ON 27 March 1900, thirty-seven workers in the wire mill department of the Pittsburgh Reduction Company's New Kensington Works went out on strike. The action represented the first major strike by industrial workers in that community. The men presented petitions to company management demanding wage increases from $1.50 to $1.75 for ten hours work. A company counterproposal of ten cents was rejected. Men in other departments joined the walkout, and a strike committee was formed. Workers imported by management to fill vacancies were intercepted at the local railroad station and persuaded to leave town. One hundred men joined a "permanent union," and solicited support from local craft unions, boarding houses and hotels.¹

A settlement was reached on 4 April. The strikers received a twelve percent increase and a reduction in Sunday work. A.F.L. Local 8261, Aluminum Workers' Union, was apparently recognized by the company. The local press applauded the absence of violence and "intense feeling" during the conflict. Local 8261 passed a resolution thanking the local burgess and the police committee of the town council for their assistance in bringing about a swift end to the conflict.²

The deceptively easy victory of the aluminum workers seemed initially to sustain the belief of local craft unionists that New Kensington was one of the strongest union towns in the nation. Events subsequent to the strike would quickly discredit that assumption.

¹. New Kensington Dispatch, 30 March, 6 April 1900.
². Ibid.
In September 1900, members of the Glass Cutters' League attempted to organize American Window Glass plants located in Arnold, a small community pinned against the Allegheny River by New Kensington. That strike was ruthlessly broken. Members of the Cutters' League were fired and blacklisted. Employees that were allowed to return to work in December were forced to join a company union. Local steel workers fared no better. In 1901, the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers attempted to unionize two American Sheet and Tin Plate plants in New Kensington. Scabs and the threat of plant removal quickly brought that conflict to an end.3

The long-term survival of the Aluminum Workers Union was an unlikely probability in such an anti-labor environment. The Aluminum Company of America moved against its unions by replacing machinists with non-union labor during a brief strike in 1907.4 In the midst of a major production slowdown in 1908, a depression year, the company issued an ultimatum. Members of the Aluminum Workers' Union were ordered to rescind their charter, disband their organization, and accept an open shop plan, or face the loss of their jobs. The union men complied quickly, "voting unanimously" to give up their AFL charter.5

The destruction of the Aluminum Workers' Union was a manifestation of Alcoa's growing power and presence in New Kensington. The Pittsburgh Reduction Company had moved from its Smallman Street location in Pittsburgh's strip district seventeen miles up river to New Kensington in 1891. The efforts of the Burrell Improvement Company, real estate developers associated with Thomas Mellon and Sons, paved the way. According to Charles Martin Hall, the site's chief attractions were free land, cheap coal, $10,000 in cash for moving, and no taxes.6 Alcoa's expansion was an integral part of an industrial boom which occurred in New Kensington. In 1891 not a single heavy industry existed in that community. A decade later Pittsburgh Reduction, two American Sheet and Tin Plate mills,

4. In 1907 the Pittsburgh Reduction Company assumed the name Aluminum Company of America.
and numerous glass manufacturing plants employed thousands of workers in New Kensington and nearby Arnold.  

During the first decade of the Twentieth Century Alcoa’s fabricating and processing operations including cooking utensils, wire drawing, cable making, bronze powder and extrusion departments were established in New Kensington. The boom continued as Alcoa’s operations expanded into adjacent Arnold in 1913. Two new Arnold plants, employing 2500 workers, generated a payroll which rivalled the $1,000,000 a year carried home in paychecks by Alcoa workers in New Kensington.  

Real estate situated near the new plants was developed and sold by Thomas Mellon.  

The ethnic composition of New Kensington and Arnold changed abruptly during those boom years. A Polish Falcon Hall was founded in New Kensington in 1911, and Young Italy was established there in 1913. When plans for a sanitary sewer system for Arnold were published in 1913, lot ownership by persons of Italian and Slavic origin had risen to nearly half the population in Arnold’s new neighborhoods. It was that “foreign element” which had, according to the local press, succumbed to the solicitations of an IWW organizer in 1913. He allegedly promoted a strike in Alcoa’s polishing department which led to a walkout of one hundred men. The organizer was arrested and fined. The strike collapsed within a week.  

Three years later Alcoa machinists, apparently unaffiliated with any labor organization, walked out on a spontaneous strike. Nearly three thousand men and women joined them several days later. The strikers met at the Polish Falcon Hall and formed a strike committee which presented their grievances to management. The workers demanded an eight hour day with pay for ten, time and one half for overtime, double pay for Sunday work, an end of the bonus system and better ventilation in company shops. Management responded that the market for fabricated aluminum products was poor and announced that the company had only remained open in order to provide employment for its workers. Alcoa politely rejected the

7. New Kensington Dispatch, 28 November 1901.  
8. New Kensington Dispatch, 4 April 1912, 6 February 1913.  
10. The Industrial Workers of the World was a radical labor organization. Its activities in the Allegheny Valley are difficult to document, but its representatives did distribute literature in local coal fields.  
demands of its workers, and waited for the strike to collapse. The
burgess of New Kensington interceded, assuring the strikers fair
treatment. He also announced that Alcoa would continue its policy
of “frequent adjustment of hourly wages just as if the strike had not
occurred.” The strikers returned to work two weeks after they
walked out.

The walkout of 1916 was followed by nearly two decades of labor
peace of Alcoa’s New Kensington Works. Aluminum workers were
not drawn into the bitter steel and coal strikes which raged through-
out the Allegheny Valley in 1919. Alcoa’s management began an
Americanization program for its workers consisting of films, lectures,
and classroom instruction, but did not participate in the virulent
Bolshevik-baiting campaign generated by management in local steel
mills. In the four strikes which occurred at Alcoa’s New Kensington
Works prior to World War I, management did not emulate the strike-
breaking techniques utilized by steelmakers and mine operators.
Scabs and hired thugs were not imported by the train load. Company
inspired industrial violence was not a weapon of choice. Alcoa
apparently preferred a measured policy of economic coercion, attri-
tion, selective dismissals, and watchful waiting in labor conflicts.
By the standards of Allegheny Valley, Alcoa’s approach to the reso-
lution of industrial conflict was moderate. That policy of moderation
persisted even after serious unionization campaigns resumed in New
Kensington in 1933.

