COAL AND PENNSYLVANIA'S TRANSPORTATION POLICY,
1825-1828

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ON FEBRUARY 2, 1828, William Lehman, chairman of the committee on internal improvements in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, reported to his legislative colleagues a plan which, for the first time and after four years of careful examination, intense debate, and political log rolling, included every section of what eventually became the Commonwealth canal system. The plan called for a Main Line of canals and railroads from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh, the Erie Extension from the Ohio River via Beaver Creek to the city of Erie, as well as lateral extensions up the West Branch of the Susquehanna River to Bald Eagle Creek, up the North Branch of the same river to the New York State line, and along the Delaware River from Easton to Bristol. Lehman announced that Pennsylvania recognized the wisdom of creating a system which would benefit all regions of the Commonwealth. His argument that Philadelphia needed the Main Line to compete against the Erie Canal has received accurate historical evaluation. On the other hand, Lehman's second major point, that this system would permit Pennsylvania

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1 Harrisburg Chronicle, February 4, 1828.
to develop local resources and especially a coal trade with American cities and industries from Maine to New Orleans, has been neglected. The Commonwealth's coal deposits exerted a prime influence in shaping the nature and extent of Pennsylvania's transportation policy.

The success of the Erie Canal triggered a reaction among New York City's rivals for the initiation of extensive transportation projects. In the Quaker City the Pennsylvania Society for the Promotion of Internal Improvements, established in December, 1824, spearheaded a movement to modernize transportation throughout Pennsylvania. The Improvement Society represented a large number of Philadelphia merchants whose major interest was in western trade, but it also drew considerable financial support from entrepreneurs interested in the development of the coal industry.

As the movement to construct a transportation system gained momentum, the Improvement Society feared that Philadelphia's desire for a link to the Ohio River and Great Lakes would become just one of many recommendations for state action. John Sergeant, the Society's president, wrote to Mathew Carey, its originator and pamphleteer, on May 9, 1825, that the time had arrived when it had become necessary to simplify views as much as possible or the public mind would be distracted by the diversity of plans and arguments afforded by local schemes injurious to the Society's primary goal. Consequently, the Improvement Society took steps to insure its control of the movement. Carey and Richard Peters, Jr., members of the Society's five man steering committee, used their political influence to have Sergeant appointed to the Commonwealth board of canal commissioners. His election to the presidency of the commission meant that he held a key position

Rubin made the point that the transportation system would stimulate agricultural and industrial growth in Pennsylvania. But he did not evaluate the relative importance of the Commonwealth's major resources as they affected the transportation policy. The development of all natural resources certainly would benefit from cheap transportation as well as yield tolls to pay for the system. (Rubin, "Canal or Railroad," 38-41.) The nature of the evidence regarding coal and the transportation policy, however, led me to the conclusion that this resource was clearly the most important and merited special consideration.

John Sergeant, to Mathew Carey, May 9, 1825, MS Society Miscellaneous Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP).

Richard Peters, Jr., to Mathew Carey, April 2, May 3, 1825, MSS Edward Carey Gardner Collection, HSP.
for determining the objectives of subsequent transportation policy.

To gain support for the Main Line and set priorities for other state projects, the Improvement Society called for a canal convention to be held in Harrisburg on the first Thursday of August, 1825. The Society succeeded in having Sergeant selected as chairman of the Philadelphia delegation to the convention and appointed to its policy committee. As head of a subcommittee to draft resolutions for the meeting, Sergeant delivered the chief policy statement. In brief it announced that Pennsylvania should construct a canal or railroad from the Susquehanna to the Allegheny and Lake Erie by the nearest and least expensive route and that local prejudices should yield to public welfare. If the convention voted to accept Sergeant's resolutions, then the Improvement Society would have the same leverage as a political caucus in persuading the canal commissioners and legislature to support Philadelphia's primary objective.

