Confrontation at Rossiter: The Coal Strike of 1927-1928 and Its Aftermath

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Coal miners and the United Mine Workers faced an extended crisis in the 1920's as coal operators sought cost reductions and pressured unionized miners to accept wage cutbacks and even to abandon the union. Sympathetic politicians, at the state and local levels, backed the large coal companies with armed personnel and injunctions. Coal miners and the United Mine Workers responded by engaging in a series of strikes, highlighted by the coal strike of 1927. In conducting these strikes the miners and the union not only faced powerful opponents, but suffered from internal divisions. District 2, which encompassed Rossiter in Indiana County and the surrounding area, was headed by John Brophy, who espoused union democracy and nationalization of the mines, and challenged the leadership of John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers in the 1920s. Current scholarship depicts this power struggle and the national labor picture in some detail. However, less attention has been paid to the events in District 2 which, not only mirrored national developments in the 1920's, but helped to set the stage for the union renewal of the 1930's as coal miners rejoined the United Mine Workers and became a key component of the Democratic Party.

In many respects conditions in Indiana County mirrored the national picture. Coal companies combined wealth with the political power of a sympathetic Republican Party. The Republican Party, which dominated the Indiana County political scene in the 1920's, forged a close relationship with business leaders. In particular, the party had strong ties with the coal operators and offered them support in recurrent coal strikes. Judge Jonathan Langham, a former chairman of the Indiana County Republican Party, issued a sweeping injunction against the coal miners and the United Mine Workers in the Rossiter Strike. John Fisher, a conservative Indiana County Republican, served as governor of Pennsylvania during the strike. Moreover, he had been both an attorney and a director of the Clearfield Bituminous Coal Corporation which operated the mines in Rossiter. Fisher and Langham were on close terms as reflected in the "Dear Nick" and "Dear John" salutations in their correspondence. Governor Fisher also supported Judge
Langham’s injunction in the Rossiter Case and condemned the subcommittee of the Committee on Interstate Commerce of the United States Senate for its criticism of Langham’s actions and outlook.2

Coal miners and coal operators of Indiana County fought several major battles following the end of World War I. Rossiter coal miners participated in the strikes of 1919 and 1922 and on occasion became involved in local struggles. In March 1921 the Rossiter miners shut down the Clearfield Bituminous Coal Corporation’s operations in their town. The controversy arose over the company’s requirement that day men should punch a time clock provided by the company. The majority of day men refused to comply and officials of the United Mine Workers supported their position. Union officials stated that their concurrence was needed to install a time clock and that no other mine in the district used one. Work resumed with the time clock after a month-long cessation of operations. This incident prefigured confrontations later in the decade as coal operators introduced cost cutting measures. They also sought changes in transportation rates which would make coal produced in the north more competitive with southern coal. However, coal companies focused their attention on labor costs and sought “concessions” from the miners and the union at a time of decreased union strength.3

The expiration of the Jacksonville Agreement, a 1924 measure which set the wages of coal miners at $7.50 a day, and the widespread violation of its terms by operators, gave urgency to the issue of negotiating a new agreement in 1927. Union representatives had been authorized by the convention of the United Mine Workers to negotiate the best wage agreement possible based on no reduction in wages. Pursuant to this charge they met in February 1927 with operators in Miami. At this meeting operators demanded both a downward revision of the Jacksonville scale and union acceptance of the principle that wages should be automatically adjusted to the changing price of coal. No agreement could be reached on wages at the Miami meetings and the union leadership began formulating plans for a nationwide strike to begin on April 1, 1927. The convention of the American Federation of Labor, in response to a plea from John L. Lewis, passed a resolution which called on its affiliated international unions to help the coal miners. However, the Coolidge administration refused to intervene in the dispute. Secretary of Labor James J. Davis could not get the major coal operators to meet with John L. Lewis. On April 1, 1927, almost 200,000 coal miners struck in the Central Competitive Field, beginning the largest coal strike since 1922.4

