HOW SEVEN METROPOLITAN DAILY NEWSPAPERS IN MICHIGAN REPORTED AND INTERPRETED THE HUNGER MARCH ON THE FORD MOTOR COMPANY IN DEARBORN ON MARCH 7, 1932

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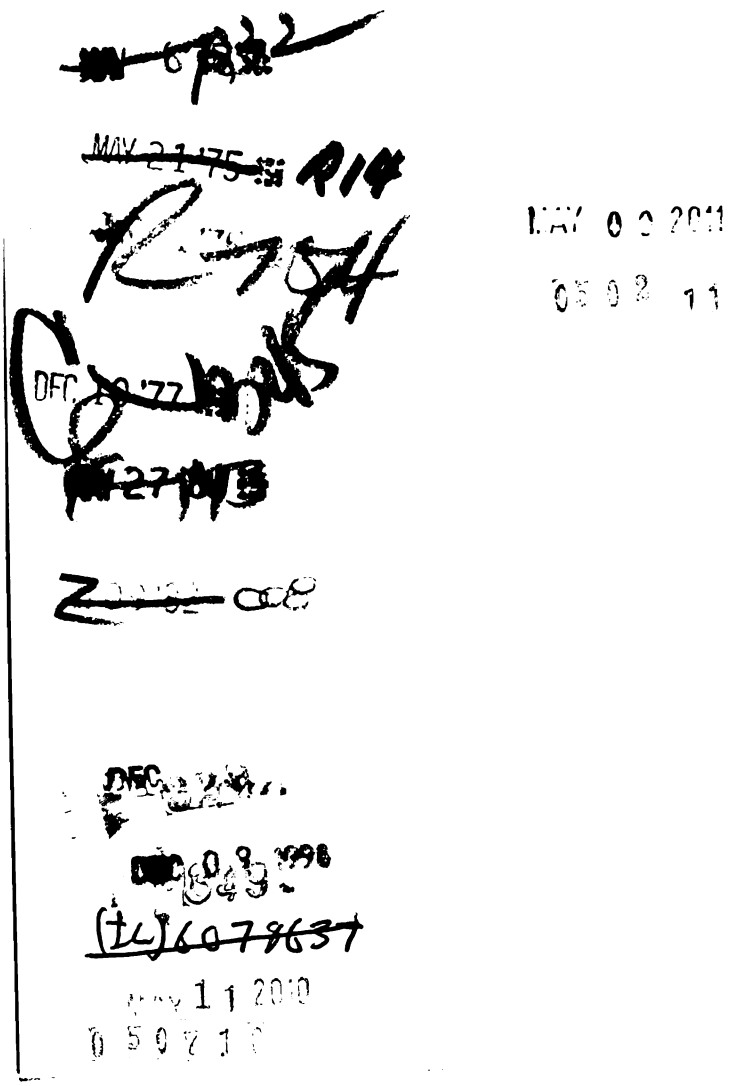

ABSTRACT

HOW SEVEN METROPOLITAN DAILY NEWSPAPERS IN MICHIGAN REPORTED AND INTERPRETED THE HUNGER MARCH ON THE FORD MOTOR COMPANY IN DEARBORN ON MARCH 7, 1932

by Stanley I. Soffin

This study is an examination of how seven metropolitan daily newspapers in Michigan, the Detroit Free Press, Detroit Evening Times, Detroit News, Flint Daily Journal, Grand Rapids Herald, Grand Rapids Press, and Lansing State Journal, reported and interpreted the Hunger March made on the employment office of the River Rouge plant of the Ford Motor Company in Dearborn on March 7, 1932.

Accounts of the Hunger March, which involved three thousand jobless in the greater Detroit area, were read on microfilms of the seven Michigan newspapers. Most news stories and all editorials were photocopied and entered into a clipping collection together with the date of publication and corresponding page number and the position of the story on the page. Stories not photocopied were summarized on note cards and entered into the clipping collection. Photographs of the Hunger March were also noted.

The events of the Hunger March were then classified as follows: The Event and Its Causes; The Issue of

Communism in Reporting the Event; Aftermath of the Event: A Mass Funeral; and A Grand Jury Investigation into the Event.

The study revealed that the seven Michigan daily newspapers departed from the Canons of Journalism, a self-imposed code of ethical standards adopted by the American Society of Newspapers Editors in 1923. News accounts of the Hunger March and subsequent events showed a variance in reporting observable fact that may have been the result of the management of news by editors to correlate news columns with editorial position. This was particularly evident in reporting and interpreting Communist party involvement in the Hunger March.

Although all newspapers in this study, except the control newspaper, the New York Times, and the Flint Daily Journal, were lax in varying degrees in reporting the issue of communism, the Detroit Free Press in particular and the Lansing State Journal were found to have most blatantly imposed their anti-Communist editorial positions upon the news columns of their newspapers.

It was also found that the outstate newspapers in the study relied solely on the Associated Press dispatches to report the events of the Hunger March, and that the Detroit Free Press reports were the basis of the Associated Press accounts. Only the Flint Daily Journal, however, made any attempt to edit the AP wire copy to remove bias against the demonstrators.

The examination found that none of the newspapers in this study showed any interest in investigating a "hint of wrong-doing" when the conduct of Wayne County Prosecutor Harry S. Toy was challenged by a member of the Wayne County Grand Jury. Neither, in fact, did the seven daily newspapers examined challenge the findings of the grand jury's investigation into the Hunger March, although an examination should have revealed the connection between the law enforcement agency in the city of Dearborn and the River Rouge plant of the Ford Motor Company in Dearborn.

Finally, the study found that the New York Times published the most reliable, unbiased, and accurate accounts of the demonstration in front of the gates of the River Rouge plant and the events that followed it. The Times, however, did not comment editorially on the Hunger March and its aftermath--despite a demonstration on March 10 by three hundred Communists in New York City protesting police brutality of the men and women in Dearborn.

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By

Stanley I. Soffin

A THESIS

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Director of Thesis

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During the course of my investigation, I have had the assistance of Mr. Joe Cherwinski of the Michigan State Library, Mrs. Ruth B. Braun of the George B. Catlin Memorial Library of the Detroit News, and Mrs. Helen S. Richard of the Michigan State University Library. I owe a special debt of gratitude to my parents, for their generosity, and to Dr. W. Cameron Meyers, whose patience has been as remarkable as his guidance. They made this study possible.

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INTRODUCTION

A member of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, an editor of a major Middle Western metropolitan daily newspaper, asked to comment on "sterling qualities" common to better newspapers, observed:

> A great newspaper is a paper that has heart, soul, brain. It tells the truth as best it can about our world. By world we mean the reader's home town, his state, our nation and the rest of the world. To tell the truth, the paper must have integrity and dedication. There are no half measures in the moral field and the paper must tell what the truth means. In our complicated world we must explain and define. We must instruct and educate.
>
> The great newspaper must be successful. I mean that it must make money. Money to pay good salaries to a strong staff. The paper must have adequate news space to do a strong, detailed job of reporting. The paper must have a devoted staff of news conscious photographers and thoughtful editorial writers to speak the paper's editorial voice strongly and clearly.
>
> The great paper must have a character, an identity. It must do special reporting and feature jobs--that's enterprise. The paper must dig and investigate. The slightest hint of wrong-doing must bring down the relentless probing of the reporters.
>
> The great paper is independent. It bows to no one--the advertiser, the politician, the banker. It has a profound duty to only one group, its readers. And from them it seeks only respect, not love.
>
> It is not enough for newspapers to say simply, "We accept society as we find it." It is true that we have a prime responsibility to mirror our society, but we also must lead toward higher citizen responsibilities, better tastes, better culture, better adult education. We must never forget that here in this America of ours we have vast morality and intelligence. The more solemnly thankful we are for this superb circumstance, the better we likely will be able to keep

> the circles widening, engulfing even larger zones of the population.[1]

In April, 1923, when the American Society of Newspaper Editors was founded, guidelines for assessing "competent and responsible" newspaper performance were set down.[2] The society, a distinguished professional organization of editors of the nation's daily press, delineated in more precise and formal language than did the Middle Western editor those characteristics and qualities that "would keep the newspaper business both free and responsible."[3] The membership unanimously adopted the Canons of Journalism, a code of ethics that advocated a standard of newspaper conduct.[4] Organized self-control of the press was to remain voluntary; and although the canons did not provide for rigid enforcement, they have provided a basis for self-regulation within the newspaper profession. They are principles newsmen can grasp and be grasped by in a subtle way: the stirring of the conscience. In brief summary the Canons of Journalism advocate:

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[1]Arville Schaleben, "The News and You," in The Citizen and the News, ed. by David Host (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1962), pp. 84-85.

[2]Randy Block, "How Effective Is Our Code of Ethics?", Bulletin of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, No. 521, July, 1968, p. 1.

[3]Ibid., p. 15.

[4]Ibid., p. 1.

I. Responsibility.--the right of the newspaper as restricted by nothing but consideration for the public welfare;

II. Freedom of the Press.--it is to be guarded as a vital right of mankind, an unquestionable right, to discuss whatever is not forbidden by law;

III. Independence.--freedom from all obligations except fidelity to public interest;

IV. Sincerity, Truthfulness, Accuracy.--good faith with the reader;

V. Impartiality.--makes distinctions between news reports and expressions of opinions; news reports should be free from opinion or bias;

VI. Fair Play.--newspapers should not publish unofficial charges affecting reputations or moral character without opportunity given to the accused to be heard;

VII. Decency.--the newspaper cannot escape conviction of insincerity if, while professing high moral purpose, it supplies the incentive to base conduct.[5]

Edwin Emery, a professor of journalism and a journalism historian, suggests two tests of the "greatness of the newspaper's performance."[6] The newspaper that the craft recognizes as being distinguished is that publication which demonstrates its integrity and zealousness in the telling of the news, and which at the same time possesses the social conscience that is acquired by its recognition of the needs of society, and by a "proper and reasonable adjustment to society's desires."[7] Honest and comprehensive coverage of the news, of course, is the first essential. A second standard of conduct is a demonstration of

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[5] Ibid., p. 2.

[6] Edwin Emery, The Press and America: An Interpretative History of Journalism (2d. ed.; Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), p. 718.

[7] Ibid.

responsibility in community leadership. An outstanding newspaper--conservative or liberal, Republican or Democrat, in its political belief--is that publication that is "aroused whenever basic principles of human liberty and progress are at stake in a given situation"[8] and which is constantly on guard against intolerance and unfairness.

Article VII of the ASNE Canons of Journalism says, in part, that "partisanship, in editorial comment which knowingly departs from the truth, does violence to the best spirit of American journalism; in the news columns it is subversive of a fundamental principle of the profession."

With these several guidelines and standards by which to assess newspaper performance, this study is an investigation of how seven metropolitan daily newspapers in Michigan reported and interpreted the Hunger March made on the employment office of the River Rouge plant of the Ford Motor Company in Dearborn on March 7, 1932. Nearly three thousand men and women, bundled in sleazy clothing with the temperature near zero, walked two miles in biting winds from the outskirts of Detroit to Dearborn to ask Henry Ford to take back some of the men he had laid off.

The newspapers in the study include the Detroit Free Press, the Detroit Evening Times, the Detroit News, the Flint Daily Journal, the Grand Rapids Herald, the Grand Rapids Press, and the Lansing State Journal.

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[8] Ibid.

In 1932, the Detroit Free Press, the city's only morning newspaper, reported a daily circulation of 192,728 and a Sunday circulation of 224,799.[9] The newspaper was published by the Detroit Free Press Company, and classified itself politically as Independent-Republican.

The Detroit News, published by the Evening News Association, enjoyed the state's largest circulation with a weekday afternoon distribution of 265,309, and a Sunday circulation of 206,734. The News was classified as being Independent politically.[10]

Detroit's third daily newspaper, the evening Detroit Evening Times, circulated 247,881 daily newspapers, 211,693 on Saturdays and 288,084 on Sundays.[11] The Times was owned by press baron William Randolph Hearst and published by the Times Publishing Company. It was non-partisan. (The Times was purchased by the Detroit News in November, 1960.)

Outstate, the Flint Daily Journal, a member of Booth Newspapers, Incorporated, a chain of seven daily newspapers, all in Michigan, had a daily evening circulation of 41,363.[12] The politically Independent newspaper

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[9] N. W. Ayer & Son's Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals [Title varies] (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayes & Son, 1933), p. 429.

[10] Ibid., p. 429.

[11] Ibid., p. 430.

[12] Ibid., p. 432.

was in 1932 and remains today the only daily newspaper in Flint.

Grand Rapids was served by two daily newspapers in 1932. The larger Grand Rapids Press had a circulation of 81,401.[13] The paper, which did not publish on Sundays, was owned by Booth Newspapers, Incorporated. Politically, it called itself Independent-Republican.

The Grand Rapids Herald, published by Federated Publications, Incorporated, had a morning circulation of 31,235 and a Sunday circulation of 31,631.[14] (The Herald was merged with the Press in April, 1959.)

In Michigan's capital city, Lansing, the State Journal was an evening newspaper with a circulation of 42,034.[15] Published by Paul A. Martin, the State Journal was listed as politically Independent. It did not publish a Sunday edition.

The seven newspapers represented a combined daily circulation of 901,951 and a combined Sunday circulation of 851,048. The papers circulated in the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas[16] of Detroit, Flint, Lansing, and Grand

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[13] Ibid., p. 434.

[14] Ibid., p. 433.

[15] Ibid., p. 438.

[16] "Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas," as defined for the Federal Government by the Office of Statistical Standards, Bureau of the Budget, in the Executive

Rapids with a combined population of 2,825,390 persons. This figure represents 58 per cent of Michigan's total population of 4,847,325.[17]

Reference to the New York Times also appears throughout this study. The Times is used solely as a control with which to compare the events of the Hunger March with the news coverage that appeared in the seven Michigan dailies. The New York Times was considered in 1932, as it is today, a newspaper of fair, complete, and reliable report. In 1937, eighty-nine Washington correspondents, the elite of the journalistic profession, voted the New York Times as presenting the most fair and reliable news. Of the reporters who rated the Times either first, second, or third, sixty-four listed the Times in first place.[18]

Office of the President, refers to a metropolitan area as that which contains at least one city of at least fifty thousand inhabitants, the county of such a central city, and the adjacent counties that are metropolitan in character and economically and socially integrated with the county of the central city. The term was not so defined in 1932, but has been adopted for this study. The Metropolitan Statistical Area of Detroit includes Wayne, McComb, and Oakland counties; of Flint, Genesee, and Lapeer counties; of Lansing, Ingham, Eaton, and Clinton counties; and of Grand Rapids, Kent and Ottawa counties. See U.S., Bureau of the Budget, Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas, prepared by Office of Statistical Standards (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1967).

[17]U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Population, II, 511-516.