As soon as Sergeant finished his speech, the convention began two days of heated debate. The strongest center of opposition came from delegates representing the Commonwealth's southern counties. In addition to the fact that they disliked the idea of paying for a canal which would have little benefit to their region, these counties saw the Pennsylvania Main Line as a threat to their turnpike interests as well as to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal which had proposed to build its main line and a lateral branch through part of this area. Even a resolution offered in support of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal did not soften the opposition of the southern counties. This opposition alone could muster about one-fifth of the votes in the House of Representatives and threatened to counterbalance effectively the slightly larger block of votes which Philadelphia and the central Pennsylvania counties counted upon to pass the desired legislation. It became clear from the outset that Philadelphia faced a formidable obstacle and needed

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These counties included Bedford, Chester, Cumberland, Franklin, Lancaster, and York.

a way to gain the support of the rest of the state for the Main Line Canal.

The only other significant center of opposition came from counties interested in the coal industry. Northampton and Tioga Counties had petitioned the legislature at the beginning of 1825 for state projects to help open up coal fields. The most ardent advocate at the convention for a system to exploit the coal deposits was Luzerne County's delegate, Jacob Cist. Prior to the canal convention Cist feared a power play by a Philadelphia-Pittsburgh coalition and suggested that the upper Susquehanna Valley delegates stick together. He pointed out that the counties on the Susquehanna's West Branch, who wanted the Main Line, could be left stranded with nothing if the Philadelphia faction chose the Juniata and Conemaugh Valleys as their route. With this possibility in mind the Luzerne County town meetings pledged support for the demands of the West Branch and upper Delaware Valley counties in return for cooperation to achieve their major objectives.

Luzerne County with Cist as its spokesman worked toward building a regional coalition, and in the process drifted toward a statewide compromise. Like the spokesmen for the West Branch counties who desired a Main Line, Cist wanted a "National Canal" going from Washington, D. C., up the Susquehanna River via the North Branch through the Finger Lakes to Lake Erie. In light of federal failure since 1808 to provide a long range interstate transportation system, Cist certainly could not have been optimistic in his treasured hope. At the same time he argued the necessity for Philadelphia to select the route of a canal to Pittsburgh. By his stand Cist may well have aspired to obtain what...

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8 While Bradford, Lebanon, Lehigh, Northampton, Pike, and Wayne Counties voted against the convention's resolutions, other counties in this region took a more moderate stand. Carey, Brief View of the System of Internal Improvement of the State of Pennsylvania, 14; Bishop, "The State Works of Pennsylvania," 184, 265.
9 Memorial and Remonstrance to the State Legislature from Citizens of Pennsylvania Re the Relaware River, Read March 1, 1825; 12 Petitions to the State Legislature Re the Tioga River, January-February, 1825, House File, 49th Session-1, 1824-1825, RG 7, Division of Archives, PHMC.
26 Newspaper clippings, Jacob Cist Papers, MSS 135, Academy of Natural Science, Philadelphia; Wyoming Herald, March 25, 1825, January 6, 1826; Lancaster Intelligencer, March 29, 1825; United States Gazette, September 23, 1825; "Internal Improvement," Broadside, Wilkes-Barre, February 12, 1825, MS Meredith Collection, Wyoming Historical and Geological Society.
11 Ibid.
was, in fact, his primary goal all along: that of getting a means of transportation by which to open the Wyoming anthracite field.

Some of the same thoughts may shortly have influenced the people living along the West Branch. Almost from the beginning they had to recognize that the longer distance required for the Main Line to follow the West Branch severely lessened the chances to persuade Philadelphia to accept their route. Moreover, the center of population, and of probable political balance lay further south, near the midpoint of the Commonwealth. If therefore they could not get the Main Line, they were willing to consider another means by which to open their coal deposits. Their needs grew to be one with those of Luzerne County provided, of course, that the spokesmen for both the North and the West Branches would support each other's claims for a lateral canal. Since the only canal commissioner in the up-river area came from Luzerne County, that county became the region's focal point for putting forth a more comprehensive plan to unify state sentiment. The compromise which gradually evolved included a trans-state commercial channel to promote Philadelphia's prosperity and lateral feeders to develop the state's resources and, even more specifically, the coal industry.

Like several others at the convention, Cist had a vested interest in the development of the coal industry. He owned valuable tracts of coal land, had made scientific experiments exploring coal use, and had also sent samples of local ore to other American and European scientists for experimental purposes. Furthermore, he had already mapped the Wyoming coal deposits, pioneered the coal trade, and written articles explaining the importance of coal for the development of the state. As regards to the coal industry, Cist emerged as its leading authority during the canal convention.

