselves trapped. In one pit, eleven children and two women either suffocated or burned to death. At the end of the twelve-hour battle, seventeen persons, including a militiaman, had died. Moreover, Tikas, who had been taken prisoner, was allegedly murdered by Linderfelt.¹

After Ludlow, union officials in Trinidad issued a "Call to Rebellion" summoning all miners in Colorado to take up arms. "Organize the men in your communities in companies of volunteers", read the communication, "to protect the workers of Colorado against the murder and cremation of men, women, and children." Gather all arms and ammunition available, exhorted the union leaders, and be ready for battle. "The State is furnishing us no protection and we must protect ourselves, our wives, and children from these murderous assassins."²

The response to the union's call was electric.

¹ Philip S. Van Cise, "The Colorado Strike Situation", May 30, 1914, CIR, 8, p. 7328.

² Testimony of Edward L. Doyle, CIR, 7, p. 6983.

Throughout the state, the workers now wages open war. First they took possession of Ludlow and Trinidad; then they attacked companies' property. At the Empire mine, they killed three armed guards and left the mine in shambles. The Walsen and McNally mines were dynamited. At Forbes, nine strikebreakers and policemen were killed. CF&I properties at Delagua, Black Hills, Aguilar, and Hastings were burned and pillaged.¹ The miners continued to carry arms and create havoc until April 29 when federal troops arrived on the scene.

In the meantime, while the nation's newspapers were making daily reports on the Colorado situation, Rockefeller was receiving the usual one-sided information from his subordinates. Concerning the Ludlow battle, Bowers wrote him: "following withdrawal of troops by order of governor an unprovoked attack upon small force of militia by 200 strikers."² For the next few days telegrams between Colorado and New York were a daily occurrence. In these, Rockefeller inquired in consternation if any company property or employees were involved in the skirmishes with the strikers. In every instance, Bowers reassured him that the CF&I was in no way connected with the violence.³

Rockefeller, because of his assumption that the reports he received were sufficiently specific and correct to justify

¹ Testimony of Edward L. Doyle, CIR, 8, pp. 7000-7.

² L.M. Bowers to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., April 21, 1914, CIR, 9, p. 8430.

³ John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to L.M. Bowers, April 21, 23, 26, 27, 29, 1914;

L.M. Bowers to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., April 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 1914, CIR, 9, pp. 8432-4.

his basic conclusions upon them, found himself in a vulnerable position within a week following the battle. Aroused by widespread accusations about his role in the Colorado events, he issued a statement as an apologia for his non-intervention. Relying entirely on Bowers' letter to Murphy, dated September 19, 1913, he discussed five of the strikers' demands and candidly declared that the company had met these demands in advance of the strike.¹ Immediately upon the publication of the statement, Rockefeller was informed that the strike leaders had given a different version of the story. To this Rockefeller publicly replied:

It is a question which source of information one is to rely upon. I must rely upon that which I know. That is the only way we can get on in life, by trusting those whom one has reason to trust. We are frequently deceived, and when we are deceived we change as quickly as we can. I do not think we are deceived in this case.²

After his public statement, Rockefeller discovered that it was not to his advantage to rely on these reports. On May 2, Murphy wrote Bowers a letter enclosing a clipping entitled "Mr. Rockefeller's Concessions" which had appeared in the New York Evening Post the day before. The newspapers, began the letter, had published copies of the Colorado statutes which intended to show that the granting of the eight-hour day, the right to checkweighmen, and freedom to trade at company stores were all "pursuant to law and not in any sense a concession made by the company." Murphy asked for a statement of fact on

¹ John A. Fitch, "What Rockefeller Knew and What He Did", Survey, 21 August, 1915, p. 465.

² New York Times, 29 April, 1914, sec. 1, p. 10.

on these points.¹ Receiving no answer by May 7, Murphy sent another letter. Referring once more to the adverse criticism incurred by Rockefeller, Murphy this time asked Bowers to make the facts known as quickly as possible.²

On May 6, the day before Murphy had written his second letter, Bowers privately answered the New York Evening Post's account by calling it "misleading in some respects plus half the truth in others." He then gave a lengthy report on the various laws, but admitted that "our legal department has furnished me some rather hurried notes." One of the laws discussed by Bowers was the semi-monthly payment in wages. Not only was the law unconstitutional but also, he maintained, no attempt had ever been made to enforce it. "It was absolutely a dead law and no individual or organization seemed to care enough about it to demand compliance in this state." He himself was unaware that such a law existed, "and if Mr. Welborn or any of our other officials knew it, it had slipped their minds or I should not have emphasized this point as I have done in this controversy." To justify his ignorance, Bowers explained:

You appreciate, Mr. Murphy, that every one of us here is under a tremendous pressure, and we have an enormous amount of work to do; in fact, our offices have been kept open night and day for the most part during the last 2 weeks. ... Local and long-distance telephones were in constant use, and we had to have armed guards at our office and at the homes of some of us, so we have not been able, if we wished, to dispute the statements of the score or two of the representatives of yellow

¹ Starr J. Murphy to L.M. Bowers, May 2, 1914, CIR, 9, pp. 8435-6.

² Starr J. Murphy to L.M. Bowers, May 7, 1914, CIR, 9, p. 8439.

newspapers and muckraking magazines who have been writing up the Colorado strike war.¹

Notwithstanding the Chairman's explanation, Murphy had discovered what he probably would have wanted Bowers to deny, namely, that "Mr. Rockefeller's Concessions" were statute law.

Following the Ludlow and newspaper incidents, there was a noticeable change in the relationship between Rockefeller and the local management. Though Rockefeller persisted in accepting the Colorado reports at their face value, the letters of warm approval became scarce.² Indeed, with one exception, there were no such letters. In addition, Rockefeller began taking a more active interest in Colorado affairs. One way that Rockefeller manifested his new interest was by sending letters suggesting to the Colorado officials what course of action they might wish to follow.

Throughout the first months of the strike, that is, until the Ludlow battle, the letters from Colorado had been in the nature of reports and the letters from New York little more than acknowledgements of these. During that period only one suggestion had come from New York. (On December 1, Murphy had proposed a plan for having the strike investigated; Bowers had rejected it). After the April events, suggestions became more frequent. One of these was in reference to a plan drawn up by Governor Ammons in November. At that time the Governor had suggested as a basis for settlement certain concessions,

¹
L.M. Bowers to Starr J. Murphy, May 6, 1914, CIR, 9, pp. 8437-8.

²
John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to J.F. Welborn, July 21, 1914, CIR, 7, p. 6684.

except union recognition, on the part of the operators. Though the strikers had rejected the plan, Rockefeller, on May 3, urged acceptance of it. At the same time, he asked Bowers and Welborn "to outline a method by which the parties can now get together for the reconsideration of the matter from that point." "Such action", added Rockefeller, "would demonstrate what has always been the fact, namely, that the operators are earnestly desirous of doing all in their power to restore harmony."¹ If the young tycoon was interested in restoring "harmony", the operators certainly were not. Since the Secretary of Labor was present at the conference, answered Bowers the next day, it was up to him "to force the union to reconsider Governor Ammons' proposition."² Bowers was plainly affirming that the union was responsible for the prolongation of the strike, and, if there was to be any settlement of the dispute, the initiative would have to come from its ranks.