[18]Leo C. Rosten, The Washington Correspondents (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1937), p. 195. Significantly, of the ninety-three correspondents who voted for

The reporters also voted the Times as the most widely read newspaper by the Washington press corps and the one newspaper for which sixty-eight of the eighty-seven correspondents interviewed said they would prefer to work. "These facts are a striking tribute to the reputation of the Times and an indication of the prestige it occupies among a body of experienced and skilled newspapermen."[19]

Microfilm copies of all the newspapers in this study, except the Detroit Times and Grand Rapids Herald, are available at the State of Michigan Library in Lansing. The Detroit Evening Times was borrowed from the George B. Catlin Memorial Library of the Detroit News. The Grand Rapids Herald was acquired by inter-library loan from the Grand Rapids Public Library. Most of the news stories and all editorials on the Hunger March were photocopied by the microfilm copier in the Michigan State University Library. After the page position of a story was noted, the story was then cut out and assembled in a clipping collection together with the date of publication and corresponding page number of the issue in which it appeared. The contents

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the least fair and reliable newspapers in the country, eighty-seven cited a Hearst newspaper for either first, second, or third place. The Detroit Times, however, was not specifically mentioned in the study.

[19] Ibid., pp. 197-98.

of stories not photographed were summarized on note cards and entered into the clipping collection. Photographs germane to the study were also noted. The events of the Hunger March were then classified as follows: The Event and Its Causes; the Issue of Communism in Reporting the Event; Aftermath of the Event: A Mass Funeral; and A Grand Jury Investigation into the Event. Measurements of stories that appear in this study are taken from microfilm photographs and are therefore smaller than the original stories.

CHAPTER I

THE SETTING

In mid-August, 1928, Herbert Clark Hoover, the Secretary of Commerce, accepting the presidential nomination of his party, proclaimed to the American citizenry that economic prosperity was a peculiarly Republican product, not quite yet perfected but ready for the finishing touches; and he then solemnly vowed, "with the help of God," to banish proverty from the nation. "We in America today are nearer to the final triumph over poverty than ever before in the history of any land," he said. "The poorhouse is vanishing from among us. . . . There is no guaranty against poverty equal to a job for every man. That is the primary purpose of the policies we advocate."[1] On November 6, 1928, the American people gave Herbert Hoover the chance he sought: Election Day came and he was swept into the White House.[2]

The Republican legislative program, designed to aid business through budgetary reform, tariff policy, and the sanction of industrial consolidation, had been initiated during the administration of Warren G. Harding, which took

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[1] New York Times, August 12, 1928, passim.

[2] Ibid., November 8, 9, 11, 1928, passim.

office in 1921, and had been continued during the five years of the administration of President Calvin Coolidge, who had asserted that "the chief business of the American people is business."[3] Now another Republican President pledged that Americans would not be beguiled from the path so clearly marked out for them by the Republicans.[4]

After the business recession of 1920, business had enjoyed unparalleled prosperity, as the expansion of new industries (automobile, radio, motion pictures, electrical appliances, and chemicals) lifted production to new heights. Prophets told the people that prosperity was a permanent feature of the "new economic era," and that both wages and output would spiral upward for all time. With security assured by the "new economy" Americans felt free to invest their savings in stocks. Speculative buying by all classes drove common stock from 117 to 225 between December, 1928, and September, 1929.[5] This rise encouraged people to buy widely on credit, confident that their investment would pay all debts. This, in turn, stimulated greater production. "Two cars in every garage" and "a chicken in every pot,"[6]

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[3]Calvin Coolidge, Foundations of the Republic (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1926), p. 187.

[4]New York Times, August 12, 1928, p. 1

[5]Ibid., January 1-3, 1930, passim.

[6]Ibid., October 20, 1928, p. 12.

used by the Republicans in their presidential election advertisements during the campaign in 1928, seemed within the reach of all.

Despite prosperity, the economy contained many weak spots: (1) Technological unemployment mounted steadily as machines took over the work of men. Between two and four million men were constantly out of work, decreasing buying power. (2) The agricultural depression after 1920 had lowered the purchasing power of farmers. (3) Overseas trade steadily declined as a result of the Republican tariff policy and the disturbing influences of the war-debt and reparation controversies that lingered in the aftermath of the World War. (4) The new wealth was largely in the hands of the few, while the wages of the principal consumers--the workers--did not keep pace with prices. (5) Credit buying meant that many Americans were poor even though spending lavishly; once their confidence in the future was shaken, they would stop buying. (6) Production in basic industries had begun to slip in the late 1920's, as the demand declined for coal, textiles, new homes, steal, and automobiles.[7]

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[7]U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Finance, Investigation of Economic Problems, Hearings before the Committee on Finance, S. Res. 315, 72d Cong., 2d ses., 1933, pp. 1194-1202. Hereinafter cited as Hearings of Committee on Finance.

Stock prices began to fall on October 21, 1929. As panic selling spread, they plunged rapidly lower, losing 40 per cent in a month.[8] (For the next three years they slid downward at a slower rate; during the period the average of leading stocks fell from 252 to 61.)[9] Millions were ruined by the crash, while others who had thought themselves secure stopped buying luxuries in an effort to conserve their savings. The collapse of public confidence slowed purchases of industrial and farm produce. Prices fell, business failures mounted, factories closed, the number of unemployment rose to 13,000,000 persons at the end of 1932, and drastic wage cuts curtailed the purchasing power of those still working.[10] As 1932 dawned, 2,298 banks had failed.[11] A stunned nation could not believe that eight years of Harding-Coolidge prosperity had been shattered.

Relief of destitute Americans rested upon the family, the neighbor, the landlord, and the employer, and not the federal government, Hoover suggested. The President

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[8] New York Times, October 22-November 6, 1928; January 1-2, 1929, passim.

[9] Ibid., December, 1932; January 1-2, 1933, passim.

[10] Hearings on Committee on Finance, p. 1193.

[11] Ibid., p. 1191.

[12] Herbert Hoover, The State Papers and Other Writings of Herbert Hoover, Vol. I: March 4, 1929, to October 1, 1931, ed. by William Starr (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1934), p. 470.

urged local communities to establish private relief organizations so as not to undermine the "spirit of responsibility" of states, municipalities, industries, and the community at large. Federal relief, he said, would destroy "character" and threaten the "roots of self-government."[13] Hoover told the citizenry that the economic depression that plagued the country could end as soon as the people regained their confidence and would begin to spend the $1.300 billion being hoarded.[14]

A nation caught up in deepening gloom and insecurity little noticed sobering events in other corners of the world early in 1932. Japan, spurred on by the loss of her vital foreign markets, increasing unemployment, and a lower salary scale for civil servants--all of these factors products of the growing world-wide depression--had invaded Manchuria, and her armies now were in conflict with the Chinese Nationalists. In Germany, Adolf Hitler, leader of the National Socialist party, challenged the aging Field Marshal Paul vón Beneckendorf and vón Hindenburg at the polls for the presidency of the republic, but missed victory in the run-off election.[15] In less than eight years Hitler would plunge Germany and most of the world into a

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[13] Ibid., p. 496.

[14] New York Times, February 4, 1932, p. 1.

[15] Ibid., March 14, 1932, p. 1.

war that would challenge life, liberty, and civilization. But a trial in the United States Seventh District Court at Chicago made news than many Americans followed, despite their cheerlessness. Alphonse Capone, the multi-millionaire master of Chicago's murderous gangsters who dealt in illicit liquor traffic, "protection" services to a variety of business enterprises, and wholesale killing--for a price, lost his appeal on a conviction of federal income tax evasion. Organized crime has spread within a decade to almost every large urban community in the country, and Capone or some of his henchmen, shared in the thousands of dollars the racketeers collected from clients or victims. Capone was sentenced to eleven years in a federal prison.[16]

A potpourri of events in March comprised the news of the day. The first-term governor of New York, Franklin D. Roosevelt, won New Hampshire's presidential preference primary election in his quest for the White House. Movie actress Greta Garbo bought a white, one-piece bathing suit from a Hollywood dress salon, and caused a flurry of activity in stores across the country by females seeking bathing suits in white and of similar design--a design that seemed to favor less suit and more female. Men who could not observe Miss Garbo in a Southern California pool or at the beach, could watch her in the most successful motion picture

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[16]Detroit Times, February 23, 25, 28, 1932, passim.

of the year, "Grand Hotel," co-starring Lionel Barrymore.[17] Anne Morrow Lindbergh, wife of Charles A. Lindbergh, who flew the first solo non-stop flight from New York to Paris to become a national superhero, addressed the nation over radio, calling on Americans to contribute to a relief fund for the flood-stricken people of China. A caption over a picture in the Detroit News of the couple shown entering a radio station ironically read, "Back in the News After a Long Absence." A week later the couple's twenty-two-months old son was kidnapped from his crib in his parents' home in Hopewell, New Jersey, an event that was to keep the Lindberghs on page one of the nation's newspapers for six continuous weeks.[18] Americans temporarily put aside their concern over the worsening depression to share the grief of the young parents. (The child's body was found seventy-three days later in a clump of woods five and a half miles from the Lindbergh home.[19])

Despite the variety in the news of the day, there was a rigid monotony to the statements of local, state, and federal officials reporting that the worst of the dark days of unemployment and failing businesses was over. The number of unemployed grew and increasingly plants and factories were closing their doors. In 1932 the nation's

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[17] Detroit News, March 20, 1932, p. 20.

[18] Ibid., February 23, 1932, passim.

[19] Ibid., March-May, 1932, passim.

451,800 corporations would report a loss of $5.640 billion below the previous year's figures.[20] In Michigan the state's major industry--the manufacture of automobiles--contributed to this deficit. As unemployment throughout the United States mounted, the demand for new cars decreased; automotive production was cut to one-fifth of the 1929 output.[21] The largest number of automobile manufacturers and the plants of automotive parts suppliers were situated in the Greater Detroit area. With employment figures down 33 per cent from 1928, Detroit area jobless accordingly could not meet payments on mortgages or loans; 160,000 Detroit wage earners failed to report or to pay their 1931 federal income taxes, returns to shrink from $80 million collected in 1931 to $36 million in 1932.[22]

The Detroit Department of Welfare reported 26,000 families on its relief rolls the first week in March; and the agency was paying each family head an average daily food allowance of fifteen cents per person. By the end of the month, welfare department officials estimated that the names of an additional 10,000 families would be added to

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[20]E. D. Kennedy, Dividends to Pay (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1939), p. 16. Kennedy uses United States government statistics in this study.

[21]Allan Nevins and Frank Earnest Hill, Ford: Expansion and Challenge, 1915-1933 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957). Hereinafter cited as Nevins and Hill, Ford: 1915-1933.

[22]Detroit Evening Times, March 17, 1932, p. 3.

its relief rolls. A citizen-organized Emergency Relief Fund attempted to relieve some of the city's burden by feeding seven thousand additional families.[23]

When Mayor Frank Murphy assumed office at the beginning of the new year, he had reported that he had found four hundred severely undernourished children standing in breadlines, their only hope for sustenance. The suicide rate, he said, had increased 30 per cent over the previous five-year average.[24] The city reached the nadir of the depression period March 15 when officials were unable to meet its payroll and were forced to borrow $4.600 million from New York bankers. Eight days earlier, Murphy had announced that to effect municipal economy 162 policemen would be laid-off from the force, at a time when bootleggers, vice kings, hi-jackers, blackmailers, and thieves--often the pathetic poor stealing bread because they were hungry--all flourished.[25]

The Communists, 1932

Against this backdrop, similar to that in other large urban communities, the Communist party in the United States, whose political doctrine was alien to a democratic

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[23] Ibid., March 6, 1932, p. 1.

[24] Ibid., January 14, 1932, p. 1.

[25] Detroit News, March 8, 16, 1932, passim.

people in a free and open society, sought to attract the bitter and disenchanted among the unemployed to subscribe to a political system that eventually would overthrow the prevailing capitalistic order.[26] By 1932 the numbers of party members in the United States reached 14,475, twice the number of the 1930 membership figures.[27] Initially, the Communists had begun to organize the unemployed in 1928, but they met with little success. But when the Great Depression threw millions of workers into the ranks of the idle and the hungry, the party began to make inroads among the dispossessed and the distressed. Two scholars, evaluating the success of the movement, commented that

> In city after city during the winter of 1930, party led committees organized demonstrations and marches upon city halls to demand adequate relief and urge passage of unemployment insurance legislation. . . . On March 6, designated as International Unemployment Day by the Communists throughout the world, a series of quite impressive though frequently violent demonstrations were held in American cities, almost entirely under party leadership.[28]

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[26]William Z. Foster, History of the Communist Party of the United States (New York: International Publishers, 1952), p. 212.

[27]Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, The American Communist Party: A Critical History, 1919-1957 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p. 225. Hereinafter cited as Howe and Lewis, The American Communist Party.

[28]Ibid., p. 192.

Meeting in Chicago in the summer of 1930, the Communist party established a new organization called the "Unemployed Councils," which was to function as both a revolutionary union and a trade union. These newly formed Unemployed Councils organized street demonstrations to dramatize the plight of the jobless, but their success was equalled by the Socialists and "independent radicals who did not 'politicize' their work so crudely."[29]

The Thirteenth Plenum of the Communist party, U.S.A., had met in 1931 to resolve to work more closely with the unemployed. Party members found work in coal mines and textile factories, and organized strikes by Mexican field hands in California and by cigar makers in Florida--everywhere where "smoldering tinder . . . could be fanned to revolutionary flame."[30] All activities were to culminate in a mass march on Washington, D.C., in December. While the capital city braced for its arrival, the Communist "army" was marching through the Midwest and East, augmenting its forces as it converged on Washington. The marchers arrived December 6, and left two days later. During the two days, the 1,570 demonstrators proceeded to denounce President Hoover, Wall Street, the American Federation of Labor--a rival of the Unemployed Councils, the

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[29] Ibid., pp. 193-194.

[30] Caroline Bird, The Invisible Scar (New York: Pocket Books, 1966), p. 145.

American Legion, and the Socialist party. In short, the Communist efforts failed. The party could not sustain political activity among the demoralized and helpless unemployed.[31]

In Detroit, however, the Communist party was slightly more successful. The city's workers were "impressed by the vigor and promptness with which the Communists were disposed to organize and lead demonstrations against wage cuts, reduction in relief expenditures, and the dictatorship of the bankers."[32] The Detroit News estimated Communist party membership in the Detroit area at less than two thousand, but put the total number of party members and affiliated organizations and sympathizers at 7,500.[33]

Three Communist activities in Detroit are particularily worthy of mention: the Community party, the Trades Union Unity League, and the Unemployed Councils. (Membership in the party was extended after a probationary period to members of the Trades Union Unity League, Unemployed Councils, and other Communist activities.[34])

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[31]Howe and Coser, The American Communist Party, p. 194.

[32]Mauritz Hallgren, Seeds of Revolt: A Study of American Life and the Temper of the American People During the Depression (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1933), p. 106.

[33]Detroit News, March 10, 1932, p. 6. Figures were based on October, 1931, election returns.

[34]Ibid.