Hard times brought on by the depression and renewed hope in-
spired by the National Recovery Act rekindled union activity
throughout the Allegheny Valley during the spring and summer of
1933. The UMWA, which had been driven from the Valley in 1927,
returned in 1933 and signed a union contract with Lewis Hicks, the
most recalcitrant anti-union coal operator in the region. By March
1934, organizers of the Glass Cutters League had signed up 3,000
workers for their union. Howard Crowe and Edward Croghan,
organizers for the Allegheny Valley Central Labor Union, appeared
at the gates of Alcoa’s New Kensington Works in July 1933. They
made speeches and distributed literature exhorting aluminum
workers to take advantage of the protections offered by Section 7a of
the National Recovery Act. Fred Broad, a local entrepreneur active

12. New Kensington Dispatch, 2, 5, 9, 12, 16 May 1916.
in promoting the UMWA, donated office space to the fledgling Aluminum Workers’ Union. On 1 August 1933, Aluminum Workers’ Union Local 18356 was chartered by the AFL. On 25 August 1933 a representation election was conducted in New Kensington. 2897 votes were cast for Local 18356, 831 for Alcoa’s employee representation plan.

Nick Zonarich, a disciple of Socialist Norman Thomas, reluctantly joined and promoted the Aluminum Workers’ Union. Although he would eventually rise to the union presidency, Zonarich would have preferred the creation of an international metal workers’ union strong enough to take on Alcoa. Union activist John Haser agreed that the activities of Norman Thomas and others had created a revolutionary atmosphere in New Kensington. However, Haser believed that hard times rather than ideology was responsible for pushing most aluminum workers into the union camp. Few workers shared Nick Zonarich’s well defined organizational goals. Most signed union cards in order to strike back against a company policy of low wages, preferential hiring and selective layoffs.

Mary Peli, a storeroom clerk, was moved to action by intolerable working conditions imposed by Alcoa’s management. In many of Alcoa’s shops, female employees constituted the majority. Each day thousands of women would appear at the plant and were forced to endure the company’s version of the shape up. The women were lined up and inspected in military fashion. Those who were hired were admitted to the shops and were subjected to harassment and intimidation. Personal insults, demeaning restroom policies, and a “bonus system” which deprived workers of their just wage incensed Mary Peli. After conferring with her family and co-workers, she and forty-

15. Fred Broad was the son-in-law of Fannie Sellins, a UMWA organizer slain by Allegheny Steel Company deputies in West Natrona, Pennsylvania on 26 August 1919.

16. All records of Aluminum Workers Local Union 18356, AFL, Aluminum Worker Local Union 2, CIO, and Local 302, USWA are held by the Pennsylvania history and labor archives, Pattee Library, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania. The collection has not yet been catalogued or assigned box numbers. Therefore, all references to those collections will be cited hereafter as Aluminum Workers Papers (AWP). New Kensington Daily Dispatch, 26 August 1933; Richard Kearns to John A. Phillip, 1 October 1934, AWP.

17. Transcripts, Nick Zonarich and John Haser oral interviews, September 1966, the Pennsylvania State University—United Steel Workers of American Oral History Project, Pattee Library, University Park, Pennsylvania, 5-10, 3-11. Nick Zonarich was President of Aluminum Workers International Union, CIO. John Haser served as business agent of the New Kensington Local for eight years.
two female Alcoa employees marched in a group to the Broad Building and signed union cards. Shortly thereafter she was called into the shop superintendent’s office and fired for “unsatisfactory work”.  

The decision to fire Mary Peli proved to be a serious miscalculation. A coal miner’s daughter, she was at home with adversity. Recognizing her courage and leadership qualities, the AFL organizers hired her to do clerical work and spot organizing for them. She also emerged as an important spokesman for Italian-American workers, who constituted more than sixty percent of Alcoa’s labor force. An Alcoa plant superintendent appeared at her home in Logan’s Ferry and offered her family financial security if she would give up her union activities. When that offer was rebuffed she was called in by her parish priest. He had already denounced the union from his pulpit and was reputed to be closely associated with the Mellons. As an Alcoa representative looked on from a darkened anteroom nearby, the priest offered Mary Peli a job at the Italian consulate in Pittsburgh. She politely refused the position and indicated her intention to remain actively involved in the union movement in New Kensington.

Nick Zonarich, John Haser, and Mary Peli were the cutting edge of a union movement which was sorely tested in the months following the creation of Local 18356. Company tactics, government policy, defections, abortive strikes, and internecine strife within the union camp rapidly eroded its membership. Initial recruiting efforts that had yielded 3300 members in August 1933 proved ephemeral as the union was reduced to seventeen active members in January 1935. Mary Peli ran a penny bingo operation in order to sustain the operations of the local, which received little financial assistance from the parent AFL. The existence of the local was made even more precarious by the mysterious disappearance of $400 from the union safe. Union officers were suspected of making private arrangements with management. The first elected president of Local 18356 accepted a managerial position with Alcoa amidst accusations of “treason.”

18. Interview with Mary Peli Petrigni, retired aluminum worker, 8 January 1980.
20. Petrigni Interview.
21. Ibid; Pauli and Garbinski Interview; Haser Interview, 6; Minutes, Local 18356, 14 June 1935, p. 175; Petrigni Interview.
Alcoa lost no time in exerting its power in the community. Its employee representation plan was promoted throughout New Kensington. Workers who subscribed to the plan were given preferential treatment by local merchants and company foremen. Retail credit dried up for Alcoa employees who supported the union. Union committees were received politely by management, for Alcoa publicly adhered to the union representation provisions of the National Recovery Act. However, Roy Hunt, president of Alcoa, made it clear that compliance with the act in no way obligated the company to accept specific union demands. Local 18356 received nominal recognition, but demands for a union contract and a check-off were refused.

The National Recovery Act, which seemed to offer so much promise to unorganized aluminum workers actually undermined their cause. Alcoa played the dominant role in drafting the NRA codes for the aluminum industry. On 14 October 1933 a basic wage scale consisting of forty cents per hour for male aluminum workers and thirty-five cents for females was presented to the National Recovery Administration. Local 18356 protested that the codes caused a reduction in real wages for many workers and thereby eroded their faith in the National Recovery Administration. Condemning the codes as "an elaborate collection of superfluous verbiage to bring about the enslavement of workers in the aluminum industry," Local 18356 advised the AFL that its membership had repudiated the codes in a vote, 2757 to 14. The AFL seemed indifferent to their dissatisfaction and moved very slowly to address the conflict.

The relationship of 18356 and the AFL was uneasy from the start. AFL representatives who were sent to New Kensington appeared to be comfortable with the provisions of the NRA codes and the local status quo. Attempts by Local 18356 to negotiate directly on its own behalf were given little encouragement. AFL representatives did not hesitate to bargain without the authorization of the local rank and file. After one such incident members threatened to throw AFL representative William Swift off New Kensington's Ninth Street bridge.