Another suggestion came in response to a peace proposal put forward by President Wilson. The President's plan was the creation of a commission composed of Hywell Davies, a Kentucky coal operator, and W. R. Fairley, a former UMWA official from Alabama. With the memory of the Ludlow tragedy still fresh in people's minds, the Secretary of Labor, at the behest of the President, had appointed on April 29 these two men to go to Colorado and attempt mediation.³ Spending several weeks in the

¹ John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to L.M. Bowers, and J.F. Welborn, May 3, 1914, CIR, 9, p. 8436.

² L.M. Bowers to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., May 4, 1914, CIR, 9, p. 8436.

³ Berman, p. 96.

state, the commission, in spite of the operators' manifest antipathy, completed its investigation by the end of the summer, Its report then served as the basis for the President's proposal.¹

The plan, made public on September 5, called for a three-year truce in the strike region. Its main features were: (1) enforcement of the Colorado labor laws; (2) striking miners not found guilty of law violations to be reemployed; (3) no intimidation of miners, whether unionized or not; (4) posting of regulations and wages and the creation of a Grievance Committee at each mine.²

New York, realizing that the plan could not be outrightly rejected, offered its services to Denver in drafting a reply to the President.³ Though the executive officers did not pay attention to the offer,⁴ Murphy went ahead with the draft and then sent it with the warning that they either accept Wilson's plan or make another proposal since "a mere refusal to do anything would be disastrous." However, he begged them not to misunderstand his strong language or his motives for the draft was written "with the understanding that you will merely consider our opinions for what they are worth and will decide the questions in the light of your further knowledge of the situation."⁵

¹
West Report, pp. 94-5.

²
New York Times, 8 September, 1914, sec. 1, p. 7.

³
Starr J. Murphy to J.F. Welborn, September 8, 1914,
CIR, 7, p. 6688.

⁴
J.F. Welborn to Starr J. Murphy, September 12, 1914,
CIR, 7, p. 6689.

⁵
Starr J. Murphy to J.F. Welborn, September 16, 1914,
CIR, 7, p. 6692.

Welborn's answer of September 18 fully reflected what management thought of the New York opinions--accept those with which they agreed and, reasoning that they had "a further knowledge of the situation", lay aside those which did not meet their approval. Welborn acknowledged Murphy's draft, used some of the suggestions, but rejected the most vital section, namely, that which called for the company to create a mechanism for enabling the different elements at the CF&I to present their views and recommendations.¹

In every instance, the New York proposals went further than the operators were willing to go. Whereas they were put forward as a means to end the strike and at the same time to appease public opinion, the operators' indicated a willingness to do neither.² In light of Rockefeller's public rebuke on April 28, it is surprising to note that these suggestions were always accompanied with the rider that they could be accepted or rejected. That the operators chose to refuse them leads to only one conclusion: Rockefeller's public statement, "labor policies are initiated and determined by the officers",³ was absolutely true.

And yet, though seemingly renouncing his responsibility, Rockefeller did go along with the actions of his officers, gave them his support, and even initiated a publicity campaign to

¹
J.F. Welborn to Starr. J. Murphy, September 18, 1914, CIR, 7, p. 6691.

²
John A. Fitch, "What Rockefeller Knew and What He Did", Survey, 21 August, 1915, p. 467.

³
Testimony of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., CIR, 8, p. 7764.

put the operators' viewpoint before the public. The campaign, explained Rockefeller before the Commission, was introduced because of the unfavorable publicity he and his father had constantly received from the press. "We felt it our duty as individuals and stockholders and directors in the company to do what we could to get the facts before the public", he said.¹ For this purpose, one month after he had realized that it was not safe to bank too heavily on Colorado reports, he acquired the services of an experienced press agent, Ivy L. Lee.²

Lee, aided by a committee of the three largest operators, set the campaign on foot about June 1. In the last months of the strike, they published bulletins labeled "Facts Concerning the Struggle in Colorado." The mailing list for these bulletins comprised congressmen, legislators, governors, editors, college presidents, and leaders in farm, labor, and commercial organizations. Though Lee headed the campaign, he relinquished his responsibility for the material published.³ However, he did report to Rockefeller and asked his approval for each bulletin; moreover, he received \$1000 monthly for the period he worked on them.⁴

Most of the bulletins were intended to discredit the strikers in the public mind. One of these contained the lie that Vice-President Hayes received an annual salary of \$32000.

¹ Testimony of Rockefeller, Jr., CIR, 8, p. 7772.

² Testimony of Ivy L. Lee, CIR, 8, p. 7899.

³ Testimony of Rockefeller, Jr., CIR, 8, p. 7773.

⁴ Testimony of Ivy L. Lee, CIR, 9, pp. 8715-6.

This charge had already been circulated by the operators in the Colorado newspapers. That they knew it to be false was evidenced by a telegram sent by Welborn to Lee on September 30.

Welborn wired:

It has been suggested, and I think very wisely, that on account of incorrectness of facts with respect to payments to officers of organization reported in Bulletin No. 4, that with the reissue of series 1, we inclose slip reading 'On page 67 it is stated that certain figures were taken from a report of secretary-treasurer U.M.W. of A., this is a mistake.' It is believed that officers are in doubt as to what information we have concerning their financial interest in the strike, and with this slip inserted they will not make any further answer. Number 14 has brought out some questions that can not be easily answered.¹

To this telegram Lee replied: "Pamphlet already printed and forwarded. I suggest that you have slips printed in Denver and enclose in mailing."² When it is remembered that Lee reported about each bulletin, Rockefeller must share the guilt of the operators and Lee in giving the public wrong information.

Rockefeller's predilection for the operators' cause was further revealed by an incident involving himself, Lee, and Major Edward J. Boughton of the Colorado National Guard. Shortly after the Ludlow outbreak, Boughton came to New York and had a conference with Lee. The Major explained that he had been sent by Ammons to give a factual account of the Colorado situation to Eastners who, according to the Governor, had been misinformed by the newspapers and magazines. Lee suggested

¹
J.F. Welborn to Ivy L. Lee, September 30, 1914,
CIR, 9, p. 8645.

²
Ivy L. Lee to J.F. Welborn, September 30, 1914,
CIR, 9, p. 8645.

that it would be good policy if the Governor wrote a letter to the President and other state governors. This letter would represent the personal viewpoint of the Governor vis-a-vis the strike. After Boughton asked him to prepare a draft of the proposed letter, Lee immediately accepted.

One of Lee's first action was to ask Rockefeller for some material. It did not seem improper to Rockefeller that Boughton, who wanted to give the facts to the public, should first seek the advice of a publicity agent of one of the parties to the conflict. Moreover, Rockefeller had no qualms in sending Lee material based on information from his officials.¹

Rockefeller did not see the letter that was finally drafted, and for a good reason. Boughton had never sent it to the Governor and no use was ever made of it. The incident, however, sheds more light on the objectivity of both Lee and Rockefeller. Though Ammons did not use the letter, it was not the fault of Lee who prepared it, nor of Rockefeller who furnished material to be used in it. Rockefeller's attitude toward the state authorities was similar to his Colorado subordinates. Not only did he fail to protest when Welborn and Bowers reported their efforts to pressure the Governor, but he accepted being part of a plan "which would have put out as a disinterested official statement, a document emanating, without the public's knowledge, from the business interests directly involved in the controversy."²

¹

Testimony of Ivy L. Lee, CJR, 9, pp. 8715-20.

Testimony of Rockefeller, Jr., CJR, 9, pp. 8595-6.

²

John A. Fitch, "What Rockefeller Knew and What He Did", Survey, 21 August, 1915, p. 468.

