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THE 1913-1914 COPPER STRIKE OF NORTHERN MICHIGAN

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ABSTRACT

THE 1913-1914 COPPER STRIKE OF NORTHERN MICHIGAN

by

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This paper examines the events of the 1913-1914 copper strike of Northern Michigan which serves as a case study of the history of mine labor discontent. This paper's intent is not to present the heroic deeds of the leaders but to recover the ordinary men and women in their struggle to better their lives. It assesses the role of management, the industrial workers, miners' wives and daughters, and the middle-class people. The introduction of new management and new technology, the alienation and conflicts between management and labor, and the controversy between the policy of paternalism and the ideology of "collect bargaining" caused strife. Women proved that they were an important force in the strike. The conflict between two classes caused working-class immigrants sought their ethnic groups to strengthen their struggle while middle-class people attempted to discourage labor movements through churches and other resources which the mining companies supported.

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INTRODUCTION

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, many violent confrontations between capital and labor occurred in the United States. In the mining industry, workers struggled to obtain decent wages and to improve their standard of living and working conditions by collective bargaining. However, their struggles were in conflict with the mining companies and these conflicts often resulted in strikes.

In an industrializing America, many companies developed paternalism to maintain a stable relationship between management and labor. These companies believed that the deeper they became involved in their employees' private lives, the better workers they could attract and maintain. Therefore, they provided workers with not only a job and a wage, but also opportunities to engage in health, education, and social welfare activities. The workers obtained more comfortable and secure living conditions and the managers reduced their labor costs. But the paternalistic industry, along with the change in its social and labor relations systems, began to unravel. With the introduction of new management and new technology, discontent grew much more

apparent, and managers and laborers became more estranged.[1] Both employees and employers heightened their class consciousness by experiencing an identity of interest among themselves, and against the group which opposed their interests. Class divisions were widened by the rise of labor unions whose ideology of "collective bargaining" opposed industrial capitalism and which organized laborers to challenge companies about issues such as wages, working conditions, and control of the workplace.

The miners of the Copper Country fought as did other industrial workers at that time, with industrial capitalism using the mining companies for whom they worked as a guise. In particular, during the period 1913-1914 they sought the right of collective bargaining because of the domination of the mining companies. However, compared to the strife in other labor areas, little historical attention has been paid to the Lake Superior copper district of Northern Michigan.

When it comes to mining and to the rise of industrialism, historians have paid particular attention to minerals and metals sold by the ton or by the ounce; they have taken little

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[1] Class consciousness developed as E.P. Thompson said: [C]lass happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs. . . . Class-consciousness is the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms. E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1966), 10-11.

notice to metals, like copper, sold by the pound. Iron and coal have attracted historians' attention, because these were the key materials that birthed and fueled the Industrial Revolution. On the other hand, historians have also been captivated by precious metals--gold and silver. Copper, although an important metal, is neither the most important, nor the dearest one.

Another factor which might help account for copper's lack of historical recognition: it was mined from the upper Midwest, not from the "real" west. In addition, the Michigan miners were dull in comparison with the fractious men found in eastern coal fields, or with the union men found in Butte or Cripple Creek. The copper fields of Michigan's Upper Peninsula were not the stuff from which the myths of America's "West" were woven.[2]

This paper examines the events of the 1913-1914 copper strike which serves as a case study of the history of mine labor discontent. The 1913-1914 copper strike of Northern Michigan happened in a remote place, but it followed patterns and had characteristics similar to other labor movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the United States. "Traditional" historians examine this strike on the basis of the conflicts between mine owners and the Western Federation of Miners, the radicalism of immigrants and the

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[2] Larry D. Lankton, *Cradle to Grave: Life, Work, and Death at the Lake Superior Copper Mines* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), vii.

violence between strikers and company deputies. This paper's intent is not to present the heroic deeds of the leaders (traditional history) but to recover the ordinary men and women in their struggle to better their lives. It assesses the roles of management, the industrial workers, miners' wives and daughters, and the middle-class people. The alienation and conflicts between management and labor caused strife. The struggles of the working-class families differed with the interests of the middle-class. Working-class immigrants sought support among their ethnic groups to strengthen their struggle while middle-class people attempted to discourage labor movements through churches and other resources which the mining companies supported.

The Michigan Copper Country is located on the Keweenaw Peninsula. It holds the world's largest deposit of native copper. Copper deposits lie along a mineral range which runs a hundred miles through the Upper Peninsula counties of Ontonagon, Houghton, and Keweenaw.

The existence of copper in the Lake Superior region was been known long before its exploitation began. About 1660, French missionaries and explorers learned from Indian inhabitants about the abundant masses of red metal in the Keweenaw Peninsula. In 1820, Henry R. Schoolcraft suggested that the government work the deposits. In 1840 Douglass Houghton, a geologist, began a careful examination of the district, and in 1841 he issued two reports to the State

Legislature. The U.S. Congress showed sufficient interest by appropriating funds for the purchase of the lands from the Indians in 1841. In 1843, the War Department issued the first mining permit.[3]

The mining companies established several company towns in this district. Like other industrialists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the mining companies of Northern Michigan developed a paternalistic system in order to maintain the stability of labor and management relationships. They dominated and controlled the social and economic institutions of the region. The mining companies also encouraged new immigration in hopes that language barriers would forestall the growth of unionism and that new workers would prove to be easily manageable. Therefore, between 1890 and 1904, for the first time, many foreign arrivals were from non-English speaking countries. During the nineties more than 10,000 people came to Houghton from Finland, Austria, and Italy. The new non-English speaking immigrants from Finland, Austria, and Italy created a new nationality problem as the Cornish and Irish workers branded together in face of the new arrivals. In addition, companies

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[3] William B. Gates, *Michigan Copper and Boston Dollars: an Economic History of the Michigan Copper Mining Industry*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1951), 3-47; Lew Allen Chase, "Early Copper Mining in Michigan," *Michigan History* 29:1 (January-March, 1945):22-30; Chase, "Early Days of Michigan Mining: Pioneering Land Sales and Surveys," *Michigan History* 29:2 (April-June, 1945):166-179.

usually assigned higher-position jobs to English-speaking workers and lower-position jobs to non-Englisn-speaking immigrants. The higher-position workers mistreated the lower-position immigrants which further increased their anger. These factors stimulated an ethnic consciousness among the non-English speaking immigrants.[4]

Although national origin, culture, and religion divided working people, they believed that men in America could be their own rulers. For them, America meant freedom and democracy. But industrialization had created instead a nightmare. The working people suddenly found "capital as rigid as an absolute monarchy."[5] This dissatisfaction increased the labor unrest. The discontent drew different ethnic groups together to fight against the capital monarchy.

After 1904, over 95 percent of the industry's output was controlled by two large companies and two interest groups which smelted their own minerals; one of which had substantial interests in the manufacturing and of the business. In addition, Calumet and Hecla Mining Company owned and operated a small fleet of vessels which transported copper minerals to the Buffalo refinery and to eastern markets, and then hauled

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[4] U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Michigan Copper District Strike*, Bulletin 139 (Washington, 1914), 133-136.

[5] Herbert G. Gutman, *Work, Culture & Society in Industrializing America* (1976; New York, Vintage Books, 1977), 52.

coal back.[6] The expansion of mining in Copper Country created a demand for more laborers. Mining company employment in Houghton County rose from 6,200 in 1887 to 8,170 by 1896 and then to 14,321 in 1904. It was during this period that large numbers of immigrants arrived from non-English speaking countries.[7]

During the years 1885 to 1904, the output of Michigan's copper district increased more rapidly in absolute terms than in any other period of the industry's history. But as the great copper fields of the western United States were found, the Lake producers were unable to maintain preeminence in domestic copper mining. Hence, the mining companies turned to new scientific management and new technology to compete with the western mines. This lessened the distance between the miners and the trammers.[8] Both miners and trammers felt threatened by the application of advanced machine technology, eliminating many traditional crafts and speeding up the pace of work. They also became irritated by the increasing consolidation and concentration of company control. Under the new technology and scientific management system, miners also lost their status and did not have a proper channel through

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[6] Gates, *Michigan Copper and Boston Dollars*, 73.

[7] Gates, *Michigan Copper and Boston Dollars*, 107.

[8] Trammers picked rocks up and pushed them to the shafts for hoisting to the surface. Usually non-English speaking immigrants such as Finns, Austrians, Italians and Poles were assigned to be trammers.

which to voice their grievances. David Brody quotes a statement made by an industrialist:

> [At one time] I knew every man . . . I could call him by name and shake hands with him . . . and the [office] door was always open. When I left the active management . . . we had . . . some thirty thousand employees, and the men who worked . . . would have stood just about as much chance to get in to see any one with his grievance as he would to get into the Kingdom of Heaven.[9]

New management estranged the relationship between workers and their employers. These factors compelled both management and workers to "identify their interests between themselves" and "against other men whose interests [were] different from theirs."[10]

In the Progressive Period, industries not only denied the rights of workers but also punished workers if they attempted to exercise their rights. The power of industrialists to prevent their employees from acting independently and according to their own interests extended even to the communities in which they lived. On the other hand, the union, the Western Federation of Miners, attempted to fight against the mining companies. They taught workers about unionism and encouraged them to change their situation. Workers then sought collective bargaining to improve their working and living conditions on July 14, 1913, but the mining

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[9] David Brody, *Workers in Industrial America: Essays on the Twentieth Century Struggle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 9.

[10] Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 10-11.

companies turned down their requests. Hence, they used the strike to respond to the decision of the mining companies.

During the strike, social and religious organizations were profoundly affected by the power of the companies. Many ministers and priests denounced the "agitators" and urged the workmen in their congregations to go back to work. Small businessmen also joined the ranks of the companies to discourage the strikers. This not only happened in the Copper Country but also in other industrial areas.

Alan Trachtenberg pointed out that the strikes "were not simply responses to economic and working conditions. They signified more than protest . . . they were an expression of working-class life."[11] The 1913-1914 copper strike was also an expression of working-class life. Familial solidarity was an important characteristic of immigrant labor activities. John Bodnar claimed:

> Family members were continually instructed in the necessity of sharing and notions of reciprocity were constantly reinforced. . . . By working together, pooling limited resources, and muting individual inclinations, families attempted to assemble the resources sufficient for economic survival and, occasionally, for an improvement in their standard of living. But the first goal was always the most immediate: <u>cooperate</u> and <u>survive</u>.[12] [underlining mine]

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[11] Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture & Society in the Gilded Age*, (New York: Hill And Wang, 1982), 89.

[12] John Bodnar, *The Transplanted : a History of Immigrants in Urban America*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 72.

Such solidarities resulted in protest and violence which involved all family and community members.

In addition, the working-class family was a nursery of class consciousness for workers' wives and daughters. The solidarity of miners underground was reinforced powerfully by that of women above ground. Their two worlds were sharply separated. No women worked in the mines. The awful wail of the disaster siren that brought them running to the pithead in search of husbands, fathers, and brothers was their main contact with the subterranean world. Yet their lives revolved around it from birth to death.[13] Working men's experiences introduced their families to class identity. Hence, strikes inevitably involved women and children as well as male workers.

However, not all of the immigrants identified with their ethnic groups. Middle-class immigrants usually opposed the labor movement of their working-class brothers because they had different interests than those of working-class people. In addition to economic interests, middle-class people had different values than did the working class. When the Copper Country's ethnic diversity increased, this new industrial working class introduced a whole new culture to American life. Working-class families tended toward ethnic enclaves where

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[13] David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: the Workplace, the State, and American labor Activism, 1965-1925* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 337.

native languages and life styles prevailed. They were involved in dirty, backbreaking and frustrating work. To middle-class people, labor seemed to represent a foreign culture, alien to American values represented by successful capital.[14]

Even immigrant middle-class people did not view themselves as their working-class brothers and sisters. A social distance began to surface between the foreign-born middle class and the immigrant workers. Some successful immigrant businessmen began to disassociate themselves from the working-class communities. They began to attach themselves to the new order of capitalism and to fight the labor movement which encroached on their class interests.[15] In the Copper Country, the middle class became a fierce force bent on destroying the working class in order to maintain their class interests. Therefore, when the Western Federation Miners sought ethnic groups and the working-class community to strengthen the strike, the mining companies asked middle-class immigrants to destroy the labor movement.

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[14] Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America*, 88.

[15] Bodnar, *The Transplanted*, 143.

CHAPTER I

SEEDS OF STRIKE

The 1913-1914 copper strike in Northern Michigan involved miners as well as trammers and almost affected the whole Copper Country. It occurred as a result of many factors. First, the workers in the Copper Country suffered not only poor wages and abusive shift bosses or shift captains[16], but also long working hours and miserable working conditions. The introduction of new technology only added to their discontent. Second, the mining companies developed a system of paternalism to achieve the stability of labor and management relationship, reduce the labor cost and keep their workers from unionizing. However, not all workers benefitted from paternalism and this stimulated workers' anger. Third, a rigid status hierarchy in the mines gave underground workers a clear sense of exploitation and repression. In addition, by shifting their workers away from unions, the mining companies

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[16] Larger companies usually employed a head captain over all the underground, a shaft captain over each principal hoisting shaft, and two shift captains or bosses per shaft, one for day work, one for night. Shift captains and shift bosses also called petty bosses. Each shaft captain did his own hiring and firing and looked after the work done within his part of the mine. Shift captains or bosses functioned like general foremen.

attempted to increase the social distance between different immigrants and arouse their ethnic hostility. This policy increased the ethnic consciousness of non-English speaking immigrants. Furthermore, the new management and new technology raised workers' class consciousness. Most of all, the Western Federation of Miners provided workers an ideology and helped them to organize themselves to have a better life. The WFM set up local unions in the Copper Country, and sent organizers as well as foreign-language speakers to the district.

The mining companies in Northern Michigan paid its underground miners in either the contract system or company account. Contracts were based on the negotiation between a miner and a shift boss. The wage depended on the price per unit of ore for a specific job. Once agreement had been reached, the contractor picked the men to assist him and work began. Because the miners were paid according to the amount of ore they shoveled, there was no need for close supervision of the miners by the bosses. But there were disadvantages to contract work. In none of the mines was the rock actually weighed. Rather, the contract miners' pay was based on the number of tramcar loads of rock that trammers blasted out and pushed to the surface. The contract miners were against this system of payment because the bosses would frequently make arbitrary judgements about the amount of ore mined. And since prices for contracts were oral and never written, the bosses

simply lowered them whenever it appeared that the miners would be able to haul out a large quantity of ore.[17] Because of the contract system, wages differed not only from firm to firm but from mine to mine within a firm and from team to team within a mine. This system encouraged the most extreme individualism and undermined the potential for cooperation among workers in a mine.