Cist expressed not only his personal interests, nor just those of his region, although his forceful advocacy may well have underlaid his prominence at the convention. He in fact often echoed the attitudes of his generation about coal, and in this he merely repeated the values and ideas of countless earlier spokesmen and

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"Wyoming Herald, November 11, 1825; United States Gazette, January 10, 1826, January 5, February 12, 1827.
"Wyoming Herald, March 2, 1827.
Newspaper Clippings, Map of the Wyoming Coal Deposits, Jacob Cist Papers, MSS 135, Academy of Natural Science; Pittsburgh Gazette, July 29, 1825; Wyoming Herald, January 6, 1826."
Coal as a symbol aroused expression in simple, brief statements scattered throughout the newspapers, pamphlets, legislative petitions, and official government reports from 1790 onward. At times it received extensive and detailed explanation. This literature showed the excitement and enthusiasm of many internal improvement leaders and their dreams to make Pennsylvania the center of a coal-based economy. By 1825, the image of coal in Pennsylvania loomed high in the minds of transportation advocates. They saw coal as one of Pennsylvania's most prized possessions; the proof that the state had the wealth to pay for the transportation system.

In particular after 1812 writers paid considerable attention to the location of extensive coal fields throughout the state. A large bed of anthracite stretched from Harrisburg for over 150 miles to the northeastern corner of the state. This bed of hard coal could be tapped by three rivers. The Schuylkill River reached the center of the southern anthracite region while the Lehigh River came within nine miles of its eastern end and stretched into the middle basin. In a similar fashion the Susquehanna's North Branch and its tributaries traversed about fifty miles of the northern district in the Wyoming and Lackawanna Valleys. To the west bituminous beds crossed the Susquehanna's other main branch and underlaid the Juniata, Allegheny, and Monongahela Valleys in the central and southwestern part of the state. In 1825 alone several articles pointed out that coal covered nearly one-third of Pennsylvania's entire land area.15

Despite their size, these coal fields were not commercially of much worth without the appropriate transportation facilities; with it, they would meet not only the needs of the state, but also of much of the Atlantic seaboard at the moment of a rapidly expanding economy. In addition to the potentially excellent location and the size of the beds, the Keystone state had a near monopoly in the supply of coal to the new industrial centers. The view expressed by Tench Coxe in 1790, that no great quantity of coal had been discovered in New England or New York and

15 For examples, see United States Gazette, September 23, 1825; Wyoming Herald, June 24, September 16, 1825; Pittsburgh Gazette, June 3, 1825.
that Virginia possessed insufficient amounts of bituminous along the James River to supply American manufacturing, proved to be true. Mathew Carey’s essay of March 4, 1825, saying that with coal and iron, the grand sources of Great Britain’s extraordinary wealth, nature had supremely blessed Pennsylvania “to a degree certainly not exceeded by any portion of the globe of equal extent” merely underscored the confidence that leaders shared about the potential of their mineral resources.\textsuperscript{16} They believed that the state was obliged to undertake an extensive transportation system in order to develop its full wealth.

Pennsylvanians based their views about the future of coal and the transportation system on two major sources, the British experience and the success of privately owned canals in the southern anthracite field. American entrepreneurs in the early national period recognized the role coal had played in the English industrial revolution and as a major source of wealth for the entire British Isles. In applauding England’s economic development, Pennsylvania’s transportation advocates additionally maintained that the Commonwealth’s economy came closer to the British model than did New York’s. In its possession of vast deposits Pennsylvania had one vital resource that the Empire State lacked. Time and again they noted that the British coal canals provided major links tying that country’s economy together and furnishing fuel for its rapid economic growth. The same would be true for their home state. These leaders envisioned the Keystone State as the British economy in microcosm. Because of coal deposits they believed that Pennsylvania could achieve the same economic position in the United States as Great Britain had achieved in the world.\textsuperscript{17}

This aspiration as well as a shortage of fuel in Philadelphia during the War of 1812 initiated a movement by a group of Philadelphia entrepreneurs to undertake two anthracite canals.\textsuperscript{18} The

\textsuperscript{16} Tench Coxe, \textit{A View of the United States of America} (Philadelphia, 1794), x, 70-71; \textit{United States Gazette}, March 22, 1825.