On another occasion, it was Rockefeller himself who took the initiative. After reading an article entitled "Capital and Labor" by Professor J. J. Stevenson of New York University, Rockefeller forwarded it to Lee with the recommendation that it be used for what he called the "union education campaign." Rockefeller referred to the article, which bitterly attacked trade unionism, as "one of the soundest, clearest, most forcible pronouncement" he had ever read.¹ However, his enthusiasm for the article dimmed when he testified before the Commission. Indeed, he was forced to recudiate some of the parts of the article and to refuse to comment on most of the ideas involved.²

In the meantime, though the White House had received a blunt refusal from the operators, hope remained that the latter would change their minds. By mid-October, this hope had completely dwindled.³ Wilson took no immediate steps. Finally, on November 29, the President, invoking one of the provisions of the Fairley-Davies truce plan, appointed a commission to settle differences between miners and operators. The next day, he released a statement in which he threw full responsibility for the continuation of the strike upon the companies. Wilson added:

I think the country regretted their decision and was disappointed that they should have taken so uncompromising a position. I have waited and hoped for a change in their attitude, but now fear that there will be none. And yet I do not feel that I am at liberty to do nothing in the presence of circumstances so serious and distressing.

¹ John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to Ivy L. Lee, July 17, 1914, CIR, 9, p. 8635.

² Testimony of Rockefeller, Jr., CIR, 9, pp. 8635-43.

³ Berman, p. 96.

In the same statement, Wilson made known the members of the commission. At its head was Seth Low, President of the National Civic Federation and former mayor of New York; other members included Charles W. Mills, a Pennsylvania mine operator, and Patrick Gilday, a UMW¹A official.

The union, following the operators' refusal of the President's plan, found itself in distressing circumstances. By October, it was showing definite signs of flinching. Its official organ editorialized: "We have left our case in the hands of the President of the United States, believing that he would and could find ways to enforce his proposition. ... We believe President Wilson will find the way to end a condition that has grown intolerable."² The newspaper was admitting that the union had no longer the strength or the resources to continue the fight and was hoping that the government would secure at least a compromise for it. Unfortunately for the union, Wilson did not come to the rescue, but simply appointed another commission. This latest investigation was the last straw. On December 9, the Colorado strike, having lasted approximately sixteen months, was called off. Two days later Welborn reported his jubilation to Rockefeller: "The feeling of satisfaction on the part of all of us over the calling off of the strike is by no means small."³

¹
New York Times, 30 November, 1914, sec. 1, p. 1.

²
UMWJ 25 (October 22, 1914): p. 4.

³
J.F. Welborn to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., December 11, 1914, CIR, 9, p. 8444.

CHAPTER 5 - THE INDUSTRIAL REPRESENTATION PLAN

The Colorado strike has not failed. ... [It] has given wide publicity to the wrongs and injustice which have been inflicted on the miners. Benefits will come to them because they have demonstrated their power, because employers will no longer dare to continue all the former abuses, since they have been made to understand and feel that financially it is too costly, and their course stands condemned before the judgement of the people.¹

We did not gain the demands we made at Trinidad, but there is one certain thing, ... the condition that obtained in Colorado previous to the strike will never again obtain in that field; that is, that the operators will have a little bit more regard [about] how they treat the men.²

Though the strike was defeated and the UMWA failed in its bid to represent the Colorado miners, the strike was not a total failure. "Aside from its impact upon public opinion in general", wrote one student of the conflict, "perhaps the most significant result of the strike was its maturing influence upon the attitudes and conduct of those who controlled the great corporations of the state."³ The strike had a perceptible impact upon Rockefeller who, though unyielding and dogmatic during the first part of the strike, sought, after the Ludlow massacre, a solution to the problem. Rockefeller gave evidence of his new attitude before the Commission:

¹ Samuel Gompers, "Colorado Mine Strikers' Commission", American Federationist 22 (January 1915): p. 47.

² Testimony of Edward L. Doyle, CIR, 8, p. 6997.

³ McGovern, p. 430.

As to the strike itself, its many distressing features have given me the deepest concern. I frankly confess that I felt there was something fundamentally wrong in a condition of affairs which rendered possible the loss of human lives, engendered hatred and bitterness, and brought suffering and privation upon hundreds of human beings. Without seeking to apportion blame, I determined that in so far as lay within my power I would seek means of avoiding the possibility of similar conflicts arising elsewhere, or in the same industry in the future.¹

As President of the Rockefeller Foundation, an organization incorporated in May 1913 with wide powers to authorize studies in many fields, Rockefeller found one solution in allowing the funds of the Foundation to be used in an enquiry of the causes of industrial unrest. For this purpose, he extended an invitation to Mackenzie King, a Canadian labor expert and subsequently Prime Minister of Canada. Upon accepting the invitation, King visited Rockefeller at his New York residence on West 54th Street. During the meeting, a variety of topics were discussed, but the Colorado situation received the most attention. Both he and management would not yield to union recognition, Rockefeller told King; however, he felt that the miners should have some form of representation. He then asked King to formulate a plan along these lines. King, explaining his lack of full knowledge of Colorado conditions, temporarily refused, but upon Rockefeller's insistence, tentatively suggested that company officials and miners' representatives could

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come together in committees to handle grievances.

1

Testimony of Rockefeller, Jr., CIR, 8, p. 7766.

2

F.A. McGregor, The Fall and Rise of Mackenzie King, 1911-1919 (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1962), pp. 92-6.

Following the conference, King did not immediately decide whether or not accept to work for the Foundation. It was only after weighing the pros and cons that King resolved to leave Canada and accept Rockefeller's offer. His appointment did not become effective until October 1, but before that date, King gave advice whenever it was sought. Thus, on August 1, Rockefeller once again asked him to devise a plan which would assure the employees an opportunity for collective bargaining.¹ King, in a letter to Rockefeller dated August 6, suggested the creation of a board on which both employer and employee would be represented, and before which, at stated intervals, questions affecting conditions of employment could be discussed and grievances examined. "What might be expected of a board of this kind," continued King, "would be that employees, before taking up any question with the officers of the company, would try to adjust or settle it among themselves." If this method failed, differences and difficulties would be presented to the company's officers by the miners' representatives.²

Despite Rockefeller's approval, management rejected King's idea on the grounds that it would appear to be a concession to the union. "To form such a board now", stated Bowers, "would discount every utterance we have made and insisted upon, that there were no differences whatever and the strike was not forced because of any grievances or differences."³

¹
John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to Mackenzie King, August 1, 1914, CIR, 9, p. 8441.

²
Mackenzie King to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., August 6, 1914, CIR, 9, pp. 8450-1.

³
L.M. Bowers to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., August 16, 1914, CIR, 9, p. 8442.

Welborn concurred with Bowers. The adoption of such a plan, he told Rockefeller, would be "an admission on our part that a weakness, the existence of which we had previously denied, was being corrected." Moreover, the officers of the company were formulating a plan which would go far in eliminating the miners' discontent, but anything done in that direction should be carried out only after the strike was over.¹ Management's decision to stave off introduction of the plan received Rockefeller's consent. "I cannot but feel", he explained to King, "that the officers of the company are right in the conclusion which they have reached. Time and manner is just as important as [the] plan itself."²

Although Rockefeller accepted his officials' judgement, he made, before the end of the strike, one more attempt to change their minds. In early October, Murphy, writing on behalf of Rockefeller, proposed the formation of committees representing both miners and operators. These committees would be "charged with the duty of enforcing the statutes of the State and also the regulations of the company looking to the safety and comfort of the miners and the protection of the company's property."³ Welborn's reply indicated that such a plan could be employed to advantage. He was still opposed to the appointment of a committee, "as that would come too near one of the demands of the miners' organization", but he was

¹
J.F. Welborn to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., August 20, 1914, CIR, 7, p. 6680.