Shift bosses and captains had great power in the mines. Sometimes men were shifted to poorer pockets of ore when they earned above the average, and the better veins were given to those who had won the boss's favor by giving him personal gifts of money or drinks. Harry Perryman, while working in the La Salle mine, testified that the shift captain demanded that he and his two partners purchase a certain Masonic charm, or pin, which cost them $30. Perryman also stated that another shift captain asked him for a number of ducks. He refused this request and lost his job at the mine.[18]

The miner could also choose to work on company account. Workers on company account were directly supervised by shift bosses who drove their men hard. Unlike the contract system, there were no incentives for the men to work at top speed. The pace of work was determined by how far the bosses could drive their workers. Many of the Cornish bosses developed

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[17] Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 11.

[18] J.E. Ballinger, "Letters on Calumet-Hecla," *Miners Magazine* 15 (February 19, 1914):13.

racist attitudes toward Northern and Southern European immigrant workers.[19]

Either in the contract system or company account, the company took numerous and unexplained deductions from paychecks. They made deductions from the miner's paycheck for rent, fuel, electricity, medical expenses, sick benefits, and various other aid funds. Other deductions were made for the materials necessary for the work in the mines, such as oil, dynamite, fuses and caps, pick handles, and shovels. So miners' wages subsidized production costs.[20]

In the Michigan copper district, the hours of labor for underground workers were from 7 o'clock in the morning until 5 o'clock in the afternoon, and for the night shift from 7 p.m. to 5 a.m., not including 1 hour allowed for lunch. According to this schedule, an underground man left the surface at 7 o'clock and returned to the surface at 5 o'clock; that is, he was underground 10 hours, including the lunch hour and the time required to descend into the shaft and to ascend to the top. But the "man machine" (the mine elevator), in which men were sent underground, had a very limited capacity. The man machine had a capacity for 40 men. Hence, there was

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[19] According to one Finnish miner, "they figured what's the difference; there's more Finlanders and Bohunks from where this one came." John Syrjamaki, "Mesabi Communities: a Study of Their Development," Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1940, 187.

[20] Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 34-35.

much delay in carrying men down and in bringing them up, and in most mines the men were usually underground 10 hours and 30 minutes. Miners claimed that 11 hours was common. According to a statement of the Calumet & Hecla Mining Company, its underground men were underground 10 hours and 30 minutes; some other companies reported 10 hours and 20 minutes.[21]

In addition to low wages and long working hours, the working conditions in the mines were very bad. The lower levels were so hot that men could not wear anything but overalls, shoes and caps on which to carry their lamps. Because of the lack of formal privies in the underground, workers urinated almost any place where another man wasn't working. They defecated into empty powder or candle boxes. Overall, sanitary conditions in the mines were primitive and bad.[22]

By the turn of the century, the heyday of the Michigan copper industry had ended. The opening of low-lost mining fields in the west worsened the competitive position in the Michigan mines. The Michigan producers were no longer maintain preeminence in domestic copper mining.

To compete with the Western copper producers, all the mining companies in Michigan insisted that implementation of the one-man drill (One man operated a rock drill.) was

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[21] Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 21.

[22] Ballinger, "Letters on Calumet-Hecla," 13; also Lankton, *Cradle to Grave*, 35-40.

necessary. Before this machine was used, workers employed a two-man drill. The two-man drill weighed from 275 to 300 pounds and the one-man drill weighed from 135 to 150 pounds. Ideally, the smaller machine, operated by one miner, would drill the same footage of holes per shift as the bigger machine worked by two.

Although the companies admitted that setting up or taking down a one-man drill was heavy work for one man, they insisted that two men each working on one-man machines near each other could assist each other in the work. In fact, men did not work close enough together to assist each other. Moreover, efficiency experts were hired and shift bosses began to push workers for more production. Loading skips were enlarged and the trammers' work became more burdensome. One of the strikers explained how such technological changes drove the men to walk out in 1913:

> In all these years (1904-1913) that I have been working for this company, we have been treated more and more like slaves being forced to do more and more each day of each year. Three or four months before the strike we were treated so bad that we were forced to strike if we waited until the beginning of spring the Company would of began driving us about like mules.[23]

Workers in Copper Country not only suffered from poor wages, long working hours, miserable working conditions and harsh shift bosses, the mining companies also intruded on their private lives. In the late nineteenth century and early

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[23] Peger Calusio to Ferris, September 27, 1913, in Copper Strike Correspondence in the State Archives.

twentieth century, many companies, such as Pullman Palace Car Company, Ford Motor Company and various coal mining companies, used paternalism to operate the relationship between management and labor. These companies believed that the deeper they became involved in their employees' private lives, the better the workers they could attract and maintain. Therefore, they provided workers not only with a job and a wage but also engaged in health, education, and social welfare activities. In return, employers who adopted paternalistic policies generally expected more diligent and loyal service from their workers.[24]

The Copper Country mine companies developed a system of paternalism in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Vernon Jensen, in *Heritage of Conflict: Labor Relations in the Nonferrous Metals Industry*, stated that "the Copper Country in Michigan always was a tight little world isolated snugly in and around the Keweenaw Peninsula," and that "perhaps no more completely controlled paternalism ever existed in this country than that which developed there."[25] In the first instance, it was necessary for companies to provide almost everything for workmen. The Copper Country was an isolated wilderness,

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[24] See Brody, *Workers in Industrial America*, 48-81; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, James Leloudis, *Like a Family: the Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (New York: W W Norton & Company, 1987); David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor*, Gutman, *Work, Culture & Society in Industrializing America*, 326-31.

[25] Vernon H. Jensen, *Heritage of Conflict* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950), 272-273.

especially when the mines were first opened. Winters were long and severe which meant companies had to store food for the long months when none could be brought into the area. They also had to provide housing for employees. Companies had to plan for all of these things.

Alexander Agassiz, president of the Calumet and Hecla Mining Company, created a good example of paternalism which neighboring companies emulated. Almost from the beginning, the mining companies of Michigan had built family houses to attract workers in order to solve their labor shortage problem. The company houses were basically the same with only slight differences. The houses usually had four to six rooms, and employees could rent them for one dollar a room per month. In 1913 the average rent paid was about $6.74.[26]

In addition to company houses, employees could obtain five-year ground-rent leases for 120-by-80 foot lots and build their own houses on company land. Ground rent was five dollars a year, but workers could live in houses which they built only when they worked for the company. The company also had the right to ask anyone to leave if the ground was needed for a new shaft house. A leasee could lose his house if he failed to pay taxes or assessments. Without the consent of the company he could not sell, assign, or transfer the lease. The company controlled one's house and land. No land could be

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[26] Arthur W. Thurner, *Calumet Copper and People: a History of a Michigan Mining Community, 1864-1970* (Hancock, Michigan, 1974), 43.

sold. As James MacNaughton, manager of the Calumet and Hecla Mining Company, once explained: "We do not know when we will have to move the house out of there . . . for mining purposes, the extension of a railroad to get to a shaft, the location of a shaft, the location of the necessary company buildings."[27]

By 1913, the mines rented out 3,520 houses, and another 1,751 employee-owned houses stood on leased company land. However, this could not accommodate the more than 14,000 mine workers. The gap between supply and demand meant many occupants of the 5,000 houses considered themselves truly fortunate to be there. But for many who lived on the outside, company housing practices only proved that paternalism was highly discriminatory. Larry Lankton stated, "some companies treated some employees like favorite sons and others like bastards."[28] Housing went to the best-paid workers whom the company wanted to keep, and not to the lowest-paid workers. Some ethnic groups, such as native-born Americans, Cornishs, and Irishs occupied the favored positions as shift bosses or miners, while others, such as Finns, Slavenians, Croatians, Austrians, Italians and Poles, worked in the lower occupations as trammers. This occupational bias in the distribution of housing served some ethnic groups well, and others poorly. In addition to ethnic discrimination, low rent was designed to attract married miners. Single miners found it difficult to

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[27] Thurner, *Calumet Copper and People*, 44-45.

[28] Lankton, *Cradle to Grave*, 148-149.

get company houses. Companies wanted housing to be regraded as a privilege, and not as an automatic benefit.[29]

The companies included medical service as part of their paternalistic system. Medical care was a Cornish tradition transplanted to Lake Superior. Because the Cornish were the best miners and the largest number of workers in the Copper Country, Cornish traditions, such as medical care, became the policy of the companies to attract and keep Cornish miners. The companies hired the doctors, built and owned the hospitals and dispensaries, and purchased the medicines and the medical instruments. Workers were charged fifty cents per month if single and one dollar if married, to help cover medical as well as surgical services and all medicines needed by their families.[30]

In 1872 the Calumet and Hecla Mining Company set up an Employee Aid Fund which continued for many years. It provided compensation for sickness, accident, or accidental death. Miners paid fifty cents per month and boys whose wages did not exceed thirty dollars a month paid twenty-five cents. Ten years later the company reduced monthly rates from fifty to thirty-five cents for men and from twenty-five to fifteen cents for boys. Between July 1, 1877, and January 1, 1913, workers contributed $504,881 and the company, $625,482--a

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[29] Lankton, *Cradle to Grave*, 154-155; 157.

[30] Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 125; Lankton, *Cradle to Grave*, 181-183; Thurner, *Calumet Copper and People*, 46.

total of $1,130,363. Contributions were invested in company shares and all dividends accrued to the aid fund. Up to January 1, 1913, the company estimated that $1,596,707 had been paid to employees or their families. When the Michigan Workmen's Compensation Act became operative on September 1, 1912, the fund rules were revised. Payments were made only in case of sickness.[31]

A pension fund for miners, with no printed rules or regulations, was established. Department heads organized the pension board. They decided when a man should retire. There was no age limit and at times less demanding jobs were found for faithful elderly employees. Companies began the fund in 1904 for employees who were sixty years of age or older and who had served the company twenty years or more. Upon the decision of the board, a man could be retired on a pension proportionate to wages paid and length of service. This benefit continued for only five years after retirement. In July 1903 the company built a broom factory to employ miners who were blinded in accidents. Widows and orphans of deceased employees could receive monthly payments from a voluntary relief fund. Up to 1913, 180 widows had received about $30,000 from this fund.[32]

Companies also provided other welfare projects. Water

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[31] Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 125.

[32] Thurner, *Calumet Copper and People*, 47.

was generally free, however, it cost fifty cents a month at Tamarack. Companies also distributed free fuel and relief to the needy, removed garbage weekly, and made necessary house repairs.[33]

In addition to the necessities of life, companies paid attention to worker's recreation and education too. Companies established bathing facilities, musical bands, an opera house, athletic teams, and many other activities. Schools and libraries were other extensions of the company's paternalism. Calumet and Hecla was the company most heavily engaged in school affairs. By 1910, C & H built ten school buildings for which Calumet Township paid rent.[34] They took in children from a dozen or more ethnic groups, and each year produced a brood of English-speaking and writing mine workers. They believed in a practical education and a limited ability to read and write. Libraries were the other facilities which companies provided for and controlled. When the Calumet and Hecla Library opened in 1898, it contained 6,800 books. The mine presidents and superintendents, however, decided which books could exist in the libraries.[35]

The companies did not receive a profitable return on their investments, at least not in a direct return. They

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[33] Thurner, *Calumet Copper and People*, 47-48.

[34] Lankton, *Cradle to Grave*, 170.

[35] Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 124; Lankton, *Cradle to Grave*, 168-176; Thurner, *Calumet Copper and People*, 52.

expected that their involvement in health, education and social welfare activities would help to lower their labor costs and keep a stable labor force. The result was that they also virtually owned and controlled the fourteen thousand lives of the mine-workers and their families.

Under the policy of paternalism, companies had great power and influence in community and local government. The Calumet and Hecla company built and owned the armory used by the local militia, for which the state paid the rent. Companies controlled the vote with red ballots for the Democrats and blue for the Republicans. A voter entering the polling place was asked whether he wanted a red or blue ballot.[36] The Calumet Township vote was for years strongly Republican because the Republican Party was associated with prosperity and support of the protective tariff. Voters were convinced that the tariff protected the price of copper and thus maintained the economic health of the local mines. In the crucial election of 1896, miners were given either a half shift or an entire day off to cast their votes. There were rumors that workers who supported the Democratic were fired.[37]

The mining companies were determined to enforce political isolation of the miners from one another. Agassiz

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[36] Angus Murdoch, *Boom Copper: the Story of the First U.S. Mining Boom* (New York, The MacMillan Company, 1945), 152-157.

[37] Thurner, *Calumet Copper and People*, 53-54.

objected to a plan to connect the various mining properties with a street railway system, because he thought that "the men could get together easier in time of strike."[38] The Knights of Labor began to unionize workers in 1887.[39] In the late 1880s and early 1890s, there were several short strikes and the Knights of Labor appeared to be making some headway in organizing the miners. Agassiz immediately hired private detectives to report on the activities of the Knights. As an additional security measure, Calumet and Hecla set up a company union, and Agassiz wrote to the local superintendent: "We sought not to hire any new men who are K. of L., and any of our men who belong should be discharged. The men have their own union now and they cannot belong to two, they must make their choice."[40] Due to company actions, and to a rapid decline of the Knights of Labor as a nationwide organization, its membership in the Copper Country fell to insignificant numbers by the mid-1890.

The control of the mining companies was all-inclusive. Even local English-language newspapers were controlled by companies. The mining companies censored every article

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[38] Gates, *Michigan Copper and Boston Dollars*, 115.

[39] The Knights of Labor began as a craft union formed by Philadelphia garment workers in 1869. In 1878 it went national; in 1881 it opened its membership to all working-class "producers." Melvyn Dubofsky, *Industrialism and the American Worker, 1865-1920* (Arlington Height, Ill., 1975), 54-60.

[40] Gates, *Michigan Copper and Boston Dollars*, 114.

affecting the mines.[41] One labor leader stated, "It [the Calumet and Hecla Mining Company] can drive any man in the district out of business."[42] Inis Weed, an observer of the strike, also pointed out that "this region resembles a feudal country rather than a republic."[43]

Luke Grant, the Labor Department's special agent in the Copper Country, pointed out that although the companies provided good benefits for workers, workers were never satisfied with feudalism.

> The impression I received from the trip was that the condition of benevolent feudalism exists in the copper country. . . . I think the company has done a great deal of welfare work for its employees and to that extent is deserving credit. Only one thing appeared to me lacking and that is the right of the workers to be free men in every sense of the word, including the right to have something to say in making the conditions under which they worked . . . It seems to me that so much paternalism must be repugnant to the mind of the American workman and that the system, sooner or later, must give way to one in which the men will have a greater measure of freedom. . . . The ideals of workmen today point toward democracy and they will never be satisfied with feudalism, even if it is of the most benevolent type.[44]

Because of the paternalistic system and the shortage of labor, copper companies recruited many immigrants into the

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[41] Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 136.

[42] As quoted in Thurner, *Calumet Copper and People*, 90.

[43] Inis Weed, "The Reasons Why the Copper Miners Struck," *Outlook* 106 (January 31, 1914):247.

[44] As quoted in William A. Sullivan, "The 1913 Revolt of the Michigan Copper Miners," *Michigan History* 43 (September, 1959):308.

