



FOUR SOFT COAL LABOR ORGANIZERS IN THE 1927 STRIKE
George Medrick on left
Courtesy of The Pennsylvania State University Labor Archives

DIARY OF A STRIKE: GEORGE MEDRICK AND THE COAL STRIKE OF 1927 IN WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

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ONE OF America's most bitter and prolonged labor disputes occurred in the bituminous coal industry during the late 1920s. It pitted what was then the nation's most powerful union, the United Mine Workers of America, against the major operators of the central competitive field, heart of the country's coal production.¹ It was a struggle for survival on the part of the union in a sector of the industry fighting to maintain its economic position in the face of challenges from new fuels and highly competitive nonunion mines.

In 1920 the bituminous industry was at the end of three decades of growth during which annual tonnage increased fivefold and the number of operating mines rose from 2,500 to 9,000. Six hundred thousand men labored in and around the mines, and some 400,000 of them belonged to the United Mine Workers of America. A semblance of order had been achieved in the chronically chaotic industry as early as 1898 when the union succeeded in establishing uniform wage rates in the central competitive field. The tactic, however, was only partially successful because a large part of the industry did not subscribe to the minimum wage agreements. For the most part these were the nonunion mines in the southern Appalachian fields. Attempts by the union to organize these mines were a dismal failure in the face of hostile courts, violence, and intimidation on the part of the operators. As long as the demand for coal to fuel America's industrial expansion continued to increase, the union mines were able to maintain their wage rates despite southern competition.

In the 1920s, however, the industry's economic prospects took a turn for the worse. Demand, which had been artificially inflated during World War I and the post-war boom, began to level off. High

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¹ This area refers to the bituminous fields of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and western Pennsylvania.

coal prices spurred a trend toward economy in fuel consumption. This, coupled with increased competition from other fuels, meant that the great expansion of the nation's productive capacity which took place between 1920 and 1929 was powered by virtually the same quantity of coal as had been produced at the beginning of the decade. The relative decline in the demand for bituminous coal dramatically increased the effects of competition from the nonunion mines. Operators from the coal fields of West Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky, paying lower wages, benefiting from excellent geological conditions, and enjoying a preferential freight rate from the railroads, increasingly captured markets once dominated by northern producers. Their gains were both relative and absolute.²

Northern operators, looking to reduce costs, blamed their weakened competitive position on the high and inflexible wage rates negotiated by the union. Attempts to impose significant wage reductions, in some cases up to 50 percent, were met by a bitter strike in 1922 which resulted in the retention of the 1920 wage rates. This conflict set the stage for the Jacksonville Agreement of 1924 in which the operators of the central competitive field agreed to continue paying \$7.50 per day, the same rate as that of 1922, but considerably above the prevailing wage in the nonunion fields.

When the southern inroads continued, the northern operators asked the union for relief and requested a renegotiation of the Jacksonville scale. Union President John L. Lewis refused on the grounds that the industry was undergoing a needed adjustment which, when completed, would result in fewer men and fewer mines and a stable, more prosperous industry. This response gave little solace to the operators who then set out to destroy the union.

Although the struggle, which began in 1925, raged throughout most of the nation's coal fields, its most serious impact was in western Pennsylvania. The Pittsburgh district had always been a difficult territory for the union. The presence of the nonunion Connellsville and Westmoreland fields made it difficult for the union to hold its ground, and the diverse ethnic groups which comprised the work force made organization and collective action difficult.

It was in this district where the operators took their first stand against the union. In August, 1925, the Pittsburgh Coal Company,

² For a more complete exposition of the economic condition of the bituminous coal industry in this period see Morton S. Baratz, *The Union and the Coal Industry* (New Haven, 1955).

largest in the district, closed down, rejected the Jacksonville agreement, and reopened on a nonunion basis. Numerous other companies followed its lead. In all, some 110 mines in Pennsylvania changed from union to nonunion operation during 1925. At the peak of the strike in 1927, some 40,000 miners were on strike in the Pittsburgh district and 85,000 in Pennsylvania as a whole.