22. Roy A. Hunt to Executive Committee, Aluminum Workers Union 18356, 9 December 1933; Minutes, Local 18356, 10 August 1933 – 23 February 1934, AWP.
23. A Basic Code of Fair Competition For The Fabricated Metal Products Manufacturing Industry, pp. 4–5. Under these codes a Southern wage differential was also established. Southern aluminum workers received a rate of 35 cents per hour for males, 30 cents for females.
24. New Kensington Daily Dispatch, 2 January 1934; Paul Howlett to Boris Shiskin, 13 May, 19 June 1934; Richard Kearns to Hugh Johnson, 10 July 1934, AWP.
Swift had been sent in to help the inexperienced negotiating committees selected by 18356, but his penchant for intrigue turned local meetings into angry shouting matches. Swift had helped to organize 18356, and presumably should have understood the temper of the local. But his clandestine tactics generated distrust and encouraged the growth of anti-AFL sentiment. On 1 March 1934, two months after Swift's arrival, local president Karl Burke Guiney resigned ostensibly because of his "inability to conduct the business of the local." On that same day 3800 aluminum workers walked out on a job "holiday." While workers stood picket duty in ten inches of snow, union militants demanded a minimum $1.00 per hour wage rate, a checkoff, and a five day work week. Alcoa responded immediately with an offer of an across the board wage increase of eleven percent retroactive to the first day of the strike. Management also offered to negotiate all other issues following the return of its employees to their jobs.

The strike produced a mixed result, for it was the product of anger and frustration rather than coherent planning. The union reluctantly accepted the company wage offer but a union contract and checkoff were not forthcoming. Swift proved true to form, by passing Local 18356 negotiators in favor of direct but unauthorized meetings with management. The strike was never endorsed by the AFL and Swift treated it as a wildcat. Local militants John Haser and Nick Zonarich responded by sponsoring a resolution condemning Swift for undermining the "moral confidence" of their Union. Alcoa was well aware of the factions within the union camp and had little difficulty exploiting their differences during the muddled bargaining sessions. The walkout ended in defeat less than two weeks after it had begun.

The March strike opened a breach between 18356 and the AFL which was never closed. The failure of the AFL to provide strike benefits or any other tangible support for the strike was condemned as a "sellout." Swift was thoroughly discredited. He was replaced by David Williams, who was to direct 18356 from the AFL district office in Pittsburgh. Apparently Williams' chief function was to keep the rebellious New Kensington local in line. Local 18356 sensed this and

25. Letter of Resignation by Karl Burke Guiney, 1 March 1934, AWP; Haser Interview.
26. New Kensington Daily Dispatch, 1, 2, 9 March 1934. There is no record of a strike vote in the Aluminum Workers minutes. I. W. Wilson to 18356, 2, 7 March 1934, AWP.
27. Haser Interview; Resolution by Extrusion Department, 3 March 1934, AWP.
accused their new adversary of usurping executive authority for the purpose of establishing a personal dictatorship. 28

The appearance of Williams evoked a new and more significant response by 18356. In a direct appeal to AFL president William Green the local demanded an international charter for all aluminum workers. What 18356 had in mind was nothing less than the creation of an industrial union such as those proposed for auto and rubber workers. Green parried that demand, arguing that the time was not opportune. Green questioned the financial viability of an Aluminum Workers’ International Union, insisting that member locals were not yet established on a “firm and permanent basis.” President Paul Howlett of Local 18356 countered that if an international charter was not granted, aluminum workers would refuse to pay dues. 29 Green avoided a confrontation by founding an Aluminum Workers’ Council in June 1934.

The Aluminum Workers’ Council was an administrative device designed to placate those who demanded an industrial union. It was also an instrument of control which director David Williams might use to master hardline locals such as 18356. Most aluminum worker locals, particularly in the South and Midwest, were not nearly as militant as their New Kensington brethren. By manipulating votes and resolutions in the plenary sessions of the council, Williams hoped to isolate and control troublemakers. Local 18356 recognized the council for what it was, and subverted its cautious and conservative purpose at every opportunity. Pleas that the local quietly cooperate with Williams were ignored. Local 18356 continued to lobby for an industrial union. In that spirit, it courted dissident machinist Mark Robb. New Kensington machinists’ Local 541 eventually defected to the Aluminum Workers in spite of Williams’ assertion that AFL rules superseded the NRA principle of right of choice. 30

William Green’s ploy failed to silence the militants. When the Council he conceived met, dissidents used the opportunity to goad Williams, and more conservative locals such as Alcoa, Tennessee, into action. In July 1934 a beleaguered Williams and his allies were pushed into negotiations with Alcoa. The abortive March strike and

28. Haser Interview; Zonarich Interview.
29. Ray Giordano to William Green, 16 May 1934; Paul Howlett to Green, 24 May 1934; William Green to Giordano, 22 May 1934, AWP.
30. Anthony Giordano to A. R. Buller, 19 June 1934; H. G. Flaugh to A. Giordano, 5 June 1934; A. Giordano to Mark Robb, 19 June 1934; Minutes, 18356, 22 June 1934, AWP.
AFL faithlessness burned bright in the collective memory of 18356. In the eyes of the New Kensington local, the new round of negotiations represented an opportunity for the AFL to prove both its good faith and commitment to their cause. On 3 August, Williams appeared before the local and announced that Alcoa had refused to accept the negotiated agreement.\(^31\)

Alcoa’s Roy Hunt made his objections to the agreement clear to the aluminum workers. The check-off “was not a natural or necessary function of the company.” Alcoa would pay “going wage rates” in all localities.\(^32\) A closed shop would violate existing agreements and the NRA codes. Seniority rights, dismissal rules, and grievance procedures were a matter of company policy and were not subject to negotiations with a union. David Williams explained to his hostile audience that if William Green sanctioned a strike all aluminum workers would walk out at one time.\(^33\)

A strike call was issued on 10 August, but it is clear that Green did not wish to accept responsibility for it. Boris Shiskin was dispatched by Green to New Kensington to serve as consultant to the Aluminum Workers. The presence of Williams and Shiskin insulated Green from the field of action. The strike call itself was issued by telephone through intermediaries Williams and Shishkin. As pickets stood six hour shifts in drizzling rain the local press reported that William Green had endorsed the strike. The press reported that he had done so to forestall wildcats by individual locals. The probability of unauthorized strikes had been reported to Green by A. R. Buller, President of the Aluminum Workers’ Council. Local 18356 President Paul Howlett later claimed that the AFL had no connection with the strike call. Dave Williams countered that the Aluminum Workers’ Council had called the strike and it was subsequently sanctioned by the AFL.\(^34\)

The strike, an orphan from the beginning, lasted five weeks. On 6 September, an agreement was announced. It was in fact a capitulation. Alcoa recognized the collective bargaining principles embodied in section 7a, NRA. There would be no checkoff, closed shop, or

31. Minutes, 18356, 3 August 1934, AWP.
32. Roy Hunt to Fred A. Wetmore, 3 August 1934, AWP.
33. Minutes, 18356, 3 August 1934, AWP.
34. New Kensington Daily Dispatch, 11, 12 August 1934; Minutes, 18356, 21 September 1934, AWP.
changes in wages. Howlett lamely explained to his shrinking membership that the local had supported the agreement in order not to break ranks with other locals in Massena, New York, and East St. Louis, Missouri. Nick Zonarich opined that the Union would accomplish nothing so long as it was affiliated with the AFL.  