²
John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to Mackenzie King, August 28, 1914, CIR, 9, p. 8458.

³
Starr J. Murphy to J.F. Welborn, October 5, 1914, CIR, 7, p. 6693.

amenable to the idea of having the manager of each mine select a miners' committee which would foster regularity in work, observance of rules and laws, care to guard against accidents, loyalty to the company's interests, and cleanliness in the homes.¹

Only after the strike had been unquestionably defeated did the CF&I put its plan, which had been drafted by Welborn, into operation. On December 17, David Griffiths was appointed to hear grievances and act as intermediary between the company and its employees.² An immigrant from Wales, Griffiths had, in the 1880's, entered the coal mines of Colorado as a miner, had filled the positions of fire boss, mine foreman, mine superintendent, and State coal-mine inspector from 1895 to 1899. He was well qualified for the work he was undertaking "not only because of his broad knowledge of the coal-mining industry, but on account of the unequalled confidence reposed in him, not by the coal miners alone, but by others engaged in the coal-mining industry."³

Shortly after Griffiths' appointment, the miners, on January 5, were invited to elect representatives who would hold a conference with company officers two weeks later at Denver. At the meeting, an early form of the Industrial Representation Plan was born. The Plan was so pleasing to Rockefeller that he could boast before the Commission:

¹ J.F. Welborn to Starr J. Murphy, October 9, 1914, CIR, 7, pp. 6693-4.

² New York Times, 18 December, 1914, sec. 1, p. 1.

³ "Sketch of Mr. David Griffiths' Activities", CIR, 9, pp. 8442-3.

Thus it will be seen that the Company has already taken steps to initiate a plan of representation of its employees. It is my hope and belief that from this will develop some permanent machinery which will insure to the employees of the Company, through representatives of their own selection, quick and easy access to the officers, with reference to any grievances, real or assumed, or with reference to wages or other conditions of employment.¹

Rockefeller's new attitude towards the miners won him the congratulations of many, but probably those most appreciated were from James Brewster, formerly a U.M.W.A attorney who had represented Colorado striking miners and had severely criticized Rockefeller during the strike. Three days after Rockefeller had made his statement to the Commission, Brewster wrote him: "I feel that I should be one of the first to congratulate you upon your present attitude, which I understand to be of willingness to listen."²

Mackenzie King did not share management and ownership's complacency. King had good reasons for being unhappy with what had been done. His apprehensions were first aroused by Griffiths who told him that Welborn still clung to some paternalistic notions. As an example, Griffiths had pointed out to the president's belief in the company's right to interfere with the type of religious instruction to be given at the camps. These fears were substantiated in early February when King and Welborn held long conversations in New York. On each occasion, Welborn clearly stated that the company should go slowly in

¹
West Report, p. 185.

²
James Brewster to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., January 28, 1915, King Papers, 26, p. 23196.

introducing new schemes.¹ King, reporting to Rockefeller his conversations with Welborn, indicated his dissatisfaction with Welborn's plan which he thought was just a mere beginning and would amount to nothing unless it developed into something real, substantial, and of permanent value. If Welborn did not undergo a radical change, warned King, Rockefeller might once again be subjected to a barrage of criticism, maybe even harsher than what he had received following the April events. There was only one way this criticism could be avoided: New York and Denver must be in complete agreement as to the kind of plan² to be introduced at the mines.

The opportunity to convert Welborn to a more democratic scheme of employee representation presented itself in March when King first visited Colorado. Ostensibly, the primary purpose of his visit was to obtain first-hand information that would later be used for a final draft of the plan. But King was also interested in selling his ideas to Welborn. While in the state, King observed the industrial situation and had frequent talks with the president. Soon, a warm friendship developed between himself and Welborn. And, probably more important, at least for the future plans of the company, Welborn seemed more ready to accept direction from King.³ King was certainly pleased when he received this letter from Welborn:

It is the ambition of the officers of the CF&I to make the social conditions at its properties

¹ McGregor, pp. 159-160.

² Mackenzie King to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., February 2, 1915, King Papers, 29, pp. 26088-9.

³ McGregor, pp. 160-1.

and the general relations between the workmen and the company the pride of everyone connected with the company, if not the envy of other industrial institutions, yet I recognize our industrial limitations in this particular line of work and want the help of everyone who can and is willing to render assistance.¹

This letter discloses a new Welborn, a man who is now seeking an assistance he had continuously rejected during the strike. The change can probably be accounted for by the different conditions existing in 1915 with respect to 1914. In the latter year, Welborn was in the midst of a strike which threatened his position as president of the company. After he, together with Bowers, had been given carte blanche by New York, the responsibility for successfully handling the situation was much more his than New York's. Such responsibility caused him to clash with his superiors whenever they took a position contrary to his. In 1915, since he was no longer on a hot seat, a detente with New York was now possible. In other words, once the urgency of the situation had disappeared, it was no longer necessary to maintain a hard line towards ownership.

After completing his stay in Colorado, King gave Welborn his impressions. He found that employees' representatives were appreciated by the miners as well as the work done by Griffiths. However, the eight-hour day was not being respected at several of the camps and especially at the steel plant. His visit to the Pueblo Hospital, where he conferred with Dr. Corwin, and his conversations with nearly all of the doctors at the various camps left him confident that the CP&I deserved

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J.F. Welborn to Mackenzie King, June 15, 1915, King Papers, 29, p. 27185.

the high reputation it had secured for its medical service. In summary, King expressed his great pleasure to have met a high average grade of company officials who believed in and were loyal to the company. At the same time, he felt that the severe criticism the CF&I had received during the strike had had a favorable effect on superintendents who were now "sensitive to, and considerate of the rights of the employees, and ... determined to eliminate and avoid what might afford just ground for criticism."¹

In September 1915, while the Industrial Representation plan was being considered, Rockefeller, together with King,² visited Colorado. Belatedly, he realized that it was good business to keep in close touch with his employees. He dressed in miners' clothes, went in the mines, and talked informally with the workers and their families.³ The success of the visit-- he "met a State the opinion of which was much divided towards him", and "left it with but one opinion, and that one of undivided praise and affection"⁴--indicated that the charges of absenteeism levied against him before and during the strike were definitely true.

Before leaving Colorado Rockefeller called a joint conference of miners' representatives and company officials to be held at Pueblo on October 2, 1915. At this meeting,

¹
Mackenzie King to J.F. Welborn, August 21, 1915, King Papers, 27, pp. 24574-87.

²
New York Times, 22 September, 1915, sec. 1, p. 10.

³
McGregor, pp. 172-9.

⁴
Mackenzie King to Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., October 6, 1915, King Papers, 29, p. 26034.