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid.}; \textit{Lancaster Intelligencer}, March 29, 1825; \textit{Pittsburgh Gazette}, July 29, August 12, 1825; \textit{Pottsville Miners Journal}, March 17, July 23, 1825; \textit{United States Gazette}, September 23, 1825; \textit{Wyoming Herald}, June 24, July 15, 1825.

\textsuperscript{18} The Union Canal, Pennsylvania’s earliest attempt at an east-west canal, received a charter in 1811, but took second place in receiving financial backing and talented leadership to the more exploitative and potentially profitable anthracite canals.
Commonwealth chartered the Schuylkill Navigation Company in 1815, primarily to tap the center of the southern anthracite region and only secondarily to serve as the first link in Philadelphia's westward waterway. A dissident group of Schuylkill Canal managers in 1818 turned to the Lehigh region, created a makeshift navigation system, and opened the hard coal trade. The success of these two projects by 1825 called public attention to what Pennsylvania had done even though New York's success in canal construction outshone that of the Keystone State and made Philadelphia fear the loss of Pittsburgh's trade to its northern neighbor. Nevertheless, Pennsylvania had constructed canals to exploit coal deposits, which provided another source of inspiration and encouragement for building an enlarged system as well as for helping counterbalance the apparent omnipotence of the Erie Canal.

Just how much of the canal convention's attention centered on coal has proved difficult to determine. Newspapers cited Cist as the most ardent advocate of coal region development. The substance of his statements, as published in newspapers throughout the state, was that the Keystone State had little to fear from New York's Erie Canal. Just as people had migrated to farmland in the Genesee Valley, he remarked, so also were they moving into Pennsylvania's coal regions. The rapid growth of boom towns such as Pottsville and Mauch Chunk rivaled the spectacular rise of Rochester and Buffalo. Coal and iron industries flourished in the former towns just as grist and flour milling industries boomed in the latter. Similar points had also been made by the Improvement Society which as early as January, 1825, began to receive financial aid from coal companies and others interested in the anthracite industry. And at least nine delegates to the convention had current investments in the coal industry either as landowners or stockholders in the mining and transportation companies. Four of these delegates, including Sergeant and Cist,

19 For examples, see the Pittsburgh Gazette, July 29, 1825; United States Gazette, September 23, 1825.
had earlier provided leadership in the successful creation of the private anthracite canal companies. Therefore, it can be assumed that the Harrisburg convention paid more than mere lip service to the argument that coal should play an important role in creating the state works.

After two days of debate the convention voted on Sergeant's resolutions. Nearly seventy-five percent of the delegates supported Sergeant. The convention, however, left two key questions unsettled. The matter of whether the state should construct a canal or a railroad awaited information which a young engineer, William Strickland, had gone to England to procure. And the question of which route the Main Line would follow remained unanswered until the canal commissioners made their surveys and calculated the probable costs. In both cases the subject of coal most likely affected the final decisions.

In the meantime both of these questions remained open for public discussion. During the latter half of 1825 a canal vs. railroad debate raged in the Philadelphia press. In almost every issue of the United States Gazette lengthy articles appeared supporting one mode or the other and focusing primarily on the relative costs of construction. And since the large expenditure and resulting tax burden would cause many people to oppose any project, it therefore became necessary to prove that the successful system would be the best means at the cheapest price. Railroad advocates maintained that their means of conveyance cost five times less than canals and could be kept in repair as cheaply. Mathew Carey privately worried about their claims, remained uncertain as to the relative cost of each, and argued in the newspapers that railroads cost as much to construct and maintain as canals. A decisive answer to the cost question, which the Improvement Society hoped to get from Strickland, failed to materialize. In comparing the value of railroads against the known advantages of canals, Strickland in his correspondence of October

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Rubin, "Canal or Railroad?" 29-48.