From the outset the striking miners endured intense hardships. The operators used strikebreakers, private police, injunctions, and many other antiunion tactics which had been developed during a century of industrial conflict in America. Evictions from company houses were commonplace. Eventually some 8,000 to 10,000 families were housed in crude union-built barracks. Relief was minimal. Few families received as much as five dollars per week with the average well below that amount. Senator Frank Goodling of Idaho reported to the Senate Interstate Commerce Committee that "conditions which exist in the strike torn regions of the Pittsburgh District are a blotch upon American civilization The Committee found men, women and children living in hovels which are more unsanitary than a modern swinepen."³

The strike proved to be a disaster for the union. By 1929 only about 84,000 miners were paying dues. The central competitive field, the heart of the union's strength, was lost. Wage rates in the industry declined from an average of \$7.50 to \$5.50 per day. The work force declined by 21 percent. With few exceptions Pennsylvania's bituminous industry emerged nonunion. Before it ended, the strike had engaged the attention of the nation's major newspapers, leading intellectuals, church groups, the Congress of the United States, and President Coolidge. No cries of outrage from concerned individuals and groups, however, could stop the brutal struggle.⁴

George Medrick, an organizer for the United Mine Workers in the Pittsburgh district, was less concerned with the epochal nature of the struggle than he was with the day to day skirmishes on the picket lines and in the mining towns of Allegheny, Fayette, and Westmore-

³ Quoted in McAlister Coleman, *Men and Coal* (New York, 1943), 132.

⁴ No indepth historical account of the 1927 strike exists. For a brief survey see Irving Bernstein, *The Lean Years: A History of the American Worker, 1920-1932* (Boston, 1966), 127-136; Anna Rochester, *Labor and Coal* (New York, 1931), 204-214. For a description of conditions during the strike, see Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, *The Coal Strike in Western Pennsylvania* (New York, 1928); U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Interstate Commerce, *Conditions in the Coal Fields of Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Ohio: Report of the Subcommittee of the Committee on Interstate Commerce pursuant to S. Res. 105, 70th Cong., 1st Sess.* (Washington, D. C., 1928).

land counties. Fortunately he kept a diary of his activities which provides a rare glimpse of what it was like to be a union representative on the front lines of the strike. Medrick's diary, in addition to illustrating a number of strikebreaking tactics, reveals a doggedly determined man doing an exhausting, frustrating, and often dangerous job, convinced of the justice of his cause and its ultimate triumph.

Born in Yugoslavia in 1893, Medrick immigrated with his parents to Fairmont, West Virginia, in 1903. He began working with his father in the coal mines at the age of eleven and became a member of the United Mine Workers of America at age thirteen. Sixteen years later he joined the union staff as an international representative assigned to organizing unions in the dangerous Kentucky and West Virginia fields. In 1936 Medrick joined the Steel Workers Organizing Committee as director of the effort to organize Bethlehem Steel. He later became director of District 11, United Steelworkers of America, located in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, a post he held until his retirement in December, 1963.

Medrick's diary includes entries from March 24, 1927, to November 14, 1927.⁵ With the exception of regularizing the capitalization of first person singular pronouns and the addition of some punctuation where necessary for clarity, excerpts from the record are presented exactly as Medrick wrote them. No attempt has been made to tamper with the construction since to have done so would have reduced the immediacy and authenticity of the account. The reader should bear in mind that this is the writing of a young man with little or no formal schooling for whom English was a second language.

March 24, 1927

Went to Pittsburgh to have conference with Serbian Croation and Slav's Society and got them to put in the paper, to keep the miners away from Pitt Coal Company,⁶ and other mines where strike is declared on by the U.M.W. of A.

⁵ The George Medrick Papers are in the Pennsylvania Historical Collections and Labor Archives, Fred Lewis Pattee Library, The Pennsylvania State University.

⁶ The Pittsburgh Coal Company was one of the key producers in the central competitive field. It employed 17,000 men and had recognized the union for 35 years. Management changed in 1924 when Andrew and Richard Mellon assumed control. James P. Johnson, "Reorganizing the United Mine Workers of America in Pennsylvania During the New Deal," *Pennsylvania History*, XXXVII (April, 1970), 18.

March 25, 1927

Went to McKeesport to see Croation and Serbian priests, but I could not get them to go with me to Banning No. 2⁷ at that time, for they promised to do all they could for me and U.M.W. of A.