Copper Country. The first ethnic groups recruited for work in the mines were the Cornish, Scottish, Irish, and Germans. Finns, Slavenians, Austrians, Croatians, and Italians were later arriving immigrants. According to Thurner, the Calumet Township's total population in 1870 was 3,182, of that number, 2,051 were foreign-born. Mining company employment in Houghton County rose from 6,200 in 1887 to 8,170 by 1886 and then to 14,321 in 1904. It was during this period that large numbers of immigrants were arriving from non-English speaking countries. Between 1890 and 1904 the population of Houghton County doubled. By 1910 there were 13,894 Finnish-born people in Copper Country representing one-third of the population in the area.[45]

To achieve the stability of labor and management relationships and prevent workers from unionizing, the companies needed to keep the miners separated from their fellow workers and outside political influences. Therefore, the mine owners commanded their labor recruiters in Europe to supply them with different ethnic groups in the hope that language barriers would forestall the growth of unionism and that the workers would prove to be easily manageable. Thus, even though the different immigrant groups worked together in the mines they maintained social distance from each other in

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[45] Gates, *Michigan Copper and Boston Dollars*, 107.

the early years.[46]

This policy not only increased the social distance between different immigrants but also their ethnic hostility. Ethnic hostility also merged with economic grievances. Cornish and other English speaking workers had access to higher-position jobs (for example, shift bosses and miners), while non-English speaking immigrants, such as Finns, Slavenians, Croatians, Austrians, Italians and Poles were discriminated against and were assigned to specific types of occupations (lower positions, for example, trammers). Non-English speaking immigrants also found that it was difficult for them to acquire skills. The unskilled work of trammers was much harder labor than the work of miners. Their pay was considerably lower, and their working hours were longer. Two trammers had to load and push cars weighing 1,200 to 3,000 pounds that were loaded with one and half to two and half tons of rock. Two or three men pushed this weight of 4,800 to 8,000 pounds over rough tracks hundreds of feet, often 1,000 to 1,500 feet or more, many times a day.[47] Graham Romeyn Taylor stated that the trammers' work was "so exhausting that

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[46] Gates, *Michigan Copper and Boston Dollars*, 107; Arthur Puotinen, *Finnish Radicals and Religion in Midwestern Mining Towns, 1865-1900*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1973, 146.

[47] U.S. Congress, Senate, *Strike in the Copper Mining District of Michigan*, (63rd Cong., 2nd. sess., 1914), Senate Document no. 381, 26.

a man is said to stand it only about seven years."[48]

In the 1913 strike, the strikers especially complained about shift bosses and shift captains who "habitually assigned working places and fixed wages, as well as rates, by showing favoritism to men of their own ethnic background."[49] The mine officials had heard these complaints before and had little intention of changing the situation. This is evidenced by an editorial entitled "No Irish Need Apply" in the *Portage Lake Mining Gazette* of May 26, 1870.

> We have frequently noticed such cases where deserving and valuable men have been discharged by incoming officials because of their nationality only; and such probably always will be the case. It is a noticeable fact that whatever is the nationality of the mining captains, the majority of the men working under their control will certainly be their countrymen. There is something so natural about this that one can scarcely find fault (with the practice).[50]

Because the companies regarded this problem as unavoidable, these grievance accumulated over many years. The shift bosses and mining captains who were charged with such discriminatory

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[48] Graham Romeyn Taylor, "The Clash in the Copper Country: The First Big Strike in Fifty Years in the Industrial Backwoods of Upper Michigan," *Survey* 31 (November 1, 1913):131.

[49] U.S. Congress, Senate, *Strike in the Copper Mining District Of Michigan*, 100.

[50] The Portage Lake Mining Gazette was one of three Copper Country dailies which, according to Senate investigators, "advocate the policies of the mining companies and voice the opinions of the mine managers." U.S. Congress, Senate, *Strike in the Copper Mining District of Michigan*, 136.

practices were primarily Cornish, German, or native-born American; the trammers and timbermen who voiced the most bitter complaints were Finn, Hungarian, Italian, and Pole. In answering the charges, MacNaughton admitted that some of the shift bosses employed by Calumet and Hecla were at times "arbitrary and dictatorial." However, he also defended the company's policy of giving these powerful jobs to particular nationalities. "The majority of the underground bosses are Cornish because they had previous experience in mining and could speak English."[51]

Non-English speaking immigrants had less access to the benefits of paternalism. For example, they found it difficult to get company housing and if they desired medical care from doctors of their own nationality, they had to pay additional fees.[52]

Discrimination and economic grievances stimulated ethnic consciousness of non-English speaking immigrants, especially Finns. They felt the need to create their own cultural contexts for social interaction (ethnic periodicals, churches,

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[51] U.S. House, *Conditions in the Copper Mines of Michigan* (63rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1914), 1402 and 1457; Joan Underhill Hannon, "Ethnic Discrimination in a 19th-Century Mining District: Michigan Copper Mines, 1888," *Explorations in Economic History* 1982 19(1):28-50; J.E. Ballinger, "Letters on Calumet-Hecla," *Miners Magazine* 15 (Feb. 19, 1914):12-13.

[52] Puotinen, *Finnish Radicals and Religion*, 142.

and temperance halls).[53] The socialist halls and working-class newspapers provided human and material resources for the development of labor organizations in the area.[54]

Underground workers, in the nineteenth century at least, identified with their ethnicity rather than with their class. They did not share a common working-class consciousness, because miners and trammers had separate interests. A hierarchy ascending from drill boys to trammers, timbermen, miners, foremen, captains, and overseers were so exaggerated that many men felt caught in an undemocratic, underpaid, overworked, and discriminatory system. Interests of skilled miners and newly employed immigrants diverged at times. The contract system worked to the advantage of skilled workers, and to the disadvantage of non-skilled workers. Mine managers liked the system, believing that it secured the loyalties of their skilled miners. If trammers worked diligently, avoided fractious behavior, and concentrated on learning the mining

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[53] A daily Finnish paper at Hancock (a strong socialistic organ), a daily Finnish paper at Calumet, a triweekly Finnish paper at Hancock, a semiweekly Finnish paper at Calumet, a daily Italian paper at Calumet, a triweekly Croatian paper at Calumet, and a weekly Slavonian paper at Calumet. Two French Newspapers, and several German newspapers were available. The founding of the *Tyomies* (The Worker) newspaper in 1896 gave the workers an organ wholly dedicated to working-class interests. Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike,* 136.

[54] Al Gedicks, "Ethnicity, Class Solidarity, and Labor Radicalism among Finnish Immigrants in Michigan Copper County," *Politics and Society* 7-2 (1977):133.

trade, then perhaps some day they might join the privileged ranks of the contract miner. However, this situation changed when the mining companies adopted new management and new technology.[55]

Between 1910 and 1912, the companies' decreasing reliance of traditional practices, and the increasing efficiency of engineering, had encouraged a widening breach in labor-management relations. The development of Anaconda and other mines near Butte, Montana, ended Michigan's domination of the American copper mining industry. During this time, the mining companies as well as other industrialists turned to the new managers and experts to achieve more production. This was very different from the practices of the nineteenth century. Before, a skill was handed down from father to son. The miner's self-esteem was tied to his skill. And a notion about his manhood involved the ability to control his work and how he did it. Now, Cornishmen and other skilled men gave way to college-educated men serving as superintendents, geologists, and mining engineers. In 1912 the *Engineering and Mining Journal* reported

> There can be no doubt that many economics are going to be effected in Lake Superior in the near future, as only lately have the companies commenced in earnest to experiment in regard to supplies, types of rock drills, and different methods of doing operations, using trained men to keep track of the experiments so that the latter will show something definite and their outcome will not be a matter of individual opinion, as so often was the case in the

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[55] Lankton, *Cradle to Grave*, 70,

> past, when the mine captain had the most to say in regard to underground equipment and practice.[56]

The miners' status eroded as these changes progressed. They no longer exerted much control over their jobs. The operations also deprived the workers of control over their work pace. The control over the pace of the job had passed into the hands of the supervisors. To increase the production, the supervisors extracted the maximum efficiency from the individual worker.

The mining companies further implemented the one-man drill to increase the production and reduce labor cost. This forced miners and trammers to come together to oppose the new technology. The drill destroyed the tradition of miners working together on teams. The one-man drill also meant harder and more dangerous work, because the miner now had no partner to look after him.

> It is too heavy for one man to rig up; too heavy for him to lift up and down on the post; and too much work; because you have got to be at the front and back of the machine at the same time.[57]

Miners strongly sensed that they were losing independence and control over their work. The new drills came in when the companies were consciously applying the principles of scientific management and were superintending their workers

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[56] C.T. Rice, "Copper Mining at Lake Superior," *Engineering and Mining Journal* (Aug. 3, 1912):406.

[57] U.S. House, *Conditions in Copper Mines of Michigan*, 538.

more closely. The machine also threatened half of all miners with unemployment, or with displacement into lower paying jobs. Trammers opposed the one-man drill because it limited their chances of moving up into miners' jobs, since the mining companies did not need so many miners. Life in the mines had become much harder. As a result, economic interests and grievances eliminated the underground workers ethnic hostility and increased their class consciousness.[58]

Also, as the companies changed from the Cornish contract system to the wage system, miners began to see themselves as less of a working-class elite and as having more in common with the rest of the laboring class. The oppression of petty bosses also provoked the working-class consciousness of miners and trammers. A Italian investigator who visited the copper district stated that "so great has been the tyranny of the petty bosses that sometimes it has extended even over the wives and daughters of miners, and this violation of family life is an important factor in explaining the bitterness of the miners' stand."[59]

Workers were able to raise their class consciousness partly due to their working experiences and grievances, partly

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[58] Ballinger, "Letters on Calumet-Hecla," 13; J.C. Engdahl, "Extracts from the Press Relative to the Colorado and Michigan Strike," *Miners Magazine* 14 (October 23, 1913):9; J.C. Lowney, "The Michigan Strike," *Miners Magazine* 14 (Sept.. 11, 1913):12-13.

[59] Weed, "The Reasons Why the Copper Miners Struck," 249.

due to the Western Federation of Miners. The Western Federation of Miners (WFM) was the only organization of metal mines workers in North America. The WFM was organized at Butte, Montana, May 19, 1893. The constitution of the WFM recognized the existence of class struggle caused by economic conditions in society. It stated that workers were exploited and did not receive a fair share of the wealth they produced. The WFM called for the emancipation of the working class and stressed that only in an industrial union and through concerted political action of all wageworkers could necessary changes be made.[60]

Under the leadership of Edward Boyce, president 1896 to 1902, the WFM became an extremely class-conscious organization advocating Marxist principles. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the WFM became involved in violent strikes in Idaho and Colorado. From these, the WFM won a reputation for radicalism, socialism, and violence. In 1896 the WFM affiliated with the American Federation of Labor but withdrew their affiliation in 1897. In 1905, the WFM allied with the Industrial Workers of the World but broke in 1908 because the WFM moved toward a more conservative posture. In 1911, the WFM renewed its ties with the AFL.[61]

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[60] Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 35-36.

[61] Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 35-38; Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: a History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), 115-119.

The knights of Labor had unionized workers in 1887. In the late 1880s and early 1890s, there were several short strikes and the Knights of Labor appeared to be making some headway in organizing the miners. However, due to company actions, and to a rapid decline of the Knights of Labor as a nationwide organization, its membership in the Copper Country fell to insignificant numbers by the mid-1890. Between 1897 and 1899 the Northern Mineral Mine Workers (NMMW) organized local unions in the iron district of Michigan, and were affiliated with the American Federation of Labor (AFL). The NMMW conducted several strikes which were unsuccessful. In 1904 this organization applied to the WFM to become a part of the WFM. The convention of WFM held in 1904 accepted the proposition, and took over the local unions in Michigan.

The NMMW had no organization in the copper district of Michigan. But after the NMMW uniting with the WFM, local unions were formed in all of the mining camps of Michigan and especially, in the copper district. However, under the policy of paternalism in the copper district, the local union progressed with little success. The WFM only formed a Calumet local and a mere 27 men were members at the start of 1909. In February and May 1909, workers established small locals in Hancock and then South Range. Over four years (1909-1912), total membership increased from about 300 to 1,000. The situation changed radically in the first half of 1913. By early July, the three WFM locals had grown to five, and total

membership had increased to 7,000 men.[62]

The WFM became far more popular because the companies gave the union a cause that appealed to underground workers. David Brody points out that "technological change provided the . . . organizing imperative."[63] Over the winter of 1912-13, the companies declared their decision to implement the one-man drill. Also, the mining companies became more and more dependent upon non-English speaking immigrant workers, who had gravitated to the lowest paid jobs. Not only had this made the shift boss and nationality problems more acute, but the Finnish element, which amounted to about a third of the foreign born, contained a large Socialist group which was ripe for organization. In addition, the WFM organizers told the Michigan copper workers that because of the WFM, underground workers in Butte worked only an eight-hour day. They worked for a minimum daily wage of $3, which was substantially higher than the average pay of Michigan workers. The locals attracted members who felt cheated by such unfavorable comparisons with Montana, and who believed that they worked too long for too little reward. The locals attracted men from the later-arriving ethnic groups who had been discriminated against, both in the application of good jobs and paternal benefits, such as housing. The WFM members also included

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[62] Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 38; Judge Alfred E. Murphy to Governor Ferris, August 15, 1913, in the State Archives.

[63] Brody, Workers in Industrial America, 29.

workers who felt the underground had grown too uncomfortable and dangerous, and who believed that arbitrary managers were pushing them harder than before. Some socialists who wanted to overturn the mining companies, dismantle capitalism, and restructure the entire economic system also joined the WFM.

The mining companies of Michigan wanted to prevent the workers from organizing themselves by exercising paternalism. However, not all workers benefitted from paternalism. The discrimination of non-English immigrants stimulated workers' ethnic consciousness. New management and new technology also drove miners and trammers together and created a new industrial working class. Further, the Western Federation of Miners helped workers to organize themselves and fight against the companies for better lives. Thus, in the first half year of 1913, the Copper Country was full of tension. Workers and the mining companies all expected the strike would be coming. Local unions and mine owners both made efforts to prepare for the strike.

CHAPTER II

THE DECISION TO STRIKE

Some historians observed that the threat of technological change was the short-term reason to push the mine workers towards the decision to strike. Implementing the one-man drill threatened half of all miners with displacement into lower paying jobs or with unemployment. Trammers opposed the machine because it limited their chances of moving up into miners' jobs. Both miners and trammers sensed that the mining companies would not withdraw the one-man drill unless they came together fast to oppose the new technology.

On July 14, 1913, the local union of WFM sent letters to the mine managers to request a joint conference for "discussing the possibilities of shortening the working day, raising the wages and making some changes in the working conditions." The letters also stated that the miners "hope from now on they may be enabled to sell their labor collectively." The local union asked the managers to reply by July 21. If the managers denied the conference, the mine workers had approved a strike.[64]

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[64] Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 7-8; Copper Country Commercial Club, *Strike Investigation* (Chicago: M. A. Donohue & Co., 1913), 54-55.