The Communist party was divided into a street nuclei and a shop nuclei, the street group organizing outdoor meetings and carrying out propaganda and in recruiting members from within industrial factories. Detroit police estimated a total of thirty to forty nuclei in the Detroit area, each with a membership numbering about twelve. These groups, according to the Detroit News, represented the active Communist workers and totaled about five hundred.[35]

The Trades Union Unity League (TUUL) was a wing of the Moscow-based Red International of Labor Unions. It was the core organization of a dozen or more national unions, of which the National Auto Workers Union in the Detroit area was a member.[36]

The Unemployed Councils were sponsored by the TUUL and were organized and directed by Communists. Many of the members of the twelve to fifteen councils in the Motor City environs, however, were not members of the party. The Detroit Unemployed Councils, like their national counterpart, promised the jobless leadership in demanding relief from city government and industry. Detroit police revealed that the Unemployed Councils made friends among the jobless by returning furniture to evicted tenants and

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

by restoring gas or electric service to those cut off for failure to pay their bills.[37]

Other Communist-front organizations in Detroit included the League of Struggle for Negro Rights, the Young Communist League, consisting of young adults, and the Young Pioneers, composed primarily of children. The leader of all Detroit Communist and Communist-sympathy groups was John Schmies, who was also national secretary of the Auto Workers Union and assistant secretary of the TUUL. William Reynolds, of suburban Lincoln Park, also figured prominently among Detroit area Communists. He was president of the Building Workers Industrial Union, which, like the Auto Workers Union, was an affilate of the TUUL. Schmies and Reynolds received orders from William Z. Foster, head of the Communist party, U.S.A., and national secretary of the TUUL. Alfred Goetz was the principal organizer of the Unemployment Councils.[38]

The Ford Motor Company, 1932

One of the principal targets of the Detroit Unemployed Councils was the Ford Motor Company. Two of the main Ford factories, the River Rouge and Highland Park plants, were located outside the Detroit city limits;

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[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

hence, they did not contribute to Detroit taxes, which helped to provide monetary assistance to the strained welfare department. Henry Ford, the company president and chairman, however, had refused to contribute to relief funds, calling charity a "dangerous crutch that, instead of helping a man to walk, might splinter, and would or could destroy him."[39]

He would rather put a man to work than put a dime in his hand. But he couldn't. By 1932 the peak of the depression for the automotive industry, a penniless population was not buying Fords or any other automobile. Total sales of all Ford products dropped to 395,956 units, as compared to 731,601 units in 1931 and 1,870,257 units in 1929.[40] Ford met production cutbacks by wage and employment reductions. The company's minimum wage in 1932 was six dollars for skilled men, five dollars for semi-skilled, and four dollars for unskilled. In 1929, the minimum wage had been seven dollars a day.[41] Employment totals corresponded with production curtailment. From a peak employment of 174,126 reached in 1929, the figures slumped to 90,706 in 1932, and hit bottom a year later at 48,957.[42]

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[39]Nevins and Hill, Ford: 1915-1933, p. 493. Keith Sward, in The Legend of Henry Ford, reported that Henry's son, Edsel, sent a check for $140,000 to the relief fund (p. 226).

[40]Ibid., p. 685.

[41]Ibid., p. 588.

[42]Ibid., p. 687.

Despite the cuts, company loses for 1931-1932 totaled $125 million.[43]

To have a job in 1932 was enviable, but to work for Ford during the Great Depression was something to endure. Job security was nil. Senior employees were often replaced without notice by cheaper hands. Acting under the direction of Charles Sorensen, Henry Ford's agressive and often captious manager of the Rouge factory, plant foremen drove fewer men harder and without rest breaks to increase production of the new conveyor system.[44]

The discontent that developed under these working conditions was kept in check by the Ford Service Department, under the command of Harry H. Bennett. A former lightweight boxing champion in the United States Navy, Bennett was introduced to Henry Ford by Hearst-editor Arthur Brisbane immediately after he had observed Bennett in a custom house brawl in New York in 1918, shortly after Bennett's enlistment had expired. Ford took an immediate interest in his fellow citizen and put him to work in the Ford sales room in New York. A week later, Bennett, a dropout of the Detroit Fine Arts Academy at age 15, was sent to Detroit to work in the Ford Commercial Art Department. His devil-may-care attitude impressed Ford, who

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[43] Ibid., p. 596.

[44] Robert L. Cruden, "The Great Ford Myth," New Republic, March 6, 1932, p. 117.

shifted him to personnel work. At the Rouge plant in Dearborn, Bennett slowly moulded the Ford Service Department, which maintained order in and around the factory gates.[45] Bennett's awesome guard system prompted the New York Times to call it the "largest private quasi-miliary organization in existence."[46]

The Service Department, a veritable espionage system, struck fear into the hearts and minds of Ford workers. Servicemen were known to brutally beatup workers who objected to the inhuman demands of the driving foremen. The servicemen were answerable to none but Bennett and could override the judgment of factory foremen and superintendents. Bennett's private police, in short, "constituted not only the police arm of the corporation, and its eyes and ears, but its central nervous system as well."[47]

One story remains to be told about the Ford Motor Company at the time of the Hunger March of 1932. Hoping to promote world peace, Ford assisted in the construction of two automobile factories in the Soviet Union in 1927.

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[45]Harry Bennett, We Never Call Him Henry (New York: Fawcett Publications, 1951), pp. 1-13. Hereinafter cited as Bennett, We Never Call Him Henry.

[46]New York Times, June 26, 1932, p. 12.

[47]Keith Sward, The Legend of Henry Ford (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1948), p. 308. Sward came to his subject as a practicing clinical psychologist and a former public relations man with the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

To assure that the new plants would function efficiently without his engineers and foremen, Ford agreed to train 150 Russian assembly and machine shop specialists in the River Rouge plant as part of the Muscovite Project. These Russian trainees were later to watch a band of three thousand Communist-inspired unemployed American workers attack the Rouge plant on March 7, 1932.[48]

The Hunger March

To demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the Ford Motor Company treatment of its assembly line personnel, and to dramatize their appeal for humane consideration by management, the Detroit Unemployed Councils and the Auto Workers Union voted in late February to organize a mass hunger march on the company's River Rouge plant. William Z. Foster, Communist party leader, and Alfred Goetz of the Unemployed Councils, were principal speakers at a mass meeting of Communists, Communist-sympathizers, and others, at Danceland in Detroit on Sunday, March 6, when the group completed plans for a demonstration to be held the following day.[49]

During the meeting, the following demands were drawn-up for presentation to Henry Ford: (1) jobs for all

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[48]Nevins and Hill, Ford: 1915-1933, pp. 673-682.

[49]Detroit News, March 8, 1932, p. 4.

laid-off Ford workers; (2) immediate payment of 50 per cent of full wages; (3) six-hour day without reduction in wages; (4) slowing-down of the deadly speed-up; (5) two fifteen-minute rest periods; (6) no discrimination against negroes in job, relief, and medical aid; (7) free medical service in the Ford Hospital for employed and unemployed Ford workers and their families; (8) five tons of coke or coal for the duration of the winter; (9) abolition of the Ford Service Department; (10) no mortgage foreclosures of homes of former Ford workers; (11) immediate payment of fifty dollars for winter relief; (12) full wages for part-time workers; (13) abolition of the graft system in hiring practices; and (14) the right to organize.[50] The demonstrators began to assemble at about 12:30 p.m., March 7, at the corners of South Fort Street and Oakwood Boulevard in Detroit. The plan was to march to the Ford Motor Company River Rouge factory in Dearborn, about two miles distant, where they intended to send a committee of nine to meet with officials of the Ford Employment Office to present their fourteen demands to the company. By 2:15 p.m. their numbers had swollen to an estimated two thousand. About one thousand more were to join the demonstration at the Rouge factory. Seventy Detroit police officers stood by to escort the marchers to the Detroit-Dearborn city limit.

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[50] Detroit Free Press, March 9, 1932, p. 3.

The march organizers had requested and had received a parade permit from Detroit Mayor Frank Murphy, but they had failed to seek a permit from Dearborn Mayor Clyde D. Ford, a distant cousin of Henry Ford.[51]

As they stepped off toward Dearborn in icy winds and 19-degree temperatures, some marchers began to sing the "Internationale," the national anthem of the Soviet Union. Others raised banners reading: "We Want Bread, Not Crumbs"; "Tax the Rich and Feed the Poor"; "Open Rooms of the Y's for Homeless Youths"; "We Want Jobs"; "Fight Against Dumping of Milk While Babies Starve"; "All War Funds for Unemployed Relief." The marchers were orderly and unarmed.[52]

A block from the Dearborn city limit, the march came to a halt. Goetz spoke to his followers, reminding them of the purpose of the march and urging them to avoid violence when they met the Dearborn police, who stood directly ahead. The marchers pushed forward. The Dearborn police force of fifty men were massed across Baby Creek Bridge leading into the city of Dearborn. The police were under the command of Inspector Charles W. Slamer, acting chief of police. He had ordered his men to place their guns in their pockets, but he had also armed his force with one thousand dollars' worth of tear gas bombs, hardly

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[51] New York Times, March 8, 1932, p. 1.

[52] Ibid., March 10, 1932, p. 12.

enough to repulse three thousand enraged marchers in the stiff winds.[53]

Slamer asked to talk to the leaders of the mob. Those in the front shouted back, "We're all leaders!" Slamer then asked for the group's parade permit. "We don't need one!" the demonstrators roared back.[54]

They poured across the forbidden city limit. The huge Rouge plant lay only a half mile beyond. To stop the mob, Slamer commanded his men to throw the tear gas bombs into the ranks of the determined marchers. But the winds, acting as though they were the marchers' protector, curled the gas back at the police, who retreated as the angered throng advanced. The police stopped and fired another barage of tear gas, and again the winds wafted it away. Some of the marchers retaliated by throwing stones that lay at the roadside. The mob continued to chase the police toward the factory gates. Less than a half mile from the employment office, the vanguard encountered Dearborn firemen hurriedly trying to connect hoses from two trucks. But with the mob throwing rocks and chunks of frozen mud at them, the firemen joined the police retreat to Factory Gate 3, the main entrance to the plant.[55]

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[53] Detroit News, March 8, 9, 1932. passim.

[54] Ibid., March 8, 1932, p. 4.

[55] Ibid.

There, firemen connected their hoses, while Ford Service Department personnel and Dearborn police stationed themselves on a pedestrian bridge thirty feet above the road. When the marchers arrived at Gate 3, they were assaulted by the force of freezing streams of water and another round of tear gas. The demonstrators withdrew, but were goaded into a final charge by a twenty-five-year-old woman.[56]

Harry Bennett then entered the melee. He had been watching a movie in the projection room with former Michigan Governor Fred Green when he learned of the fracus. Henry Ford, his son, Edsel, and plant manager Charles Sorenson were having lunch at the Dearborn laboratories at the time of the mass disturbance. According to his own account, Bennett said he "actually thought [he] was going to pull a big thing and stop the whole riot by [himself]."[57] With his clerk, George Beach, behind the steering wheel of his limousine, Bennett drove into the midst of the marchers. Rocks showered his car. When he stepped out of the car, he was immediately struck down by a flying rock, or brick, and then was hurried off to Ford Hospital. But when Bennet fell, gunfire opened up from the direction of the pedestrain bridge where both Bennett's service guard and the

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[56] Ibid.

[57] Bennett, We Never Call Him Henry, p. 92.

Dearborn police were stationed. The demonstrators fled, pursued by Dearborn and Detroit police, who had answered an earlier call from the retreating Dearborn police. When the grounds were cleared, four demonstrators had been killed and about thirty others wounded. Police suffered only from injuries inflicted by rocks or stones.[58]

Prosecuting Attorney Harry S. Toy called for an immediate Wayne County Grand Jury Investigation to study the causes of the outbreak as well as Communist activities in the Detroit evirons. The grand jury began its investigation one week after the violence and was adjourned June 31, 1932, after hearing more than two hundred witnesses. The jurymen returned no indictments, found that a "large number" of demonstrators were not Communists or in sympathy with Communist activities; that the march was Communist inspired; and that the Dearborn police were responsible for the four deaths but were justified in killing to protect "lives and property." The jury also urged succeeding jurymen to continue the investigation of Communist leaders in Detroit.[59]

Five days after the Ford outbreak, Detroit Communists buried the four slain marchers in full party salute. A parade of some ten thousand participants, representing Communist organizations, preceded funeral rites at Woodmere

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[58] New York Times, March 9, 1932, p. 3.

[59] Detroit News, July 1, 1932, p. 30.

Cemetery, while an estimated fifteen to thirty thousand men, women, and children looked on.[60]

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[60]New York Times, March 13, 1932, p. 17.

CHAPTER II

THE EVENT AND ITS CAUSES

Detroit Free Press

Detroit read the first detailed account of the Hunger March on the morning of March 8, 1932, in the Detroit Free Press. The news of the demonstration dominated pages one and three. Page one displayed a banner headline that read: "40 Die in Riot at Ford Plant." Two pictures of the hostilities appeared under the banner, one 5-columns wide by 3 1/2-inches in depth, and the other, directly below the first, measured 5 columns by 2 inches. The story on the march appeared directly to the right of the pictures in columns eight and nine and measured 62 inches in length. The story was continued on page three.

Page three also featured a face photo of Harry Bennett of the Ford Service Department and a 3 1/2-inch story about Communist party leader William Z. Foster, which appeared under a 2-column by 5-inch picture of Foster.

A related story about the Hunger March published on page one of the March 9 issue revealed plans for the mass funeral of the four slain marchers, comments by police and demonstrators, a statement by the Unemployed Councils and Auto Workers' Union, which included a list of the fourteen demands the demonstrators intended to present to

officials of the Ford Employment Office, identification of the dead, information about the five Communist leaders sought by police for having inspired the march, and the contents of a placard advertising the Hunger March.[1] The story was continued on page three and totaled 36 1/2 inches.

The Free Press account of the outbreak of violence fixed blame on the marchers and indicated sympathy for the Dearborn police. The demonstrators were temporarily repulsed by the tear gas bombs at the Detroit-Dearborn city limit, the Free Press reported, after the marchers had refused to obey Inspector Charles Slamer's orders to disperse. Responding to the tear gas attack, the story said, the marchers filled the air with rocks: "The air was full of them. Police began to suffer from the hurtling missiles."[2]

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[1]The placard read: "The crisis is still deepening and spreading and unemployment is mounting. Mr. Ford is prospering at the expense of the workers. Ford is preparing to manufacture war materials in his plants. Monday, [March 7] the laid-off Ford workers will march to Dearborn to demand immediate relief from Mr. Ford. All workers are urged to join the Great Ford Hunger March.
"Join the Ford Hunger March!
"Down with imperialistic invasion of China!
"Demand recall of Japanese diplomats from United States!
"Demand withdrawal of American troops and warships from China!
"Stop the shipment of arms and amunition to China!
"Organize and defend the Soviet Union!"

[2]Detroit Free Press, March 8, 1932, p. 3.

The Free Press quoted Inspector Slamer's version of the Dearborn police-hunger marchers' confrontation at the Dearborn city limit. The marchers had begun to throw rocks after he had asked for their parade permit, Slamer said, and before he had ordered his force to "let go with the tear gas."[3]

Just when and why the shooting began was obscured by varying accounts. The Free Press reported three versions in its news columns, yet chose a fourth for the first paragraph of the main story on the demonstration. The first version of the beginning of gunplay appeared in the chronology of the march and was unsympathetic toward the marchers.