For the small band which remained active in the local during the fall of 1934, anti-AFL sentiment took on a renewed vitality. Howlett openly extolled the virtues of an industrial union. Zonarich proclaimed that a union had to be "a fighting organization." Engineers and machinists, already members of AFL internationals, were invited to 18356 meetings. The local also entered the political arena. Howlett wrote to Jim Farley requesting that he help the local defeat the re-election of anti-New Deal Senator David Reed. Only the Democratic National Committee was capable of dispensing enough aid to defeat politicians backed by the "predatory wealth of the Mellons." It is clear that Local 18356 had embarked on a political course later taken by the CIO long before John L. Lewis' fist found Bill Hutcheson's jaw.

Howlett's militant anti-Mellon rhetoric was deceptive for it belied the fact that the focus of his local's antipathy had shifted from Alcoa to the AFL. In the two years following the August strike, the militant activists who sustained the local fought to disassociate it from Green's domination. Local 18356 continued to call for an international charter. Green responded by calling a convention for the purpose of reorganizing the Aluminum Workers' Council. Those antithetical positions made David Williams' chore impossible. Zonarich and his fellow dissidents declared him persona non grata in New Kensington. Obstinate to the bitter end, Williams replied with venom. "The job has been given to me to form the foundation of an International Union and I am going to make that foundation upon a growing membership, and not a bunch of damn Communists." Those who advocated an independent Union were not "progressives" but Communists "working undercover." The attempt by 18356 "to set itself up bigger than the AFL" was due to "a combination of booze, detective agencies, and Communists." When pressed to appear and prefer

35. *New Kensington Daily Dispatch*, 6 September 1934; *Minutes*, 18356, 21 September 1934, AWP.
36. *Minutes*, 18356, 5 October 1934; Richard Kearns to T. Swartz, Mark Robb, 20 October 1934; Paul Howlett to Jim Farley, 22 October 1934, AWP.
charges, Williams refused. He demanded instead that all officers of
the local resign and that all radicals be identified and eliminated.37

Green's ineptitude and William's inflammatory denunciations
opened wounds which 18356 dissidents were not inclined to heal.
"Save our Union" flyers financed by penny bingo were circulated
among workers disillusioned by AFL failure. Machinist Mark Robb
joined Haser and Zonarich in a call for an industrial union at 18356
meetings. Machinists union business agent J.V. Pessamato appeared
before 18356 and warned the local of the consequences of "jurisdic-
tional trespass." A. O. Wharton, President of the International Asso-
ciation of Machinists, informed 18356 that it must observe the "juris-
dictional rights" of his union or face the loss of its charter. David
Williams also warned the local that if it did not rescind the member-
ship of the machinists, the matter would be taken to Green. Revoca-
tion of its charter would be the probable result. The local responded
on 21 March 1935 that the machinists had been disassociated. The
local explained that they had been admitted only to prevent them
from joining Alcoa's company union. Machinist Robb continued
to attend and speak at 18356 meetings as late as 7 June. When Green
learned of this he dashed off a directive to 18356 to dissociate the
machinists by 1 July or face expulsion from the AFL. On 28 June,
18356 complied.38 That was the last time the AFL was able to intimi-
date the aluminum workers of New Kensington.

In 1935, the National Recovery Act was struck down by the
Supreme Court, the Wagner Act was passed by Congress, and the
CIO was born. David Williams continued to direct the Aluminum
Workers' Council. He negotiated an agreement with Alcoa in
October 1935. Management again agreed to accept the principles of
collective bargaining, but signed no union contract. Local 18356
praised William's "capable and skillful leadership" to government
agencies, but the bickering between Williams and the local continued
unabated. Williams continued to blame the Aluminum Workers'
Council for the failure of the August strike, and the local blamed the AFL. In the view of 18356 the greatest obstacle to the unionization of New Kensington’s aluminum workers was the AFL, not Alcoa. At meetings complaints were voiced about the Federation’s “pathetic indifference” to the problems of workers in the aluminum industry. The object of the AFL was apparently to keep aluminum workers “subdued and quiescent.” In April 1936 the Allegheny Valley Central Labor Union was forced to surrender its charter to the AFL. That body had voted a public expression of sympathy for the CIO. Local 18356 lost no time in dashing off a letter to William Green demanding the restoration of the charter. Green’s refusal was proof positive of his hostile intentions.\(^39\)

The emergence of the CIO offered both an alternative to the AFL and renewed hope to thousands of disenchanted aluminum workers in New Kensington. Thousands who had deserted the union in 1934 returned to the fold in the spring and summer of 1936. The local invited CIO organizer John Brophy to speak to its membership. The Peoples Press, an organ of industrial unionism, was adopted as its official publication. Local 18356 made no attempt to hide its fraternization with the CIO. Other aluminum worker locals were invited to attend functions at which Brophy, Pat Fagan, and Glenn McCabe were scheduled to speak. John Haser and Nick Zonarich believed that fraternization with the CIO was nothing less than a prelude to industrial unionism and secession from the AFL. Moderates in the local had not yet given up on the AFL, and hoped that the presence of the CIO in New Kensington would force Green to issue the long-awaited international charter.\(^40\)

William Green continued to stall on the charter question even when faced with the loss of 18356 to a rival organization. In order to prevent the creation of a “wild industrial organization” in New Kensington, David Williams announced that his office would monitor the local’s finances. Williams was well aware of the successful recruiting drive which was underway, and hoped to maintain a measure of control by collecting the per capita tax that locals were required to pay to the AFL. By such an action he hoped to prevent

\(^39\) B. Gravatt to George Berry, 6 November 1935; Minutes, 18356, 22 November 1935; Gravatt to William J. Kelly, 5 December 1935; Minutes, 18356, 26 May, 7 April 1936; B. Gravatt to W. Green, 22 May 1936; Green to Gravatt, 3 June 1936, AWP.