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King's plan of industrial representation was inaugurated and one week later it was submitted to a general vote of the miners. The total vote cast was 2,846, of which 2,404, or 84 per cent, were in favor of the plan, and 442, or 16 per cent, were opposed.²

Attached to the plan was a "Memorandum of Agreement" outlining certain basic provisions designed to prevent disputes. The agreement, effective October 1915, was to run until January 1918. The eight-hour day, which was a matter of statute law, was written into the contract as well as the semi-monthly payment of wages. The company also promised to post scale wages, and to maintain these wages for over two years unless competitive districts granted an increase; to fix moderate charges for house, rent, light, and water; and to erect bath and club houses. In addition, employees were given the right to hold meetings on company property, to purchase where they pleased, and, though the right to hire and discharge was the exclusive of the company, they could not be discharged without first being cautioned or suspended. Another important stipulation was no discrimination on account of union membership.³

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The plan here submitted to a vote covered only the coal miners. A similar plan, containing the same basic principles but adapted to the needs of the steelworkers, was presented to them in May 1916. They accepted the plan, 73 percent favoring it. This plan was later extended to cover employees at the Sunrise mine in Wyoming and at the Colorado and Wyoming Railway. Cf. Ben M. Selekman, Employes' Representation in Steel Works (New York: Russel Sage Foundation, 1924).

2

Ben M. Selekman and Mary Van Kleeck, Emoloyes' Representation in Coal Mines (New York: Russel Sage Foundation, 1924), p. 27.

3

"Memorandum of Agreement Respecting Employment, Living and Working Conditions", cited in King Papers, 27, pp. 24598-600.

When it is remembered that in earlier years membership meant dismissal and union organizers were not even allowed to enter the camps, this provision was of great significance.

When finally adopted, the Plan provided that at each mine two or more representatives would be elected for a one year term. These representatives met an equal number of company officials at an annual meeting. In addition, district meetings would be held every four months in each of the five districts, four representing the coal mines and one the steel plant. In every district there would also be four joint committees composed of an equal number of employees and company officers to consider (1) safety and accident; (2) industrial cooperation and conciliation; (3) sanitation, health, and housing; (4) recreation and education.

The employees' representatives in each camp had the right to take up with any company official all grievances which were reported to them. If they could not obtain satisfactory adjustment of the case, they might appeal to the President's Industrial Representative, David Griffiths, who was constantly moving about the camps. If Griffiths failed to restore amicable relations, the employee or his representative might appeal to the higher officers right up to the president, or he might refer the matter to the joint committee on cooperation and conciliation. If this latter body could not provide satisfaction, the employee might go to the last board of appeal, the Colorado Industrial Commission.¹

Underlying the Plan was a definite philosophy which

¹
Selekman and Van Kleeck, pp. 60-9.

Rockefeller set forth in a newspaper article of January 1916. Every corporation, he stated, is composed of four parties: the stockholders, the directors, the officers, and the employees. The interests of these four are identical. Each must do its share for the Plan to succeed; "an effort on the part of any one to advance its own interest without regard to the rights of the others, means, eventually, loss to all." Though some have referred to the Plan as "establishing a Republic of Labor", it, continued the article, is not a "panacea" and yet it is a step in the right direction. The Plan provides ample machinery to minimize abuses but its ultimate success will largely be determined "by the spirit in which it is carried out."¹

From the outset, the UMWA was hostile to the Plan. It, stated its official organ, was a poor substitute for the privileges that could only be acquired through the collective action of the workers.² There was no possibility, maintained Vice-President Hayes, for the worker to be justly represented when the Plan was based solely on the good will and patronage of the CF&I; under such a Plan, the miners would become merely the "wards" and not the "partners" of the men in charge of the properties.³ John Lawson believed the Plan did not contain "the essentials of collective bargaining", but rather attempted "to substitute paternalism for democracy and philanthropy for

¹ John D. Rockefeller, Jr., "Labor and Capital-Partners", Atlantic Monthly 117 (January 1916): pp. 16-20.

² "Paternalism Not the Solution", UMWJ 25 (October 14, 1915): p. 5.

³ "Report of Vice-President Hayes", 25th Convention of the UMWA, UMWJ 25 (January 20, 1916): p. 42.

justice."¹ Samuel Gompers attacked Rockefeller directly:

So Mr. Rockefeller has formed a union--a union of his own employees of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, and perhaps imagines he has solved the problem of just relations between himself and his employees. But with all his wealth and the brains he could buy and suborn he has missed the mark. Imagine an organization of miners formed by the richest man in the world, who employs its members. What influence can such a pseudo union have to insist upon the remedying of a grievous wrong or the attainment of a real right?

Gompers had the answer: where men have no security in their position they will obey the company's directions.²

The United States Commission on Industrial Relations, even before the Plan had been ratified, condemned it in much stronger terms. George West found that it embodied "none of the principles of effectual collective bargaining and was a hypocritical pretense of granting what is in reality withheld"; it wasn't conceived and implemented for the employees, "but for the purpose of ameliorating or removing the unfavorable criticism of Mr. Rockefeller which had arisen throughout the country following his rejection of President Wilson's plan of settlement." And, added West: "The effectiveness of such a plan lies wholly in its tendency to deceive the public and lull criticism, while permitting the Company to maintain its absolute power."³

The liberal press of the nation also denounced the Plan. The argument put forth was simple: no union was a union

¹ John Lawson, cited in "Colorado's 'Republic of Labor'", Literary Digest, 23 October, 1915, p. 890.

² New York Times, 5 October, 1915, sec. 1, p. 7.

³ West Report, pp. 156-7, 186.

in anything but name unless it had the power to bargain with capital. One Eastern weekly, for instance, declared:

There should be no self-deception about the scheme. It does not establish representation nor provide for collective bargaining. The fact that the men have to choose their delegates from the employees of the company is a death blow to any genuine representation. For it means that the miner who is unfortunate enough to be elected has to represent his constituents at the risk of his job. And no good intentions of Mr. Rockefeller's can alter the fact that a miner in an obscure Colorado camp is at the mercy of foremen and mine superintendents. To ask him to fight the cause of his fellow-workers, when that cause will carry him into conflict with the men who control his employment, is to destroy at its roots the possibility of representation.¹

Though the Plan was much criticized, it did engender some favorable responses. Thus, President Wilson's Coal Strike Commission, which had visited Colorado in December 1915 and had published a report two months later, was very enthusiastic about it. Terming the Plan a new venture in labor relations, the Commission felt positive that not only would it prove a success but would also influence other operators to follow its example. The Plan, far from being a means to escape dealing with a union, was a first step in ultimately permitting workers to determine their own living and working conditions.²

If the Rockefeller Plan suffered by comparison with outside unions, it held its own in comparison with other company-initiated schemes. The Industrial Council Plan, in effect at McCormick and International Harvester, provided for a "Works Council" in which employee-elected representatives had an equal

¹
⁴ "The Rockefeller Plan in Colorado", New Republic
 4 (October 9, 1915): p. 249.

²
 McGregor, pp. 185-6.

voice and vote with management in considering matters of mutual interest. It guaranteed to every employee impartial arbitration and the right to put forward any suggestion, request, or complaint and to have it quickly decided upon. The Harvester Plan differed somewhat from that of the CF&I in providing closer management supervision, and in allowing arbitration only with company permission. Employee representatives could only meet in the presence of management representatives whereas in the CF&I Plan, employee representatives were not supervised in local meetings except at those meetings where representatives of all the camps met with top management. In one respect, the Harvester Plan was seemingly more democratic: in the "Works Councils", unit voting of the employee group and the employer group was in force; in the CF&I Plan, if one miner voted with management, his vote could decide the impending issue.¹

No doubt the Industrial Representation Plan established a company union, but it was a big step forward when compared to the totally autocratic labor conditions previously existing at the company. The Plan provided a buffer between the frequently despotic superintendents and the miners. Whereas, before the Plan was introduced, communication between worker and top management was next to impossible, the worker could, now, break the wall separating himself and the executives. However, having said this, it does not obscure the fact that the Plan was basically devised as a company-controlled substitute for outside unionism.