Negotiations at the District 2 level followed a somewhat different course. Representatives of the Bituminous Coal Operators Association of Pennsylvania and
district officers of the United Mine Workers met in Altoona on April 1, 1927. At this meeting they agreed to extend the wage rates of the Jacksonville Agreement until July 1, 1927 or the ratification of a new agreement. A wage scale committee, selected by a District 2 convention, met with coal operators in Philadelphia in late May. At this meeting the operators demanded a 20% wage reduction and declared that they would suspend operations after June 30th if no agreement was reached by that date. The operators contended that competition from non-union fields in the South necessitated major wage reductions. The Scale Committee refused this demand and condemned the operators for violating the human rights of coal miners. It declared that the union represented people while the operators represented property rights and that human rights came before property rights. It stated "that present wages and conditions do not now fully give our people the standards to which they are entitled by every concept of equity and justice." The impasse in negotiations continued and the strike began on July 1st. Strike activities in Indiana County focused on the mines of the Clearfield Bituminous Coal Corporation, which was the only major operator to maintain the Jacksonville Agreement into 1927. However, the officials contended that the company could not remain competitive with such a high wage rate and demanded an "adjustment" from the miners and the union.

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Rossiter, the main strike scene in Indiana County in 1927-28, was created when Jacob Smith sold part of his farm to the Clearfield Bituminous Coal Corporation in 1900. The company surveyed the layout of the town and named it Rossiter for E. W. Rossiter, treasurer of the New York Central Railroad (which owned the coal company). The site was located in one of the largest and richest coal fields in Indiana County. The coal mined in Rossiter was used by the New York Central to fuel its engines. Rossiter grew as a result of the railroad and the demand for coal generated by World War I. Its population peaked at 5,000 in 1917, but its economy maintained some strength in the early 1920's. The community was home to roughly 100 business establishments, including a company store. Although the coal miners usually suffered from a common poverty, ethnic differences were reflected in the physical separation of miners, who tended to live in different parts of town based on their nationalities. The population distribution was about one-third Italian; one-third Polish, Slavic, and Hungarian; and one-third Scottish, English Irish, German, and Welsh. There were no Mexican or African-American miners. The company's rationale for its exclusion of "colored" miners noted that the presence of "colored men" would have a demoralizing effect on the community, especially the schools, because of their "way of living."
The operations of the Clearfield Bituminous Coal Corporation became the focal point of the coal strike of 1927 in Indiana County. The confrontation at Rossiter and the sweeping injunction issued by Judge Langham were the strike's highlights. On July 1 approximately 750 miners at the Rossiter mine joined other coal miners in Western Pennsylvania on strike. Local Union No. 1726 adopted a resolution which it forwarded to state Senator Lee North, who represented Punxsutawney, the largest nearby town. The miners condemned the coal company for inaugurating a reign of terror designed to destroy their union by subjecting the miners and their wives to severe beatings. They requested the aid of Senator North in assuring them the rights guaranteed by the Constitution, which they alleged were being trampled upon by the hired gunmen of the coal company. The miners from Rossiter also engaged in direct action as they marched to other
mines in the vicinity where they sought to convince fellow miners to stop working. These activities led to an injunction against them by a judge of the Jefferson County Court. By August 1927 the problems faced by the miners increased as Sheriff J. M. Malcolm of Indiana County issued a proclamation which prohibited loitering, disturbance of the public peace, and gatherings of three or more persons.\(^7\)

Additional setbacks followed in September as the Greensburg State Police barracks dispatched six troopers to Rossiter with twenty-one deputies also stationed there. On September 19th the Rossiter mine of the Clearfield Bituminous Coal Corporation reopened on a non-union basis with most of its employees recruited from outside the district and paid on the lower 1917 scale. November brought another setback for the Rossiter strikers as Judge Langham issued a sweeping preliminary injunction which blocked virtually all of their activities. The injunction forbade picketing, marching or gathering for meetings or rallies. It prohibited the disbursement of union funds for use by striking miners. The order also forbade newspaper advertisements and other means of communication being used to aid the cause of the strikers and convincing miners to desist from work. Judge Langham's prohibition against singing hymns and holding church services on lots owned by the Magyar Presbyterian Church situated directly opposite the mouth of the mine was especially infuriating to the miners.\(^8\)