> Stories vary as to the beginning of gunplay. One is that the Ford police prepared for battle on the road under the [pedestrian] bridge, that the mob came on, that stones landed on several heads, and more men fell with their skulls cracked.
>
> "Keep back!" someone shouted.
>
> The mob, defiant, came on.
>
> "If you come on, you're going to get it!" another voice warned.
>
> They came on--they got it!
>
> Pistols began to bark; shotguns to spray their lead. . . .[4]

In a second account of the outbreak of gunfire reported by the Free Press the police withheld their gunplay until after they saw Harry Bennett, the Ford Service

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

Department chief, fall to the pavement. This version said Bennett and an unidentified man drove into the mob and that his car was "beseiged by rocks" as soon as the marchers recognized him. When Bennett stepped from the car, he was hit by a brick or stone, and he sagged to the pavement before being rescued and rushed to Ford Hospital by police.[5]

Detective Hugh Quinn of the Detroit Police Department added to this account. He told reporters that before Bennett went down, Bennett shot and killed an unidentified assailant who had fired upon him.[6] Quinn later denied this. The third Free Press version of the beginning of gunplay also involved Bennett. This account reported that Bennett was shot through the window of his car as he was driving down Miller Road to the scene of the hostilities.[7]

Despite acknowledging these accounts, the Free Press chose to feature a fourth version of the outbreak of

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid. Harry Bennett's own account of his part in the melee varied from all those reported in this study. In his autobiography, Bennett said he drove out to the crowd with his clerk, George Beach, behind the steering wheel. When he stepped out of the car, he said, he was assailed by chunks of slag and that to protect himself, he grabbed a marcher whom he identified as Joe York. Both fell to the ground, Bennett bleeding profusely from a gash on his forehead. Then Bennett reports:

"York got to his feet. Just as he did so, Dearborn police opened fire on the mob . . . and Detroit police, who had come out to see the show, began firing from the overpass. York and four [sic] others were killed, and many injured."

[7] Ibid. Medical examiners at Ford Hospital said that Bennett suffered no bullet wound but was hit in the forehead by a brick or rock.

shooting in the first paragraph of the main story of the Hunger March:

> Six shots fired by a Communist from behind a parked car were cited by police Monday night as the match which touched off a riot at the Ford Motor Co., Miller Road, early in the afternoon in which four men were killed and 29 seriously injured.[8]

No additional information on this six-shot theory appeared in the March 8 Free Press or in subsequent issues.

The Free Press, however, repeated this version almost word for word March 9, but immediately added the hunger marchers' explanation of the shooting:

> Each side continued to put upon the other, however, the onus for starting the sanguinary battle. . . .
> Dearborn police still insisted--and claim to have witnesses--that six shots fired by a Communist from behind a parked automobile brought on the bloodshed. The marchers, who passed through a tear gas bomb attack and withstood freezing water from fire hoses before reaching the plant, maintained that bricks and stones were the ammunition and that the Dearborn police fired without cause.
> Wounded marchers, still confined to hospitals, were one in declaring that if they had been allowed to march peaceably to the gates and send their spokesmen into the plant there would have been no cause for disturbance.[9]

This March 9 follow-up story, which measured 36 1/2 inches and which appeared on pages one and three, not only presented a balanced account of the outbreak of the shooting, but also indicated a compassion for the hunger marchers, which was lacking in the "come and get it" account published the previous day.

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[8] Ibid., p. 1.

[9] Ibid., March 9, 1932, p. 3.

A Free Press editorial suggested that the violence was "egged on" by a "few subordinate Red agitators."[10]

Detroit News

The afternoon Detroit News featured the Hunger March in its March 8 issue by publishing face photos of the five Communist leaders, who were thought to have instigated the demonstrations, across the top of page one and by publishing two full pages (four and fourteen) of related stories and pictures of the disturbance. The 2-column main story on page one was accompanied by two related stories, one identifying the arrested men and women and the other listing the dead and injured. The main story describing the Hunger March totaled 47 inches. Related stories totaled 100 1/2 inches. These stories covered such topics as an interview with the twenty-five-year-old woman, Mary Gossman, who spurred on the marchers when they started to disperse, statements of hospitalized demonstrators, statements by Dearborn and Detroit police officials, comments by Dearborn Mayor Clyde M. Ford, a report of the "stand-by" orders given to the First Battalion, 125th Infantry of the Michigan National Guard, a summary of how the Hunger March turned into a violent outburst, and a feature on Harry Bennett, describing how he had twice before escaped death.

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[10]Editorial, Ibid., p. 6.

The account of the violence at the Dearborn-Detroit city limits in the March 8 issue of the News was similar in content and tone to that of the Free Press. The News relied on the comments of Inspector Slamer to tell the story of the first confrontation between the marchers and the law:

> "The crowd began to mass in the road," Slamer said. "I walked up to them and asked for their leaders. The men in front shouted that the leaders had not come back yet. I then asked for their parade permit.
>
> "'We don't need one,' some of those in front yelled. With that, the air was filled with rocks, sticks, clubs, and bricks. The lights went out for me, and that's all I know."[11]

The story did not report Slamer's order to fire tear gas.

The News version described the marchers as "a mob gone mad with anger," seemingly from being told they could not enter Dearborn, for the story did not indicate that the tear gas assault preceeded the rock throwing. The Dearborn police, the News said, did not fire tear gas until Patrolman Dewey Roberts was struck down by the marchers.

> . . . As Roberts fell to the ground, the men rushed over him.
>
> One of them grabbed Roberts' nightstick and beat the helpless officer over the head with it. When the man dropped the club, another grabbed it up and also pounded Roberts about the head and body.[12]

The News also depicted the marchers as "savages" pouncing upon their prey when they overwhelmed Inspector

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[11] Detroit News, March 8, 1932, p. 4.

[12] Ibid.

Slamer: "Inspector Slamer fell, hit by a rock. As he lay stunned on the ground he was pounded with rocks and clubs."[13]

The News chose to believe the version that gunplay did not begin until after Bennett was attacked:

> A missile crashed through the side of [Bennett's] car and struck Bennett in the head. He halted the car and got out. A second rock felled him. . . . As Bennett went down, the shooting started.[14]

This account was told by John Collins, Detroit manager of the New York Times World Wide Photograph Syndicate. Collins said that after Bennett collasped, he heard one of the policemen say, "Get your guns out and let them have it." Collins then added that "all the police drew their pistols and fired into the crowd."[15]

Detective Quinn's version of gunplay also appeared in the News, but varied from the account reported in the morning Free Press. The News said Quinn and Patrolman William Henson of the Dearborn police force both reported that the police had withheld gunfire until after a rioter had fired the first shot. Quinn said one bullet fired by a marcher had hit his car. When he got out of his car and took protection behind an iron shield, Quinn said he saw Bennett struck down by a wound to his forehead.[16]

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

The News did not mention any one's firing from behind a parked car. Comments from hunger marchers, as reported in the News, were one in agreeing that (1) the Dearborn police fired tear gas before the demonstrators let loose their rock attack, and (2) gunplay was started by the police, because the marchers were unarmed.[17] Editorially the news concluded that "the truth as to who started the disorder will probably never be known."[18]

Detroit Evening Times

Detroit's third daily newspaper, the Detroit Evening Times, printed 52 1/2-column inches of news and a full page of pictures on page seventeen of the disturbance at the Rouge plant in its March 8 issue. A banner eight-column headline on page one read: "Jail 40 Ford Rioters." The main or lead story on the Hunger March appeared under the banner and two smaller headlines and totaled 31 1/2 inches in length. The story was continued on page six, where two face photos of John Schmies of the United Auto Workers' Union and William Z. Foster also appeared. On page seven there were two related stories, one that included comments from the hunger marchers, and the other, an account

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[17] Ibid., p. 14.

[18] Editorial, Ibid., March 9, 1932, p. 6.

of Bennett's two previous brushes with death. The Times was the only Detroit daily newspaper to comment editorially March 8 on the fracas at the Ford Motor Company. The editorial, however, only lauded Bennett's courage against "overwhelming odds."[19]

According to the Hearst-owned Times, the battle between the unemployed marchers and the Dearborn police began after the tear gas attack had failed to stop the demonstrators from entering the city of Dearborn. Like the News and Free Press, the Times relied on Inspector Slamer's report (the Times misspelled the acting police chief's name as "Schlamer"):

> At Baby Creek, near the Detroit-Dearborn line, Inspector Schlamer and 50 of his officers met the marchers and ordered them to halt. When the parade continued the officers fired tear gas shells. A high wind dispersed the gas without damage to the demonstrators. . . .
>
> "I ordered them to halt," Schlamer said, "but they came at us with stones and clubs. We gave them more gas to hold them. . . ."[20]

The Times story then described the mob's trampling over wounded police as the officer retreated.

Gunfire began, the Times said, when the marchers opened fire:

> Three [unidentified] members of the mob made statements admitting several demonstrators were armed with pistols. Witnesses told police the first shots were fired by Communists.[21]

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[19] Detroit Evening Times, March 8, 1932, p. 26.

[20] Ibid., p. 6.

[21] Ibid.

The Times account of the confrontation presented still another version of Bennett's connection with the shooting, but in no way indicated he had anything to do with initiating the gunplay. Bennett, the Times said, was slightly injured by flying rocks as he approached the marchers in his car. He fell to the pavement after he alighted from his car. Then, the Times reported:

> Regaining his feet, Bennett is said to have pulled his pistol and opened fire.
> "When he emptied his gun, he turned to me and demanded mine," an officer told [Assistant Prosecutor Frank] Schmaske. "Before I could hand him the pistol, he fell unconscious and was lifted back into his car and driven to the emergency hospital."[22]

By the next afternoon, the Times had picked up the six-shot version and reported the "Dearborn police maintain the firing which claimed four lives was begun by a rioter who hid behind an automobile and shot at police with a pistol."[23] None of the Times stories offered its readers an explanation by hunger marchers of the cause of the shooting.

Grand Rapids Press

In outstate Michigan, the two Grand Rapids daily newspapers--the Press and the Herald, the Flint Daily Journal, and the Lansing State Journal are members of the

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., March 9, 1932, p. 2.

Associated Press, a newsgathing organization whose round-the-clock reports include state, national, and international news. As Associated Press members, the four outstate newspapers relied on news dispatches of the Hunger March distributed by the Associated Press.[24]

The Grand Rapids Press, which has the largest circulation outside Detroit, continued to prominently display the Lindbergh baby kidnapping story on page one of its March 8 issue. News of the Hunger March appeared under a banner relating to the Lindbergh child at the top of page one. Two 1-column stories appeared side by side under a common 2-column headline, "Seeking Communists in Probing Riot Fatal to 4." In column four, an Associated Press story recounted the events in Dearborn the previous day and was continued on page two; in column five, another Associated Press story related Communist involvement in the Hunger March. A list of the demonstrators killed or injured was printed on page two, as were a story on Mary

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[24]The Associated Press is a non-profit, cooperative newsgathering organization and is entitled exclusively to the use of all local news and photographs printed in member newspapers. An analysis of the news stories of the Hunger March published March 8 in the Detroit Free Press indicates that it was the basis of the accounts used by the Associated Press editors in Detroit in writing the story that was distributed by leased wire to Associated Press newspapers. The similarities are apparent in the news feature stressed, use of identical language, position of direct quotations in the narrative, and overall general organization of the narrative. Member newspapers, however, are free to edit and trim Associated Press stories as little or as much as their editors desire.

Gossman's urging the marchers on, and a story on William Z. Foster's connection with the Hunger March. Within the Foster story was a related story set in a box that told of indictments of Foster and four other Communists for violation of the Michigan anti-syndicalism act which had been on the state records since 1922. The newspaper also suggested editorially that "floating laborers" who sought jobs in Detroit were partly to blame for the Hunger March. The Press report of the Hunger March totaled 37 column inches.

The Associated Press dispatch in the Press reported that the tear gas attack incited the marchers to stone-throwing:

> The marchers, who assembled in Detroit and marched two miles to the plant, drove before them with a shower of stones the 30-man detail of Dearborn police that attempted to halt them with tear gas at the city limits.[25]

The Press was clear to establish the uncertainty surrounding the outbreak of shooting. The story said:

> The opposing forces accused each other of inciting the tragic conclusion to the march.
>
> Police said six shots from the demonstrators, fired from behind a parked car, started the fight. The marchers who passed through a tear gas bomb attack and withstood freezing water from the fire hose before reaching the plant, said police started the firing. They claimed to have fought only with bricks and stones.[26]

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[25] Grand Rapids (Mich.) Press, March 8, 1932, pp. 1-2.

[26] Ibid., p. 2.

This account was followed by the different versions of how Bennett sustained his injuries. These included Detective Quinn's mysterious gunman, the report that Bennett was shot at while riding in his car, and an eye witness account of Bennett's being assailed by stones both in and out of his automobile.[27]

The account of the shooting also included a succinct "come and get it" version as reported in the Free Press. The Associated Press story, however, attributed this version to a witness.[28]

Grand Rapids Herald

The morning Grand Rapids Herald published one story on the Hunger March in its issue for March 8. The Associated Press dispatch appeared at the top right of page one and was run under a 2-column headline that read: "Jobless Storm Ford Plant; 4 Die, 50 Hurt." The 18-inch story included only a chronological account of the Hunger March, with the exception of a one-paragraph Associated Press story about the alerting of the National Guard, which appeared directly above the first paragraph of the main story.

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

The Herald story, like that of the Press, said the tear gas attack "proved ineffective" in dispersing the marchers, but did not indicate any rock-throwing at the Dearborn-Detroit city limits.[29] The morning Herald's account of the climactic shooting in front of Gate 3 varied from that in the afternoon Press. The Herald did not report that the police and marchers accused each other of inciting the gunfire, nor did it include the six-shot version of the Detroit Free Press. Instead, the Herald reported almost word-for-word the "come-and-get it" version that was briefly mentioned in the Press:

> "Keep back," someone shouted.
> "If you come on you'll get it," another cried.
> They came on.
> Pistols barked. Shotguns roard. Men began to fall before a spray of lead. . . .[30]

Unlike the Press, the Herald did not include all the accounts of Bennett's injury. The Herald said only that Bennett was shot at while approaching the fight scene in his automobile. Significantly, the paper did not report that gunfire followed Bennett's rescue by policemen. The story simply said the "mob's ranks broke, and the marchers fled."[31]

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[29] Grand Rapids (Mich.) Herald, March 8, p. 1.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

Lansing State Journal

The Lansing State Journal published the Associated Press dispatch of the Hunger March. The 25-inch story was a combination of the stories that appeared in the Grand Rapids Press and Herald. The afternoon State Journal's account of the outbreak of shooting was exactly the same as that which appeared in the morning Herald.

The following day, however, the State Journal reported the claims of both the law enforcement agency and the hunger marchers:

> Responsibility for the outbreak of gunfire at the factory . . . remained unsettled Tuesday night. Participants in the riot said the police started the shooting. The police asserted they fired to protect their lives. The police admitted they took no weapons from the rioters but insisted that shots were fired from the ranks.[32]

Flint Daily Journal

In Flint, the Daily Journal almost ignored the story of the Hunger March. While news of the Lindbergh's kidnapping dominated page one on March 8, the report of the Ford fracas appeared in the middle of page twenty, under a one-column headline, "31 Under Arrest After Ford Riot." The Associated Press story, which totaled 5 1/4 inches, did not recount in detail the chronology of the demonstration in Detroit and Dearborn. Flint readers were

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[32]Lansing (Mich.) State Journal, March 9, 1932, p. 2.

told only that four "marchers or bystanders" were killed and "several score" injured, including Harry Bennett.[33] The afternoon daily, Flint's only daily newspaper, made no attempt to relate how the demonstration resulted in a free-for-all or even why the marchers had paraded to the River Rouge factory.