\(^40\) John Brophy to B. Gravatt, 22 June 1936; Minutes, 18356, 23 June, 30 June, 7 July, 1 December 1936; Howlett to Local 19104, 7 July 1936, AWP. Haser, Zonarich, Petrigni, Garbiniski—Pauli Interviews.
the heretofore bankrupt local from transferring those fresh funds to CIO coffers. Williams remained as tactless as ever. He demanded that the local conduct an audit, implying that its officers had submitted false per capita tax reports. The local promptly refused the audit request. Exasperated, Williams told the local that he was going to get control of its books because 18356 was “merely a dues collecting agency for the AFL.”

Green’s inactivity and Williams’ recklessness destroyed both AFL credibility and any hope of reconciliation. It is clear that by January 1937, the CIO faction had become the majority in New Kensington. Perceiving an imminent break with the AFL, members of the executive board moved decisively. Mary Peli withdrew the local’s funds from an Arnold bank in February 1937. Nearly $20,000 in union funds were stored under her bed pending their disposition by the local. Thus having secured the local’s financial assets, the executive board convened a special Sunday meeting on 5 March 1937. The executive board announced that the clandestine withdrawal of union funds had been necessitated by the presence of AFL “stool-pigeons” in the local. The establishment of a new CIO account and audit were approved by the membership. An end to the payment of per capita taxes to the AFL was also approved. After grievances against the AFL were aired, the membership agreed to convene an Aluminum Workers convention in New Kensington for the purpose of founding an industrial union under the auspices of the CIO. A call was sent out to all Aluminum Workers locals inviting them to participate.

Members of the executive board were so sure of local anti-AFL sentiment they issued invitations to the convention to John L. Lewis and William Green ten days prior to the 5 March meeting. Green declined, and Lewis sent surrogate John Brophy. The invitations to the scattered Aluminum Worker locals produced mixed results. Local 19338, Louisville, Kentucky opposed the break with the AFL as did 18780, East St. Louis. Williams had visited them and attributed the secession sentiment to a “clique of reds.” The Massena, New York local even refused to receive emissaries sent by 18356 for

41. W. Green to B. Gravatt, 28 July 1936; D. Williams to P. Howlett, 4 March 1936; Minutes, 18356, 19 July 1936; D. Williams to Gravatt, 30 September 1936; Minutes, Special Meeting, Local 18356, 5 March 1937, AWP.

42. Petrigni Interview; Minutes, 18356, 5 March 1937, AWP.
the purpose of promoting the convention. As 18356 made preparations for the convention Williams continued to attribute the rupture to "communists and disrupters." Green suspended the local on 12 March, but 18356 refused to return its charter or turn over its treasury to the AFL. On 17 March the AFL filed suit against 18356 in federal court in Pittsburgh. The litigation would not be finally settled until 1942, five long years after 18356 had jumped to the CIO.43

On 12 April 1937, the constitutional convention of the Aluminum Workers' of America convened in the Elks Hall in New Kensington. John Brophy and Len DeCaux, editor of the Union News Service, were in attendance. Twenty-one delegates, representing only four aluminum Worker locals, founded the Aluminum Workers of America, CIO. Fourteen of the delegates represented the New Kensington area. Local 20257, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, supported the CIO but did not send delegates. The only non-Pennsylvania Locals represented were Fairmont, West Virginia and Alcoa, Tennessee.44

The New Kensington delegation took the lead. Their plant housed six thousand workers employed in thirty-seven different crafts. Traditional craft unions were simply too divided, and therefore too weak. The AFL had proven its faithlessness on at least two occasions, and had done nothing to unionize fifty thousand aluminum workers which were as yet unorganized in the aluminum industry.45

Following a vote for affiliation with the CIO, a number of resolutions were introduced and passed by the delegates. The convention endorsed a resolution offered by John Haser condemning the AFL. Louis Petrigni demanded and the delegates supported an organizing campaign for all aluminum plants. If that were not done, work might be sent to non-union sites. Haser and Petrigni also introduced resolutions condemning European fascism and its American offspring, the Black Legion.46

The CIO granted the Aluminum Workers of America a charter on 15 June 1937. AFL Local 18356 became Local 2, AWA. Nick Zonarich

43. W. Pasnick to J. L. Lewis, 25 February 1937; Pasnick to William Green, 25 February 1937; Thomas R. Jarrell to B. Gravatt, 7 March 1937; Local 18780 to W. Pasnick, 6 March 1937; L. H. Fallon to Keith Sward, 1 March 1937; L. H. Fallon to Walter Pasnick, 1 March 1937; Williams to 18356, 6 March 1937; John Haser to W. Green, 16 March 1937; AFL vs Aluminum Workers Local 18356, U.S. District Court, Pittsburgh, 17 March 1937, AWP.

44. Constitutional Convention of the Aluminum Workers of America, New Kensington, Pennsylvania, 12-15 April 1937; B. Gravatt to Leonard Break, 26 March 1937; AWP.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.
was elected international president and John Haser became business agent for Local 2. Local 2 became the center of a nationwide organizing drive launched by the CIO. Louis Petrigni and his wife Mary Peli Petrigni were dispatched to Alcoa's Cleveland plant. Charles Pauli was sent to Fayette, Indiana and John Haser to Edgewater, New Jersey. 47 Although the AWA organizing campaign enjoyed widespread success, the goal of a single industrial union representing all aluminum workers was never achieved. 48 A nationwide CIO Aluminum Workers contract with Alcoa was finally signed in 1939.

The new found power of Local 2 was felt immediately in the Allegheny Valley. Not only did the Aluminum Workers present a united front to Alcoa, but they plunged into politics as well. 49 The local had debated the endorsement of Democratic candidates in local elections while still an AFL affiliate. In 1936, local 18356 had supported John Dent, president of the Jeanette, Pennsylvania, Rubber Workers Local, and Fred Broad for election to the State Assembly. But in 1937 four aluminum workers stood for election in New Kensington and Arnold, and candidates representing CIO affiliates dominated the Democratic slate. In New Kensington and Arnold the aluminum workers could deliver in excess of ten thousand votes. That power was dramatically reflected by the appearance of persons friendly to labor on school boards, city councils, county commissions, as mayors and burgesses, and in the office of district attorney and sheriff. Fred Broad, elected Westmoreland County Sheriff in 1939 with AWA and UMWA support, polled more votes than any other candidate for office in the election. 50

Local 2 used a variety of methods to transmit its point of view to its members and the community. Its recording secretary wrote a column in the New Kensington Dispatch entitled "Valley Labor News." The local also sponsored the Aluminum Workers Forum,