The managers ignored the request. The Quincy Mining company returned the unopened letter marked "refused." The other mining companies did not reply to the letters either. Mine managers believed that to reply to the letters would recognize the WFM and this was the last thing the managers wanted to do. Consequently, the local union met on July 22 and declared a strike effective the next morning.[65]

Mine managers and local businessmen blamed outside agitators for disturbing the harmony of labor relations and causing the strike. However, the officers of the WFM in Denver made efforts to restrain the local union from fast action. On March 25, 1913, President Charles H. Moyer wrote a letter to Thomas Strizich, a national organizer of Calumet, Michigan.

> I was much pleased to hear of the progress being made in the way of organizing in Michigan and sincerely trust that the men there will realize the importance, in fact the absolute necessity, of deferring action that may precipitate a conflict with the employers until they have practically a thorough organization.[66]

Charles E. Mahoney, the vice president of the Western Federation of Miners also told Charles E. Hietala, secretary of the Hancock Miners' Union, that the mine workers were better to act carefully.

> I feel that after all of these years they could at least act judiciously, and be careful in guarding

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[65] Lowney, "The Michigan Strike," 12-13.

[66] Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 38.

> themselves in every step that is taken to the end that they may be more secure at all times in their efforts to emancipate themselves.[67]

The officers of the WFM in Denver thought the strike should wait until the union more completely organized the mine workers, especially until it organized the surface men, the stamp-mill and smelter men. They considered it better to wait until April, 1914 because at that time the membership would increase and there would be six months of good weather ahead.

However, the mine workers insisted an immediate action should be taken to secure better conditions. Mr. Richard, one of the local officers of the union, testified that

> Well, the attitude of the men with regard to the strike, they insisted they were going out; that they would not stand for conditions any longer; and they would go out whether the locals or the executive board--the executive council of the W.F. of M.--would call a strike; they would go out anyway; so it would be impossible for anybody to keep those men back any longer.[68]

Therefore, the executive board of the WFM reluctantly consented to a referendum vote. The local union advertised the referendum in the regular meeting and papers in different foreign languages. However, the announcement of the vote did not appear in the three daily papers of Calumet, Houghton, and Hancock which the mining companies more or less indirectly controlled. On July 1 the following questions were submitted

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[67] U.S. House, *Conditions in the Copper Mines of Michigan*, 59.

[68] U.S. House, *Conditions in the Copper Mines of Michigan*, 93-94.

to the five local unions of the district:

> Shall the miners' Union, acting through the district union, ask for a conference with the employers to adjust wages, hours and working conditions in the copper district of Michigan?
>
> Shall the Executive Board of the Copper district Union, acting in conjunction with the Executive Board of the Western Federation of Miners, declare a strike, if the mine operators refuse to grant a conference or concession?[69]

The local unions held the polls open from July 1 to 12. The officers of WFM claimed that more than 9,000 members cast the vote and 98 percent of the vote approved the strike.[70] On July 23, 1913, the Copper Country area began the biggest strike in the history of Northern Michigan. The strike district was around seventy miles and affected 14,528 men. The strike forced the majority of the stamping mills of the area to suspend operations.[71]

Historians have two different interpretations of the origin of the strike. When Vernon Jensen discussed the causes for the strike, he wrote "the dissatisfactions of the miners

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[69] Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 38-40.

[70] Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 40; Taylor, "The Clash in the Copper Country," 129. According to the congressional hearings on the copper strike, a 7,680 to 125 vote favored a strike. Thus, only 7,805 persons cast the vote. U.S. House, *Conditions in the Copper Mines of Michigan*, 115.

[71] Lowney, "The Michigan Strike," 12-13; Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 42-43.

involved wages and hours, and the use of the one-man drill."[72] The *Report of the Commissioner of Labor Statistics in Regard to Strike of Mine Workers in the Michigan Copper District* also concluded that "Dissatisfaction regarding wages, hours of labor, and the use of the one-man drill was the principal cause of the strike of the mine workers which began in the Michigan copper district on July 23, 1913." Angus Murdoch in *Boom Copper* and William B. Gates in *Michigan Copper and Boston Dollars* point out that it was the one-man drill that caused the strike. Larry Lankton in *Cradle to Grave* also states that miners and trammers came together to oppose the new technology--one-man machine.[73]

However, the letter which the local union sent to the mine managers on July 14 did not make any definite demands. In fact, the letter did not mention a minimum wage, maximum working hours or improving working conditions. It simply stated that they hoped to "sell their labor collectively," and they sought a conference meeting with the managers to discuss wages, hours of labor, and working conditions. Dan Sullivan and C.E. Hietala, president and secretary of district 16, did not state mine workers' demands until August 15, 1913.

> On the 23d of July, 1913, the greatest strike in the history of American metal miners began in the copper district of Michigan. Fifteen thousand men

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[72] Jensen, *Heritage of Conflict*, 275.

[73] Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 9; Angus Murdoch, *Boom Copper*, 221; Lankton, *Cradle to Grave*, 221.

> in and around the mines laid down their tools, demanding recognition of the union, an eight-hour day, a minimum wage of $3 for all underground workers and engineers, with an increase of $5 cents per day for surface employees. Also that two men shall be engaged in the operation of all mining machines.[74]

In fact, the wages and hours issue was less clear. Comparing the conditions between Michigan and Montana, the mine workers in Michigan found that Butte had higher wage rates and a shorter work day. They used this to justify increased wages and reduced hours in Michigan. However, they admitted that the living conditions in Michigan were better. Because of the nature of Michigan copper, it was unnecessary to roast rock for separating the copper from the sulphur. Therefore, the suffocating smoke which the mine workers of Butte cursed was not a factor in Michigan.[75] In addition, food cost about one-third more in Butte and rent was at least five times higher than in Michigan.[76] This was the reason why the mining companies refused to increase the wages. Working hours were not a real issue to cause the strike either. The strike was still under way when mine managers indicted that they would start the eight-hour day on January

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[74] Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 41.

[75] C.T. Rice, "Mining Copper at Lake Superior," *Engineering and Mining Journal*, (Aug. 3, 1912):217-220.

[76] Arthur W. Thurner, *Rebels on the Range: the Michigan Copper Strike of 1913-1914* (Lake Linden, Mich: John H. Forster Press, 1984), 101.

1, 1914.

William Sullivan in "The 1913 Revolt of the Michigan Copper Miners," and Arthur W. Thurner in *Rebels on the Range* stated that the real issue was that workers did not have a channel to reveal their grievances and to determine the conditions under which they worked and lived. Both state and federal investigations revealed that the main concern of the workers was their desire to have a voice in shaping labor conditions and local politics.[77] *Strike Investigation*, a report by Copper Country Commercial Club, listed the grievances of strikers as following:

> 1. The claim that men are not treated with justice and decency by the petty bosses employed in the mines.
> 2. That the men have no adequate way of presenting grievances to the various mining managers, without incurring the displeasure of the minor bosses, and undergoing discrimination and possible discharge for making complaints.[78]

In the Copper Country, there was no channel through which grievances of the employees could be taken and adjusted. Many workers could not speak English to express their grievances. MacNaughton admitted that not every individual could tell him their grievances, but he believed through other ways the companies still could know what the mine workers wanted.

I think that personal contact with individuals, and

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[77] Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 135-136; U.S. House, *Conditions in Copper Mines of Michigan*, 1482; William Sullivan "The 1913 Revolt of the Michigan Copper Miners," 311; Thurner, *Rebels on the Range*, 203, 232-33.

[78] *Strike Investigation*, 63.

> through the various ramifications, such as our doctors, our social workers, and if we have visiting nurses, there will be innumerable ways by which we can feel the pulse of the community.[79]

The workers had no satisfactory channel to adjust the grievances, and the tyrannies of underbosses. Separately these grievances appeared to be very small. They were, however, allowed to accumulate, to go on from month to month, and from year to year. The mine owners or Superintendents did not show any sympathy with these minor wrongs. Therefore, the letter of July 14 emphasized that mine workers had a right to organize themselves to adjust their grievances.

> We hope you realize that labor has just as much right to organize as capital, and that at this age these two forces, labor and capital, while their interests are not identical, must get together and solve the problems that confront them.[80]

The Miners' Bulletin, official organ of the strikers, also pointed out the real cause of the strike.

> The really dangerous feature of the situation in the Calumet District is not that the miners are shockingly underpaid, though their wages certainly are not adequate, nor that the conditions in the mines are extremely dangerous or unsanitary, though they ought to be improved in both respects. What should give us concern is the undoubted fact that Houghton County, Michigan, in the heart of what purports to be the purest democracy on earth, is <u>being governed as an oligarchy</u>.[81] (underlining mine)

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[79] U.S. House., *Conditions in the Copper Mines of Michigan*, 1477.

[80] *Strike Investigation*, 55; Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 41.

[81] *Miners' Bulletin*, December 2, 1913.

Therefore, the biggest issue which the strikers wanted to fight against was the oligarchy of the company. Governor Woodbridge N. Ferris disclosed that the "organized capacity" was the real reason to continue the strike.

> I have every reason to believe however, that if the men would return to work the Mining Companies would correct every grievance except on and that one grievance is the essential cause of the continuance of the strike. The strikers are determined to be recognized in their organized capacity.[82] (underlined in original)

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[82] Roy C. Vandercook Papers. Michigan State University Archives; Woodbridge N. Ferris to Roy C. Papers, September 30, 1913.

CHAPTER III

THE STRIKE BEGINS

The strike began in most mines on the morning of July 23, 1913, but some did not begin until the night shift on that day. By July 24 the strike forced all but two smaller mines in the Copper Country to close down.[83] The strike affected 14,528 men. The WFM did not organize the surface men very well. However, since the underground workers stopped work, the surface men were forced to be idle.

On July 23, the first day of the strike, some riots occurred when strikers hit the men who were going to work with rocks and clubs. On the evening of July 24, the Houghton County Sheriff, James Cruse, asked Governor Woodbridge Ferris

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[83] The two small mines which did not closed down were the White Pine Copper Co. and the Victoria copper Mining Co.. They were at the extreme southern end of the range, were the WFM had no organization. The mining companies which were involved in the strike were the Calumet & Hecla Mining Co., the Allouez Mining Co., the Centennial Copper Mining Co., the Isle Royale Copper Co., the Laurium mining Co., the Osceola Consolidated Mining Co., the Superior Copper Co., the Tamarack Mining Co., the Copper Range Consolidated Co., the Quincy Mining Co., the Wolverine Copper Mining Co., the Franklin Mining Co., the Winona Copper Co., Houghton Cooper Co., the Hancock Consolidated Mining Co., and the Oneco Mining Co. The above companies were in the Houghton County. The Ahmeek Mining Co. and the Mohawk Mining Co. were in the Keweenaw County. The Mass Consolidated Mining Co. and the Lake Copper Co. were in the Ontonagon County. Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 42.

for help. He stated that the "situation here has become desperate."[84] By July 27 the entire Michigan National Guard of 2,565 men came to the Copper Country.[85] After the Guard arrived, no further disorder happened until some of the mine workers started to return to work.

Although the Governor sent the soldiers for protecting life and property and keeping order, some soldiers lacked discipline. They got drunk, fired revolvers, and visited brothels. The strikers set up a union Hall on Sixth Street in Red Jacket and paraded daily with banners, flags, placards, and brass bands. Soldiers observed the daily march to keep the peace, but verbal abuse, disorder, and fist fights created constant tension and hard feelings. The state militia rode down defenseless people on the sidewalks, insulted young girls and abused strikers and their families.[86] Union and strikers

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[84] Telegram from James Cruse to Governor Ferris, July 24, 1913. This document is found in "Records of the Executive Office 1913-1914, Woodbridge N. Ferris Governor Records Pertaining to Strikes in Copper Mining Industry," Michigan State Archives, Lansing, Michigan; Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 49-50.

[85] Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 50.

[86] "Notes from the Strike Zone," *Miners Magazine* 14 (August 28, 1913):6; "The Fight in Michigan is a Life and Death Battle: Extracts Covering the Situation," *Miners Magazine* 14 (Aug. 14, 1913):13; Laura G. Cannon, "State Militia--Strike Breakers," *Miners Magazine* 14 (Sept. 11, 1914):8-9; J.C. Engdahl, "The Strike of the Copper Miners," *Miners Magazine* 14 (September 4, 1913):12; J.E. Ballinger, "Letters on Calumet-Hecla," *Miners Magazine* 15 (March 19, 1914):10.

claimed that the soldiers in the streets were unnecessary and it insulted the residents of the town. They wanted the governor to withdraw the militia. They read the following letter wired to the governor.

> The largest mass meeting in the history of the copper district registers its protest against the use of troops to aid in operating the mines. We protest against answering the just demands of workingmen with the bayonet. No property has been destroyed, no arrests have been made . . . [87]

John Hepting, the sheriff of Keweenaw County, also stated that "there had been perfect peace and order and not a single infraction of the law committed since the strike commenced." Therefore, "I request you [the governor] to withdraw all troops [from] this county."[88] However, Governor Ferris did not change his attitude, he wanted the troops to remain "as long as life and property [were] at stake."[89]

Before the strike began, the mining companies already expected the strike. Therefore, at the request of the mining companies, Sheriff Cruse had sworn in about 430 deputy sheriffs. Most of them were employees of the companies. From when the strike began until November 1, the number of deputies increased to 1,700. Sheriff Cruse permitted these deputies to

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[87] "From the Strike Zone," *Miners Magazine* 14 (Aug. 7, 1913):6.

[88] "The Fight in Michigan is a Life and Death Battle: Extracts Covering the Situation," *Miners Magazine* 14 (Aug. 14, 1913):13.

[89] Woodbridge N. Ferris to Roy C. Vandercook, September 6, 1913. Roy C. Vandercook Papers, Michigan State University Archives.

carry arms.

Two weeks before the strike, Sheriff Cruse also contacted the Waddell-Mahon Corporation of New York to import deputies to protect mine properties. This was the decision of the Houghton County board of supervisors too. The mine managers completely dominated this board. Most of its members were mine managers, and others were connected directly or indirectly with the mining companies in business relations. At first, MacNaughton, one of the supervisors and manager of the Calumet and Hecla Mining Company, opposed importing the guards, because he believed that the strike would end very soon. After the first two days riots, the board decided to import Waddell-Mahon men. The sheriff and prosecuting attorney of Houghton County had issued authority for these men to carry arms.[90]

The strikers were angry about the bringing of the Waddell-Mahon men to the district. They called them "gunmen" and denounced them as "thugs." During the strike, deputies and the Waddell-Mahon agency men caused many difficulties and lots of disturbance and violence. The Waddell-Mahon cadre claimed that they could easily defeat the WFM.[91] Armed

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[90] *Detroit Free Press* interviewed James MacNaughton which was appeared in the *Hancock Evening Copper Journal* of August 11; Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 53-55.

[91] "Boasting of their Shameless Vocation," *Miners Magazine* 14 (Nov. 13, 1913):4.

militia and deputies marched along with the paraders on the highway, seeking to provoke strikers to violence. Soldiers rode their horses across and through the paraders, clubbed strikers on the streets and arrested people without cause.[92] Dan Wilcox, a Waddell-Mahon man, testified that they were informed to make trouble.