The Daily Journal dispatch was similar to the other Associated Press stories discussed in this study in that the sentence, "In the morgue, in jail, and in hospitals were the victims of the bitter battle," appeared, as in the Grand Rapids Press and Lansing State Journal. The Daily Journal, like the other outstate newspapers, also included news of the National Guard alert.

The follow-up story in the Flint paper of March 9 was buried among advertisements on page fourteen. Only 2-inches in length, the story reported, for the first time, identification of the dead and that seventeen of the thirty injured were released from Detroit hospitals.

New York Times

The New York Times for March 8 carried a 25-inch, page one story on the Ford Hunger March. Pictures by John Collins, Detroit-based photographer for the Times, appeared

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[33]Flint (Mich.) Daily Journal, March 8, 1932, p. 20.

in the March 9 issue and showed the police throwing tear gas bombs and wounded police being helped from the battle scene. The story on March 9 was an Associated Press dispatch, while the stories published March 8, 10, 12, and 13 were labeled "Special to the New York Times" in a line above the Detroit dateline.

According to the Times, the tear gas attack occurred after the marchers ignored the Dearborn police warning to disperse:

> Ignoring the warning, the marchers surged over the city line and instantly, the fighting broke out. The police hurled tear gas bombs into the crowd . . . but the prevailing high winds quickly cleared the air of the tear gas fumes.[34]

The Times then reported that the marchers retaliated by throwing rocks and frozen mud at the police, causing them to draw their guns and point them "threatenly" at the angry mob. When the marchers had chased the retreating police and firemen to the Rouge factory gates, the Times said, "they were met by squads of police with drawn guns and by the Ford Company's fire department."[35]

Unlike all other accounts in this study the Times reported that when demonstrators requested a hearing with Ford officials to present their demands, "someone started to shoot. The report of the pistol shot started a

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[34] New York Times, March 8, 1932, p. 10.

[35] Ibid.

general melee."[36] The fighting ended, the report said, with the arrival of State and Detroit police, who were answering an earlier call for help.

Finally, the story said Bennett was either injured by a brick thrown from a short distance or that he was wounded by a bullet:

> Bennett was injured as he attempted to drive through the mob in a closed car. He was recognized by some of the rioters, a score of whom showered the machine with stones, while someone else fired a shot.[37]

The story did not place the Bennett espisode in the natural chronology of the demonstration; hence, readers did not know where or when this incident took place.

In the Associated Press follow-up story in the issue of March 9, the paper reported that "responsibility for the outbreak of gunfire at the factory remained unsettled tonight."[38]

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[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid., March 9, 1932, p. 3.

CHAPTER III

THE ISSUE OF COMMUNISM IN REPORTING THE EVENT

The treatment of communistic participation in the Hunger March by the newspapers in this study reveals the varying degrees by which the editors upheld the Canons of Journalism. At a time when the public was most susceptible to new approaches to old problems, the press had a responsibility to present its readers with a truthful, accurate, and impartial account of the communist involvement in the Hunger March as well as a sincere interpretation of the meaning of the demonstration.

Detroit Free Press

The most strident attack on the communist involvement in the Hunger March appeared in the Detroit Free Press. The first paragraph of the Free Press's first story on the demonstration--"six shots fired by a Communist from behind a parked car"--set the anti-communist tone that was to prevail on the pages of the Motor City's only morning daily.

Although Dearborn police originally cited the six-shot version of the riot, there was no indication by the police, in the Free Press story, that the gunman was either found and identified, or that he was a Communist.

Accordingly, it is puzzling how the Free Press editors were able to lable an unidentified man as a Communist.

The Free Press also tried to suggest that most of the marchers were Communist party members. In its March 8 issue, the Free Press reported that "the marchers were heterogenous. All were not Communists, although faces of familiar agitators were in the ranks. . . . The line-up, however, was a good three-quarter red."[1]

The next day, the Free Press reported, "Communist organizations, heavily represented in the ranks of the rioters, spent a day explaining [the Hunger March] at their typewriters."[2] This statement followed an earlier comment that read:

> While investigators of the causes of the riot by numerous agencies led to different conclusions on some matters, all seemed to be in agreement Tuesday that the so-called Communist element was in the minority of the crowd. . . .[3]

The Free Press also quoted a Ford official who fixed blame for the riot on the Communists:

> The plan was hatched by Communists in Detroit, of course, but we [Ford Motor Company] are mystified as to why the attack was directed at us. . . .[4]

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[1] Detroit Free Press, March 8, 1932, p. 1.

[2] Ibid., March 9, 1932, p. 3.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., March 8, 1932, p. 3.

Significantly, other newspapers in the study, with the exception of the Grand Rapids Herald and Lansing State Journal, quoted the same Ford spokesman as only denying responsibility for the disturbance on the part of the Ford Company. The newspaper did not include the Ford spokesman's comment on Communist involvement.

The Free Press treatment of William Z. Foster and other known Communisty party leaders augmented the newspaper's anti-communism stand. Writing only from hearsay, the Free Press was quick to establish Foster as an "alleged ringleader" of the demonstration. Foster's "inflamatory speeches," the Free Press reported, "spurred his cohorts to death and in jury. . . . Others got the shots. He disappeared."[5] The Free Press called Foster a "radical leader"[6] who was "once a leading American Communist" but who "now holds a minor place."[7] The caption over Foster's two-column by five-inch picture read: "Speeches Spur Disciple on to Death."[8]

Headlines, too, also led Free Press readers to believe the vanguard of job-seekers had consisted entirely

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[5]Ibid., p. 3.

[6]Ibid., p. 1.

[7]Ibid., p. 3. The Detroit News and Detroit Evening Times identified Foster as the national head of the Communist party in the United States.

[8]Ibid.

of Communists. The headline under the banner of the March 8 issue read: "Murder Charges Asked After Red Mob Fights Police; Communists Inflamed by Foster Hurl Stones and Clubs in Pre-Arranged Outbreak."[9] When Communist leaders from Chicago, Cleveland, and New York arrived in Detroit to assist in plans for the mass funeral of the four slain marchers, the Free Press headline announced: "Red Chieftains Here for Rites."[10]

Editorially, the Free Press fixed responsibility of the "deplorable and fatal rioting" on Foster and other "red agitators" who deliberately had delivered "incendiary and inflamatory speeches" to stir up "passion and unrest" among the "dupes, who by disposition were orderly citizens."[11] For his action, the editorial continued, Foster would probably receive a "special decoration from Stalin."[12] The editorial concluded its attack on the "conspirators" by calling them "too cowardly and contemptible to risk their own skins in a melee."[13]

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[9] Ibid., p. 1. The Free Press did not report Albert Goetz' plea for no violence prior to the marcher's confrontation with Dearborn police.

[10] Ibid., March 12, 1932, p. 2.

[11] Editorial, Ibid., March 9, 1932, p. 6.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

The Free Press continued to assail the Communists for cowardice in its second editorial on the Hunger March and subsequent events. After twenty-five-year-old Mary Gossman, a participant in the march, refused to testify when brought before the Wayne County Grand Jury--the Free Press headline said she tried to "thwart" the jury[14]--the paper charged editorially that Miss Gossman had "obstructed the machinery of the law in its efforts to get to the bottom of the regrettable incident."[15] Because the "young Communist . . . lost her memory," the editorially sarcastically commented, "agitators" must therefore be "ashamed" of their part in the march:

> They might be both ashamed of having lured innocent men and women into conflict with the law and apprehensive of the consequences of having the full truth of their cowardice and duplicity revealed. Communists are the last people in the world to look to for heroism in battle or in court.[16]

When the grand jury released the findings of its two-and-one-half-month investigation, blaming Communist agitators for the Hunger March, the Free Press was eager to continue its acidulous attack on the Communist character: "Red agents never get into hot places themselves if they can help it. They let those they have deceived to that."[17]

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[14] Ibid., March 16, 1932, p. 9.

[15] Editorial, Ibid., March 17, 1932, p. 6.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., July 2, 1932, p. 6.

The Free Press did not publish a story about communistic organizations in the Detroit area to enable its readers to better understand communist involvement in the Hunger March.

Detroit News

In direct contrast to the Detroit Free Press, the afternoon Detroit News was careful not to suggest that the majority of marchers were Communists. But the News immediately informed its readers in the first paragraph of its lead story on March 8 that the Communists had inspired the hostilities:

> Communist leaders were being sought today by members of the prosecutor's and sheriff's staffs as instigators of the riot outside the Ford River Rouge plant Monday. . . .

Pictures of five men appeared on page one under this caption: "Communist Leaders Sought in Ford Riot and Man Jailed as a Speaker."[18] The words "red" and "Communist" did not appear in any News headlines of stories reporting the Hunger March. The words "agitator" and "radical" also

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[18] Detroit News, March 8, 1932, p. 1. Those pictured were Foster, John Schmies, Communist candidate for mayor of Detroit in 1931; Albert Goetz, organizer for the Michigan Unemployed Councils; William Reynolds, Communist candidate for mayor of suburban Lincoln Park; and John Ullman, one of the speakers at the March 6 meeting at Danceland. Not pictured but also sought by police was John Pace, a member of the Unemployed Councils.

did not appear in the News, while the word "Communist," when used, referred only to known Communist party members.

On March 10, the News published a story explaining the operation of the Communist party, U.S.A., and of organizations sympathetic to the Communist cause.

Editorially, the News suggested that because Communist leaders did not march they may have had another "motive" in inspiring the March, "a motive quite apart from communism."[19] The News then discouraged a community attack on the Communists:

> . . . communism itself is merely a political theory and political theories are not outlawed in this Republic of freedom of thought and speech and therefore not a cause for rioting. Hence a crusade against communism will not mend matters.[20]

The editorial sympathized with Detroit's jobless--"forlorn creatures" who gathered in a warm hall the night before the march to hear "Communist speakers who promised them the world."[21] Given work, the editorial continued, the unemployed would never be impressed by communist doctrine. Only if it could be proved that the "promotors" of the march "conspired to make an illegal march in hopes of creating a riot," the editorial concluded, would there be "something to prosecute."[22]

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[19]Editorial, Ibid., March 9, 1932, p. 6.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid.

Detroit Evening Times

Like the Detroit News, anti-Communist sentiment in the columns of the Detroit Evening Times was considerably less than that in the Free Press. The Times referred to the Hunger March as "Communist-led" or "Red-led"[23] and the caption over the picture of Foster and John Schmies, read, "Red Leaders Hunted."[24] Only one headline referred to Communist party involvement in the Hunger March: "Reds Led Hunger Marchers."[25]

The Times editorial columns, too, mitigated communist involvement. An editorial published March 9 blamed "the opposition offered by Dearborn police" for changing an "orderly demonstration into a riot, with death and bloodshed as its toll."[26] After praising Detroit Mayor Frank Murphy's recognition of the constitutional right of free assembly, the editorial said "a large section of the unemployed are under bad leadership."[27] The editorial's only reference to communism was directed at the party's leaders.

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[23] Detroit Evening Times, March 8, 9, 1932, passim.

[24] Ibid., March 8, 1932, p. 6.

[25] Ibid., p. 1.

[26] Editorial, Ibid., March 9, 1932, p. 26.

[27] Ibid.

> Communist leaders have made impossible demands on industry and the city government, but however visionary some of their claims and demands may be, it is a mistake to use violence against such people until they themselves resort to violence.[28]

The juxtaposition of "bad leadership" and "Communist leaders" in the editorial suggests the Times editors believed the Communists guilty of misguidance only.

Grand Rapids Press

The Grand Rapids Press first called attention to the communist participation in the Hunger March by publishing two Associated Press dispatches under this headline: "Seeking Communists in Probing Riot Fatal to 4."[29] A page-one story pointed to a police search for "five known Communist leaders" that police believed to have instigated the fatal demonstration.[30] Another page one story, also by the Associated Press, quoted marchers who talked to newspapermen after the march as denying affiliation with the Communist party.[31]

Another reference to the communist issue appeared March 8, when the lead to a third story read: "Charges of communistic plotting were uttered by officials Tuesday as

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[28] Ibid.

[29] Grand Rapids Press, March 8, 1932. p. 1.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

they ordered police to round up radicals who, they allege, incited the fatal rioting at Dearborn with a carefully planned campaign of inflamatory speeches."[32]

The Press also dramatized a pending indictment of Foster for inciting a riot in Michigan in 1922. The jury disagreed on Foster's alleged guilt, and at the time of the Ford Hunger March, a motion for dismissal of the case was still pending in the State Supreme Court. The story was displayed in a box on page two and appeared in the middle of a Hunger March story that presented the following segment of a speech attributed to Foster by an "agitator" in the Sunday night meeting prior to the Hunger March:

> "A demonstration against the capitalistic class and Henry Ford, who doesn't know how to keep a promise, will be the greatest and most significant expression the oppressed workers have every known. We are going to show the capitalists we are strong enough to overthrow them. Eventually, we will overthrow them."[33]

The Press was the only newspaper in this study to include this direct quotation.

A final reference to communism appeared in a United Press[34] story about Mary Gossman, who led the marchers in an attack on police after the police had fired tear gas

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[32] Ibid., p. 1-2.

[33] Ibid., p. 2.

[34] The United Press, founded by E. W. Scripps in 1907, gathered and distributed news and new photographs to newspapers that bought this service. United Press merged with International News Service in 1962 to form the United Press International.

bombs into the crowd. For the fourth time in the March 8 issue, the Press told its readers that Foster "[was] said to have demanded 'action' in fiery speeches to unemployed Sunday night."[35]

Editorially, the Press charged that "Communist agitators" had "taken advantage" of Detroit's unemployment situation, and urged the state to prohibit the "transient jobless" from entering the state. The editorial said this "floating labor" group was attracted to Detroit by a new model announcement by Henry Ford that promised work for one hundred thousand men. "Hundreds of those attracted to Detroit . . . may drift to other Michigan cities," the editorial warned, "when they find no work available in the Motor City."[36]

Grand Rapids Herald

The Grand Rapids Herald, which published only two stories on the Hunger March, reported that "newspapers said William Z. Foster, Communist leader, had urged all Communists to join [the Hunger March] in addresses Sunday."[37] The morning daily also reported that "William J. Cameron

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[35]Grand Rapids Press, March 8, 1932, p. 2.

[36]Editorial, Ibid., p. 8.

[37]Grand Rapids Herald, March 8, 1932, p. 10.

of the Ford organization said the plan originated with Detroit Communists. . . ."[38]

The second story, related to the Hunger March, was an account of the mass meeting in Detroit March 11, when plans were laid for the funeral of the four slain marchers, and speeches denouncing Detroit Mayor Frank Murphy and Henry Ford were made. The Associated Press story, which appeared under the headline, "Reds Would Hold Ford 'Murderer,'" said the meeting was "avowedly sponsored by Communists."[39] This was the only reference to communism in the story. The Herald did not react editorially to the Hunger March.