These developments gave the company the upper hand, but the strikers and the union tried to maintain morale and continue the struggle. The men from Rossiter and other union mines replied to the injunction by marching on the non-union camps, pulling out the miners and closing the mines. In July and August of 1927, in particular, auto caravans went to mines at Hamilton, Valier, and Adrian to try to persuade them that they were hurting the miners' cause by working below scale. They also held rallies in August addressed by Van Bittner, a United Mine Workers organizer. At the end of August, James Mark, President of District 2, sent a letter to district miners urging them to stick to the union and condemning the proclamations of sheriffs in Indiana County and nearby counties which declared a state of emergency. The company retaliated against these initiatives by the miners and the union by significantly increasing the rate of evictions in October. A letter sent to D. S. Shea, Superintendent of Police of the Buffalo, Rochester, and Pittsburgh Railway Company by R. J. Evans, General Superintendent of the company, conveys the extent of the dislocation. He declared that 130 eviction notices had been served, "103 of which were served Saturday, October 15, and the time limited
to 10 days.” His report of October 29th declared that 230 eviction notices had been served and 120 families had moved out. At the same time new families were moving into town, “more miners were employed and production was increasing.” By the end of November, according to a report of Superintendent Shea, 400 men were working at Rossiter of whom 90 were former employees. The union responded to this emergency by placing miners and their families in Symerstown, a suburb of Rossiter, and beginning the construction of barracks to house the homeless. The barracks were 20 feet wide and 120 feet long and were constructed of single boards lined with tar paper. Each unit contained 20 rooms 10 feet by 12 feet. The occupants obtained water from wells and springs located near each unit and used toilets built alongside the barracks.9

Residents not only experienced unsanitary housing conditions, but faced harassment and violence from mine guards, deputies and the state police. In testi-
mony before a congressional committee, A. J. Phillips, a strike leader, described several instances of harassment. In one instance "... nine state constabulary or coal and iron police, two on horses and seven walking on foot, chased our people right down on the side of the road, and crowded the people off the road...." In another case when the children were coming from Bible reading, "the coal and iron police drove them back." In his testimony before the committee and in an affidavit of complaint, Steve Naggy described being arrested, hit with a blackjack and having his jaw broken as a result of being mistreated by deputy sheriffs.\textsuperscript{10}

The miners and union officials tried to rally support for their cause. For example, they held several meetings in October 1927 to present their case and to boost the morale of miners. An October 8th gathering attracted at least 500 participants and an October 16th meeting in Rossiter drew a crowd over 200 spectators. These meetings supplemented attempts by the officer of District 2 to enlist the help of the public. The officers addressed a letter to "Dear Friends" in which they condemned the coal company for its tyrannical tactics. They pinpointed the effects of evictions on the miners and children of the miners who now faced the problems of insufficient coal and inadequate clothing. The letter concluded with an appeal to all liberty-loving and humane citizens to assist in their struggle for liberty. A second "Dear Friends" letter sent on November 10, 1927, provided additional arguments for public sympathy and aid. Union officers reiterated their denunciations of the tyrannical and despicable tactics of the coal companies and contrasted this record with the "splendid spirit" of the coal miners. They declared that the miners would not submit to demands "to lower his standard of living; stultify his humanhood; turn traitor and destroy his Organization."\textsuperscript{11}