Henry Gilpin, to Mathew Carey, August 23, 1825, MS Autograph Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, reproduced from the American Philosophical Society collection; United States Gazette, September 15, October 4, 11, November 15, December 2, 6, 7, 12, 14, 20, 30, 1825.
20, 1825, refused to pass judgment on which might be the best overall means of conveyance for Pennsylvania.\textsuperscript{26}

While the majority of interested Philadelphians discussed the issue from the viewpoint of its relative costs, an anonymous party hoped to direct attention to an equally important consideration, namely that of the system's use. In a series of letters signed "Northumberland" this advocate argued that the chief function of the system would be to accelerate the state's economic development. He pointed to the role that coal and other natural resources would play in this growth and, from this perspective strongly favored canals. Fast freight and passenger service between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh was not, in his estimation, of primary importance. Granted that any transportation system should connect the east with the west, he believed that it would be used to the greatest extent in hauling large quantities of bulky products such as coal for long distances at a cheap price. In England canals had proved their ability to do exactly this task efficiently whereas railroads merely served as short auxiliaries to the canal system.\textsuperscript{27}

Along this same line another article in the \textit{United States Gazette} on November 15, 1825, signed "Philo-Hamilton" developed an argument built upon attracting investment capital. He indicated that since the demand for coal greatly exceeded the supply, the Commonwealth should encourage as many people as possible to enter the coal trade. In his estimation railroads would limit the entry of the average person with money into the coal business since the necessary capital to purchase railroad equipment exceeded that possessed by most individuals. Moreover, such a purchase would tie up small investments all year round, and thereby permit only large corporations to expand and come to control the trade. On the other hand, a canal would easily facilitate the expansion of hinterland capital on a much more rapid basis. Just about anyone with a limited amount of money could construct a cheap canal barge, dig coal, load it aboard, and market it within a period of six weeks to two months. They could use the profit to remain in the trade and expand operations or to enlarge

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{United States Gazette}, December 26, 1825.
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{United States Gazette}, November 4, 25, December 16, 30, 1825, January 3, 1826.
their farm or other business. Therefore, to this political economist the construction of a canal meant that a greater number of people could increase their wealth and productivity.

Canal advocates, in centering attention on coal, provided an answer to the question of how to pay for the system without overburdening the state’s debt or greatly increasing taxes. As happened in England, they felt that coal would provide the greatest tonnage for the system and yield the largest revenue in tolls. A committee of the canal convention, chaired by Mathew Carey, said that the tolls on the coal and iron trade alone would probably be ample to pay the interest on the state’s investment.\(^2\) Jacob Cist and several other advocates even believed that a canal system which permitted as many people as possible to enter the coal trade would pay for itself.\(^2\)

Acceptance of this argument became the means whereby the demand for a system more extensive than just the Main Line was not only economically feasible but also politically expedient. If the coal and iron traffic would pay for the system without raising taxes, the state could afford to construct a system tying its diverse regions together. The crucial factor hinged on the coal trade. State politicians could commit political suicide in levying additional taxes on a farming population which strongly objected to such a burden. On the other hand, the rural population would gladly support a plan which gave them a connection to the national market at no additional cost to themselves and at the same time offered excellent investment opportunities. The superabundance of coal in the state provided the answer and proved to be a decisive factor in the selection of a comprehensive canal system for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Nearly two years passed, however, before the state legislature hammered out the final package. During the legislative session of 1825-1826 the canal commissioners reported in favor of a canal connecting the Susquehanna and the Allegheny Rivers, but they

\(^2\) United States Gazette, September 13, 1825; Henry Gilpin, to Mathew Carey, August 23, 1825, MS Autograph Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, reproduced from the American Philosophical Society collection.

\(^2\) Newspaper clippings, Jacob Cist Papers, MSS 135, Academy of Natural Science.
needed additional information before making the final decision on whether to use a central or northern route. Since either route would include sections from Harrisburg to the mouth of the Juniata River and from the mouth of the Kiskiminetas Creek to Pittsburgh, the legislature decided that construction should begin on these sections and postponed further action until its next session. In the meantime a large number of petitions poured into the legislature supporting a number of additional, and usually lateral canals.\textsuperscript{30}