> One night one of the scabs got drunk and fired his pistol off I and two other guards immediately ran into the building. when we found out that the scab did the shooting we walked to the street. We were met by Captain Neal. He asked me what the trouble was. I told him. He replied to me, "you G- d- fool, why don't you say the strikers fired a shot at the house? The more trouble we start, the longer we can stay on this job!"[93]

During the entire strike, the WFM attempted to ask the State and the Federal governments to settle the strike. The managers held semi-weekly meetings to discuss the strike situation and on all matters about the strike they acted together. The managers rejected these three propositions for arbitration on the ground that they would not deal with the Western Federation of Miners. They regarded the WFM as a lawless organization. They also claimed that there would have

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[92] "Lowney Sums Up the Situation in Michigan," *Miners Magazine* 14 (Nov. 6, 1913):6-7; J.E. Ballinger, "Letters on Calumet-Hecla," *Miners Magazine* 15 (March 19, 1914):9-10; "Affidavits from 'Law and Order' Guards," *Miners Magazine* 15 (February 19, 1914):10-11; Vandercook Paper, Michigan State University Archives.

[93] "Affidavits from 'Law and Order' Guards," *Miners Magazine* 15 (February 19, 1914):10-11; Henry Batter had similar testimony in U.S. House, *Conditions in the Copper Mines of Michigan*, 2194.

been no strike if the agitators from Denver had not incited their employees.

On July 25, C.E. Mahoney, Vice President of the WFM, and A.A. Kerr, a WFM lawyer, urged Governor Ferris to make a personal investigation of the industrial conditions that prevailed in the copper mines, but the governor ignored their request. Vice President Mahoney then left for Lansing, Michigan, and made a personal call on Ferris. He suggested Ferris arrange a "joint conference of both sides" to settle the strike. Ferris then had General Abbey deliver a proposal to settle the industrial dispute.[94]

On July 30 MacNaughton and five other managers told Abbey that they could not accept the offer of the governor. The mine managers replied that:

> there is therefore no industrial dispute between the mine owners and employees. . . . We can not recognize the right of Western Federation of Miners to intervene or to assume to represent our employees with respect to the present conditions . . . the Western Federation of Miners . . . whose sole object is undeniably to establish the federation in a dominant control of the mining industry of this district.[95]

The mine management regarded the Federation's constitution as a declaration of war. They discredited the principles of WFM

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[94] "The Situation in the Copper District of Michigan," *Miners Magazine* 14 (Aug. 7, 1913):6; Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 75; *The Calumet News*, July 28, 1913.

[95] Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper district Strike*, 77.

as immoral and un-American. The mine managers pointed out the bloody and violent record of WFM which included the strikes of the Coeur d'Alene district in Idaho (1894) to Cripple Creek and other Colorado districts between 1894 and 1904. The mine managements took the stand that this was for many years a very peaceable community until outside agitators came in.[96] After the failure of the intervention, the governor stated that

> if I [Ferris] were manager of the Calumet and Hecla I should meet my miners as my workers, and try to meet their just demands without tying my hands and feet to an organization, provided I rebelled against being thus tied.[97]

The second effort of Ferris to make a settlement of the strike was through Judge Alfred H. Murphy, of the circuit court of Wayne County. Judge Murphy spent nearly two weeks in the copper range. He tried to learn about the labor conditions in the mines and the causes of dissatisfaction that had led to the strike. On August 14 he held a conference with the mine managers at the Houghton Club, and urged them to agree to the arbitration of the strike. Murphy even proposed to drop the question of recognition of the federation. The mine managers replied that they would agree to the eight-hour day, but they were opposed to any uniform wage scale or discontinuance of the one-man drill, as well as the re-hiring

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[96] "The Copper--Mine Owner's Side," *Outlook* 106 (February 21, 1914):397-400.

[97] Ferris to Vandercook, July 31, 1913, Vandercook Papers, Michigan State University Archives.

of union agitators. Furthermore, they would not reemploy strike leaders who were involved in disturbances under any circumstances. Other miners could return only if they gave up their union cards. This response infuriated Murphy who subsequently wrote the following remarks to the governor.

> To agitate for improved conditions, to agitate for the right of employees to organize, to agitate for any legitimate end is the right of every citizen. To penalize the exercise of that right by refusing employment throughout the copper country to any striker is to put him and his family upon that community practically without employment. It is wrong fundamentally and wholly wrong in principle. In policy nothing so much reminds me of it as the obtuse course of the Bourbons. It would put the strikers who return to work in the position of sacrificing their fellows who had been loyal in a common cause. . . . In principle, if the employer can do this, he can, with like propriety, compel withdrawal from any political, religious, or social body as a condition of employment. It is <u>un-American</u>.[98] [underlining mine]

The governor also agreed that the behavior of the operators was arrogant and unfair.[99]

The mine managers refused all the arbitration propositions made by the state. This evidenced that the prophecy of Major Roy C. Vandercook was right. Vandercook doubted that there was any chance for the state to settle the strike because of the operators' stubborn determination not to recognize the union. He also said that MacNaughton was the

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[98] Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 81; Lowney, "The Michigan Strike," 12.

[99] Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 82.

stubbornest person to persuade.[100]

In August, after the failure of the second arbitration, the strike entered a new phase of incidents of violence and provocation. At 5:30 p.m. August 15, at Seeberville, a small mining camp near Painesdale, John Kollan, a striker, attempted to go to his boarding house by a short-cut path which he had used before the strike. A deputy sheriff, an employee of the Copper Range Consolidated Co., warned him not to go that way because it was company property. After an argument Kollan still went on. The deputy reported the matter to the man who was in charge of the Waddell-Mahon men. They decided to arrest Kollan on a charge of intimidation. Two deputies and four Waddell-Mahon then went to the boarding house. They told Kollan that he was under arrest, but he ran into the house. Then the Waddell-Mahon men and deputies surrounded the house on two sides and began firing though three windows on one side and the back door. When the firing began there were 15 people in the house, including two women and four children. Four men were shot, and a baby in its mother's arms was powder burned. Firing continued until the six men had exhausted their bullets. Diazig Tizan was killed instantly, and Steve Putrict died the next day. Neighbors later testified that the Waddell-Mahon men and deputies, after shooting up the house, went to the street and gathered stones and empty bottles and

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[100] Vandercook to Ferris, July 30, 1913, Ferris Records, State Archives.

put them around the house to show that they had been used as missiles against them.[101]

The wounded men were taken to a company hospital because there was no other in the vicinity. When a brother of one of the wounded men called to see him, a company physician said to him, "If I operate on your brother and he gets well he will just go out and fight again! You go out and tell your Croatian people to go back to work, and I will treat your brother." The man refused, and his brother died.[102]

After the shooting, Anthony Lucas, prosecuting attorney of Houghton County, called Sheriff Cruse to arrest all of the six men. However, the sheriff allowed them to escape. Although the sheriff arrested them later, he set them free on bail in the end. Attorney Lucas informed Sheriff Cruse to withdraw his approval for any of the Waddell-Mahon men to carry weapons. But Sheriff Cruse did not withdraw his consent. The Waddell-Mahon men continued to carry arms.[103]

The U.S. Department of Labor attempted to settle the situation in September. Secretary of Labor William B. Wilson assigned John A. Moffitt of the Bureau of Immigration to work

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[101] "Notes from the Strike Zone," *Miners Magazine* 14 (Aug. 28, 1913):5-6.

[102] "Notes from the Strike Zone," *Miners Magazine* 14 (Aug. 28, 1913):5.

[103] Lowney, "The Michigan Strike," 12; Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 55.

on the Michigan conflict. But the mine managers still refused to accept the offer. The reply of the mine managers did not discuss the propositions in detail. It was only a reiteration that "the real issue involved in the strike is recognition of the Western Federation of Miners," and that they were determined to bring about the "elimination" of that organization in the Michigan copper district. Furthermore, Quincy Shaw claimed that the mining companies did not consider that William B. Wilson, Secretary of Labor, was an impartial judge.[104]

James MacNaughton further threatened that "if his Company would consent to recognize the Union, he would leave here before he personally would."[105] He even rejected the suggestion that the President of the United States be an impartial arbitrator to reconcile the strike. He bluntly stated that

> This is my pocketbook. I won't arbitrate with you as to whose pocketbook this is. It is mine. Now it would be foolish to arbitrate that question. I have it decided in my own mind.[106]

In September the mining companies further discouraged strikers by bringing in the strikebreakers to restore their production. In the beginning of the strike, MacNaughton

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[104] "The Copper--Mine Owner's Side," *Outlook* 106 (February 21, 1914):398.

[105] Judge Alfred J. Murphy to Ferris, August 14, 1913, in Copper Strike Correspondence in the State Archives.

[106] U.S. House, *Conditions in the Copper Mines of Michigan*, 1482.

claimed that he would never import any strikebreakers from outside. He believed that his companies did not have any dispute with his workers and the workers would resume their work as soon as they got protection.[107]

However, when the settlement could not be achieved, the Calumet and Hecla Company had more than one hundred agents scattered in different parts of the country to recruit strikebreakers for the mines. All strikebreakers in different cities and towns were sent to Chicago and from there were shipped directly to Michigan. Federation members distributed posters in the Copper Country and adjoining regions, including states where workers might be recruited as strikebreakers. Although they warned men away from the Michigan copper mines, the mining companies still brought strikebreakers into the Copper Country.[108]

In September, the Calumet and Hecla Mining Company, the Copper Range Consolidated Company and the Quincy Mining Company recommenced their production, but the rest of the mining companies still suspended their work. The Calumet and Hecla had a larger number of strikebreakers than that of the

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[107] *The Calumet News*, July 27, 1913; *Detroit News*, August 9, 1913; "The Fight in Michigan is a Life and Death Battle: Extracts Covering the Situation," *Miners Magazine* 14 (August 14, 1913):12; "Lowney Sums up the Situation in Michigan," *Miners Magazine* 14 (Nov. 6, 1913):6-7.

[108] "Calumet and Hecla," *Miners Magazine* 14 (Nov. 6, 1913):4.

other two companies. By the end of September, the Calumet and Hecla claimed their production had 40 percent of the normal output, but the officials of the WFM declared the statement was exaggerated.

The Quincy Mining Company brought in the first strikebreakers on September 19. These strikebreakers were Germans, and few of them could read English.[109] They needed to sign "the statement of labor contract" which showed that they would earn $2,50 per day and work 9 hours a day. Each of them needed to pay the company the cost of his transportation, $24.50 from his first six months salary. The word "strike" was written in English while the rest of the contract was written in different languages. It evidenced that the company intended to deceive those who could not read English. The strikebreakers also needed to sign that they would not join or belong to any labor union.[110]

When the strikebreakers arrived in the Copper Country, they were confined in the train station for several hours. Then soldiers and Waddell-Mahon men escorted them to a shaft house. General P.L. Abbey and other officers of the National Guard were present. The company also showed the newcomers to the strikers. On the same day, 14 strikebreakers escaped to the headquarter of the WFM and claimed that they did not know

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[109] Ballinger, "Letters on Calumet-Hecla," *Miners Magazine* 15 (Feb. 19, 1914):12-13; (March 12, 1914):10-12.

[110] Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 62-66.

the Copper Country was on the strike.

> We . . . have been hired . . . to work in the mines of the Quincy Mining Co. . . . with the understanding that there is no strike on in the district. On September 19, 1913, at our arrival to Hancock, we were locked into a coach from 2 o'clock a.m. until quarter after 4 o'clock, then we were taken to the Quincy mine location. On September 19, 1913, we seen by the thousands of the strikers parading on the county road. Then we found out that we were hired under misrepresentation by the agency who shipped us here. . . . we are not willing to work in the Quincy mine while the strike is on, and we came to Kansankoti Hall [union headquarter] to get protection . . . [111]

The later coming strikebreakers still claimed that they did not know that they would work in the strike district. Some of them even were threatened and forced to the Copper Country. In addition, the deputies and soldiers guarded them and did not permit them to leave the bunk house and boarding house at the mine unless they had a pass. The strikebreakers accused the deputies of mistreating and threatening them. Several deputies even admitted that they were ordered to beat the workers.

> A Hungarian (a strikebreaker) one day wanted to leave the mine. He said "I don't want to work here." I told the mine boss, and he said "lock the s- - - b- up!" I took him to the lieutenant of the guards, and they took him away.
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> Several days later a train of about sixty miners arrived, and when we [deputies] went to the mines with these men, about twelve objected to working and demanded their fare paid back to Chicago. As they could not speak English, we told the mine boss, and he said, "Chase them in! What do you

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[111] Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 64.

think we are, man leave without a pass."[112]

Lots of strikebreakers wanted to leave the district after they learned about the situation. However, the mine companies did not pay them their earnings and did not give them the transportation fee back to Chicago. It was the Union which offered them the transportation.

In late September, the mining companies tried to seek legal means to crush the spirit of organization among their employees. In early twentieth century, companies usually adopted a legal way to attack the strike.[113] They petitioned Twelfth Circuit Court Judge Patrick Henry O'Brien to issue an injunction against the WFM. Judge O'Brien was a native of the Copper Country. He went to study law but returned to set up a law firm in Laurium. As a Democrat, he advocated the worker's cause and took such cases that could potentially damage his career, such as the defense of Finnish Socialists for their role in the Hancock Red Flag Parade of 1907.[114]

During the copper strike, Judge O'Brien tried to be fair

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[112] "Affidavits from 'Law and Order' Guards," *Miners Magazine* 15 (February 19, 1914):11.

[113] Brody, *Workers in Industrial America*, 26.

[114] A brief summary of O'Brien's legal career is featured in the *Daily Mining Gazette Green Sheet*, October 3, 1970 and in *Report of interview with Patrick Henry O'Brien, Detroit Michigan, October 16, 1957*. Bentley Historical Library, Michigan Historical Collections, University of Michigan.

to everyone. On August 23 he had denied a petition by WFM which proposed the Waddell-Mahon men were not "suitable aid" for the sheriff. This request charged them with inciting citizens to riot, breaking peaceful parades on public highways, making many false arrests, assaulting innocent bystanders and beating prisoners in jail and in cars. Judge O'Brien replied:

> The sheriff must assist neither the mining companies nor the strikers. . . . no one in his office can be employed to break a strike. . . . It ought to be the effort of both parties to this controversy to get together.[115]

However, the settlement between both parties ended in frustration. Later, the mining company law firm of Rees, Robinson and Petermann petitioned Judge O'Brien to forbid public demonstrations by the union.

On September 20, Judge O'Brien issued an injunction restraining picketing, parades, and interference with men who wished to work. Miners' Bulletin and the WFM severely criticized this injunction because it was legal to peacefully picket during the strike. However, the strikers obeyed this order and discontinued picketing and parades until September 29 when Judge O'Brien dissolved the injunction. The strikers resumed the early morning picketing and parades in various locations throughout the district.