March 26, 1927

Made up my own plan. I hired a car and got my sister, sister-in-law, and two other girls from Youngwood, to go into Banning, and take collections for the church and under my construction [instruction] to go all through the patch to get full names and address of all the men that gave the money to the church of which they collected seventy-eight dollars and got eighty names. While they were collecting they were saying about poor conditions in non-union fields in Westmoreland Co., and that all miners were coming out on strike April first. While they were in the patch I waited at Perryopolis thinking of a plan to get in myself. I was told at the society office in Pitt that there was a fellow there. Which I knew by the name George Rapich. While I was waiting at Perry I saw a car coming out of Banning No. 2 and just happened to be this man in a Dodge sedan. And I made up my mind where he went I would to. First stop he made was west Brownsville. Which he stopped at a hotel restaurant by the name Zagreb. And theirs [there is] where I got talking to him . . . he asked me if I would take him home . . . and I said I would take him as far as the line. And he said it was alright for me to go with him. That he was king in Banning. Then I told him who I was working for and he was shocked. And after a hard conferance with him he aggreed to come out of Banning and bring all Serbian and Croation out with him . . . He took my car and he drove it himself and I sure did take a chance of my life. And when we came into Banning five coal and iron police. They stopped the car and he said to them this is the king and that was the end. Which I was supposed to be Butcher from Brownsville . . . then went around in different houses which I met some follows which I knew well. They were sure shocked to see me there. . . .

⁷ This mine was one of the Pittsburgh Coal Company mines located near Perryopolis, Fayette County, Pennsylvania.

March 29, 1927

. . . I stopped at Wyano Picket Line and helped chase the cars to Farr Station.

March 30, 1927

Went to Brownsville and stayed all afternoon Then went into the patch at Banning No. 2. Went into four Boarding houses and talked to about 70-80 men asked them to leave on April 1 also all the boarding bosses promised that they would move away.⁸ Soon as they worked out their notice. Because the Coal Co. will not give them their money until they work out their 10 day notice. In which I got all them men all that I talked to to give their notice in next day. Left Banning at 11:30 P.M.

March 31, 1927

Stayed home until 5:30 P.M. left Greensburg at 6 O'clock went to Jacob Creek [Jacob's Creek] and I seen Mr. Hagan and talked to him he told me that he tried to have a meeting at Banning No. 2 which was stopped by State Troopers and coal and iron police Left Jacob Creek at 9 P.M. went to Brownsville I met a man from Banning which was at that gathering and he said that the super and Coal and Iron police⁹ went around the houses and begged the men not to leave and said that there will not be no strike and that there is no more union. But the men that I talked to know better than that. Left Brownsville at 1:30 A.M. in morning.

⁸ Boardinghouse bosses were common in the mining towns of America. They sometimes owned but usually leased houses from the mining companies. Their tenants were the miners without families, often recently arrived immigrants. Often the room and board charges were deducted from the miners' pay by the company. During strikes, striking boarders were usually evicted and the boardinghouse bosses, their livelihood endangered, became active recruiters of strikebreakers.

⁹ Beginning in 1865, the state of Pennsylvania passed legislation which provided special "Coal and Iron Police" for railroad and industrial companies. These policemen were given all the powers of public police officers in the counties in which they were authorized to serve. While the power of appointment rested with the state, in reality the selection was done by the companies who paid the men and gave them orders. In addition to protecting company property and strikebreakers, the Coal and Iron Police were often charged with provoking violence, assaulting strikers and their leaders, and terrorizing the coal towns. Federal Council of Churches of Christ, *Coal Strike in Western Pennsylvania*, 49-51.

April 1, 1927

Went to mass meeting at Jacob Creek at which was Mr. P. Murray speaking. Which was one of the best speeches I ever heard in my time which was spoke by Mr. Murray.¹⁰

April 2, 1927

Went to Brownsville in the evening and stayed around the hotel Zagreb where the men from Banning and other scab¹¹ mines gather. And I talked to quite a few in which they promised that they would leave the scab mines as soon as they worked out there notice.

April 5, 1927

. . . in the evening went to see a fellow that work at White Valley had a long talk with him and a lot other fellow that works there. And I found out that there were about 20 deputies put on around the works. But I found out that miners that work at mine would come out on strike and stay out if export mine would come out with them. In which I worked hard to get them to come out there-selves.

April 8, 1927

Met the King George Rapich at 9:30 A.M. and went to Pitt with him to Serbian and Croatian Society in which king has promised to me and the society officials that he will do all he can for the Society and U.M.W. of A. to keep the scabs away from Pitt Coal co.

April 9, 1927

I wrote twenty-six letters to fellows that I knew around Banning No. 2.

April 13, 1927

Had a date with Montenegro at Fayette City at 7:30 which he told me that there was one boarding boss that

¹⁰ Philip Murray was vice president of the United Mine Workers of America. Later he became the first president of the United Steelworkers of America and served as president of the Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO) from 1940 to 1952.