47. John Haser to Local 2, 15 May 1939; Mary Peli Petrigni to Local 2, 9 February 1938, AWP. 48. John Haser reported in 1944 that the AWA controlled 16 Alcoa Plants, the Steelworkers 2, the Die-Casters 3, Auto workers 3, and the AFL 6. John Haser to George Hobaugh, 24 May 1944, AWP. 49. Local 2 reported the presence of a "rump movement" sponsored by AFL "stooges" in 1939. No one seemed to take the AFL drive seriously, and it did in fact fail. John Haser to Louis and Mary Petrigni, 3 February 1939; William Hanka to George Hobaugh, 31 January 1939; Hanka to Wesley Crampton, 3 February 1939, AWP. 50. Minutes, 18356, 11 October 1935; John Dent to Bert Gravatt, 24 March 1936; Fred Broad to Bert Gravatt, 18 November 1936; Fred Broad to William Hanka; 2 December 1939, AWP.
a weekly public affairs program. The CIO message was further disseminated by the *Peoples Press* and the *Aluminum Workers Journal*. A well organized women's auxiliary insured that the AWA was identified with local civic and philanthropic activities. The local also cultivated good relations with the New Kensington and Arnold police.\(^{51}\)

On 12 July 1938, Local 2 informed John L. Lewis that the Allegheny Valley, once known as a "Black Valley" for Unionism, had become a "CIO Valley." The local claimed that "the spirit of Industrial Unionism" had been "injected into the hearts of every man, woman and child". The new order of things was reflected in the union's dealings with the Aluminum Company of America. The union struck Alcoa in 1937, 1938, and 1939 on the way to the conclusion of a comprehensive union contract signed on 11 November 1939. However, there was generally an absence of rancor and violence in those disputes. Violence led to tragedy in Alcoa, Tennessee in July 1937. A union picket was slain by Alcoa guards.\(^{52}\) But that sort of thing did not occur in New Kensington.

The relatively amicable state of affairs which existed in the Allegheny Valley was discussed at a meeting in Cincinnati on 5 November 1938. The First General Conference of the affiliated locals of the Aluminum Workers of America was informed that Local 2 had a rational working relationship with Alcoa. Delegate Edward Troutman explained that the company was "not too arbitrary" and that many problems were settled by "mutual understanding." That amity existed in spite of substantial layoffs in Local 2 and summer-long picket lines in New Kensington. Bert Gravatt, past president of the local, told the gathering that the normalization of relations with Alcoa was due to the aggressive policies adopted by 18356. "We didn't believe in sitting tight," Gravatt told his fellow delegates. Our organization is "mighty potent" in politics, "municipal, county and state." A coherent publicity campaign carefully orchestrated by the local also brought the union cause favorably into public view. George Hobaugh, past treasurer of Local 2, explained that the "troubles" that an otherwise exemplary New Kensington local was

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51. The Arnold Chief of Police was a guest speaker at the Constitutional Convention on 12 April 1937. The Local took pains to publicly thank the police following every strike. Local law enforcement agencies were never an adversary during Aluminum Workers Strikes.

52. Frank Carson to John L. Lewis, 12 July 1938; Nick Zonarich to George Hobaugh, 28 December 1939; Fred Wetmore to John Haser, 9 July 1937, AWP.
having were attributable not to Alcoa, but to Communists "boring from within."  

AWA President Nick Zonarich was a Socialist and an outspoken anti-Communist. But Zonarich balked at a motion to conduct an investigation to ferret out all persons in the AWA with Communist or Fascist leanings. Zonarich proposed that the problem be handled diplomatically, so that the radicals might be quietly controlled. An internecine fight would only weaken the union’s united front against business. Zonarich was certain that the Communists controlled no locals, and that none were present on the AWA executive board, Bert Gravatt agreed that the Communists constituted a small bloc in New Kensington, and that a purge would only drive them underground. The union’s most formidable enemy was the “reactionary force.” A red-baiting campaign would only give ammunition to the Dies Committee, an enemy of unionism. The motion was defeated by a vote of sixteen to one, and the issue of Communism was quietly buried.

In 1940, Local 2 prospered. War production ended layoffs in an expanding aluminum industry. John Haser reported that the membership of Local 2 had grown to 7,075. The local seemed preoccupied with the draft, leaves of absence for military service, and fingerprinting of Alcoa employees. The local’s secretary reported that “working conditions improved to the extent that we seldom find anything wrong with the place in which we work.”

On 21 November 1940, the apparent serenity in New Kensington was shattered by a wildcat. According to accounts in the press Thomas Davis, a committeeeman of Local 2, had attempted to collect delinquent dues from an aluminum worker. The worker allegedly responded by brandishing a knife. When word of the altercation reached the work force, they walked off the job demanding that he be disciplined. Management responded that the problem was an internal union dispute. Local 2 agreed that the affair was a matter for the union, but insisted the walkout was not due to Communists or radicals in the union.

54. Ibid; Zonarich Interview.
55. John Haser to all Shop Committees, 16 October 1940; R. M. Ferry to Local 2, 16 October, 11 November 1940; John Haser to Committeeemen, 29 March 1940; William J. Hanka to O. B. Lackey, 8 February 1940, AWP.
56. New Kensington Dispatch, 23, 27, 29 November 1940.
The wildcat lasted for eight days. Phillip Murray negotiated a solution with Alcoa, and 7500 aluminum workers returned to their jobs. The recalcitrant worker was ostracized and sent to a lonely boiler room in the Logans Ferry Plant. The furor died down, but only briefly. The issue of radicalism in the local had again been raised, this time publicly. The penetration of “leftist elements” into American unions, particularly those involved in defense industries, had become a matter of nationwide discussion in 1940. Communism would become the consuming issue in the election of officers for Local 2, scheduled for 15 December.