In October, because of the application of the mining

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[115] Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 57.

companies, the State Supreme Court reinstated and continued to enforce the injunction. The State Supreme Court also prohibited the peaceful meeting and parading. On October 23, the militia and deputy sheriffs arrested 141 men at Allouez mine and 68 at Mohawk mine, on the charge of violating the order of the Supreme Court. However, the 141 men who had been arrested were released. Judge O'Brien told the defendants:

> You are permitted to parade, but you must not interfere with men going to work. The Supreme Court says you have no right to picket. Whether this order is right or wrong, obey it. You have no right to call men scabs. You should recognize the absolute futility of attempting to evade the injunction.[116]

The mining companies continued to import the strikebreakers. On October 28, 1913, the Houghton and Calumet Daily Gazette said that the mining companies had imported over 1,200 workers to replace dissidents. Another 500 strikebreakers arrived in the next two months.

The mining managers attempted to import enough strikebreakers to drive the strikers and their families from the Copper Country. However, lots of strikebreakers left the Copper Country and most of them were not skilled and qualified workers. Therefore, the mining companies still could not completely restore their production.

On November 9 the militia arrested 90 strikers and women

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[116] Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 62.

in Calumet, on the charge of violating the injunction.[117]

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[117] "The Decision of Judge O'Brien," *Miners Magazine* 14 (December 25, 1913):5; "The Decision of Judge O'Brien," *Miners Magazine* 14 (December 25, 1913):5; "Calumet: Investigation by the National Women's Trade Union League," *Life and Labor* 4 (March, 1914):74-77; *The Calumet News*, October 24, 25, 1913.

CHAPTER IV

ETHNICITY, SOLIDARITY AND CONFLICT-- STRIKERS, WOMEN AND MIDDLE CLASS

Familial solidarity was an important characteristic of immigrant labor activities. Such solidarities resulted in protest and violence which involved all family members. Hence, the copper strike inevitably involved women and children as well as male workers. However, not all of the immigrants identified with their ethnic groups. Middle-class immigrants usually opposed the labor movement of their working-class brothers because they had different interests than those of working-class people. In the Copper Country, the middle class became a fierce force bent on destroying the working class to maintain their class interests. Hence, the Western Federation Miners sought ethnic groups and working-class community to strengthen the strike while the mining companies asked middle-class people to destroy the labor movement.

Union officials set up a Union Hall on Sixth Street in Red Jacket to deal with all situations. Strikers paraded daily with banners, flags, placards, and brass bands to show the scabs their strength. Strikers hoped this would lift

their moral. Women and children also participated in the daily marching. The union urged the strikers and their families to read Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*, socialist tracts, and history to educate themselves in their fight for justice.[118]

The WFM published and distributed daily *Miners' Bulletins* in many languages from August, 1913 to April, 1914. It ridiculed scabs and attacked the strategies of the companies. The *Tyomies* [*Worker*], a Finnish socialist oriented newspaper, was a very vocal and active periodical in the strike. It served as a source of strike news. From the beginning, the position of the *Worker* in Hancock was clear. It not only supported the strike, but also directly participated in making the strategy. The union often used the Socialist Kansankoti Hall to hold meetings.[The *Worker* owned this building.] The *Worker*'s publishing company helped to print English language papers such as *Miners Bulletin* and *Wage Slave*. This organization also directed some parades and marches during the strike.

In addition to the *Worker*, there were other Finnish periodicals. In Calumet, the *Daily Paper* took a moderate position in supporting the strike, but also included critical perspectives. The *American Finn* of Hancock, a Finn paper,

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[118] U.S. House., *Conditions in the Copper Mines of Michigan*, 1108-1276, 2241-2247; "Notes from the Strike Zone," *Miners Magazine* 14 (August 28, 1913):5; *The Calumet News*, July 26, 1913; July 28, 1913; "From the Strike Zone," *Miners Magazine* 14 (Aug. 7, 1913):6-7.

initially sought a neutral perspective. Before the strike began, the editor advocated an eight-hour day, criticized the one-man drill, and deplored local wages and working conditions. But later, he opposed the Western Federation of Miners because of its ties with the *Worker* and socialist ideology. Moreover, the *American Finn* feared that Finns in the Copper Country might suffer as did their countrymen on the Mesabi Range during 1907.[119]

However, the *American Finn* changed its attitude. On September 11 and 13, 1913, it published a paper of B.W. Rautanen, a pastor in Calumet. Although he disagreed with the militant principles of class-conscious Marxism, Rautanen found the impetus for social reform in evangelical Christianity.

> On the one hand, Christianity is an individual matter, a personal relationship with God. But it is also a social issue, for Christianity is a social phenomenon. It is imperative, therefore that the servant church adopt both perspectives into its ministry.

From this principle, he defended the strike as a legitimate and legal method to remedy the grievances by local workers. He asked the mining companies to recognize the WFM and further urged more employees to join the union and give their support.

Rautanen spoke to both local Finnish churchmen and socialists. He urged his fellow clergymen to study sociology and economics, as well as to speak to parishioners about

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[119] *Worker*, *Daily Paper* and *American Finn* all were written in Finnish. Socialist agitators also loomed in the 1907 Mesabi Range strike. Finnish immigrant were active in the strike and were ostracized after the strike.

working conditions and eternal life. He blamed socialist agitators for attempting to build a workers' movement upon materialism and class hatred. Seeking a biblical basis for social reform, Rautanen claimed that a precedent for an activist could be found in the story of Moses. Moses led the first strike described in the Bible when he brought the Israelites out of Egypt. Rautanen then used a metaphor to suggest the nonviolent spirit desired for such efforts. From this perspective, labor unions and social work among the poor (for example, health insurance, temperance activity, better legislation, and educational program) were equally essential in a congregation's ministry.

Various other correspondents in the *American Finn* revealed their sympathy for the strikers. However, these writers did not accept a class struggle viewpoint. They preferred to accept the reform idea from current Progressive trends in America or moderate Christian Socialism along British lines.[120]

In addition to the Finnish immigrants, other immigrants also worked together to fight for their rights. In the beginning, the mine operators believed that their employees could not cooperate because of so many different ethnics and creeds. They assumed the ethnic and religious prejudices were powerful factors in weakening the solidarity of the strikers. However, in the battle of economic grievance, ethnic and

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[120] Puotinen, *Finnish Radicals and Religion*, 251-254.

religious differences became unimportant.[121]

By the latter part of August, many underground workers discovered that the strike brought many difficult situations such as lack of savings and other household problems. Daily parades stimulated morale, but did not bring food. On September 4 James MacNaughton announced that union men and their families living in company houses would shortly be evicted. The financial crunch thus grew more heavy.[122] In addition, officials arrested more and more people for intimidation and assault as well as battery which aggravated the distress.[123] Up to August 1, 1913, 1500 people left the copper country. Some of them went to Marquette iron range in search of employment, and some went to Detroit for work.[124]

The economic grievance brought some men to return to work. On August 17 these men also asked the company for an eight-hour shift, minimum wages, and use of two men rather than one on each drill. All of these requests were part of the WFM's demands. General Manager MacNaughton refused the

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[121] "The Situation in Michigan," *Miners Magazine* 14 (October 2, 1913):8-9.

[122] J.E. Ballinger, "Letter on Calumet-Hecla," *Miners Magazine* 15 (March 19, 1914):9.

[123] "Notes from the Strike Zone," *Miners Magazine* 14 (August 28, 1913):5; Lowney, "The Michigan Strike," 12; "Lowney's Letter from the Strike Zone," *Miners Magazine* 14 (November 27, 1913):9; "Lowney Sums up the Situation in Michigan," *Miners Magazine* 14 (November 6, 1913):6-7; *The Calumet News*, July, 30, 1913; October 4, 1913; October 24, 1913; October 25, 1913.

[124] *The Calumet News*, August 2, 1913; August 6, 1913.

requests of the nonunion men, but they decided to go back to work anyway.

Most of them were non-union men but some were strikers. A large number of the returning workers were mine bosses. This began the intense bitterness between strikers and nonstrikers. One returning employees claimed that

> Those still on strike are simply misled and we are sorry for them, not resentful toward them. They are the least intelligent of our people, as a rule, only a very small proportion of them being able to read English.[125]

The remaining strikers decided to fight until the end. The leaders of Finns on the South Range declared that until the mining companies agreed to take them all back they would hold out as long as the Federation stood for them and would endeavor to keep other nationalities from work.

On September 1, the union finally gave financial support to the strikers. The WFM called on all its affiliated unions to raise money to provide food, clothing and shelter. The five local unions of the WFM began distributing strike benefits from national headquarters. Single men received three dollars a week and married men ten dollars. The WFM printed coupon books to their members which had a cash value in purchasing supplies at the union store.[126] The Butte Miner's Union contributed about $15,000 a month. The unions

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[125] *The Calumet News,* August 4, 1913; October 24, 1913; "The Copper--Mine Owner's Side," *Outlook* 106 (February 21, 1914):397-400.

[126] *The Calumet News*, April 15, 1914.

of the United Mine Workers of America in Illinois, the organization of coal miners, assessed $100,000. On September 29, the American Federation of Labor called upon its two million members to contribute at least five cents each to help "these brave men, women and children, who are bearing the brunt of this fight for industrial justice."[127]

The strikers not only attained financial aid, but also got spiritual support. Some labor notables came to the district to address from 4,000 to 6,000 persons at times in Laurium's Palestra. Many of the speeches were translated into foreign languages. The main speakers included Charles Moyer of the WFM; John Mitchell of the United Mine Workers; John B. Lennon, John M. Wilkes and John L. Lewis of the American Federation of Labor; Victor Berger of the Socialist Party; and a venerable campaigner in many mining disputes of that day, Mother Jones.[128]

The coming of Mother Jones brought new hope to the Copper Country. She stirred women to participate in the activity and aroused enthusiasm among men. She stated that

> I'm going out and get the women lined up to keep up their nerve and I'm going to make some of these weak-kneed men buck up and fall into line. I'll take them back into the game instead of letting

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[127] "The Convention of the American Federation of Labor," By special correspondent, *Life & labor* 4 (January, 1914):4-12; "Miner's Strike," *Life & Labor* (November, 1913):346-47; Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 47-49.

[128] *The Calumet News*, July 26, 1913; *Daily Mining Gazette*, August 6, 1913; *Detroit News*, August 7, 1913.

them sneak out into the grass.[129]

Mrs. Joseph Cannon, a feminist and a union leader's wife, was the other woman speaker. She claimed that their present struggle was not only for themselves, but also for the coming generation. A victory would make it easier for other workers to win fights for liberty and for better working conditions. She also appealed to women to participate in the struggle, to encourage the men, and to join in the parades, meetings and picket duty.[130] Both union leaders and striking miners knew the participation of women in the strike was really important to obtain the final success because it was more difficult for soldiers and deputies to deal with women than with men.

One miner pointed out that "If we win out in this strike much of the credit will belong to our wives."[131] The women of the Copper Country organized their forces into auxiliary unions and more than 800 women belonged to the Western Federation of Miners. There were Finnish women, Austrians, Russians, Swedes and Italians.[132]

Most strikers' wives were immigrants. For surviving in the new environment, the immigrant family especially

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[129] *The Calumet News*, August 5, 1913.

[130] *The Calumet News*, August 4, 1913; August 6, 1913.

[131] *The Calumet News*, August 1, 1913.

[132] J.E. Lowney, "The Michigan Strike," *Miners Magazine* 14 (Sept. 11, 1913):12-13; Ella Reeve Bloor, "The Woman's Part in the Calumet Copper Strike," *Miners Magazine* 14 (March 19, 1914):12-13.

appreciated the value of cooperation. Family goals came to supersede individual goals, and parents and children all worked vigorously to contribute to familial welfare. In immigrant households, the family was a nursery of class consciousness for workers' wives and daughters. Working men's experience introduced women to class identity. They needed to be loyal to "'one's own kind', in defiance of the contempt so freely expressed by one's 'social betters,' and of interdependence with neighbors."[133] One miner said:

> This afternoon, while riding on a street here in town I saw a group of miners' wives. They were discussing the strike. they argued back and forth for quite a while and then one of the women who had two bright little boys of about two years sitting on her lap pointed to them and said: "<u>There are the ones our men are striking for. You don't want to see them bent and crippled before their time, do you</u>?" That's why our wives are with us and that's why they're going to make it mighty unpleasant if we don't stick.[134] [underlining mine]

Furthermore, women were aware of the domination of the mining companies. They delivered their children in the company's hospital, washed in water from company pumps, heated with coal brought on company boats. Even the garbage was carried off in company wagons. The mining companies intruded their private lives almost from all aspects.

Neighborhood solidarities were especially conspicuous in their lives and struggle. The vast working-class

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[133] Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor*, 140.

[134] *The Calumet News*, August 1, 1913.

neighborhoods urged women to work together to fight with the companies and strikebreakers. They could make life unbearable for scabs, mount large funeral processions for slain strikers, and involve entire families in the fighting.

When union organizers and socialists offered women a vision of better days than the ones they had know, women immediately demonstrated their militancy and solidarity. The women of the South Range were apparently much more interested in the strike than those of the North. They were more strenuous in their denunciation of the operators than men. Lots of women with their children went to listen to the lecture of the Union officers. Hundreds of them went on picket duty every morning at 5 o'clock. Frequently women led these parades. Some with children in their arms, others pushing baby carts, were active in the daily parade and picketing. They wanted to show that not only the union, but the home also was on strike. In every home the women were urging their husbands and fathers to hold out until Spring. One miner told a Detroit Free Press reporter that:

> Our wives are heart and soul in the cause. They urged us to strike and they're urging us not to give in. If we show any signs of wavering they upbraid us and call us cowards. It is having a decided effect upon the men. Down in Hancock the member of the ladies' auxiliary of the local branch of the Union are taking active part in the demonstrations. They are planning to make the family purse go as far as possible. Some of them are advocating the buying of all food on the co-operative system. On the South range the women are

doing the same thing.[135]

The wives and daughters of the strikers, in the hope of raising money for the long winter ahead, sent a small collection of their crochet work to be shown in the Arts and crafts Exhibit at the Chicago Art Institute. School children in Keweenaw also boycotted the schools for a time.[136]

Lots of conflicts and disputes happened between women and deputies during daily parade and picketing. A fourteen-year old girl, Margaret Fazakas, joined a Labor Day morning parade to protest the return of anti-union men to the mine. Some deputies told the marchers to go home to eat breakfast. Some women shouted that they had as much right to be there as the deputies. The deputies fired about 90 or more shots into the marchers. A stray bullet struck Margaret Fazakas over the left ear and plowed through her head, coming out at the back of the neck.[137] The general opinion was that the deputies did the shooting while the strikers did not throw any stones, use clubs, or fire arms.[138]

On the same day, another riot took place on Oak street.