¹¹ Scab was a derogatory term for nonunion workers who accepted employment in a mine or any enterprise which was being struck.

had 14 boarders which was a pretty fellow to handle. I asked him if I could get in the patch with him to see this fellow.¹² He said he would take a chance in which we met there. I laid in the back seat and thats how we got through to see this fellow and he brought him out and we talked in his car. He said he would leave as soon as he found a place at some steel mill. The Montenegro tells me that things are in good shape that in a short time we will be able to chase out half of the scabs that are in Banning No. 2.

April 14, 1927

Came in Brownsville at 2 P.M. and met the king and four other Boarding bosses with him. I engaged a room up stairs and went up with them all. Then I started to talk to them about coming out and leaving Banning No. 2 and to take all their boarders along. And to stay away from mines that are on strike. That I would do all I could for them to clear their names which they carry now as a "scab." And they seemed very satisfied with what I told them. Then I made a date with them to take them down at Victor Brew to get them a drink. they didn't show up.

April 18, 1927

Went to Pitt and loafed around the third and Ross Streets. And I found out that there is a lot of secret joints where these scabs are coming and going. And I am working my way into block the scab market out of these joints.

April 22, 1927

. . . I went down to Second and Third Ave. at water and Ross st. I hung around those joints till 10 P.M. and I found out more about scab shipment from those joints. I have some of our men at each one of those joints that keeps me posted with what is going on there while I am not there. . . . In one of those joints oned by Mike Yackich I met John Lutherencheck in there talking to some men that was working for some contractors in Pitt. He tried to get them to go to the coal mines and scab. When J. Luther left I started to talking to those men that they told me that L. is making a drive from one St. to another and going to those

¹² Patch or patch town was a term used to describe the coal towns. Evidence for deciding its precise origin is lacking.

joints with his Luitents and he would work together with the men that run those joints that he would give them \$2 for each man that he would ship to the mines. And which they all did play the game with him. But I am glad to say that I have stopped that scab market that L. organized a year ago. Not only in Pitt, But in Duquesne, Homestead and Braddock L. could not face his own people which they all knew his past record. But he worked with Serbians and Croations Shipping them to Pitt Coal. In Brown I found one of his Lieut, John Budcheck as I understood this man Bud. has some men around Point Marion and Morgantown. They are knocking Liews [Lewis] and other officials of the U.M.W. of A. And I found out that there is a lot of that in Brownsville and that is all J. Bud talk. Bud. is hanging around a tailor shop run by Beleski. This man Beleski has a brother in Greensburg and he has a tailor shop also. I have learned the other day from one of his good friends that this man Beleski from Greensburg has two men. They are supposed to take orders for suits and while doing that they are getting men for Luth. and Bud. also. I have not learnt all yet that is being done by those men. But I am still on their track at which I think I will break up that gang in a few days.

April 26-27, 1927

. . . then I went to Yackich hotel and I met four men that were ready to be shipped to a mine named "Hill." Lutherincheck left them there which the coal and iron police were going to come after them. Then I talked to those men and got them not to go. And these men told them that they would not go and scab and that they were no coal miners.

May 1, 1927

We held a meeting at Serbian Hall in Pitt.

May 7, 1927

Went to . . . Brownsville where I stayed till 3 A.M. and I found out that my friend King as gone back in line with Pitt Coal again. I have been looking for him whole week but he has always kept dodgin me the king has gone back to run a boarding house and he has 18 Boarders again Those Boarding Bosses are no coal miners and their boarders also . . . they are nothing but low down dogs

May 11, 1927

I met four negroes walking the road and they told me they were from N. Carolina . . . which they said that their families were at N. Carolina and they said as soon as they made some money they would leave Banning¹³ . . . I was not long on the road till coal and iron police began keeping track of me . . . Then we went to Banning to scab wedding at which there was about 30 scabs . . .

May 23, 1927

Went to Pitt and went down to the Catholic Observatory. To see Mr. Petrack he is editor of the Croation Society. Then also I went to the Serbian Society at which I talked to Mr. Dieck the editor of Serbian Society. There was a car which followed me from down town . . . In it were four men which I beleive were four thugs. When I left there I went over to North Side to see one of the board directors of the Croation Societty which this car followed me and they waited till I came out. Then they started back in town after me. That is how I lost them . . . The Pitt Coal co, is getting desperate down at which they never have been before. Because they cant get any slavs to go in and scab. Also at which they found that there is two of the biggest foreign societys of their kind in the world and that they are with the united M.W. of A. . . I see nothing but victory in Western Penn.