On the eve of the election Nick Zonarich charged that Communists were behind the slate of candidates headed by incumbent President Al Daughenbaugh. Zonarich’s volte face on Communism appears at least in part to have been politically motivated. His presidency depended upon the support of Local 2, which constituted the largest voting bloc in the AWA. The decision to make Communism an issue in the election was denounced by Daughenbaugh as a ploy by Zonarich to arrest the erosion of his support in the local. Daughenbaugh also charged that Zonarich’s pre-election revelations were designed to cover up the fact that Socialists had dominated the union for several years.57

Zonarich was an admitted disciple of Norman Thomas, and had a reputation for taking care of his friends in the union. His left wing connections no doubt caused him some discomfort, for the CIO had begun to identify and banish its radical elements in 1940.58 The AWA president was clearly vulnerable to Daughenbaugh’s charges and to whatever anti-radical pressures the conservative leadership of the CIO might choose to exert on him. Father Charles Owen Rice, Chaplain of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, joined Zonarich in denouncing the Daughenbaugh slate and its “more pay, less speed up” campaign. Father Rice believed that the election of a

57. New Kensington Daily Dispatch, 13, 14, 15 December 1940; Valley Daily News, 13, 14, 16 December 1940.

58. *The People’s Press*, edited by Keith Sward, was replaced as the official organ of the AWA because of its editor's alleged pro-Communist leanings. The nature of Nick Zonarich’s ideological commitments to socialism are not clear. The contents of his Penn State oral interview indicate that he became a pragmatic union bureaucrat. Zonarich confirmed the presence of Communist “noise makers” in Local 2, but claimed they never achieved domination. John Haser also claimed in his oral interview that New Kensington had its share of Communists like all mill towns. Haser believed these people weren’t anti-American and dropped their affiliation upon learning the party was controlled from outside the United States.
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slate sprinkled with "Communist stooges" would be a "black day for the AWA and the CIO." Rice acknowledged that Zonarich had been a Socialist in his youth, but gave assurances that Zonarich was a "foe of Communism" and "a supporter of true American Unionism." 59

No less than four members of the Daughenbaugh slate were thought to have an affinity for Communism. However, the center of conflict was the contest for business agent. Incumbent John Haser, Zonarich's personal choice, was challenged by Louis Petrigni, a man Zonarich claimed had "played real closely with the Communists." 60 The choice for business agent was of critical importance to Zonarich, for that person conducted the day-by-day affairs of the local. If Petrigni were elected, Zonarich would have had great difficulty in controlling a local which was vital to his interests. Haser was a trusted Zonarich ally. Petrigni seemed considerably to the left of Zonarich, and authored many resolutions condemning international fascism at union meetings. It was also clear that Petrigni was an independent type who would not simply follow Zonarich’s lead.

The election produced such mixed results that it is impossible to assess the precise impact that the Communism issue had upon the union electorate. Haser defeated Petrigni, thus assuring a measure of control for Zonarich. Daughenbaugh won by a majority of three to one. Two alleged Communist sympathizers were also elected. The storm over the election passed quickly, and union operations resumed their normal course. The major casualty of the conflict was Louis Petrigni. Mary Peli Petrigni reported from Cleveland that her husband had been fired from his job as organizer by Zonarich because he had opposed the Haser-Zonarich faction in the election. 61

The factional conflict which rocked the AWA in 1940 was not the sole problem plaguing the organization. Although war would bring prosperity to aluminum workers, the financial condition of the AWA remained tenuous. The AWA controlled sixteen of thirty Alcoa plants in 1944. The lion's share of the International's budget was derived from Local 2. That budget supported International officers' salaries and a small organizing staff of five. Nick Zonarich had always favored one large industrial union for all workers in the metals

59. Pittsburgh Press, 13, 15, 16 December 1940; New Kensington Daily Dispatch, 13, 14, 16 December 1940.

60. Zonarich Interview.

61. New Kensington Daily Dispatch, 16, 17 December 1940; undated clipping, New Kensington Dispatch, AWP.
industry. John Haser anticipated a major struggle between the AWA and Alcoa after the war. The AWA could not hope to win such a struggle with its meager resources. Haser and Zonarich therefore quietly promoted the amalgamation of Aluminum Workers with the United Steel Workers of America.  

During the war the activities and attitudes of the AWA were shrouded in mystery. In 1944 complaints were raised that Local 2 had not received reports from the International for two years. The International was in fact in debt to the Garment Workers and Steel Workers from whom Zonarich had borrowed funds. John Haser, not Zonarich, sold the amalgamation idea to Local 2. The USWA had 800,000 members, the AWA less than 20,000. The USWA had assets of four million dollars, the AWA was destitute. The USWA had four hundred organizers, the AWA had five. Local 2 appointed delegates to attend the AWA Convention in Hot Springs, Arkansas on 5 June 1944. The delegates were instructed to support amalgamation if Phillip Murray would make a commitment to organize all aluminum workers, and allow local unions to retain autonomy and their assets. 

On 13 June 1944 John Haser reported that the AWA delegates had adopted a resolution for amalgamation. Delegate Alan Hill explained that the organization’s new name would be the United Steel and Aluminum Workers of America. Hill also announced that John Haser would soon begin a campaign to organize all white collar workers at Alcoa. On 9 July William Hart and Michael Petrak of the Steel Workers appeared at Local 2 to explain the white collar organizing campaign. Events were moving far too quickly for some members. President Joseph Carey complained that amalgamation had been pushed on his Local without time for analysis. His objections were politely deflected, and the local turned in its old charter. Local 2 became Local 302, United Steel Workers of America. 

Amalgamation was accomplished without the benefit of debate by the membership. Some members believed that even though amalgamation had been railroaded through the local by Haser and Zonarich, it was nevertheless warranted. But questions about the new partnership arose quickly. John Haser and Nick Zonarich had been

62. Zonarich, Haser Interviews; Haser to George Hobaugh, 24 May 1944, AWP.
63. Minutes, Local 2, 4 April 1944; Interview with Louis Saulle, Vice President, Local 2, 20 June 1980; John Haser to Theodore Beal, 24 May 1944; Haser to G. Hobaugh, 24 May 1944; Minutes, Local 2, 14 May 1944, AWP.
64. Minutes, Local 2, 14 June, 9 July, 10 August 1944, AWP.
elevated to staff positions in the USWA. The local wanted to know if it would continue to be serviced by a full time business agent. Some members feared that a part time business agent would serve the local from the district USWA office. On 5 September President Carey reported the results of an executive board meeting conducted with Nick Zonarich in attendance. A “full time” business agent would also serve Steel Worker locals in spite of protests to the contrary. Carey announced that the treasury of Local 302 had been transferred to the USWA. He attributed the failure of USWA to change its name to Steelworkers and Aluminum Workers to an oversight by Phillip Murray.  

On 26 September, a special meeting was convened at Local 302 to discuss amalgamation. For the first time the eighteen point program for amalgamation adopted at the June convention was read and explained to the membership. Under the terms of the merger Aluminum Workers were governed by the USWA Constitution. The Union name would be changed to reflect the presence of Aluminum Workers in the USWA.  

Full time AWA personnel were transferred to the USWA, and would serve the Aluminum Workers whenever practical. William Hart, USWA staff representative, explained that John Haser had become a member of his staff but would continue to service the Aluminum Workers. If the local desired a full time business agent, it would have to bear the expense. AWA assets and collective bargaining contracts were to be assumed by the USWA. Nick Zonarich announced that amalgamation had been “perfected,” and could not be changed.  