Lansing State Journal

Headlines in the Lansing State Journal were quick to tell readers that Hunger March participants were all members of the Communist party. For example, an Associated Press story published March 8 appeared under the one-column headline: "Racial Riot Fatal to Four; More Than 50 Injured As 3,000 Communists March on Dearborn Plant."[40] The story reported that "a dozen men from the ranks of the 3,000 or

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[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., March 12, 1932, p. 2.

[40] Lansing State Journal, March 8, 1932, p. 1.

more marchers are in jail."[41] It made no reference to three thousand Communists.

Similarly, a State Journal story on the Wayne County Grand Jury investigation, reported by the Associated Press, did not suggest that the Hunger March was Communist-inspired, but the headline above the story read: "Wayne County Jury Probes Red Riot."[42]

The State Journal published an Associated Press dispatch of the hostilities in front of the Ford factory. The first half of the story was identical with the account that appeared in the Grand Rapids Press. The second half of the story was the same as the dispatch published in the Grand Rapids Herald. The point at which the State Journal chose to switch from the Press account to the Herald version involved the issue of communism. Where the Press account reported that individual marchers denied being Communists, the State Journal read: "William J. Cameron of the Ford organization said the [Hunger March] originated with Detroit Communists. . . ."[43]

The anti-Communist sentiment of the State Journal's news columns was specifically spelled out on the editorial page:

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., March 14, 1932, p. 1.

[43] Ibid., March 8, 1932, p. 2.

> The affair in Detroit and Dearborn appears to have been stirred up with purpose and design, by red leaders, with intent to foster the red cause of rebellion and the over throw of the existing order. The persons in the crowd that participated were apparently merely the dupes of the designing. The Communist agitators had to make a showing in order to continue to get money from Russia for themselves.[44]

The voice of the newspaper sound suspiciously similar in both tone and content to that of the Detroit Free Press.

Flint Daily Journal

Readers of the Flint Daily Journal received no report that Communists had participated in the Hunger March. The Daily Journal news account did not state or suggest that any of the marchers were either Communists or were affiliated with Communist party activities. The participants were called "persons," "victims," "demonstrators," and "marchers," never "Communists" or "Communist-led." Even in the story about plans for the slain marchers' funeral, with which Communist party members assisted, Daily Journal editors were careful to eliminate direct references to Communists.

Only once did the Daily Journal quote anyone who called the marchers "Communists." This appeared in the Associated Press dispatch that reported Mary Gossman's refusal to talk before the Wayne County Grand Jury.

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[44]Editorial, Ibid., March 9, 1932, p. 6.

The Daily Journal then quoted Assistant Prosecutor Miles Cuhehan, who called Miss Gossman a "typical Communist."[45] The Flint Daily Journal did not comment editorially on the Hunger March.

New York Times

Of the newspapers examined in this study, the New York Times most fairly represented the participation of the Communists in the Hunger March. The Times reported that "nearly 3,000 of Detroit's unemployed with Communists in their midst,"[46] had marched on the River Rouge factory. It also reported that George S. Fitzgerald, an assistant prosecuting attorney for Wayne County, said all but one of the wounded denied they were connected with the Communist Party.[47] The Times also reported that industrial and labor leaders in Greater Detroit, agreed that "the rioters were not all Communists" and that they voiced the belief that only a small number were so affiliated.[48]

The only reference in the news columns of the New York Times to Communists' participation in the Hunger March

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[45] Flint Daily Journal, March 16, 1932, p. 3.

[46] New York Times, March 8, 1932, p. 1.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., March 9, 1932, p. 3.

was made by law officials, who charged Foster and four leaders of a Detroit Communist-affiliated organization with "openly inciting the group [the Hunger Marchers] toward a riot."[49]

The Times did not use the words "Communist" or "Communists" in any headlines dealing with the Hunger Marchers' demonstration, but did use the word "Red" in one headline: "Reds Are Sought in Fatal Ford Riot,"[50] which indeed was accurate.

Surprisingly, the New York Times did not comment editorially on the Hunger March, or the participants' economic condition that had provoked the demonstration.

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[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

AFTERMATH OF THE EVENT: A MASS FUNERAL

While investigation of the causes of the hostilities of the Hunger March was underway by law enforcement agencies of Dearborn, Detroit, and Wayne County, Communist party members in Detroit and Communist party-sympathizers plunged into preparations for a mass funeral for the four marchers who had been shot to death in front of the Ford Motor Company's River Rouge plant. On March 10, George Kristalski, secretary of the International Labor Defense of the Trades Union Unity League, informed Detroit Police Commissioner James K. Watkins in a letter that a funeral service for the four victims would be held at the Workers' Home at 2:00 P.M., March 12, and that a funeral procession through downtown Detroit to Woodmere Cemetery, only a few blocks from the Ford plant in Dearborn, would follow.[1]

Watkins, a former Rhodes scholar, said he was powerless to refuse permission for the funeral procession, but he added that he was perplexed as to whether the funeral procession was more specifically a parade for which he would not grant a permit.[2] The next day, however, Police

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[1] Detroit News, March 10, 1932. p. 12.

[2] Ibid.

Superintendent John P. Smith said he would permit "the holding of a parade from the Workers' Home to Woodmere Cemetery." Smith added that the parade would be supervised "just as any other large parade or large funeral."[3]

To complete plans for the funeral and to protest the killings, a mass meething, held under the auspices of the Communist party, was scheduled in Arena Gardens on March 11. Police estimated five thousand persons attended the meeting to hear seven Communist party speakers.[4] The group adopted a resolution protesting the shooting at the Ford plant, and collected $1,158 from those attending to help defray expenses of the funeral.[5]

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[3] Ibid., March 11, 1932, p. 6.

[4] Ibid., March 12, 1932, p. 1-2. The speakers included Albert Goetz of Unemployed Councils; Frank Gerbert and Rudolph Baker, district organizers of the Communist party in Chicago and Detroit, respectively; Fred G. Biedenkapp, a member of the executive national committee of Industrial Labor Defense; Miss Nydia Barker of the Young Communist League; Benjamin Bussell, brother of Joe Bussell, one of the slain marchers; David Greg, a wounded victim of the Hunger March; and Catherine Stone of the Young Pioneers. Frank Sykes of the Unemployed Negro Workers Council, was chairman of the meeting. Benjamine Bussell was not a Communist.

[5] The resolution was presented to Mayor Frank Murphy by a committee of fifteen, headed by George Kristalski. The protest against the shooting of the four marchers was titled, "Protest Resolution Against Ford Massacre." It demanded that the cities of Dearborn and Detroit pay indemnity to the families of the slain, injured, and crippled workers. It also demanded immediate unemployment relief and unemployment insurance. The resolution was accepted by Mayor Murphy and the Detroit City Council, which passed a motion to study the resolution for three days. Of the papers in this study, only the Detroit News reported this meeting in detail.

Men, women, and children, many of them in patched and frayed clothing, began to appear at the Workers' Hall as early as 8:00 A.M. March 12. By 2:30 P.M., when the parade began, an estimated ten thousand had filed past the four coffins, draped with a crimson banner on which the names of the victims were inscribed.[6]

To the beat of muffled drums, the cortege of ten thousand marchers, representing every Communist organization in the city, began its seven-mile journel down Woodward Avenue to Woodmere Cemetery. The marchers were escorted by seven hundred Detroit police, under the personal command of Police Commissioner Watkins who was using an office high in the Eaton Towers to issue orders. Mayor Murphy witnessed the marching mourners from a hotel suite overlooking Woodward Avenue and was in constant communication with Watkins.[7]

In Dearborn, meanwhile, Police Chief Carl A. Brooks, confined to his sick bed at home, gave orders to stop with tear gas and clubs any marchers who attempted to enter Dearborn. No shots were to be fired unless there was property damage or loss of life. Forty State Police, armed with

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[6]Detroit Evening Times, March 13, 1932, p. 4. The dead were Joseph York, 20; Coleman Long, 25; George Bussell, 16; and Joseph DeBlasia, 32. York and Bussell were members of the Young Communist League; Long and DeBlasia were not known Communists.

[7]Ibid.

shot guns and machine guns, protected Ford property. Captain Donald S. Leonard of the State Police had instructed his men to use clubs, if necessary, then tear gas, and if these failed, to try a nauseating gas to repulse demonstrators. Guns were to be used only if police were being shot. Dearborn was guarded by sixty Dearborn policemen, seventy Wayne County deputy sheriffs, and forty policemen from surrounding cities.[8]

Crowds estimated as high as thirty thousand lined Woodward Avenue to watch the spectacle file by.[9] In addition to the marchers, the procession included four black hearses, a twenty-eight piece band, and 175 automobiles. Some marchers sang the "Internationale," and "Solidarity Forever." Others chanted, over and over, "Smash the Murphy-Ford police terror," and shouted, "We want bread; Ford gave us bullets." They jeered as they passed Ford dealers' sales rooms. An assortment of banners and placards called upon the marchers to "Avenge the Murdered Youths," "Fight Back," and for Ford to "Slow Down the Daily Speed." Red predominated as the favorite color.[10]

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[8] Detroit News, March 13, 1932, p. 8.

[9] Detroit Evening Times, March 13, 1932, p. 1. The Times said the crowd was the largest of a "communist nature" in the United States since the funeral of Sacco and Vanzetti in 1927.

[10] Detroit News, March 13, 1932, p. 8.

The only threat of an outbreak came when parade leaders wanted to continue on Woodward Avenue past City Hall in violation of their parade permit. The police prevailed, and the marchers took the detour to Woodmere Cemmetery, where a thousand mourners and the curious had gathered in wind-chilled 15-degree temperatures. The coffins were lowered into a common grave while mourners sang the "Internationale." There were no religious rites. Following the burial, speakers took turns at graveside to denounce capitalism. By 6:30 P.M. Detroit's bizarre funeral was history.[11]

Detroit Free Press

Funeral coverage by the Detroit Free Press was marked by a continuation of antagonism toward the demonstrators and by incessant warnings of more violence to come. Each story about funeral arrangements in the Free Press included precautions that would be taken by police to preserve order. This pattern was set in the issue for March 9 when news of the funeral first appeared. After the lead paragraph of the page-one story announced a "gigantic mass funeral," the second paragraph read:

> In response, Carl Brooks, Dearborn police head, warned that "no demonstration and no raid will be made on the Ford Plant as long as there is a man left on the Dearborn Police force."[12]

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[11] New York Times, March 13, 1932, p. 17.

[12] Detroit Free Press, March 9, 1932, p. 1.

The response, however, was not related to the funeral, but to rumors of a possible second attack on the River Rouge factory, independent of the funeral.

The Free Press again associated the funeral with violence in a second story about the funeral plans:

> Every law enforcing agency in Wayne County is being mobilized and these forces together with State Police and local units of the National Guard are being held in readiness to prevent a recurrence of Monday's fatal riot. . . . Radical leaders predict that more than 10,000 will march at the funeral.[13]

The story appeared under the headline: "Police Ready to Foil Riots; Expect 10,000 Reds in Funeral March."[14]

When Hunger Marchers had assembled in Arena Gardens the night before the funeral, the Free Press reported few specific details of what took place. The story, however, did include that "several score plainclothes police" were scattered throughout the crowd. The story, with the accompanying headline, "Red Chieftains Here For Rites," indirectly questioned the police for not arresting Albert Goetz, one of the speakers, who, the Free Press said, was "reportedly . . . sought for questioning by Prosecutor Harry Toy."[15]

The Free Press account of the funeral was biased against the marchers. When police and marchers discussed

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[13] Ibid., March 11, 1932, p. 5.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid., March 12, 1932, p. 2.

the possibility of altering the parade route so as to pass City Hall, the Free Press described the scene this way:

> Marchers were told they would not be permitted to pass the City Hall. . . . There was a half hour's exchange of glares--then the marchers decided to take the police at their word and turned west as directed.[16]

Significantly, the only picture of the funeral to appear in the Free Press was supposedly of this meeting, under the caption: "Parley with Reds Halts Red Funeral Line at Grand Circus Park."[17] But the 5-column by 6 1/4-inchs picture showed only the crowd standing peaceably behind a fence of uniformed police, all looking to their right.

The Free Press also tried to establish disinterestedness in the post-burial speeches. The newspaper reported that "most of the people went home after the service at the grave. Others wanted to make speeches. They made them. After a time, they tired. More went home. Finally the orators went also."[18]

In an attempt to mitigate the significance of the throngs that viewed the four biers in Workers' Hall, the Free Press reported: "Some were only curious--it was something to do, a vicarious experience in tragedy."[19]

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[16] Ibid., March 13, 1932, p. 1.

[17] Ibid., p. 10.

[18] Ibid., p. 1.

[19] Ibid., p. 10.

The Free Press also turned readers' attention from Workers' Hall to a fire station across the street: "Firement [there] reminded the crowd that many firemen had lost their jobs."[20]

The morning newspaper did not include details of the parade in its 18 3/4-inch report on the funeral of the four slain Hunger Marchers. The 1-column story, which appeared on page one and which was continued on page ten, acknowledged the orderly temperament of the marchers, but gave no credit for orderly behavior to the marchers:

> The demonstration began peaceably; peaceably it ended. Officials who looked on and leaders of those who marched gave credit to Detroit police for efficacious and tactful supervision of the hugh funeral.[21]

The Free Press did not comment editorially on the mass funeral, nor did any of the newspapers in this study.

Detroit News

Contrary to the tone and kind of reportage supplied readers of the Detroit Free Press, the evening Detroit News presented a detailed and reliable account of the mass funeral. During the week, however, readers had to search for stories about the funeral march. The first story appeared March 10 on page twelve under a 12-point headline,

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[20] Ibid. One hundred twenty-five firemen were released from duty March 8 for the sake of municipal economy.

[21] Ibid., p. 1.

"Communists Plan Public Funeral." The 2-inch report stated simply George Kristalski's announcement of plans for a funeral service in Workers' Hall to be followed by a funeral procession. The story appeared under a Hunger March story continued from page one.

The second mention of the funeral was published the day of the funeral, March 12, when the News reported the proceedings of the meeting in Arena Gardens. The News did not publish the time of the funeral, but did announce the parade route.

A detailed report of the funeral march appeared in the Sunday issue, March 13. The 31-inch story began on page one under a 1-column headline, "8,000 March for Riot Dead," and was continued to page eight, where two pictures appeared. A 4-column by 7-inch picture showed part of the crowd gathered at Workers' Hall, and a 2-column by 8-inch photograph showed relatives of the dead at the graveside. Three related stories also were published on page eight. One described the security taken to guard Ford property, a second announced the beginning of the Wayne County Grand Jury investigation, and the third, the planned protest of police action during the Hunger March by the American Civil Liberties Union.[22]

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[22]The information included in these three stories appeared in part at the end of the Detroit Free Press account of the funeral.