May 25, 1927

Went to . . . Brownsville and I found out that king has sold his hotel to another scab by name Stanko Seponich from Montour for 1,100. Then I found out from a fellow that the furniture did not belong to him. He himself rented it. But he turned around and solt it to this fellow. Then I went up to see this Jew that leased and rented this furniture to King. I talked to the Jew about it so this Jew and I got a warrant for king and two of his partners at which we served on him next day. We got the king but his other two partners went away.

¹³ Blacks were used extensively as strikebreakers. Racial animosity added to the normal hostility toward strikebreakers and led to several incidents of violence. Many of the blacks were obtained locally, but large numbers were also brought in from West Virginia and the southern states. There are no exact figures on the total number of black strikebreakers, but one company increased the number of its black workers from 586 in 1924 to 3,704 in 1927 while its over-all work force declined from 11,563 to 9,076 during the same period. Federal Council of Churches of Christ, *Coal Strike in Western Pennsylvania*, 66-67.

May 26, 1927

. . . King is in jail at Uniontown.

May 27, 1927

. . . Now that I am working on the scab that came from Montour . . . that bought the place from king which of course this guy is selling liquor. I am going to raid him tomorrow if my friend Constable comes from Washington Pa. which he is on the jury there.

June 4, 1927

Went to Pitt and stayed there till 11 P.M. and I had an automobile accident at 1 P.M. which caused me to be in the hospital Sunday and till noon on Monday.

June 12, 1927

I had a date with Montenegro from Banning No. 2 at 11 A.M. . . . He tells me that there is a lot of men coming in from Connelsville looking for work. He tells me that there big dissatisfaction with the men that are real miners . . . when a real miner comes there he leaves in a week which he cant work under the conditions. . . . The only steady miners they have is the men that the boarding bosses brought in. . . . They would leave if they could make enough to leave. The boarding bosses and Coal Co. Store takes all they make. They always have a bill on the Boarding Bosses book. That is why they never can not get ahead. . . . I have also met some progressive men. I had some real hot argument with them. Every progressive or Bolshiviek as I call them in Brownsville. They are going to work against U.M.W. of A. Bust them up. Thank God there isnt many of these kind fools.¹⁴

¹⁴ Medrick refers to an anti-Lewis group within the United Mine Workers which emerged because of dissatisfaction with Lewis's leadership in the 1922 strike and because of the failure to organize the nonunion mines. Consisting of a coalition of communists, socialists, and anti-Lewis moderates, and calling themselves the "Save the Union Committee," they challenged Lewis in the 1926 presidential election and lost amid cries of election fraud. In 1928 the coalition split over internal differences and the left wing organized a rival union in the coal industry, The National Miners Union. During the 1927 strike much of the United Mine Workers' leadership was preoccupied with the internal struggle. Medrick was a Lewis loyalist. For background on this dispute, see John Brophy, *A Miner's Life* (Madison, Wisc., 1964); James Weschler, *Labor Baron* (New York, 1944); Joseph E. Finley, *The Corrupt Kingdom* (New York, 1972).

June 22, 1927

. . . At 8:15 there were a lot of men about the Davis Employment Office and around the Hanna Employment office. Almost all of them were Slavish—Serbian and Polish. Then I was going up and down the streets and I was talking in my language telling the men that there was a strike on in Pitt District and Pitt Terminal mines.¹⁵ Then it took me about an hour and half to break up the crowd. Then comes out the Mr. Hanna the Employment agent. He was going to have me arrested for interfering with his men. I told him that I was not interfering with his men that I was walking up and down for my health.

July 17, 1927

Went to a picnic at Clairton and made a speech to the mill workers to keep away from the mines. The same day I went to another picnic at Duquesne and also made a speech there.

July 28, 1927

. . . The scabs are getting scarce. They are not so easy to pick up as they were before. I have all the boarding bosses stopped from getting any more scabs and they are even scared to come in the city of Pitt. . . . Now that our biggest fight is automobile scabs which they number about 2 thousand. If there is a way to stop the scabs come in auto we would end the strike in three weeks time. I am doing all that is in my power.