The Rossiter strikers solicited aid from Punxsutawney, Indiana County and other parts of the state. The Central Labor Council of Punxsutawney, for example, sought contributions of money, food, and clothing in the business district of the town. The solicitors emphasized both the dire straits of the recipients and the role of Rossiter miners as good customers of the merchants. The merchants responded to this appeal with generous donations of clothing, shoes, and money. Other donors included several doctors, the Knights of Pythias Lodge and the Catholic Daughters of America. Another wave of donors followed this initial surge with contributions from Attorney Charles J. Margiotti, various groups of workers, and the Fraternal Order of Eagles. In addition the Central Trades Council of Punxsutawney sponsored a benefit performance for the wives and children of striking miners
which featured a film and a band. On occasion, the strikers and their families solicited help outside the Rossiter and Punxsutawney area. For example, a group of men and women from Rossiter went to Indiana to solicit aid from residents with a letter of identification from the secretary of the Indiana Chamber of Commerce. The residents of Blairsville, an Indiana County town located 12 miles from Indiana, made generous relief contributions through their churches and schools. Railroad workers collected aid for the Rossiter miners and advised them to stick it out. Richard Gilbert, secretary-treasurer of District 2, prepared a form letter to introduce the solicitors to potential donors in which he authorized the bearer to solicit relief for the destitute and starving miners of District 2 in Allentown, York, and Lancaster. Robert Slee, Secretary of Local 1736, was one of the solicitors.12

Periodic mass meetings continued in 1928, highlighted by Mitchell Day activities in Punxsutawney on April 1st. This annual event honored the memory and contributions of John Mitchell, a prominent leader of the early United Mine Workers. The parade featured almost 1,000 miners and more than 200 women and children, as well as an audience of more than 2,000. Women and children, the majority from Rossiter, led the parade. The boys carried banners with inscriptions such as “Join the Union” and “In Union There’s Strength,” while the girls carried flags. A. J. Phillips, a Rossiter strike leader and Church of God clergyman, thanked the people of Punxsutawney for their support. James Mark, President of District 2, condemned the coal operators. An address by Mrs. Norman Sholtis was the most impressive aspect of the program, according to the Punxsutawney Spirit. She described the problems of a wife and mother in strike periods and urged wives and mothers of strikers to back their husbands and sons. Most of the participants in the festivities came from Rossiter, but residents of neighboring towns also joined the celebration. On June 5th Philip Murray, vice president of the United Mine Workers, and James Mark spoke to a mass meeting in Sykesville, a town north of Punxsutawney. They called on coal miners to stick together, a theme reiterated in the speeches of Phillips and Sholtis. Police intervention aborted a meeting of almost 500 miners near Punxsutawney on June 24th after Reverend Phillips prayed and the participants sang two hymns. The dispersal of the meeting prevented the coal miners from hearing speeches by several United Mine Workers officials.13

In late February 1928 the strikers and their supporters were buoyed when the Interstate Commerce Committee of the United States Senate arrived in Indiana County. The presence of committee members and a press entourage placed the plight of the coal miners in the national spotlight. This visit was part of their inves-
tigation of conditions in the coal fields of Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Ohio. Committee members saw the issues in the strike as transcending labor-management relations and encompassing the issue of civil liberties. They probed the subject of whether the strikers had lost their constitutional rights to freedom of
speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of the press. Senator Robert Wagner of New York challenged Judge Langham’s outlook and actions. After a reference to “drastic injunctions,” he posed a question which was fundamental to their interchange. “Is it your idea of the law . . . that a striker has no right to speak to one who is employed upon premises where a strike has been called?” He was joined by Montana Senator Burton Wheeler in a series of questions to Judge Langham about whether it was an infringement of the rights of strikers to prevent them from placing an advertisement in a newspaper urging that miners not work here because a strike for higher wages and better conditions was underway. He also declared that “you are getting into a pretty dangerous thing, it seems to me, when you issue injunctions against the singing of such hymns. . . .” Senator Wagner pursued a similar line of questioning in an interchange with A. L. Musser, vice president of the coal company. He asked Musser whether the injunction would “be repugnant to your ideas of liberty and right of free speech. . . .” He added: “you restrain any attempt to address any of the strike breakers, and you in addition to that, as I read the injunction, prevent these same strikers from giving the public their version of the situation by means of newspaper advertisements.” “Both as a judge and attorney . . . I never saw an injunction as comprehensive as this one.” Senator Wheeler pointed to the dangers of the injunction. “If the courts of this nation are going to be used to enjoin religious proceedings guaranteed to the people by the Constitution, then we have no legal Government. I will say you are just breeding anarchy by that sort of thing.” The Reverend A. J. Phillips, a miner and strike leader, proclaimed the right of strikers to freedom of religion and he denounced injustice. He declared “I am a law-abiding citizen as far as constitutional laws are concerned, but I think there is a good many things that they have done to us people that are unjust. We have tried to instruct our people every day as they go out of this place, to go peaceably and to contend with these strikebreakers; even a look is enough.” In spite of these precautions, strikers suffered from the violence and intimidation of the coal and iron police and the deputy sheriffs. For example, Mrs. David Malven, a Rossiter resident, testified to being shoved and poken in the stomach and described how a man was “beat up and almost killed.”