Unlike the Free Press, the News objectively described in detail the confrontation between police and marchers over the route of the parade:

> The head of the parade reached Grand Circus Park shortly before 4 p.m. Here there was a delay while leaders of the procession argued among themselves and with police as to their future course. The police were stretched two deep across Woodward to bar any future progress downtown. James E. McCarty, Deputy Superintendent; Fred W. Fraham, Chief of Detectives; and Inspector Edward A. Mitte, Director of Traffic, conferred with the leaders.
>
> Inspector Mitte informed them they would have to keep to their original plan and detour west on Adams. The crowd behind sent up shouts while others continued their chanting. One leader said there were 15,000 persons present who wanted to go to City Hall. Supt. John P. Smith was reached by telephone and issued instructions that the hearses were to be allowed to continue down Woodward.[23]

In two paragraphs the News had clarified for its readers the only near-detonative incident of a potentially explosive day.

Detroit's largest daily also contested the Free Press description of the post-interment speeches at the graveside. The News factually reported that five hundred of the one thousand who witnessed the burial had remained to listen to further speeches despite the "intense cold."[24]

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[23] Detroit News, March 13, 1932, p. 8.

[24] Ibid.

Detroit Evening Times

On Tuesday, March 9, the Detroit Evening Times reported that the Communist request to hold a mass funeral had been denied. The same report included this reaction to the denial, attributed, in the words of the Times, to a "fiery spellbinder":

> Police and their capitalist masters fear we would be heartened and emboldened by the sight of the dead bodies of our comrades. . . .[25]

The Times and the New York Times were the only papers in this study to publish the police refusal to grant permission to hold the funeral.

The next day, the final advance story on the funeral appeared. It reported that "disorder is feared when the funerals of two of the dead are held Saturday."[26] The Times had reported that two of the four slain demonstrators were not Communists, and apparently believed that the two non-Communists would not be buried with the known Communists. It was the only paper in this study to publish this information. No additional details of the funeral appeared in the March 10 story, which reported the meeting to be held in Arena Gardens. The headlines stressed the potential violence feared by police: "Police Fear New Ford Riots;

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[25] Detroit Evening Times, March 9, 1932, p. 2.

[26] Ibid., March 10, 1932, p. 1.

Young Workers Call Protest Meeting; Funeral Flareup Threatens; 44 Quit Jail."[27]

The afternoon Times began its extensive coverage of the mass funeral on the day of the funeral. A 4-column picture of part of the crowd that attended the protest meeting at Arena Gardens the night before appeared in a prominent position on page one. The caption over the picture read: "Reds Mass for Tribute to Ford Riot Victims."[28]

This 1-column headline appeared under the picture: "Heavy Guard at Ford Riot Funerals."[29] The Times then proceeded to tell its readers about the mobilization of Detroit, Dearborn, State and suburban police forces before it reported news of the morning funeral service at Workers' Hall. The remainder of the 9-inch story included details of the funeral procession, told in future tense. The story also reported that "fiery speeches" had been delivered during the mass meeting at Arena Gardens. The March 12 account, in the Detroit Times, then, helped to raise the credibility of the fear of additional violence.

But a headline the next day quickly told Times readers that the funeral was orderly: "10,000 Parade

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., March 12, 1932, p. 1.

[29] Ibid. Although the Times used the word "funerals," the story indicated that the four victims would be buried in a common grave.

Peaceably at Funerals for Ford Rioters."[30] The detailed story, which totaled 29-inches in length, began:

> Peace officers armed with riot guns and tear gas bombs stood guard over the estates of both Henry and Edsel Ford Saturday, while in Detroit more than 10,000 persons marched in a funeral parade for the four killed in Monday's riot at the Ford Rouge plant. . . .
>
> The parade and demonstrations incident to it, passed without any disorders. . . .[31]

Continuing to overemphasize the roll of the police, the Times described the police-marchers confrontation at Grand Circus Park this way:

> Police diplomacy averted what threatened to be a serious situation when the first marchers reached the park. . . .
>
> One of the leaders insisted that he and his cohorts be permitted to march directly south in Woodward avenue. . . . [Director of Traffic Edward] Mitte talked to the leaders quietly. After a brief parley, the parade turned west on Adams.[32]

The Times story was augmented by related pictures, which appeared on pages two, three, and four. None of the pictures was offensive to the funeral participants. The various related stories that appeared in the News were also published separately in the Times for March 13.

Grand Rapids Press

News of the funeral received little attention in the outstate Michigan papers examined in this study.

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[30] Ibid., March 13, 1932, p. 1.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., p. 13.

In Grand Rapids, the Press on March 9 included the announcement of the mass funeral in the middle of an Associated Press story discussing news of the Wayne County Grand Jury Investigation into the slayings, and the search for the organizers of the Hunger March. The story said only that the meeting in Arena Gardens and a mass funeral were announced in handbills circulated the day after the Hunger March. Like the Free Press, which had placed news of the funeral in the first paragraph of a similar story, news about the funeral was followed by Chief Carl Brooks' statement that "no further demonstration and no raid" would be tolerated by Dearborn police.[33] Unlike the Free Press, however, the Press omitted the phrase, "in response," which had preceded Brooks' statement.

On March 11, the Press again published news about the funeral in an Associated Press dispatch that featured the action of the American Civil Liberties Union, which had announced plans to prosecute members of the Dearborn police for their role in the shooting of the hunger marchers. The last two paragraphs of the 10-paragraph story reported the time and date of the funeral, plans for the parade, and the fact that the four bodies would be placed in one grave.[34]

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[33] Grand Rapids Press, March 9, 1932, p. 1.

[34] Ibid., March 11, 1932, p. 1.

On March 12, the day of the funeral, the Press headline on page one story read: "Police Will Watch Riot Victims' Rites; Ready to Cope With Anything that Might Develop at Funeral Parade; Communist Meet Held."[35] As the headline indicates, the story stressed the action to be taken by police to assure order the day of the funeral.

The story, however, did reveal one fact that was not reported by any of the Detroit papers: that the collection taken at the Arena Gardens meeting to help defray the costs of the funeral would go to the erection of a "monument in the form of a clenched fist, described as the symbol of the Communist party, over the grave."[36]

Because the Press did not publish a Sunday issue, news of the funeral and parade did not appear until Monday, March 14. Again, the funeral report appeared at the end of an Associated Press story, this one announcing the first session of the Grand Jury investigation. The page one, 3-paragraph story said only that the funeral services were held with approximately eight thousand participants, that the parade marched from "Workers' Center" to the cemetery, that "large details" of police directed the marchers, and that there were no disorders.[37]

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[35] Ibid., March 17, 1932. p. 1.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid., March 14, 1932, p. 1.

The Grand Rapids Herald made no mention of the funeral in its coverage although it did report the meeting at Arena Gardens.

Lansing State Journal

In mid-Michigan, the Lansing State Journal first mentioned the plans for the mass funeral in its March 9 issue. The story began almost word-for-word the same as the published Free Press story on the same day. The page-one story featured the overtones of possible violent eruptions from the funeral participants and from those in the parade.

No additional information on the funeral appeared until March 12, when an Associated Press dispatch was published under the headline: "Guard Against Another Riot; Officers Mobilize to Stop March on Ford Plant this Afternoon; Will Follow Funeral; Monument is Planned for Four Men who Died in Rioting Monday."[38] The story again concentrated on police plans to control the marchers. Unlike the Associated Press story that was published by the Grand Rapids Press, the first three paragraphs of the State Journal dispatch told of the police guard around the River Rouge factory in anticipation of a demonstration following the funeral services. The remainder of the State Journal story was the same as that of the Grand Rapids Press.

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[38]Lansing State Journal, March 12, 1932, p. 1.

The State Journal, which also did not publish an edition on Sunday, carried the same Associated Press report of the funeral on page one of its March 14 issue as did the Grand Rapids Press.

Flint Daily Journal

The Flint Daily Journal published no advance story about the mass funeral, but on page six of the March 13 issue, a 4-inch story on the funeral appeared. The Associated Press dispatch played up the anti-Ford-Murphy banners carried by participants in the first paragraph. The Daily Journal, the only paper in this study to set the number of marchers as low as six thousand, reported the route of the parade and the "strong details" of police stationed along the route.

As mentioned earlier in this study, the outstanding feature of the Daily Journal account of the funeral was the absence of identifying the marchers as Communists. The story appeared under the headline: "Workers Denounce Ford and Murphy, 6,000 March in Funeral Procession of Four Killed in Detroit Riot."[39]

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[39]Flint Daily Journal, March 13, 1932, p. 6.

New York Times

The New York Times reported only the funeral ceremonies of March 12, having earlier announced that "the Communists [were] refused a request to hold a mass funeral for the four dead rioters."[40] The 4-inch story of the funeral in the Times factually reported the chronology of the day's events. The precautions taken by the police and the incident at Grand Circus Park were not included in the story.[41]

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[40] New York Times, March 10, 1932, p. 10.

[41] Ibid., March 13, 1932, p. 17.

CHAPTER V

A GRAND JURY INVESTIGATION INTO THE EVENT

Late in the day that some three thousand jobless men and women had skirmished with Dearborn police outside Gate 3 of the River Rouge plant of the Ford Motor Company, and four of their numbers had been slain by gunfire, Wayne County Prosecutor Harry S. Toy announced he would call a grand jury[1] to make an "immediate" investigation into the battle between police and demonstrators. Toy's public statements on the Hunger March, reported by each of the newspapers in this study, were quick to defend Henry Ford, suggesting that he was the victim of a premeditated conspiracy.[2] Less than twenty-four hours later, meeting with newspaper reporters, Toy said he had "definite proof that the riot was premeditated and carefully planned," and the

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[1]In 1931 the Michigan Legislature passed a law requiring the counties to maintain a permanent grand jury. A grand jury has inquisitorial powers only and is without authority to determine the guilt of anyone brought before it. Its function is to collect evidence on which a person or persons involved in a crime may be brought to trial for that crime. The members of a grand jury are sworn to secrecy and the proceedings are not made public. At the time of the Hunger March, the first panel of the Wayne County Grand Jury was in session.

[2]Detroit News, March 8, 1932, p. 1; Detroit Free Press, March 8, 1932, p. 1; Detroit Evening Times, March 8, 1932, p. 1; Grand Rapids Press, March 8, 1932, p. 1; Grand Rapids Herald, March 8, 1932, p. 1; Lansing State Journal, March 8, 1932, p. 1; New York Times, March 8, 1932, p. 3.

evidence from his one-day investigation had failed to show the demonstration was "either a hunger march or an unemployment march."[3] He threatened to prosecute leaders and participants of the march under the state Criminal Syndicalism Act, enacted by the Legislature in 1931.[4] But despite these utterances, he was on record that he personally would handle the investigation by the grand jury, which also was to look into Communist party activities in greater Detroit.[5]

Toy placed forty-eight Hunger March participants under arrest March 7 and 8. Others were arrested after Toy's deputies raided Communist party headquarters in Detroit.[6] At least two of the arrested had sustained gunshot wounds and were handcuffed to their hospital beds.[7] By March 11, Circuit Court Judge Harry G. Dingeman ordered the release of the last of those arrested for habeas

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[3]Detroit Evening Times, March 9, 1932, p. 1; New York Times, March 9, 1932, p. 3.

[4]This statute gave local police the power to disperse any unlawful assemblage. Under the law, if any congregants were killed resisting a police order to disperse, the police could not be held responsible. Conversely, if any police were killed or wounded, every member of the assemblage as well as spectators could be held responsible. At the time of the Hunger March, the law had not been tested.

[5]Detroit News, March 8, 1932, p. 1; Detroit Free Press, March 8, 1932, p. 1; Detroit Evening Times, March 8, 1932, p. 1.

[6]Detroit Evening Times, March 9, 1932, p. 1.

[7]Oakley Johnson, "After the Dearborn Massacre," New Republic, March 30, 1932, p. 172.

corpus hearings. All of those taken into custody were ordered to appear before the grand jury. In the meantime, bullets were extracted from the bodies of the four victims, and the Dearborn police who had clashed with the demonstrators had turned their guns over to balistic experts to determine who had shot and killed the victims. Curiously, Toy's office did not pursue the examination of the guns carried by Ford's private police. Toy also cast suspicion on the post-mortem. When the families of the four dead men asked Toy for permission to have a doctor of their own chosing assist at the autopsy, Toy refused, saying it was not customary to permit an outside physician to attend autopsies.[8]

The actions by Prosecutor Toy were opposed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), acting under the direction of its founder, Roger N. Baldwin.[9] Upon his arrival in Detroit on March 10, Baldwin said he would "use every means in our [ACLU] power" to stop the search for William Z. Foster. He said Toy's efforts to find Foster were "manifestly an attempt to divert public attention from the crimes of those sworn to guard the public peace."[10]

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[8] Detroit News, March 10, 1932, p. 12.

[9] The American Civil Liberties Union was founded in New York in 1920. According to its constitution, the object of the private organization is to "maintain and advance civil liberties . . . for all people throughout the United States and its possession. The union's object shall be sought wholly without political partisanship."

[10] Detroit News, March 10, 1932, p. 12.

By March 12, the ACLU investigation found the attack on the hunger marchers was "wholly unwarranted" and due solely to the police of the Ford Motor Company in preventing workers' demonstrations at its gates. The ACLU also announced that (1) it would carefully follow the proceedings of the grand jury investigation; (2) it had accepted several requests to represent persons injured in the demonstration in damage suits; (3) it would defend any Communist leaders arrested for inciting the mass disturbance or for criminal syndicalism; and (4) it would attack as unconstitutional Michigan's anti-syndicalism law if the question was brought into court.[11] Baldwin also said he was satisfied that the Detroit police had no part in the shooting and were justified in answering the call for help from Dearborn police.[12] He later denounced the action of the Dearborn and Ford police during the Hunger March as "wholly out of keeping with sane methods of dealing with such demonstrations.[13] The Communists refused ACLU aid, however, after the union had cleared Detroit police of blame in the riot.[14]

When the ACLU announced it would investigate the Hunger March, Toy suddenly changed his tone. He announced

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[11] Ibid., March 13, 1932, p. 10.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Detroit Times, March 13, 1932, p. 3.

[14] Ibid., March 15, 1932, p. 1.

that his office wanted to "fix the blame [of the violence] no matter where it falls. We are entering the investigation with open minds and are determined to obtain all the facts."[15]

The Wayne County Grand Jury opened its investigation of the Hunger March on March 14, one week after the disturbance. Three-and-a-half months later, and after hearing the testimony of more than two hundred witnesses, it was adjourned. The twenty-three man jury found the "use of gunfire" by the Dearborn police was "necessary" to protect lives and property. The jury's report did not indicate who had fired the fatal shots. The jurymen added that Dearborn police "might have been more discrete" before they reacted with tear gas.[16] The jurors found that a "large portion" of the marchers were not Communists nor "associated with or in sympathy with their principles or objects, but were mislead by false statements and radical influences into becoming a part of [the] demonstration."[17] The jury also found that "professional agitators," still in Detroit, had urged the marchers to enter the Dearborn community illegally, and it urged the succeeding grand jury to continue investigating the activities of the leaders of the Hunger March "to the end that their criminal purposes may be curtailed and forestalled."[18]

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[15] Ibid., March 10, 1932, p. 1.

[16] Detroit News, July 1, 1932, p. 30.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

Although not mentioning him by name, the findings reported that Bennett had been acting in the role of a "peacemaker" when he was injured by the marchers. The jury also found that "no agent, employe, or official of the Ford Motor Company took any part in forcibly quelling the riot."[19] The Ford Motor Company, then, was vindicated completely.