The final shape of the Commonwealth's policy began to emerge in the canal commissioners' report of February 6, 1827. The commissioners said that careful surveys of the Susquehanna's two branches as well as routes leading to the Allegheny River and Lake Erie had been made the previous summer. They set forth two principles as guides in their recommendations for state projects. They felt that Pennsylvania should develop its natural resources and industry and at the same time establish a commercial channel through its territory to the Ohio River and Lake Erie so as to secure the trade of the vast area bordering on their water. Therefore, they recommended that the state construct the Main Line along the Juniata and Conemaugh Valleys, with a portage railroad connecting these sections, and lateral canals from the Allegheny River to Lake Erie, up the Susquehanna's West Branch to Bald Eagle Creek, and up the North Branch to the New York State line. Furthermore, they recommended that the legislature apportion the construction funds fairly among all the sections, as had been the traditional state policy for improving navigation on its rivers since the 1790s.\textsuperscript{31} In this report the canal commissioners established the basis of the subsequent transportation policy.

Chairman Lehman on March 9, 1827, reported a bill to the House of Representatives following the suggestions of the canal commissioners with the exception that he added a provision for a Delaware Division Canal from Easton to Bristol. Lehman ac-

\textsuperscript{30} Harrisburg \textit{Chronicle}, January 26, February 2, 1826; \textit{United States Gazette}, January 6, 10, 1826; \textit{Wyoming Herald}, January 13, 20, 27, February 3, 10, 17, 24, 1826.
\textsuperscript{31} \textit{United States Gazette}, February 12, 1827.
cepted the commissioners’ formula of industrial development and western trade. Of the many essential items involving the state’s economic growth, coal once again received the highest priority.

In discussing the Main Line Division from the Susquehanna via the Juniata and Conemaugh Valley to the Allegheny River, the canal commissioners like others before them had called attention to the potential economic development of the area and of the role coal would play. Throughout 1825 the Pittsburgh Gazette had printed numerous articles about coal, iron, and salt. Of the three industries in relation to the Main Line Canal, the Pittsburgh paper paid the least attention to coal since it lay immediately adjacent to the city and close by the other industries. The Main Line west of the Appalachian Mountains would do little to stimulate Pittsburgh’s coal trade.

A real boom to the coal trade of Pittsburgh, on the other hand, would come with the opening of the Erie Division to the Great Lakes. As an article in the Harrisburg Chronicle pointed out, the western shore of Lake Erie was barren of timber and needed fuel. The same fact may have been in the mind of DeWitt Clinton during a visit to Pittsburgh in the summer of 1825 when he noted the value of bituminous coal as a major source of fuel not only for western Pennsylvania but also for his own state. With the growth of cities and industry in the Great Lakes region the demand for coal would surely increase.

The largest quantity of coal in the Pittsburgh region, however, would go toward stimulating local development of iron, salt, and other industries. Many writers pointed to the possibility of smelting iron with coke and noted that extensive coal beds immediately adjacent iron ore deposits promised a bright future for the growth of this industry. The availability of cheap fuel near salt wells would allow that industry to boom. By 1825 the greatest amount of bituminous in western Pennsylvania was already consumed in

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He even briefly repeated the major point of the coal argument. Wyoming Herald, March 9, 16, 23, 1827.

United States Gazette, September 13, October 14, 1825; January 5, February 12, 1827; Pittsburgh Gazette, January 28, February 25, June 3, August 12, 19, September 2, 1825.

Harrisburg Chronicle, March 10, 1828.

Pittsburgh Gazette, August 12, 1825.
producing salt. And the use of coal as fuel for heating buildings and generating steam power received wide recognition. In almost every way coal affected the growth of the region's economy.

Just as coal supplied fuel for the region's growth, the Main Line would aid its prosperity by providing a vital artery connecting the western part of the state with eastern markets. Iron smelted with coal would become a significant item for trade on the canal. Salt, likewise, would add to the canal's tonnage, having the same effect in producing large tolls on the Main Line as the salt of Salina, New York, was doing for the Erie Canal. And the manufacture of other products, made possible by the abundance of coal in the region, would stimulate trade on the canal and help make the system profitable.