Senator Wheeler, in his questioning of James W. Mack, attorney for the coal company, declared that “the injunction that this judge of yours granted did not make any distinction between peaceful picketing and any other kind and consequently under the law that injunction restrains peaceful picketing as well as any other kind of picketing just for the reason that id did not differentiate between
Wheeler asked Mack whether it was a violation of freedom of speech to prohibit a striking miner from going to a man and saying to him that I wish you would not go to work at this mine because we are striking for higher wages and better living conditions. Mack replied it was not an issue of free speech but an example of intimidation. He also testified "that the United Mine Workers of America or any other organization, that is opposing any industry which is working, has no right to insert anything in the public press over its signature which will tend to keep men away from that place of work." Senator Frank Gooding of Idaho returned to a central issue in the hearing and joined his colleagues in condemning the injunction against hymn singing. He added that "to this subcommittee your injunction is so outrageous as to deny an American citizen every right that the Constitution guarantees him. . . ." Senator Wheeler declared "that I do not think the injunction issued in this case can be justified in any court anywhere in the United States of America."  

The presence of the United States Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Interstate Commerce placed the strike at Rossiter in the local and national spotlight. The Punxsutawney Spirit and the Indiana Evening Gazette provided the most
detailed and extended coverage of the strike and the congressional hearings. However, other newspapers also took note of the investigation and the strike. Pittsburgh newspapers dispatched reporters to cover the hearings and published stories about the events in Rossiter. Lowell F. Limpus reported on the committee proceedings for the *New York Daily News*, and he also testified before the committee. His photographs graphically told the story of poverty which the senators encountered. The *New York Times* provided coverage of the hearings on February 28th and 29th, emphasizing the injunction against hymn singing. In addition, *The United Mine Workers Journal* printed articles on the strike and a letter by A. J. Phillips in which he lamented the poor physical condition of the miners and the decline in outside donations, and called for conciliatory congressional legislation. The injunction and the call of Rossiter miners for a general coal strike received most of the attention in the articles published in *The Daily Worker*. Editorial opinion about the congressional investigation varied. The *Indiana Evening Gazette* declared there was no real need for an investigation, while the *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph* defended the committee and condemned the coal operators.

The investigation of the frightful conditions of life and labor experienced by coal miners reinforced the sympathy for labor that Senator Wagner developed as a judge and state legislator. Judge Langham’s Rossiter injunction and other conditions led him to exclaim “Had I not seen it myself... I would not have believed that in the United States there were large areas where civil government was supplanted by a system that can only be compared with ancient feudalism.” Although no specific recommendations for legislation emerged from the committee’s report, it spotlighted abuses, particularly the labor injunction. Wagner became interested in this issue and his law firm won two landmark injunction cases. Furthermore, Wagner became a close ally of Senator George Norris and Congressman Fiorello La Guardia, co-sponsoring the Norris-La Guardia Act of 1932 which severely limited the use of labor injunctions.