The independent Aluminum Workers’ Union had indeed ceased to exist.

The marriage of the AWA and USWA was not entirely tranquil. The quiet work of Haser and Zonarich on behalf of amalgamation had enabled them to present Local 2 with a fait accompli. But their efforts did not eliminate the insurgent tradition in the local. Sporadic grumbling continued well after Local 2 had received its USWA charter. The Steelworkers had not only reneged on the union name change. Some Aluminum Workers also complained that local autonomy meant little more than neglect by the USWA. Local 302 remained John Haser’s responsibility, but the payment of per capita

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65. Garbinski-Pauli Interview; Saulle Interview; Minutes, Executive Board, Local 302, 10 August 1944; Minutes, Local 302, 22 August 1944; 5 September 1944, AWP.
66. The name of the Union was never changed.
67. Minutes, Special meeting, Local 302, 26 September 1944, AWP.
fees was not buying the quality of service to which some members of the local had become accustomed. On 8 July, 1946, Local 302 seated officers who were apparently hostile to Haser and the USWA. A flood of recriminations followed. On 20 January, 1948, the USWA suspended all local officers and placed Local 302 in Trusteeship.

The local officers were charged with misappropriation of funds, illegal court actions, libelling and slandering international officers, impeding the International, and violating the USWA Constitution. As the conflict warmed up allegations of Communism and subversion were added; the officers were accused of consorting with a known Communist organizer. The accused responded that the entire affair was simply a smear campaign inspired by Haser, Hart, and the losing slate in the 1946 election. The object, they asserted, was the usurpation of power in the local. Suspended President Frank Hill claimed that the conflict had begun because Haser and Hart were too busy to take care of the local's business. Vice President Sam Anthony accused the staff of District 19 of conducting a purge of President Hill and his executive board because of their outspoken criticism of the inadequate services rendered by the USWA.68

The suspended officers continued to hold rump sessions long after the trustees had assumed control of the local. Bert Gravatt, past president of the local and a founder of the Aluminum Workers' Union, was named chief administrator of the trusteeship by the USWA. Gravatt was immediately assailed as a dictator and a pawn of District 19. The ousted officers attempted to institute counter charges against Gravatt and Haser, but that effort was quashed by the courts. The ousted officers continued to publish their version of The Aluminum Workers Journal, official organ of the local.69 They also had access to the local press. On 2 February, Father Casimir Orlemanski, pastor at St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, defended the suspended officers in the New Kensington Daily Dispatch. Orlemanski suggested the restoration of the ousted executive board and the suspension of William Hart for not attending to his job. If the USWA insisted on trying the suspended officers, Orelmanski suggested that the trial be conducted by the rank and file. The priest's implied distrust of District 19 officialdom was clarified in an open appeal written

68. New Kensington Daily Dispatch, 6 April, 2 February 1948. The minutes for the Local are not reliable for this period.

by Sam Chine, suspended recording secretary of Local 302. Chine charged that he had been told by the New Kensington Democratic chairman that Hart and Haser were planning to get rid of Frank Hill and his executive board. Chine also stated that Father Orle-manski had been solicited by Haser and Hart to support their plot to remove Hill and his board. Chine also emphatically denied the existence of a Communist conspiracy in the local. 70

By March Communism had replaced official malfeasance as the chief issue in the conflict. The supporters of District 19 alleged that the suspended officers, dubbed "club 11," were a dangerous political clique backed by Communists. They accused the dissidents of hiring left-wing lawyer Morris J. Kaplan to defend them. Kaplan, they alleged, was identified with Communist unions in New York. The Worker countered that the ousted local officers were fighting both the Mellons and their union stooges. The Worker accused William Hart of forcing an Alcoa inspired "speed-up" on the Aluminum Workers. The Daily Worker also pointed out that Hart was president of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists and hoped to use the incident to silence opponents of that movement. 71

It is unclear whether the conflict of 1948 emanated from internal union politics, Communist subversion, or both. The merits of the charges and counter-charges remain muddled. It is clear, however, that the USWA chose to use a show trial to resolve the conflict. On 15 July, a trial committee convened hearings in New Kensington which would drag on until 16 September. Defendants denounced the trial as a mockery which served the interests of "rotten politics". Others not directly connected with the proceedings questioned the objectivity of the hearing officers and the wisdom of the trial. Some believed that problems connected with elected officials of Local 302 could have been best remedied by the rank and file in the next election. 72

Trial transcripts reflect a preoccupation with Communist subversion rather than official malfeasance. Six executive board members were found to have engaged in subversive activities. Three were cited for conspiracy to break away from the USWA. Two were found

72. Transcript of Testimony, before the Trial Committee, Local 302, United Steel Workers of America, CIO, 15 July—16 September 1948; New Kensington Daily Dispatch, 28 July 1948; Garbinski–Pauli Interview; Saulle Interview.
guilty of misappropriation of union funds and records. The trial committee recommended expulsion of President Frank Hill and five others. Probation was recommended for four men, and one man was not sentenced. On 5 November, the fate of the eleven men was placed before the electorate of Local 302. The report, findings, and recommendations of the trial committee were rejected by secret ballot, 968 to 615.73

A veteran aluminum worker and long time member of the New Kensington local once mused that the upheavals which rocked his union were not caused by Alcoa.74 His observation is corroborated by the events of 1937, 1940, and 1948. Conflicting ambitions and factionalism within the union movement produced those tumultuous episodes. An internal struggle for a union that worked produced the rupture with the AFL and the subsequent charges of radicalism. The furor over the Daughenbaugh slate was the byproduct of a struggle between Nick Zonarich and his adversaries in Local 2. The anti-Communist show trial accompanied a power struggle between Local 302 and agents of the USWA. Allegheny Valley Aluminum Workers were not subjected to violent repression like their brethren in the coal mines and steel mills of the region. The unionization of Alcoa had exacted casualties, but the struggle did not produce prolonged bitterness. Collective bargaining between the union and Alcoa conformed to the standards set by the Wagner Act. Nevertheless, corporate decisions accounted for the demise of Local 302. In 1966, the local's membership had fallen to 2200 workers. Shop closings threatened five hundred more jobs. The local signed a “save the plant” agreement with Alcoa which included concessions on seniority, retirement, and incentive provisions of the union's contract. On 1 July 1970 Alcoa announced the termination of its manufactured products division and the closing of the New Kensington works. By 31 March 1971 the closings had been accomplished. The Aluminum Workers' Union and the aluminum city in which it flourished are now but fading memories.

73. Transcripts of Testimony, 1-10; Bert Gravatt to Sam Chine, 6 November 1948, AWP.
74. Garbinski Interview.