¹
 Robert Ozanne, A Century of Labor-Management Relations At McCormick And International Harvester (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), pp. 118-122.

CHAPTER 6 - THE PLAN IN PRACTICE

John A. Fitch, writer on the staff of the weekly journal Survey, had begun his coverage of the Colorado's industrial situation in 1912. During the next two years, he wrote many articles in which he developed one main theme: peace could never come to Colorado until the rule of the operators was ended.¹ The CF&I's introduction of the Plan had received the following comment from him: "It is not democracy that he [Rockefeller] has established in the industrial relations of the mines; it is not a satisfactory form of collective bargaining, though it may be a step in the direction of both."² After the Plan had been in operation for two years, Fitch personally visited the coal camps and was impressed with the new conditions. "This is the story of a changed order", he reported; "the bitterness engendered by the Colorado strike of 1913-1914 and the events back of it is being slowly but surely wiped out and a better state of affairs, industrial and political, is coming into being."³ Fitch credited the Plan for most of the transformation.

While the strike was in progress, Welborn had repeatedly asserted his company's intention to keep closed camps,

¹ John A. Fitch, "Law and Order: The Issue in Colorado", Survey 33 (December 5, 1914): pp. 241-258.

² John A. Fitch, "The Rockefeller Plan", Survey 35 (November 6, 1915): p. 147.

³ John A. Fitch, "Two Years of the Rockefeller Plan", Survey, 6 October, 1917, p. 14.

that is, camps which the public could not freely enter. On the 10th of February, 1916, the CF&I's Board of Directors issued the following statement: "Anyone conducting himself in an orderly manner may visit the camps of the Company."¹ Fitch personally attested to the change: he had gone freely about the camps,² talked with whomever he pleased and no one had interfered.

During the strike, the leading coal operators would not meet under any circumstances with union representatives. By 1917, the Victor-American Fuel Company had signed a three-year agreement with the UMWA. The CF&I had not gone so far but had admitted union leaders into its camps and had also held conferences with them.

Fitch, like Ben M. Selekman and Mary Van Kleeck, investigators for the Russel Sage Foundation, found that the committees established by the Plan had corrected some former abuses. Compulsory buying in company stores was a thing of the past; complaints against prices were dealt with promptly and equitably; life in the camps was happier and more healthful and opportunities for school were greatly improved. Only one thing clouded these changes for the better: they had been brought about through the initiative of management while employees were given no responsibility for decisions.³

In addition to these industrial changes, Fitch found the political outlook different. The company's influence in

¹ "Statement of Board of Directors", King Papers, 35, p. 30897.

² Fitch, "Two Years of the Rockefeller Plan", p. 14.

³ Fitch, p. 20.

Selekman and Van Kleeck, p. XX.

county and state affairs no longer existed. Sheriff Jefferson Farr, who had served the interests of the coal companies for over a decade, had been defeated. Judge Granby Hillyer, who had been appointed by Governor Carlson to try the cases growing out of the strike and who had sentenced John Lawson to life imprisonment, was removed from his position. Furthermore, the indictments against Lawson and other striking miners had been dismissed.¹

Though Fitch was probably correct to assert that the company no longer exercised political control over local affairs, others found that the company now interfered in national affairs. Indeed, the majority opinion in the state believed that the CF&I, together with the Colorado Republican leaders, had conspired to carry the 1916 elections for the Republican Party. After the election results became known, Murphy informed Rockefeller:

There were seven election precincts which were coextensive with seven coal camps and no one was allowed to enter these camps previous to election day for many months without stating his business and obtaining permission from the superintendent. ... Majority opinion in legal effect holds that under foregoing conditions there could not be a free and fair election and threw out entire vote of these seven precincts.²

Fitch discovered that the miners did not make use of the grievance-adjusting machinery provided by the Plan. Complaints were few, none was of a serious nature, and they were quickly dealt with.³ Fitch's findings were corroborated by

¹
Fitch, "Two Years of the Rockefeller Plan", p. 15.

²
Starr J. Murphy to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., King Papers, 33, 13 July, 1916, p. 29413.

³
Fitch, p. 17.

¹
 Welborn and by the Russel Sage Foundation investigators. The latter found grievances, ranging from complaints about underground working conditions to attempts by superintendents to discriminate against unionized miners, in every camp except two. Like Fitch, they found that these grievances were rarely reported to company officials. The representatives' reluctance to express their real feelings, concluded Selekman and Van Kleeck, could only be explained by their fear of losing their jobs or of getting a bad working place.²

Among company officials, the Plan received favorable comments. "There is no doubt of the success up to this time", wrote Weitzel, "and the best and surest proof is the fact that we are turning men away from our mines while all other operators in the state are complaining about shortage."³ Welborn agreed: the good conditions existing at the CF&I were entirely the result of the introduction of the Plan.⁴ Clarence J. Hicks, in charge of industrial relations at the company, credited Welborn for the Plan's early success. Welborn's genuine interest in all that pertained to the living and working conditions in the mines and camps had so filtered through to the subordinate officials that the Plan, as a result, had been strictly adhered to and its terms scrupulously observed.⁵

¹
 J.F. Welborn to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., January 14, 1916, King Papers, 35, p. 30845.

²
 Selekman and Van Kleeck, pp. 177-8, 194.

³
 E.H. Weitzel to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., December 22, 1916, King Papers, 35, p. 30269.

⁴
 J.F. Welborn to Mackenzie King, March 31, 1917, King Papers, 38, p. 33369.

⁵
 Clarence J. Hicks to Mackenzie King, January 25, 1916, King Papers, 34, p. 28553.

Even Rockefeller had high praises for the way the Plan was working out. In a public address delivered after the war, he stated his belief that the Plan had proven a boon to what he termed the four parties in industry. He placed particular emphasis on six effects of the Plan: uninterrupted operation of the plants and continuous employment of the workers; improved working and living conditions; the establishment of frequent and close contact between employees and employers; the elimination of grievances; the development of good will; and the creation of a community spirit. Moreover, under its operation, the participants in industry were gradually becoming convinced of the soundness of the proposition that they were fundamentally friends and not enemies and that their interests were one and the same. Prosperity and happiness were resulting.¹

Those individuals or groups who were neither connected with the company or with labor spoke favorably of the Plan. Following the strike, Trinidad, a town at the heart of CF&I properties, had experienced high unemployment. One year after the Plan had been in force, the Trinidad Chamber of Commerce was happy to report that, thanks to the Plan, all men in the town and its surrounding districts were back at work.² The Trinidad Picketwire aptly summarized the town's feelings toward the Plan and the company for having introduced it:

The business of making gardens, the entertainment offered by the YMCA, the club houses and the

¹
John D. Rockefeller, Jr., "Representation in Industry", Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 81 (January 1919): p. 177.

²
Trinidad Chamber of Commerce to Mackenzie King, 22 March, 1916, King Papers, 35, p. 29588.

encouragement to develop in every way is going to bring its returns to the men who are behind the Plan. ... The CF&I is following the right Plan.¹

President Wilson's Coal Strike Commission reported that the company was operating the Plan "with entire good faith."² The Industrial Commission of Colorado, a body which studied disputes and made recommendations within a thirty-day period before a strike or a lockout could be declared, found very few grievances and also indicated the absence of any discrimination against union members.³

The UMWA was, as could be expected, dissatisfied with the workings of the Plan. One unionist claimed that the company was not abiding by the nondiscrimination clause of the Plan.⁴ Wages were also unsatisfactory but to a union's request to have them adjusted, the company bluntly refused. Another matter that caused friction concerned the raising of money for the Red Cross. The company had organized a campaign whereby each miner would donate one day's pay; the company in turn would double the sum raised. The response by the men was more than expected--almost 100 per cent donated money. Problems arose when a union local at one of the camps decided to do better. Union members there voted to give 1 per cent of their wages to the Red Cross for the duration of the war. They then asked the company to check

¹
Trinidad Picketwire, May 8, 1916, King Papers, 35, p. 30950.