Immediately after the grand jury adjourned. Mrs. Jerry Houghton Bacon, a member of the retiring jury, severely criticized Prosecutor Toy's methods of handling the jury during its six-month session. She charged that Toy had used the jury as a medium of political publicity for himself, and that at times, the jury had been restricted in the freedom of its inquisitorial powers or had been led into channels presenting the point of view that Toy wanted to emphasize. But because Mrs. Bacon was bound by oath to secrecy, no investigation of her charges were deemed possible by Circuit Judge Clyde L. Webster.[20]

Press Coverage

Press coverage of the Wayne County Grand Jury Investigation was minimized by the secrecy surrounding grand jury proceedings. Witnesses were bound by oath not to reveal what had transpired during questioning, and newspapers could have been found in contempt of court had they published

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Detroit Times, July 3, 1932, p. 5.

the proceedings. All newspapers in this study, in their first reports of the Hunger March and the ensuing attack by the Dearborn police, had published the announcement of Toy's plan to initiate a grand jury investigation of the incident, and of his intention to find Communist party leaders and place them under arrest for violation of the state criminal syndicalism law before telling their readers what had taken place before the climactic conclusion of the march. Perhaps more significantly, none of the newspapers in the study, except the New York Times, reported on March 8 the original purpose of the Hunger March--to present fourteen demands to officials of the Ford Employment Office. By stressing Toy's statements and, as previously noted, by emphasizing Communist participation while ignoring the purpose of the march, the newspapers built a strong case against the demonstrators.

When Toy brought the issue of the Hunger March before the grand jury on March 14, the Detroit papers began to publish daily accounts of who had testified before the jurors. The Detroit Free Press and Detroit News dropped front page display of grand jury coverage after the first session, while the Detroit Evening Times waited until March 17. The stories, which appeared sporadically until the findings of the grand jury were released, averaged about three column-inches. Outstate, the Grand Rapids papers and the Lansing State Journal announced the opening

of the grand jury investigation in page-one stories on March 14. No additional stories on the investigation appeared until July 1. The Flint Daily Journal published grand jury stories March 15 and 16, on pages four and three, respectively, before discontinuing coverage until the June 30 announcement.

Editorially, none of the papers in the study commented on or questioned the grand jury until it recessed on June 30. The News announced in an editorial March 12 that it would be "improper to enter any public discussion of the riot in Dearborn" while the grand jury was in session. The paper expressed "every confidence that Prosecutor Toy and the grand jury [would] seek to bring exact justice to all concerned."[21] In the same editorial the paper attacked Roger N. Baldwin, ACLU director, for "his apparent belief that the exaction of a permit to parade through the streets of a city is unconstitution" in that a parade permit requirement infringes upon the right of peaceful assembly.[22] The News argued that the Supreme Court had previously ruled parade permits constitutional and added, with a slap at the Hunger Marchers:

> . . . the right of peaceful free assemblage in most properly conducted American cities has ever been protected and guarded, with understanding, of course,

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[21]Editorial, Detroit News, March 12, 1932, p. 6.

[22]Ibid.

> that a free assembly would stay where it assembled and not march without permission.[23]

That was the News's final editorial comment on the Hunger March.

While the Detroit Evening Times did not comment editorially on any phase of the grand jury investigation until July, an editorial was published in the Free Press--an attack on "Communist Cowardice" after Mary Gossman had refused to testify when brought before the grand jury.[24] The Free Press also published a strident editorial on the American Civil Liberties Union for offering legal aid to the Communists:

> Assumption that the leaders of disorder and sedition are right and the leaders of the law are wrong is characteristic of the Civil Liberties Union, and that is particularly so where Communists plots and activities come into the picture. Apparently an agent from Moscow can do no wrong in the eyes of the organization. . . .
>
> What considerations or mental twists may be the exciting causes of the strabismic outlook and activities of the Civil Liberties Union, we will not attempt to say; but the organization is certainly a striking example of misdirected, muddled and in effect, sometimes evil effort that works often for the destruction of the very institution of which it loudly professes to be most tender, and we think this is putting the matter rather mildly.[25]

The Free Press never included the word, "American," in referring to the name of the civil liberties group.

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[23] Ibid.

[24] Editorial, Detroit Free Press, March 17, 1932, p. 6.

[25] Ibid., March 12, 1932, p. 6.

The outstate newspapers in this study did not comment editorially on any phase of the grand jury investigation. The New York Times, meanwhile, suspended coverage of the Hunger March with its story on the mass funeral March 13.

When the Wayne County Grand Jury recessed June 30, it publicly released its findings concerning the Hunger March. Of the newspapers examined, only the News published the full text of the five-page report, and only the Detroit Evening Times did not publish a news story reporting the findings.

The Detroit News displayed the grand jury's report on page thirty of its July 1 issue. The story appeared under a 1-column headline calling attention to the jurymen's exoneration of police: "Clears Police in Ford Riot."[26] The second deck of the headline stressed the jury's statement accusing the Communists as the instigators of the Hunger March: "Grand Jury Finds Communist Agitators Caused Hunger March."[27] The first five paragraphs of the story summarized the findings of the grand jury report before presenting the complete text. The story emphasized the information in the headline--that no indictments were returned, that a large number of the marchers were not Communists, that the four marchers were "justifiably" shot by

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[26]Detroit News, July 1, 1932, p. 30.

[27]Ibid.

Dearborn police, and that no Ford Motor Company agent, official, or employee took any part in "forcibly quelling the riot."[28] No editorial on the grand jury report was published by the News.

The Free Press published its report of the grand jury findings on page one July 1. The 1-column headline was just the reverse of that of the News. The first deck read: "Reds Blamed for Ford Riot," while the second deck added: "Grand Jury Absolves Dearborn Police."[29] The information in the first deck of the headline was taken from the second paragraph of the story, and the second deck was based upon details appearing in the first paragraph. The Free Press story also included the jury's calling the Dearborn police "indescreet" in firing tear gas at the marchers.[30] Finally, the story reported that no indictments were issued; that, in the words of the report, "the riot would have been suppressed with the use of gunfire had not the rioters made assaults upon the police and an official of the Ford Motor Company [Harry Bennett]"; and that the jury recommended a continuation of the investigation into the activities of the leaders of the demonstration.[31]

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[28] Ibid.

[29] Detroit Free Press, July 1, 1932, p. 1.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

The next day, the Free Press editorially excused the Dearborn police for their "indiscreet" action:

> . . . the officers were in a difficult situation where it was easy to make a minor mistake with the best of purpose. . . .[32]

The editorial also urged the incoming grand jury "to continue investigation of the activities of the instigators of the riot":

> This advice and recommendation ought to be acted upon, not only for the general safety of society, but also for the protection of those innocent but unreflecting persons who are the chief dupes of the professional Communists, and who generally are the ones to bear the brunt of any trouble or tragedy arising as a result of Communist activities.[33]

No report of the grand jury's findings appeared in the Detroit Evening Times. In an editorial, however, the Times said "the jury's presentment told a story that everybody already knew--recited undisputed facts that nobody had questioned."[34] The editorial then questioned the fact that no indictments were returned:

> Neither the jury nor the prosecutor gave the slightest hint that anybody ON EITHER SIDE of the fight that cost four lives should be prosecuted for murder or inciting a riot.[35]

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[32]Editorial, Ibid., July 2, 1932, p. 6.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Editorial, Detroit Evening Times, July 1, 1932, p. 28.

[35]Ibid.

The Times also charged that "someone" gave the findings to "one of the newspapers before it ever reached the grand jury room. . . ."[36] The title of the editorial suggested that the "someone" was Prosecutor Toy: "Prosecutor Slips; Gives Grand Jury's Presentment to the Press before He Shows it to Jurors."[37]

A possible explanation for the absence of a Times news story on the grand jury report appeared in a July 4 editorial criticizing the state's adoption of a permanent grand jury:

> Just when other states are abandoning this ancient and discredited form of inquisition, Michigan revives it at the request of Prosecutor Toy . . . against the advice of many of the best judicial minds of Michigan's bench and bar.[38]

Not only did the Times believe the findings of the grand jury uninformative, but also considered the means of acquiring the information an "ancient and discredited form of inquisition."

The outstate papers examined in this study published Associated Press dispatches on the findings of the grand jury. The stories were similar to that of the Free Press. The Lansing State Journal and Grand Rapids Press played up the placing of the blame on "communist agitators," while

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[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid., July 4, 1932, p. 28.

the Grand Rapids Herald and Flint Daily Journal emphasized exoneration of the Dearborn police in the headlines and first paragraphs of their accounts. The State Journal published the story on page one; the Grand Rapids Press on page two; the Grand Rapids Herald, on page sixteen; and the Flint Daily Journal, on page ten. None of these papers commented editorially on the grand jury report.

What is perhaps most significant about the press reaction to the grand jury investigation is that the findings went unchallenged by the newspapers in this study. The editors did not attempt to question Toy's conduct before or during the grand jury investigation despite the attack by Mrs. Jerry Houghton Bacon. Had they been moved by their debt to social responsibility and by the "slightest hint of wrong doing," they might have reported that Dearborn Mayor Clyde M. Ford was a distant cousin of Henry Ford and that he owned a Ford agency; that Dearborn Police Chief Carl Brooks was a former Ford detective and aid to Harry Bennett; and that Bennett had at times shifted members of his guard to the Dearborn Police Department, and vice versa. Concerned editors dedicated to the enforcement of the Canons of Journalism should have noticed the irony of a statement that justifies killing--and in this case, home-grown Communists--in order to protect property on which a large

group of technicians from the Soviet Union were being trained.[39] But they did not.

[39]Sward, The Legend of Henry Ford, pp. 241-242.

CONCLUSION

With the pall of the Great Depression blanketing Detroit, three thousand of the Motor City's unemployed, ragged and somber, banned together under Communist leadership on March 7, 1932, in a futile effort to demand jobs and relief from Henry Ford. Before they could meet with Ford officials, the demonstrators were repulsed first by tear gas and freezing streams of water, and finally by gunfire that killed four of their number and wounded many others. The event in front of the gates of the River Rouge plant of the Ford Motor Company, as reported by three daily Detroit newspapers--the Free Press, the News, and the Evening Times, and four outstate newspapers--the Flint Daily Journal, Grand Rapids Herald, Grand Rapids Press, and Lansing State Journal provided an unusual opportunity for the newspapers' editors to uphold self-imposed codes and ethical standards adopted by the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 1923--the Canons of Journalism. Although they do not provide for a system of rigid enforcement, the canons were generally accepted by editors and publishers of the country's newspapers as one of the best expressions of the principles of journalism. The newspapers in this study, however, did not closely observe the canons in

reporting the Hunger March on the River Rouge factory. Instead, the editors chose a regrettable alternative--they adopted their own code, which in varying degrees resulted in irresponsible journalism.

The examination into the causes of the event as well as the mass funeral, reveals a variance in reporting observable fact. Most significantly, the study suggests that this variance was a possible result of news management by individual editors, an unpardonable sin in a free and responsible press protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

Another flagrant violation of the Canons of Journalism was particularly obvious in the pages of the Detroit Free Press. The city's only morning newspaper seized the opportunity presented by the Hunger March to assail the issue of communism and to a degree question the loyalty of free men and women. The Free Press yielded to a seemingly hostile instinct by publishing strident editorials on the Communist party, U.S.A., and on those citizens, down on their luck, who had been touched by it. The editorials were based more on emotion than on reason and intellect; and they reinforced the editors' attempts to associate all three thousand demonstrators with communism in the news columns. Such reporting and interpretation tended to totally disregard fair play, truthfulness, responsibility, and decency. The Lansing State Journal, whose editorial

on the Hunger March was remarkably similar to that of the Free Press and whose news reports and headlines also spread the belief that the marchers were primarily Communists, similarily ignored the editors' code of good newspaper conduct.

The other newspapers in study also stressed Communistic involvement in the Hunger March in their news columns, either because they seduously quoted the statements of law enforcement agencies or because they unquestioningly accepted the dispatches filed from Detroit by the Associated Press, whose editors seemingly relied principally on the accounts of the Hunger March, the slayings of four marchers and their burial, and the resulting grand jury investigation into the circumstances that provoked a riot as reported by the Detroit Free Press, a member of the Associated Press.

The anti-hunger marcher tone and content of the Free Press was evident in the Associated Press dispatches published by the outstate newspapers in this study. Only the editors of the Flint Daily Journal chose to exercise their right to edit Associated Press wire copy by carefully deleting references to Communist party participation in the Hunger March, an inuendo that could suggest that the three thousand marchers were sympathetic to an alien political doctrin. Because of this, however, the stories about the Hunger March in the Flint newspaper were not complete reports informing readers about the demonstration and its aftermath.

By publishing Wayne County Prosecutor Harry S. Toy's announcement to initiate a grand jury investigation of the Hunger March, and his intention to find and arrest the leaders of the demonstration before telling their readers what had taken place in the vicinity of the Rouge plant, all the newspapers in this study, except the New York Times, were culpable of establishing guilt of the marchers. This, indeed, is an indication that the newspapers abandoned their responsibility to safeguard the rights of the citizenry by acting independently of any group, including a law enforcement agency. The Michigan newspapers in this study were quick to side with Toy in clearing all blame from Henry Ford, whose sweat-shop labor policy, patrolled by Harry Bennett's Ford Service Department, was instrumental in instigating the demonstration.

None of the newspapers in the study was aroused by the public statements or the conduct of the Wayne County Prosecutor prior to his presentation of evidence to the grand jury; nor did any newspaper challenge the jurors' findings, which not only were suspiciously vague but also overtly defensive of the Ford Motor Company. While Keith Sward's scholarly study, The Legend of Henry Ford, raised interesting and significant facts regarding the grand jury report, such as the relationship between the Ford Service Department and the Dearborn Police Department, the seven newspapers in this study avoided comment and turned

instead to other events for editorial discussion. Even Mrs. Jerry Houghton Bacon's charge that Toy had acted in a prejudicial manner in conducting the grand jury failed to stimulate the editors; hardly an auspicious comment on a profession whose existence is contigent upon checking the misuse of power.

Although guilty of the above violations of ethical newspaper conduct as prescribed in the Canons of Journalism of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, the Detroit News and Detroit Evening Times demonstrated some degree of compassion in their reporting the Hunger March. After their accounts on March 8 of the demonstration, the News and Evening Times appeared to have re-evaluated their originally hostile positions in reporting the Hunger March to concentrate on accurate reports of the events following the march.

The control newspaper in this study, the New York Times, published perhaps the most reliable, unbiased, and accurate accounts of the Hunger March and the events that followed it. Surprisingly, the Times did not comment editorially on the march and the brutality that followed, since three hundred Communists in New York City protested the treatment of the men and women in Dearborn by police by demonstrating outside the headquarters of the Ford Motor Company on the corner of Broadway and Fifty-fourth streets on March 10, 1932.

The purpose of this study was to show how seven metropolitan newspapers in Michigan reported and interpreted the Hunger March on the Ford Motor Company in Dearborn on March 7, 1932. The examination indicates that the seven newspapers were remiss in upholding the editors' own code of ethics and conduct and suggests a short but shamefaced chapter in the history of American journalism.

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