The determination of miners, the community support received by the strikers and the favorable publicity generated by the congressional investigation boosted the morale of the Rossiter miners. However, their adversaries had critical advantages in this protracted war of attrition. They had more wealth, more political power and more support from the local press. Company officials determined to hold firm. For example, A. J. Musser sent a letter to his employees on February 28, 1928, reiterating company policy. He declared “this mine will continue to operate on the present basis and no other. Our policy will remain unchanged.” Other
major coal operators also refused to negotiate, and by the end of August 1928 virtually every mine operated on a non-union basis. “Scab” miners earned the rate of $6.00 a day. This defeat produced residual problems for Rossiter miners and other coal miners in District 2. The Rossiter population split between miners who returned to work and those miners who refused to do so. Some miners and their families left town, including Robert Slee, secretary of the local, who moved to Youngstown, Ohio. Problems intensified for Rossiter coal miners in the early 1930’s. By 1931 only 250 to 300 miners remained employed and they faced problems on and off the job. They performed dead work, unpaid labor, and remained at their work site, without any time off for dinner. The company doctor failed to provide regular services for the miners and the company demanded that miners patronize the company store. Desperate miners sought the aid of union leaders. Robert Slee sought help from John L. Lewis, but neither Lewis nor James Mark, District 2 President, could offer any assistance.18

The disposition of the barracks built by the union to house miners and their families evicted from company houses during the strike illustrated the problems of both the union and the miners in the aftermath of the strike. The union wanted to raise money for its depleted treasury by selling the barracks, but the former strikers often opposed this policy. John Ferro wrote to James Mark requesting permission to obtain a barrack so he could open a chicken business. He noted that he had stood by the officers of the union, aided evicted families in moving and helped to build all the barracks. He added that the coal company would not give him any work because of his active part in the strike and that he would hate to leave Rossiter on account of the needs of his mother. John Mack, another former striker, also couched his appeal on the basis of family considerations. He faced money problems and had to support five young children. He wanted to use the lumber he would get from acquisition of a barrack. Mack obtained a four room barrack for $25.00 because of his role as a union man and a striker.19

Several other cases illustrated the extent of the need and the role of the union as a source of hope, if not of aid. Arch Serian experienced problems similar to those of the other aforementioned strikers, but he sought a job or money rather than a barrack. He could not find work and owed $94.00 in back rent. In addition to this obligation he needed money to provide medical aid to his sick little boy and to buy school clothes for his children. He also wanted money so he could look for work outside the area because as a union miner he could not get work locally. Levi McConnaughey, a District 2 official and a member of Local Union 1736, supported
his request and wrote to another District 2 official in his behalf and referred to Serian "as one of our best union men." James Mark responded to Serian's request by declaring District 2 could not be of help. Mark added that Richard Gilbert, Secretary and Treasurer of District 2, would send him a $5.00 check. A renewal of the request for support in November 1929 brought a reply from James Mark that the union could not help him. Ironically, McConnaughey also had problems of his own; his efforts to find work in Pittsburgh, Buffalo and Canada had been unsuccessful.20

A new national political climate ushered in by Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal reinvigorated the miners and their union. On May 14, 1933 Philip Murray spoke at a rally in Clymer, a town 10 miles north of Indiana, before a crowd of four thousand. After the meeting 700 miners joined the United Mine Workers. Organizers followed with rallies and recruitment in other Indiana County coal towns. The rise of the United Mine Workers also had implications for Indiana County politics. In 1934 the United Mine Workers of District 2 created a Labor Non-Partisan League as a political vehicle. They linked the fortunes of the United Mine Workers and the Democratic Party, putting particular emphasis on the candidacy of Thomas Kennedy, a United Mine Worker official, for lieutenant governor. The United Mine Workers helped the Democrats capture over 46% of the county vote, a significant improvement over the party's performance in the 1920's and early 1930's. During the Roosevelt era, the Democrats won a governorship for George Earle and a U.S. Senate seat for Joseph Guffey. Guffey quickly made a mark in Congress by sponsoring the Guffey Coal Conservation Act. This measure, enacted in 1935, regulated the price and marketing structure of coal industry with provisions which guaranteed collective bargaining. It also stipulated uniform scales of wages and hours and created a national commission which would fix prices and regulate production. This legislation provided the stability which Rossiter miners had sought in the late 1920's. Meanwhile the National Labor Relations Act, sponsored by Robert Wagner who investigated conditions in Rossiter as a member of the Senate subcommittee, provided federal government protection for collective bargaining and established the National Labor Relations Board which considered unfair labor practices and conducted certification elections.21