²
New York Times, 19 March, 1916, sec. 1, p. 19.

³
"Evidence of Unrest in Colorado", Survey 39 (November 10, 1917): p. 145.

⁴
Edward L. Doyle, "Miners Organize Their Own Union", American Federationist 23 (November 1916): p. 1049.

off the amount, turn the money over to the union's secretary who would send it to the Red Cross. The company offered two reasons for refusing the request: it was not signed by all of the men and it was illegal for a miner to assign his pay for more than one month at a time.¹

These accumulated grievances could have spurred the union to another confrontation with management but, unfortunately for the former, it was in no position to call a strike. Since 1914, the UMWA had been plagued by internal problems. Though, at the outset, Lawson had agreed with Hayes about the conduct of the strike, he soon found himself at odds with the Vice-President and other members of the international. The divergence continued and got worse after the strike. Lawson accused Indianapolis for having withdrawn its support too early, that is, before the striking miners had been able to get their old jobs back or get work elsewhere.² In 1916 an election for district officers was held in District 15. Lawson, as a candidate for the presidency, received an overwhelming majority. However, after the election, the international, claiming that the district was no longer self-sufficient, decided to suspend its autonomy. In line with this new policy, it assumed direction of Colorado affairs, appointed James Moran president instead of Lawson and Warren Pippin as secretary-treasurer; at the same time, it sent Hayes to take charge of a new organizational drive.³

¹ Fitch, "Two Years of the Rockefeller Plan", p. 18.

² Selekman and Van Kleeck, p. 278.

³ UMWJ 27 (February 15, 1917): p. 11.

This factionalism [reported Selekman and Van Kleeck] greatly weakened the union, and the defeat and withdrawal of Lawson deprived the miners of an able leader. Moreover, the charges of unfair tactics in elections made many members of the union lose confidence in its administration.¹

Notwithstanding its ostensible weakness, the union issued a call for a strike on August 1, 1917, but added the rider that if the company showed a disposition to remedy the situation, the strike would not occur. The strike threat, maintained the union, came as a direct result of the failure on the company's part to attend a peace conference originated by Moran. According to its organizer, this conference would involve representatives of miners and operators and would discuss ways and means peace could be maintained between employers and employees while the country was engaged in the war. Welborn expressed sympathy with the objects of the meeting, but rejected the invitation since the Plan was accomplishing the same purposes.²

Despite the company's refusal, the strike did not occur on the established date. Two incidents deterred the union from taking such a course: the international had advised against a strike³ and union officials had been given the opportunity to hold a conference with company representatives. In fact, on July 14, Moran and John McLennan, President of the State Federation of Labor, met with Welborn and his assistant Clarence Hicks. In the past management had categorically refused to meet

¹ Selekman and Van Kleeck, p. 280.

² Fitch, "Two Years of the Rockefeller Plan", p. 18.

³ UMWJ 28 (August 2, 1917): p. 4.

union officials.¹ This new attitude marked a drastic reversal of former policy. Welborn gave two reasons for the shift: (1) management, aware when a strike is in progress that the union usually interprets a conference as giving the hope of a contract, refused because it did not wish to give such hope; (2) the Plan, by providing a method of conference between management and employees, had allowed him to gather enough information to refute any charges that either Moran or McLennan might have put forth.²

During the conference, Moran claimed to be strongly desirous of averting a strike on the set date, but made it clear that the miners themselves, of whom, according to his own estimates, 90 per cent were members of his organization, wanted union recognition and were willing to obtain it even if it meant a strike. Welborn denied the percentage of unionized miners; however, he did acknowledge that many miners had taken out their membership cards. As the convention proceeded, Moran directly asked the president whether or not he would recognize the union, a request which Welborn flatly turned down. Before the meeting was adjourned, Welborn was left with the impression that the conference had had the effect of averting a strike.³ Two days later, his impression materialized; the CF&I received official notice whereby the strike was called

¹ In January 1915, Rockefeller had had a series of interviews with Edward L. Doyle, John R. Lawson, and Frank J. Hayes. Cf. McGregor, p. 135.

² Selekman and Van Kleeck, pp. 283-4.

³ J.F. Welborn to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., July 14, 1917, King Papers, 35, p. 31957.

off pending a conference with the union on July 26.¹

Before this second conference was held, Welborn was informed about newspaper reports which claimed that the miners were unhappy. Rockefeller asked Welborn to make "full reparation" if the charges were true, but, if groundless, to make the facts public so as to counter the unfavorable publicity. Unless this was done, warned Rockefeller, the desire among the miners to strike would "naturally be interpreted as indicating that something was wrong and the company would be publicly criticized and condemned in spite of its clean record and its constant effort to be fair."² Welborn did not share Rockefeller's concern. "Unless we are woefully in the dark as to the feeling of our men in general", he wrote to King three days before the conference, "the grievances that will be presented Thursday will be of a trivial and imaginary character."³

Welborn's confidence justified itself when the conference actually took place. Moran came up with only two grievances both involving discharges. After Welborn insisted that these could be taken up by the Plan, Moran, terming the Plan a "one-sided affair, undemocratic, and a failure", objected. The District president then asked for union recognition to which Welborn immediately said no. The meeting was dissolved without any agreement and, according to Welborn, with Moran

¹
J.F. Welborn to Mackenzie King, July 17, 1917, King Papers, 38, p. 33406.

²
John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to J.F. Welborn, July 18, 1917, King Papers, 35, p. 31962.

³
J.F. Welborn to Mackenzie King, July 23, 1917, King Papers, 38, p. 33411.

unable "to bring himself to believe that we could not be induced to recognize the union."¹

Company men were delighted with the results of the conference. Rockefeller congratulated Welborn for having "handled a trying situation with great patience, wisdom, and skill."²

The next day Welborn wired Rockefeller that conditions in the district were quieter than they had been a week earlier and so far results of circulating a petition asking for recognition of the union had not been such "as to give us serious concern."³

The fact that no strike occurred would indicate that the grievances were not so serious. They served a means to an end--obtaining a conference where a demand for union recognition would be made. Though the demand was rejected, it certainly would be made again.⁴

In September, the union received another opportunity to make the request. Murphy, while on a visit to Colorado, had a meeting with Moran. Essentially, the union leader gave Murphy the same story he had already told Welborn. Since 90 per cent of the CF&I's miners were unionized, he insisted, they demanded replacing the Plan with the UMWA. Murphy acknowledged Moran's demand but referred to Welborn the decision whether to

¹
J.F. Welborn to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., July 28, 1917, King Papers, 38, p. 33421.

²
John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to J.F. Welborn, August 5, 1917, King Papers, 37, p. 32935.

³
J.F. Welborn to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., August 6, 1917, King Papers, 37, p. 32942.

⁴
Fitch, "Two Years of the Rockefeller Plan", p. 19.

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refuse or accept.