The reason that Pittsburgh newspapers deemphasized the coal trade on the Main Line most likely resided in the fact that other counties along the route preempted the position of the southwestern counties in shipping bituminous eastward to the Atlantic seaboard. The counties on the headwater of the Juniata River could easily ship large quantities of bituminous to the Quaker City. This coal trade received considerable attention in the Philadelphia newspapers. The city could use a large amount of soft coal in addition to the volume of anthracite coming from the Schuylkill and Lehigh regions. Instead of losing this trade to Baltimore, Philadelphia wanted the soft coal for its coastal commerce as well as for special purposes in its factories. The Quaker City saw the soft coal trade as another facet in its quest to become the Newcastle of America.

The same point was made in the campaign for a canal along the West Branch of the Susquehanna River. Protagonists for this route cited the extensive bituminous beds of Clearfield County as one of the most important reasons for selecting it as the westward waterway. One article in United States Gazette claimed that Clearfield County sent 2,000 tons of soft coal to market annually.

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"Ibid.; United States Gazette, September 13, October 14, 1825, January 5, February 12, 1827; Pittsburgh Gazette, January 28, February 25, June 3, August 12, 19, September 2, 1825; Howard N. Eavenson, The First Century and a Quarter of American Coal Industry (Pittsburgh, 1942), 155-185.

"Ibid. United States Gazette, September 13, 1825, February 12, 1827.
and that the canal would greatly increase this amount. Furthermore, another article by Northumberland contended that the 300 mile long West Branch route would produce the Berminghams and Sheffields of America since the coal and iron deposits offered excellent locations for industrial development. In choosing the mouth of the Bald Eagle Creek as the lateral canal's northern terminus, the canal commissioners may have had the prospectus for an industrial town in mind. A group of New York entrepreneurs had plans for a company with extensive mining and manufacturing privileges and the right to construct a canal or railroad from its Bald Eagle Creek property northward to Elmira, New York. The canal commissioners believed that a lateral canal into this region would draw the production of such towns southward, stimulate the coal trade, and secure more commerce for the Quaker City.  

Like their neighbors on the West Branch, the people living along the Susquehanna's North Branch used the coal argument to achieve their objective. The assertion that coal would pay for the cost of constructing a canal up the Susquehanna to Wilkes-Barre had been made by Jacob Cist as early as 1822 when he tried to gain the aid of Baltimore in undertaking such a project. When the Wyoming Valley began agitation for inclusion in the state works they put forth the value of their coal deposits as sufficient reason for constructing a canal up the Susquehanna River to the New York State line. They pointed to the interest of their northern neighbor in constructing canals and railroads to the Tioga, Belmont, and Lackawanna coal fields as well as to the effort of the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company to take anthracite from Carbondale to the Hudson Valley. Although the canal commissioners recognized their claim and included it in the

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88 Harrisburg Chronicle, February 7, 1828; Lancaster Intelligencer, September 20, 1825; United States Gazette, March 18, November 4, 18, 25, December 16, 20, 30, 1825, January 3, 1826, February 12, 1827.
89 Lancaster Intelligencer, March 29, May 17, 1825; United States Gazette, December 12, 1825; Wyoming Herald, February 18, March 4, 25, June 24, November 11, December 23, 1825, January 6, February 10, December 1, 22, 1826, January 26, February 23, March 2, 9, 23, 1827; Newspaper clippings, Jacob Cist Papers, MSS 135, Academy of Natural Science; “Internal Improvement,” Broadside, Wilkes-Barre, February 12, 1825, MS Meredith Collection, Wyoming Historical and Geological Society; New York, General Assembly, Report of the Selected Committee, Relative to Fossil Coal, etc., April 14, 1828, pamphlet, Wyoming Historical and Geological Society.
recommendations, the decision to build the lateral initially only as far as Wilkes-Barre may have rested, in part, on Philadelphia's jealousy of losing this trade to the north. While the Wyoming Valley gained a better outlet to the Atlantic Coastal market, the Quaker City occupied a strategic position for handling most of this trade.

Of the several routes, however, the Delaware Valley posed the greatest threat to Philadelphia in the loss of the coal trade. New York City could tap this trade on the Delaware River at three points. The valleys stretching from Port Jervis to Kingston, New York, offered a northern route to the Hudson River and had already become the path for the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company. New York financiers were also backing the proposed Morris Canal and Delaware and Raritan Canal from the Delaware River across New Jersey. Threat of losing this trade played a vital role in gaining Philadelphia's support for the Delaware Division Canal from Bristol to Easton.