August 6, 1927

Went to Mammoth [Mammoth] and Mt. Pleasant and Latrobe and Derry. There are three Agents around Westmoreland field gathering men for different Coal co, one is Tony James living at Greensburg he is Italian and a Jew Red Cohen also from Greensburg and John Nuget from Margrette [Marquerite] a Slavish.

August 14, 1927

Stayed at home for a change.

¹⁵ Pittsburgh Terminal Coal Company.

August 23, 1927

Went to Pitt went to Croation and Serbian Societies. The editor of the Serbian paper by name Mike Yankovich told me that on Aug. 11 there were official from Jones and Lockner¹⁶ came up to him and asked him if he would want to make \$1,000 if he would go along with them and help them to get some scabs. They told him that U.M.W. of A. is Busted up in this state and by one more year they will be busted up all over U.S. And they told him the best thing would be for his people and the membership would be to go and work. And to put that in the Societies paper. And to put in a good line about Jones and Lockner Co. How good co. this is to work for. And also they asked him in his spare time to go around Woodlawn and South Side or some other town where he could get some real miners for them. That they would pay him \$500 down and \$500 at the end of the year. And he turned that down and he told them that he could not do anything like that. And they also asked him if he could keep me out of the office. And to stop me from putting different articles in the paper every day. He said that he could not do that. That I am one of the director of the paper and society.

August 25, 1927

Stayed in Greensburg which I had to stay for I was witness for 6 fellows which they were getting their citizen papers.

October 4, 1927

In last three weeks in Uniontown I took off over 50 men away from Pitt Coal co. and Pitt Terminal. . . . There are three employment offices in Uniontown and one in Brownsville. I am working hard on two of the offices in Uniontown to close them up, one is Pitt Terminal one is Bethlehem Steel. . . . Every Monday the Pitt office would be full of men from 15 to 20 be ready to ship out. Then I would run in the office and make a speech to them and ask them not to go and scab. And ask them to leave the office with me. In the mean time the Agent would go to Court house to get a Sheriff and one would go down to Police Station and the third fellow would be calling up on the phone. When I would see the police coming I would go away. And I always got from 8 to 10 with me out. Then I

¹⁶ Medrick is probably referring to the Jones and Laughlin Steel Corporation of Pittsburgh which operated so-called captive mines, or mines owned by steel corporations for their own use.

would get on their nerve and spoil their shipment and that they would not know what there were saying to these men. Then I would run down to Brownsville and get couple of our union men that are on strike take them over to Uniontown with me with their suitcases and send them in the Employment offices with my instructions to go in and get a job and sit in there and get friendly with the other fellows that are shipping out. . . . Then I would run in the office again and make a speech to them that we have a strike on and not to go out and scab. Then they would call the police and sheriff again. By the time I would see police coming I would leave. These two men would be in charge while I was chased. They would say to the scabs that organizer was right that we better not go. More than once I had the police and sherrif looking for me in Uniontown. But they never got me yet. I busted up their shipments more than once. . . . Now that they are trying to get nice with me and speak to me every time they say "hello" to me the answer I would give them is "go to hell."

I went to Detroit to a convention and we sure had some hot time. The Reds were going to try to control the newspaper.¹⁷ But they didn't get it. They wanted to have the newspaper so they could knock the U.M.W. of A. and their officials. Same as the Workers party does.¹⁸ But they failed.

Last Saturday I was going to go to Uniontown But I met a fellow in Pitt on Friday he told me that there was a place back of Carnegie—Cherry Valley that there were three Boarding Bosses. Each had over thirty men they were working for some contractor filling up some yard for a railroad. . . . That work has stopped and those men were laid off. . . . There were Agents from Vesta Coal Co. and Agents from Pitt T. and other Agents from Renton and other places. . . . We had a little argument and fight out there that night. And at eleven oclock at night you ought to have seen them run. I got a couple of cracks but no harm done. . . . they had some men in there that they knew that was taking their part and so did I so there as a fight for all. There was guns, knives, clubs flying around there good thing there was no policemen there. . . . Our people are staying solid and they are going to stay solid till this strike is won.

¹⁷ Here Medrick is probably referring to an attempt by anti-Lewis insurgents. In 1927 the Lewis forces succeeded in amending the union's constitution to exclude communists from membership. Throughout the intra-union fight Lewis attacked the dissidents, regardless of their political affiliation, as communists. Anna Rochester, *Labor and Coal* (New York, 1931), 219; *United Mine Workers Journal*, February 15, 1927, 4.

¹⁸ This was the name of the American communist political party recognized by the Soviet Union during this period.