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[135] *The Calumet News*, August 1, 1913

[136] *The Calumet News*, October 4, 1913; U.S. House, *Conditions in the Copper Mines of Michigan*, 1834; *Detroit Free Press*, July 29, 1913; *Evening Copper Journal*, August 28, 1913; "Strike of the Copper Miners," *Life and Labor* (December, 1913):376; "Note from the Strike Zone in Michigan," *Miners Magazine* (August 21, 1913):8; Thurner, *Calumet*, 97.

[137] She did not die and later she testified.

[138] U.S. House., *Conditions in the Copper Mines of Michigan*, 1163-1166.

Some women attacked several men when they were on their way to work. The women threw stones and all sorts of missiles at the men. One of the women had a bottle of acid. However, before she could use it, one of the men who was attacked fought the women with their own weapons. Finally, the men had the women on the run and proceeded to their work. Deputies and soldiers often beat and arrested women during their picketing and parading. The authorities arrested forty-eight women for assault, inciting a riot, intimidation or resisting an officer, but some of them did not commit any crime or cause any disturbance.[139]

Union organizers developed women's forces as effective tactics in the daily strike. Women at Quincy, South Range, Painesdale, Calumet, and in Keweenaw snatched lunch pails, slapped scabs, and struck men with their fists and spit. They also hurled rocks, threw eggs and tin cans. In addition, they argued and cajoled with strikebreakers to stop them to work. A striker's wife at Painesdale struck her non-striking neighbor's wife in the face with a filthy broom. It was common to see a man covered with blood show up for work, having been knocked down or kicked or pelted with rocks.

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[139] *The Calumet News,* August 1, 5, 1913; October 4, 1913; U.S. House., *Conditions in the Copper Mines of Michigan,* 1085, 1104, 1107; *Evening Copper Journal,* September 2, 1913; John Francis Dyer, "The Truth About the Copper Strike," *National Magazine* 40 (May, 1914):235-51; Bureau of Labor Stats., *Michigan Copper District Strike,* 67.

Soldiers expressed shock at the language some women used.[140]

A National Guardsman reported, "the women are the real active ones in the district. The men are more inclined to sit back and let the women do the fighting, for it is more difficult [for Guardsmen and deputies] to deal with them than with the men."[141] Vandercook complained to Ferris that it was hard to handle "the poor, [and] misguided women." He further stated that

> hugging an excited, shrieking female in the middle of the street is not exactly and envious job and one cannot always be as courteous about it as might be expected, but we get along with them the best we can and all of us try to see the amusing side and pathetic side rather than to allow our anger to be excited by the performances they indulge in.[142]

James MacNaughton informed Quincy Shaw that after one morning's "rioting" in Calumet, 15 of the 20 persons arrested were women. He also described how the women supported the strike.

> I cannot tell you to what length the Finnish and Croatian women are going in this matter. . . . At the Trimountain mine last week, the Finnish women dipped up a pail of human excrement from an outside water closet. They put a long stick through the handle and carried the pail down the street followed by five other women with brooms, the intention being to smear any non-Union man they

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[140] U.S. House., *Conditions in the Copper Mines of Michigan*, 1741, 1829, 1834, 2046-52; *Evening Copper Journal*, July 28, August 28, 1913; *The Calumet News*, August 28, 30; September 8, 1913.

[141] *The Calumet News*, September 6, 1913.

[142] Vandercook to Ferris, Sept. 6, 1913, Michigan State University Archives.

> could find. Indeed one non-Union man was caught by the women who watched him go into a water closet, they plastered him thoroughly over the head and face with human excrement. Here at Calumet they have not been quite so bad in their acts but the language they have used is beyond description, and a "S-O-B of a scab" is a common expression among the politest women of the strikers.[143]

The most active woman in the district was Annie [Ana] Klobuchar Clemenc. Clemenc was a Croatian and stood over six-feet tall. The strikers called her "Big Annie." Both her father and husband were miners. She was born in this country and educated in the school at Calumet. Her enthusiastic leadership of the miners' daily parades, in which she carried a flag as large as she was, encouraged the strikers.

One time, when Clemenc was persuading the strikebreakers not to go to work, an officer told her "Annie, you have to get away from here." She said: "No, I'm not going. I have a right to stand here and quietly ask the scabs not to go to work." Then, the officer arrested her. In the city jail, General Peter Abbey, commander of the state militia, asked Clemenc, "Why don't you stay at home?" She retorted "I won't stay home. My work is here. Nobody can stop me. I'm going to keep at it until this strike is won for the workers." Then, Annie Clemenc was charged with assault and battery.[144]

Ella Reeve Bloor, a union socialist and journalist, took

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[143] JM to QAS, September 2 and 12, 1913.

[144] Bloor, "The Woman's Part in the Calumet Copper Strike," 13; *The Calumet News,* 10, 1913; U.S. House., *Conditions in the Copper Mines of Michigan,* 2175.

Clemenc as a companion speaker on a train tour of the Midwest. They hoped to raise money for the union and strikers. However, they came home with less money than they had started with. After the failure of the strike, she left the Copper Country and never went to the streets to organize for labor again.[145]

However, not every woman in the Copper Country supported the strike. Some scabs's wives did not accept attacks on non-union men passively. At Yellow Jacket, some women decided to protect men going to work. Kate Swetish was the leader. "You no hita my man," a woman with club in one hand and a hefty boulder in the other told a band of strikers in Red Jacket. She dropped her club and moved the men she escorted through the crowd. The Calumet and Hecla officers asked her to be a deputy. She refused the offer but she vowed to continue to escorting her men.[146]

This strike gave these women a new sense of power, although negative. They stood in the first line to fight with the military and deputies. They led the picket lines and faced arrest and jail. On the strikebreaker's side, some worker's wives escorted their men going to work. The Calumet and Hecla officers even asked a woman to be a deputy--

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[145] Virginia Law Burns, "Ana Clemenc: Heroine of the Copper Mines," *Historic Women of Michigan: A Sesquicentennial Celebration* edited by Rosalie Riegle Troester, (Lansing, Michigan: Michigan Women's Studies Association, 1987), 202.

[146] *The Calumet News*, September 5, 6, and 24, 1913.

traditionally, it was a man's job. However, women could not obtain the position of leadership.

During the entire strike, women had proven themselves a strong force. Women's traditional female roles did not translate into passive behavior. Their ethnic and national solidarity enhanced their class struggle. They demonstrated their capacity to ignite and keep aflame the impulses of revolt in the labor movement. However, the interests of working-class women conflicted with that of middle-class people.

The middle-class people such as merchants, grocers, meat dealers and pastors in the Copper Country not only opposed the strike, but also attempted to destroy the force of the labor movement. The greatest gap between the striking miners and the middle-class people of the community was issue of intimidation. Middle-class people, most of whom agreed with the point of view of the companies, felt that the strikers had no right to bother or frighten those who chose to go to work. They believed that strikers caused the disturbance and violence in the community.

That middle-class people had such negative images of the strikers probably was due to the press in the district. The mining companies more or less controlled the three largest English-language newspapers. Hence, their reports about the events of the strike usually did not have fair descriptions. *Miners Magazine* accused reporters in such presses of having

spent all their time at the company club house and submitting their reports to MacNaughton before sending it out, so the entire press of the country was at the disposal of the mine owners.[147]

People in the district suffered not only by intimidation but also by economic decline. Businessmen and professionals faced financial losses due to the labor movement. After the WFM set up union stores and strikers as well as their families faced economic difficulties, local businessmen such as merchants, grocers and meat dealers lost many profits.[148] They feared to see their business reduce to almost nothing if the strike continued very long. A local hotel clerk pointed out the change of the local businessmen's attitude after they faced the economic decline. He said:

> It's funny, how quick the business men changed. Before the strike they said, 'if the miners strike, they're not to blame. They're entitled to a square deal. But when Jim McNaughton said, 'The grass will grow on your streets before I'll ever give in.' They began to change. It's funny.[149]

Calumet Evening News reported that a local Finnish businessman complained of his financial loss:

> It's bad enough that business has been demoralized by the strike, but to think that men who have

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[147] J.C. Lowney, "The Michigan Strike," *Miners Magazine* 14 (September 11, 1913):12; "Lowney Sums up the Situation in Michigan," *Miners Magazine* 14 (Nov. 6, 1913):6.

[148] *The Calumet News*, August 1, 1913.

[149] Weed, "The Reasons Why the Copper Miners Struck," 250.

> invested their savings in business and private property are to suffer at the end of the strike is an entirely different proposition.[150]

He blamed the labor unrest on the socialists, and accused such agitators of being more interested in building up their political party than in gaining union demands.

Therefore, a group of middle-class citizens, small traders and professional men, formed the Citizens' Alliance by the end of November to remove the WFM, labor movement and recover their business. They published their version of the strike in the weekly periodical, *Truth*. The Citizens' Alliance distributed free copies of *Truth* throughout the district with the mining companies paying the printing costs.

The strike not only hurt the middle class but also caused the Finnish community to suffer. Because the success of the growing socialist movement posed a direct threat to the authority of Finnish clergymen, a bitter struggle began within the Finnish community between socialist Finns and church Finns. On November 1 the *American Finn* lamented that local Finns were gaining a reputation of being "Russian aliens, trouble-makers and socialists." On November 4 the paper criticized the WFM members for calling a strike before all workers were organized into the union. They claimed the WFM did not represent all employees. The editor further suggested that the WFM should hold an election among the idle men to determine their present wishes. In short, strong sentiment

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[150] *Calumet Evening News*, October 31, 1913.

for ending the strike prevailed among some conservative Finns. The editor of the *Miners Bulletin* reacted against this position. On December 16 the *Miners Bulletin* criticized a local minister for supporting the Citizens' Alliance.

> You and your church are trying to oppress the poor by helping the companies drive the only organization out of the country that will aid us in our struggle against oppression and greed. . . . The church has taken the same stands as the Priest and Levite had taken whom Christ spoke about.[151]

The Copper Country Methodist Ministerial Association replied in *Miners Bulletin*:

> We express our deep interest in the welfare of labouring men. They constitute the larger part of our congregations and form the principal portion of our personal associates. We are anxious to aid in their right to organize for personal advantage, providing they conduct their organization in harmony with the recognized principles of reason, justice and true morality, and with true regard to the rights of other laborers and employers. We also believe in the right of men to remain outside of labor organizations and to work where and for whom they have opportunity without insult or danger of molestation. We believe in the right that employers have to refuse to employ or to dismiss from their service any man or any member of any organization whose history, principles, or practices are hostile or detrimental to the success of their industry. We also believe that <u>capital is entitled to a just and adequate profit upon its investment</u>.[152] [underlining mine]

In a personal letter to the *Miners Bulletin* Methodist District Superintendent W.E. Marvin further stated:

> The church is not against strikes, though many of us doubt their expediency. What the church is against in this present controversy is <u>the reign of</u>

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[151] *Miners Bulletin*, December 16, 1913.

[152] *Miners Bulletin*, December 24, 1913.

> terror into which our community has been plunged, and the refusal of strikers to permit men who wish to work to do so. If we grant to one the right to work, and we are against the W.F.M. because it denies this right, and enforces its denial with acts of violence.[153] [underlining mine]

Some local Finns organized an Anti-Socialist League which would raise and maintain the honor and reputation of Finns, bolster the law, foster good will among the people, and assist Finns in obtaining their national rights. In pursuit of these goals the League hoped to diminish the influence of socialism. On March 29 a group of Finns gathered in the Red Jacket Town Hall to state formally these objectives, elect various officers and organize a campaign of education along political and social lines to "better meet and destroy this evil [socialism]." The main officers included N.A. Lampea, Oscar Keckonen, Dr. O.H. Sorsen and Lenry A. Kitti. The speakers of the League toured the Copper Country to organize the local Finns. They told the Finnish community that the mining companies in these areas were refusing to hire Finnish socialists. The League also refused to patronize the *Worker* by cutting many of the paper's advertisers. In addition, the League sponsored several public rallies where prominent Finns denounced socialism.[154] However, the Anti-Socialist League did not mention the vigilante tactics adopted by Waddell-Mahon gunmen and the Citizens' Alliance. They also did not remark

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[153] *Miners Bulletin*, December 24, 1913.

[154] *The Calumet News*, March 30, 1914; *Calumet Evening News*, March 30, 1914.

that some socialists were seeking reforms through the parliamentary process. On April 6, in the Hancock mayor election, Abram Ojala received 781 votes to 231 votes for Socialist candidate Carl Parta. It was a sign that the strike would be ended.[155]

On the morning of December 7, three non-union Cornish scabs, Thomas Dally, Arthur and Harry Jane, were killed while they slept in bed. Assailants fired several times into their boarding house. This was the first time any non-union miners were killed.[156]

The Citizens' Alliance accused the WFM of murder. They urged the Houghton County sheriff to remove these agitators. On December 8, the Houghton County Board of Supervisors requested Judge P.H. O'Brien to convene a local grand jury to investigate the murders. Twenty-three jurymen were eventually selected, however, none of the persons chosen was a Finn. Keenly aware of public sentiment, O'Brien issued a restraining injunction against the Citizens' Alliance from intimidating WFM organizers whose names were listed in a pamphlet "Copper Strike Leaders Now in the District."[157] On December 10, the

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[155] *Calumet Evening News*, April 7, 1914.

[156] A Finnish striker named John Huhta was later charged with complicity in the killings. The WFM admitted that he was a union man at one time, but was no longer affiliated with the union when the shootings took place.

[157] U.S. House., *Conditions in the Copper Mines of Michigan*, 1578. O'Brien revealed his rational for dealing with the strike, "the true inwardness of the struggle . . . is a destiny of a set, deliberate, and relentless purpose on the

Citizens' Alliance held a massive parade. There were 40,000 participants walking in the copper district. The mining companies gave their employees one afternoon off so they could attend the meetings of the Citizens' Alliance.

During the parade through Hancock, several marchers walked past the *Worker* publishing company offices on Franklin Street and warned business manager John Nummivuori that "We will be soon back, and we will clean out this place."[158] Nummivuori asked Sheriff Cruse for protection but the sheriff denied this request. Therefore, many *Worker*'s employees armed themselves behind locked doors throughout the night. Several cars passed by, but no shots were fired.

Late that night, however, several Citizens' Alliance men and Waddell-Mahon men went to the WFM union hall in South Range. They broke in, arrested thirty-nine strikers and smashed much of the furniture. Henry Koski, secretary of the local union, lived with his family on the second floor. Deputy Timothy Driscoll ascended the stairs and began pounding on the apartment door. Finally Koski took a gun and shot through the door, wounding Driscoll in the stomach. Koski was

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part of the mining companies to crush out the spirit of organization among their employees met by a self-sacrificing and determined devotion to unionism on the part of the strikers."

[158] U.S. House., *Conditions in the Copper Mines of Michigan*, 859.

arrested for assault and bound over for trial.[159]

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[159] U.S. House., *Conditions in the Copper Mines of Michigan*, 12.

CHAPTER V

THE ITALIAN HALL TRAGEDY AND THE END OF THE STRIKE

After the Italian Hall tragedy, many people left the district or did not actively participate in the strike any more because of losing one or several family members. The Italian Hall was an important factor which discouraged strikers and caused the failure of the strike. The conflict between middle-class people and working-class people also showed distinctly in the Italian Hall Tragedy.