The proposed state canal along the Delaware River proved to be an instructive case of the politics of economic self-interest in that the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company wanted to undertake this project. That company petitioned the state legislature in 1825 for the privilege, but received strong opposition from the counties north of Easton which wanted the state to construct the work. These counties feared that if the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company owned the canal, it could create an effective bottleneck for the flow of coal coming across the five proposed canal and railroad projects connecting the northern anthracite field with the Delaware River. These local politicians felt that the Commonwealth could do a much better job regulating the coal trade instead of letting one company monopolize a strategic channel to the Quaker City. They sent many petitions to the state legislature pleading their cause and finally won their fight for the Delaware Division Canal. The state would own and operate the canal which handled the coal going from their area to Philadelphia even

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though the representatives of Lehigh County who supported the claim of the private company would oppose this arrangement to the bitter end.

Even the Philadelphia and Columbia Railroad which did not become a part of the system until 1828 was pictured as a means of bringing the state's coal and iron together, making the industry of Chester and Lancaster Counties grow and the iron trade of Philadelphia more prosperous. As for the Commonwealth's internal trade, coal became the single most important commodity. The geography of the state left Philadelphia vulnerable to the loss of this trade. In having this trade come down the Susquehanna River, the Quaker City hoped that the Union Canal and the Delaware and Chesapeake Canal would divert the flow to its wharves. Fear that Philadelphia would have another traumatic experience in the loss of the national coal trade to its urban rivals provided a major motivating force. For reasons of commercial self interest, Philadelphia shifted its support from purely a trans-state line to a more comprehensive system.

The final factor in shaping the transportation policy was political self interest. Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and the counties through which the Main Line would pass simply did not have enough votes in the legislature to undertake just that project against the will of the rest of the state. Counties in the upper Susquehanna and Delaware Valleys pledged their support to the Main Line project as long as their demands received attention. And in their coal deposits, they felt that they had a legitimate claim for lateral canals that would not place additional financial burdens on other regions. Philadelphia accepted this political compromise as readily as it welcomed the prospect of profits from the coal trade.

The voting pattern of the state legislature reflected the alliance between the coal interests and east-west Main Line advocates. The sixteen votes of the up-river counties, through which passed the lateral canals intended primarily to develop the coal trade, provided the bare margin of two votes in passing the legislative package in 1827. Even the addition of Lancaster and Chester Counties' votes the next year which made for a comfortable two-
thirds margin, would have been insufficient to pass the bill if the coal canals had not been part of the package and their coalition had voted solidly against the measure.\textsuperscript{42}

In 1831 Mathew Carey, in reviewing the history of the movement, pointed to this alliance as a necessity serving the interests of the entire state.\textsuperscript{43} Without the support of the counties primarily interested in the development of the coal trade, the advocates of the Main Line would have been defeated. Considering the geographical and political diversity of the state, it became necessary for two of the Commonwealth's major interests to make compromises and combine political forces for the success of their projects.

In judging the Commonwealth's action from 1825-1828, the importance of developing the state's coal deposits was clear to many Pennsylvanians. It became a sufficient reason by itself for undertaking three of the four lateral canals. As for the remaining sections, people saw coal producing the greatest overall effects on commerce, industry, and urban life. It would supply the largest tonnage of any commodity on the state works and therefore produce the greatest amount of toll. These economic reasons, in turn, led to political log rolling. In both the economic and political thinking, coal played a decisive role in the creation of Pennsylvania's transportation policy. While the Erie Canal caused fear for the loss of trade among Philadelphians and drove the city into action, coal served as a positive motivating force creating dreams of industrial and commercial prosperity in Pennsylvania.

\textsuperscript{42}Harrisburg Chronicle, January 14, February 28, March 3, 6, 17, 1828; United States Gazette, January 5, February 12, 1827; Wyoming Herald, February 16, March 9, 16, 23, 30, April 6, 13, 1827, January 18, 25, 1828.

\textsuperscript{43}M. Carey, Brief View of the System of Internal Improvement of the State of Pennsylvania, 17-18.