Other developments which contributed to the march of labor had a Rossiter linkage. John L. Lewis spoke at the Indiana Fairgrounds on October 24, 1936. He attracted a crowd which one local newspaper estimated at 10,000 and another at 20,000. Lewis declared "Americans today are no longer contented with the way
labor has been exploited by financial and industrial leaders who have controlled the political situation.” He also praised the United Mine Workers “as the shock troops to restore industrial democracy.” The platform committee for the rally included Thomas Kennedy and Pennsylvania Attorney General Charles J. Margiotti. Margiotti had served as a lawyer for the United Mine Workers in the Rossiter strike. James Marks, President of District 2, chaired the rally. In 1936 Jonathan Langham, who issued the sweeping injunction in the Rossiter strike, retired from the bench after twenty years of service as a Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Indiana County. His departure signaled a new political balance of power in Indiana County as the Democrats built on the gains they had made in the elections of 1934. During this period the hearings of the La Follette Committee of the United States Senate stressed the links between the right to organize and specific civil liberties guaranteed by the Bill of Rights, especially the freedom of speech and the freedom of assembly.22

The experiences of Rossiter miners in many ways typified the plight and responses of American miners in the 1920’s. Coal miners sought to maintain their wage levels and self-respect in the face of coal operators who demanded wage reductions and even deunionization. Almost continuous strikes ensued as the miners and the union battled the companies and their political allies. In Rossiter the workers faced pressures from a powerful company reinforced by the power of the judiciary and the police. In the strike of 1927-28, the pivotal struggle in this confrontation, the Clearfield Bituminous Coal Corporation, defeated the workers and the union with the aid of Judge Langham’s blanket injunction. This defeat marked a period of extreme deprivation for the miners whose suffering increased with the onset of the depression. Nevertheless, some aspects of the battles of the 1920’s pointed the way to the turnaround of the New Deal and the CIO. Strikers in 1927-28 received community support, especially from the residents of Punxsutawney. Some journalists publicized the strike and praised the strikers. Most dramatically, a committee of the U.S. Senate witnessed and publicized the struggle of the Rossiter miners. The presence of Senator Robert Wagner, in particular, provided a key link between the despair of the 1920’s and the new directions of the 1930’s, both in Rossiter and nationally.
Notes


5. Letter of Scale Committee to District 2 Members, Box 6, File 32; Statement of the Representatives of the United Mine Workers of America with Reference to the Central Pennsylvania Joint Conference of Operators and Miners, May 28, 1927, Box 13, File 25, District 2 Papers, Special Collections, IUP.


7. Resolution of Local Union 1736 to Honorable Lee North, Miscellaneous Folder, District 2 Papers, IUP; *Punxsutawney Spirit*, July 1, 21, August 2, 6, 8-10, 1927; *Gazette*, August 3, 9, 12, 1927.


12. *Spirit*, December 5, 7, 16-17, 20, 1927, February 3, 10, 13, 16, March 17, 1928; Solicitation letters Box 50, File 5, File 8, Box 53, File 2, District 2 Papers.


15. Ibid., 324-335.


District 2 Papers.
19. John Ferro to James Mark, February 6, 1929, John Mack to James Mark, July 29, 1929, James Mark to John Mack, October 12, 1929, Box 52, File 1, John Mack to James Mark, October 15, 1929, James Mark to John Mack, November 8, 1929, James Mark to John Mack, November 15, 1929, Box 52, File 2, District 2 Papers.
20. Arch Serian to James Mark, August 24, 1929; James Mark to Arch Serian, August 27, 1929; Levi McConnaughey to John Ghizzoni, August 14, 1929; Arch Serian to James Mark, November 16, 1929; James Mark to Arch Serian, November 20, 1929; Box 53, File 1, District 2 Papers.