On December 24, the WFM planned a party for strikers' children in the Italian Hall. Annie Clemenc directed several women to prepare for the party. By two o'clock, more than 175 adults and about 500 children crowded the hall. They sang carols and listened to some speeches. Then, Santa Claus gave each child a gift. Suddenly, at 4:30, the excitement turned to panic and finally to mourning. On the second day of the tragedy, the *worker* reported that

> The most appalling disaster in the history of Michigan occurred last night at the Italian Hall in Calumet where hundreds of men, women, and children had gathered to witness Christmas exercises for the strikers' children. The program which was quite lengthy had just begun when a strange man ascended the stairway, yelled "fire" and quickly made his escape to the street. Several persons who stood near the entrance where this man appeared, state that he had his cap pulled down over his eyes, and

> that pinned to the lapel of his coat was a "Citizens Alliance" button. At the cry of fire the great crowd acrose as one and made a mad rush for the exit in the front of the building. In the rush down the stairway many fell and being unable to regain their feet were trampled to death, their bodies acting as stumbling blocked by the dead and dying.[160] [underlining mine]

The cause of the tragedy was a man yelling "fire." However, the rescuers found no fire in the Hall. Seventy-four persons were trampled to death. The dead included 3 Italians, 20 Croatians or Slavenians, and nearly 50 Finns. Sixty of the victims were children, two to 16 years old. This tragedy was felt not only by the families and friends of the dead, but also by the whole community.

Residents in the Keweenaw Peninsula immediately raised $25,000. In addition to the local contributions, donations also came from Nevada, Utah, Montana and Ontario. Even the people who opposed the WFM such as the mine operators contributed their money for the suffering families.[161]

A relief committee of twelve persons was appointed to supervise the gathering and distributing of gifts. Members of the women's committee of the Citizens' Alliance began going from door-to-door to give the financial aid to the suffering families. But the president of WFM rejected such relief.

> We can take care of our people. We have fought their battles, fed them while they were hungry and

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[160] As quoted in Puotinen, *Finnish Radicals and Religion*, 272.

[161] J.E. Ballinger, "Christmas Festivities End in Carnage," *Miners Magazine* 14 (January 1, 1914):13-14.

> clothed them then they were cold. Now we can bury them. We ask no help from others. The labor organizations of the world have come forward in fine shape. We have $16,000 and it well reach $20,000.[162]

Many members of the Citizens' Alliance could not tolerate the rejection of their charity by Moyer. On December 26, a Citizens' Alliance committee went to Moyer's room to ask him to accept the aid money and squelch the reports that Citizens' Alliance members were behind the Italian Hall tragedy. Having reached this agreement, the delegation left Moyer's room. A short time later, several men broke in the room. Moyer later told the reporters that

> I was assaulted in the Hotel Scott, Hancock, by members of the Citizens Alliance and a Waddell-Mahon gunmen. I was terribly beaten, shot in the dark and dragged more than a mile through the streets threatened with death and hanging and finally placed aboard a train about 8:50 last night. I was guarded by two thugs till I reached Channing at two in the morning.[163]

At Channing, Moyer received medical treatment for his head and back wounds. He then continued to Chicago where he was in the hospital about ten days. Moyer further said that MacNaughton and Sheriff Cruse instructed the assault.[164]

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[162] *Calumet Evening News*, December 27, 1913.

[163] U.S. House, *Conditions in the Copper Mines of Michigan*, 275.

[164] U.S. House, *Conditions in the Copper Mines of Michigan*, 2255-2284; "Anarchy Run Mad in Copper District of Michigan," *Miners Magazine* 14 (Jan. 1, 1914):7; "The Story of the Outrage," *Miners Magazine* 14 (Jan 8, 1914):5-6.

On the following day, the editors, printers and other employees of the *Worker* were charged with conspiracy for publishing seditious materials, which was the Christmas Eve article (In this article, the Worker accused the Citizen Alliance member of causing the tragedy.), and inciting people to riots. However, no warrants were issued.[165]

At this time, more men went back to work. Mine operators believed that the strike movement would wither away very soon. In March, MacNaughton announced that the men would go back to work on the company's terms, or leave the Copper Country. Many people returned to work for fear the mining companies would replace their jobs. Although some strikers persisted, the WFM prepared to call off the strike. The end of the strike finally came in mid-April.

On April 7, the WFM district secretary Charles Hietala reported that 3,104 out of 4,740 wanted to return to work in a strike referendum.[166] The strikers did not get any concessions except the eight-hour day and a right to present their grievances freely and safely but not collectively.

One of the reasons for the failure of the strike was the duration. The longer the strike lasted, the more difficult it became to hope for victory. *Miners Magazine* pointed out that the only thing which the strikers feared was hunger.[167]

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[165] Puotinen, *Finnish Radicals and Religion,* 275.

[166] *Calumet Evening News*, April 7, 1914.

[167] *Miners Magazine* 14 (October 23, 1913):7.

Strikers and their families suffered poverty during the strike. Although lots of strikers preserved their fight until the end, some of the workers could not endure their impoverishment and resumed their jobs. One of striker's son was interviewed by Wilbert Maki.

> We had a boarding house with a few boarders. . . . My father was a striker, but he had to go to work. The boarders didn't have any money to pay their rent. So my father said, "I have to go to work. I don't know what you guys are going to do, but if you don't go to work, you have to get out." Half of the men went to work and the other half wouldn't go. They began to fight and that was the end of the boarders.[168]

In addition, the strike drained enormous money and required a high level of continuous organizing. When the strike ended, the WFM found itself trapped in debt. Some of workers even accused the WFM of having misconducted the strike. Actually, the local unions had made mistakes in the beginning. First, they should not have begun the strike before they had completely organized the mine workers. Second, they should not have waited until mid-July to start their fight. Since Northern Michigan had a long winter, it was difficult for workers to stand the severe winter. In addition, the WFM needed to solve the problem of the strikebreakers. The more strikebreakers the companies brought in, the more union funds were drained in recruiting them, feeding them, and

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[168] Wilbert B. Maki, *Stairway to Tragedy (The Italian Hall Disaster): Copper Strike of 1913* (Michigan's Copper Country, 1983), 88.

transporting them out. Yet the copper production steadily increased. For the union, the financial loss aggravated the problem. In addition, the Italian Hall tragedy caused some people to be tired of all conflicts and violence during the strike. Losing their families or friends made them feel there was no reason for them to fight to improve their lives.

The other factor which really hurt the WFM was its history. Under the leadership of Moyer, the WFM was more conservative than before. Even Samuel Gompers, President of the AFL, said the WFM had become relatively conservative. However, its actions in western mines made the mine owners and middle class believe the WFM was an agitator and a radical organization.

The mining companies defeated the strikers by their abundant resources. They had better financial and political support than that of the WFM. They asked the Governor to send the military to help them to protect their property and recommence their manufacturing. They also imported the strikebreakers to resume their production. Most of all, they refused to negotiate and settle with the WFM, thus frustrating the strikers and the union. The mine owners in granting the workers the eight-hour day and the right to present their grievances further broke the solidarity of the strikers.

Finally, the mining companies obtained the support of the middle class. In the Copper Country, both middle class and working class benefitted from the paternalism. However, the

middle class did not, as the working class, suffer poor wages and bad working conditions. On the contrary, they believed that the mining companies brought them a peaceful and secure environment which was destroyed by the labor movement. They could not tolerate the disturbance, intimidation and violence. The financial loss further increased their indignation. Therefore, they attempted to crush the labor movement through different approaches. After the strike, a WFM official claimed: "Our lesson at Calumet was that we got to do away with the great middle class as they are the mainstay of the capitalist."[169]

After the end of the strike, some of the strikers went back to work and some of them left the district. People in the Copper Country seemed to return to their normal lives. However, losses were felt. Many people suffered financial hardship and lived in poverty because of the nine-month strike. Clarice Jones, secretary of Associated Charities of Calumet and Vicinity said: "Some of the families are barely existing. Some have barely enough to eat, no clothing, no shoes and no underwear."[170] In addition, about 200 people suffered from tuberculosis among the miners. A hundred persons died in various shootings and the Italian Hall disaster, and the local population was diminished since

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[169] As quoted in Thurner, *Rebel on the Range*, 251.

[170] Woodbridge N. Ferris Scrapbook #5, University of Michigan, Michigan Historical Collections, Bentley Historical Library.

numerous residents moved elsewhere. Many workers could not find jobs in the district. Further, the mining companies terminated the housing leases of Finns to "eliminate" them from Copper Country. Churches also suffered in the strike. In Kearsarge, the Hungarian Magyar Reformed Church lost four-fifths of its members because of the population loss. Finnish Churches also suffered in membership loss and other difficulties.[171]

The WFM lost this battle completely. Although it had lost its campaigns before, this one was particularly harmful. The strike left the union buried in debt. It had spent $800,000 in its vain attempt to organize the Michigan copper workers, which included large amounts of money borrowed from other labor organizations. In addition, the WFM Local No.1 Butte, Montana contributed substantial philosophical and financial support to the copper strike. But as the strike dragged on unsuccessful and economic conditions deteriorated, the Butte miners came to resent their financial support for the strikers. The Butte miners' recalcitrance ultimately crippled Local No. 1 and the WFM as a whole.[172]

Although the mining companies won the battle, they also

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[171] *The Calumet News*, April 15, 1914; Thurner, *Rebels on the Range*, 236; Puotinen, *Finnish Radicals and Religion*, 286.

[172] Thurner, *Rebels on the Range*, 255-56; Thurner, "Western Federation of Miners in Two Copper Camps: the Impact of the Michigan Copper Miners' Strike on Butte Local No. 1. Montana," *The Magazine of Western History* 33(2) 1983:30-45.

lost some grounds. From 1910 through 1912, they produced an average of 220 million pounds of copper per year. In 1913 and 1914, total production was only 140 and then 165 million pounds. In addition, lots of their workers went to Henry Ford company for $5 per day while the mining companies fought against a $3 minimum wage. The mining companies not only lost many skilled and experienced workers but also needed to spend money to train new workers.[173]

Since the mining companies won the strike, the copper district went back to the paternalistic system. The mining companies did not allow the WFM to exist in the district. Workers could not participate in any union until decades later when another strike happened.

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[173] Lankton, *Cradle to Grave*, 240-241.

CONCLUSION

The 1913-1914 copper strike of Northern Michigan was a typical example of an industry that did not deal well with change. In an industrializing America, companies in search of higher productivity and lower production costs started to be more forceful in implementing into place new technologies and work rules. In doing so, they politicized change in the workplace, making it a controversial issue. Although they to be modernized on the surface, the mining companies held to their nineteenth-century ways and could not deal with the realities of the twentieth century.

The copper's industry did not adjust well to the introduction of new peoples, such as Finns, Italians, and Hungarians--immigrants who were treated differently than the industry's earlier Cornish, German, and Irish workers. It did not manage the introduction of unionism well. Also, the industry did not deal well with workers' rising expectations, nor with their desires for higher standards cf living. Managers continued to see themselves as the standard setting of the workers' working conditions and private lives. The companies assigned their workers appropriate occupations, houses, and social settings, and the men were supposed to

settle for what they got. Such paternalism provoked more and more workers to assume an independent and democratic bent. In the end, workers sought collective bargaining to fight the domination of the mining companies.

This study reveals that several characteristics of the 1913-1914 copper strike of Northern Michigan were similar to those of other mining labor movements at that time. First, the paternalism of the mine owners provided their employees everything except what they wanted most: better wages, better working conditions, and an end to abusive petty bosses and the one-man drill. In addition, the shift from traditional craftsmanship to new technology and new management distanced the employers and their employees in the workplace. Since there was no authorized channel through which to express their grievances, workers came upon the idea of collective bargaining which became a basic component in the ideology of the WFM. In other words, the workers themselves turned to a new idea about labor/management relations, one that seemed highly subversive to the widely held theory of paternalism. The fact that collective bargaining was introduced by "outsiders" only increased the mine owners and the middle-class people's dislike and fear of this change.

Second, during the strike, women proved that they were an important force. Their activism was expressed not as vicarious support for their husbands, fathers, and brothers but in direct public confrontations with the mining companies.

Going to meetings, picketing actively, preparing food, and raising funds, women not only did everything the men strikers did, but also performed some duties that men were not prepared to do. When the miners went on strike, the action was commonly undertaken by the entire community. The aggressive participation of wives and daughters was a root cause of the particular militancy of the mining communities.

Third, diverse ethnic working-class groups in the Copper Country demonstrated remarkable cooperation during the strike. Although most of them could not communicate with each other, they threw away their ethnic and religious prejudices and united for months to achieve collective bargaining. Some ethnic groups, such as the Finnish immigrants, were especially active in the strike. However, once the strike ended, workers, especially immigrants, were pressured by the need to live and survive in the Copper Country and sustain their familial and communal arrangements. They drifted from their support of the WFM. By early October, 1913, the Calumet and Hecla Mining Companies reported that 98 percent of its Cornishmen went back to work, as did 80 to 90 percent of all Scots, Irishs, and Scandinavians; 60 to 65 percent of the southern Slavs; and half of the Italians. Those who remained were predominantly Finns, Hungarians, and Croatians, who had returned at the rates of 35, 10, and 7 percent.[174] Immigrants could be effective strikers and militant workers,

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[174] Thurner, *Rebels on the Range*, 104.

especially when encouraged by existing labor organizations, but they could not jeopardize the marginal foundations of their familial and communal networks for too long a period by remaining away from work.

In addition, the immigrant middle class frequently abandoned their brothers and sisters for their own interests. The attitude of the Citizens' Alliance during the strike symbolized the reaction of the middle class toward the labor movement in industrialized America. The middle class had totally different interests than the working class did. Since most of the working class were immigrants and were poor, the middle class regarded the working-class people as un-American.

On the other hand, for the working class, Americanism meant democracy. Americanism meant they could achieve what they wanted. Hence, they viewed the mining companies as undemocratic and un-American and saw themselves as embodying American values. They wanted to achieve their American dreams through the labor movement. However, the changes which the working class wanted to achieve threatened the superiority and business supremacy of the middle class. Fifteen years after the event, an unknown radical wrote:

> In this strike once again the darkest forces of conservatism stepped forward under the leadership of the clergy . . . the struggle was like a war between the bourgeoisie and the working masses.[175]

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[175] As quoted in Carl Ross, *The Finn Factor: in American Labor, Culture and Society*, (New York: Parta Printers, 1977), 122.

Thirty years after the strike began, the major goal of the Michigan workers of 1913-1914 was achieved. In 1939 the National Labor Relations Board ordered Copper Range to dismantle a three-year-old company union. Employees then elected to be represented by the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers of the Congress of Industrial Organization. By early 1941, Quincy and Isle Royale also operated under union contracts, and in 1942 the union came to Calumet and Hecla.[176]

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[176] Gates, *Michigan Copper and Boston Dollars*, 171-72.

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