Moran persisted in his efforts and next attempted to discuss the matter with Rockefeller, but the latter would have none of it. He made it clear to Moran that he would not undercut his executive officers. Rockefeller reiterated his position to Welborn:

while I am greatly interested in the welfare of the Company and its employees, I shall not at any time undertake to carry on negotiations of any kind affecting the interests of the corporation, much less permit myself individually to act as a court of appeal from the officers of the Company.²

Moran and the union had lost another round.

In summary, though most of the specific objectives of the strike, other than recognition of the union, were carried out by the Plan, Selekman and Van Kleeck called the Plan "an incomplete experiment", and concluded that the fruits of the experiment had been "better living conditions and better relations between managerial officials and miners", but that it had not become "a partnership for labor."³ Likewise, Fitch believed the Plan to be "the latest chapter in the story of Rockefeller in Colorado. It's a better and more hopeful chapter than others, but it isn't the end of the book."⁴ The miners, the only people who had personal knowledge of the Plan and its workings, would undoubtedly have agreed. Probably the miners were dissatisfied

¹
J.F. Welborn to Starr J. Murphy, September 18, 1917, King Papers, 37, p. 32961.

²
John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to J.F. Welborn, October 16, 1917, King Papers, 37, p. 32982.

³
Selekman and Van Kleeck, p. 398.

⁴
Fitch, "Two Years of the Rockefeller Plan", p. 20.

with every aspect of the Plan, but many times they manifested their discontent in regard to one of its most important features-- wages. Under the Plan, wages, which were to be determined by the company, would remain stationary unless increases were given in the major unionized fields. Between 1916 and 1920, company employees received on six occasions advances averaging 10 per cent, but these were brought about either by the negotiating efforts of the UMWA or by their being outrightly imposed by the government. A large majority of the miners, aware that it wasn't the company which was fighting its battles, demonstrated its discontent by joining the national coal strike of November 1, 1919. During the depression of 1921, the company set out to cut wages by 30 per cent. With one day's notice, management on September 1 made the necessary cut, which was immediately followed by a strike. The Colorado Industrial Commission temporarily checked the company's intentions by declaring the reduction illegal for failure to give thirty days' notice. The CF&I met this requirement and by November 17 the wage cut came into effect. In 1922 another walkout, occasioned by national rather than local issues, occurred. Following this latest strike,¹ the company restored the 1920 scale.

The miners' discontent persisted through the late twenties and the early years of the New Deal. It was only in 1935 that they were delivered from the Plan. In that year the National Labor Relations Act closed the book on the company union and the UMWA finally established itself at the CF&I mines.

¹
 Irving Bernstein, The Lean Years (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960), pp. 162-3.

CONCLUSION

The CF&I, like many other corporations at the turn of the century, was plagued with recurrent labor problems. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the company attempted to improve the lot of its men. Its belief that welfare was good business was instrumental in the company changing from a purely economic to a major social institution as well. This belief, however, was not shared by the miners. That they were not satisfied with social reforms only was amply demonstrated by the outbreak of the 1913-1914 strike.

Economically, socially, and politically, the miner felt the overwhelming might of the corporation. The nature of the company town was partly responsible for many of the economic evils. The miner was unhappy with the company store, often the only store in the town and where prices were established by the company. Scrip payment, which in fact cheated the miner of part of his wages, also proved unsatisfactory. Socially, though the company had gone far in making conditions better at its mines, it still did not provide adequate housing and continually directed the type of religious instruction the worker would receive. The company added to the miner's discontent by interfering with his basic American rights and by outrightly evading Colorado labor laws. Faced with such a complete domination, the miner had but one recourse--join an organization which could more effectively bargain with the company. The strike broke

out when the company flatly refused to deal with the miners collectively.

The outbreak of the strike immediately brought both levels of government, federal and state, on the scene. The appointment of a mediator, the intervention of Secretary of Labor Wilson, even the personal efforts of Governor Ammons and President Wilson did not achieve a breakthrough in the negotiations. In all cases, the CF&I, with the cooperation of other companies, stifled all hopes of settlement.

Management's obduracy was heartily supported by ownership. Whenever Welborn and Bowers reported to Rockefeller about their rejection of the latest peace proposal, Rockefeller approved their position. He often made it clear to them that whatever the decision they would reach, he would stand by that decision. Rockefeller's resolve to wash his hands of all labor matters was a subject of much discussion during the strike and was something for which he was severely criticized. However, his attitude was not unique in the corporate world; indeed, most directors who testified before the Commission on Industrial Relations candidly admitted that they left labor questions to management.

Following the Ludlow incident, there was a perceptible change in the relations between Rockefeller and his Colorado subordinates. If, until Ludlow, Rockefeller had completely relied on whatever Welborn or Bowers had reported, after Ludlow, he did not accept everything at its face value. Management, in its quest to defeat the strike, remained adamant towards

settling with the UMWA; Rockefeller, however, was willing to smooth labor relations. Thus, he appointed a labor expert, Mackenzie King, to investigate the causes of industrial unrest. Moreover, though management manifested a definite indifference to public opinion, Rockefeller was very much concerned with it. This was revealed by his hiring of a publicity agent to put forward the operators' viewpoint before the public.

During the summer of 1914, King proposed to Rockefeller a plan which, he hoped, could be implemented at the company's properties and which would go far in alleviating the miners' apprehensions. Since the scheme essentially kept power in the company's hands, Rockefeller was very receptive. After he accepted it, he presented it to the Colorado officials for their opinion. Welborn and Bowers, claiming that ratification of King's idea would constitute a defeat for the company, rejected it but were willing to reconsider its implementation once the strike was over. When Rockefeller agreed with their decision, the plan was temporarily set aside.

The termination of the strike allowed the company to put the Industrial Representation Plan in operation at its mines. Under the Plan, the CF&I was not to discriminate against a worker for being a union member, but, at the same time, it would not recognize or deal with trade-unions. The Plan, rather than being merely directed against trade-unions, represented Rockefeller's view of the best system of industrial relations. Its principles were morally and legally correct, and economically and philosophically sound. The philosophy

of the Plan was rooted in the 19th century but was influenced by the Progressive Movement. During this period, there arose widespread resentment of big business occasioned by the evils and abuses of industrialism. This resentment took the form of the writings of journalists who exposed some of the practices of large corporations. Relative to standards of the period, the CF&I was not a large enterprise but, being a Rockefeller concern, was as much in the public eye as United States Steel. This factor restricted the company in its dealings with labor. In other words, it could have blocked unionism without the Plan but this would have meant open repression, as in the past. By 1915, this was no longer possible. Therefore, what the company needed was a righteous way of blocking unions. The Plan filled this requirement. It enabled Rockefeller to talk about "a partnership for labor" without surrendering any of the absolute power that management had once exercised.

The miners' overwhelming acceptance of the Plan once it was proposed to them did not indicate total satisfaction with its provisions, but that, rather, under the circumstances, they could not bargain for anything better. This was revealed by the subsequent history of the company. After the Plan had been in force a few years, investigators found conditions at the mines much improved in reference to pre-strike years and many miners satisfied with its workings. However, there was also a substantial majority which did not think of the Plan as a panacea. At most, this majority offered a temporary allegiance to the Plan, an allegiance which it would quickly break off given the opportunity. During the period 1919-1935, this opportunity was often taken, but on all occasions the result

proved detrimental to the miner. It was only in 1935 that the federal government, by declaring all types of company plans illegal, accomplished what the majority of CF&I miners had tried unsuccessfully to do for twenty years.

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