The Making Of A Labor Leader: John Mitchell
And The Anthracite Strike Of 1900

Craig Phelan
University of Wales, Swansea

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John Mitchell
A great deal is known about John Mitchell's attempt to extend collective bargaining to the anthracite fields in 1902, which resulted in a five-month long strike and made the United Mine Workers of America a permanent force in hard coal. Far less is known, however, about Mitchell's efforts during the five-week work stoppage of 1900. If the 1902 strike might be viewed as an "Armageddon" in hard coal — a veritable death struggle between mine workers and operators, then the 1900 strike could well be dubbed its prelude. All the participants in the 1900 strike — operators, union leaders, and the mine workers themselves — believed the struggle would settle, once and for all, who controlled working conditions in the industry. And after the strike had ended, all the players believed themselves to have emerged victorious. But as the events themselves reveal, none of the issues in dispute had been resolved, and the only real winner of this perceived monumental economic clash was the able young president of the UMWA.

In many ways Mitchell came of age during the 1900 strike. Upon his election to the union presidency in January, 1899, he was an inexperienced twenty-eight-year-old greenhorn from the northern Illinois prairie who lacked confidence in his ability to lead the rank and file and administer the affairs of the union. The 1900 strike thus represented his first major test as a field general. He learned how to control his forces, how to unite the disparate elements under his command, how to prevent their actions from bringing down on the union the wrath of adverse public opinion. Equally important, he learned the complicated tactics of behind-the-scenes maneuvers, the give and take that goes on in corporate boardrooms, the political realities of industrial relations. Mitchell proved a quick study, for he was able to translate his limited victory into significant union growth and secure for himself the friendship of some of the most important politicians in Washington. In short, the lessons he learned in October, 1900, made possible the victory two years later.

The strike also represented Mitchell's debut in the national spotlight. The press and public scrutinized his actions for the first time. And to their delight, he proved a "responsible" union leader, a man who could be trusted to keep the peace, a man who was bold enough to take on monopoly capital but "rational" enough to end hostilities when reasonable offers were made. When the strike was over, the press made him a hero. He won the praise of liberal and conservative alike. Here was a labor leader the American people could trust.

Most importantly, the strike earned for Mitchell the respect and loyalty of the hard coal diggers themselves. Mitchell did not hold the rank and file in high regard. He considered them brutish and ignorant, and he approached them with a smug superiority. Yet he quickly learned the value
of cultivating their favor, and in his public utterances he proved remarkably sensitive to their individual and collective aspirations. Mine workers responded to his public persona by looking to him as their savior and by following his orders to the letter. To a remarkable degree, this personal bond between the leader and the led formed the basis of union power in anthracite.

In numerous ways Mitchell's youth was similar to that of hundreds of thousands of nineteenth century bituminous coal diggers. Born in 1870 in Braidwood, Illinois, he had intimate knowledge of the daily grind of poverty and hunger, the horrendous working conditions and the daily fear of death in the mines, and the brutality of strikes and lockouts that cast the pall of outright starvation over mining communities. In some ways his experience had been even more unfortunate than most. The loss of his parents at an early age, the physical abuse he suffered at the hands of his stepmother, the paucity of his education, and the subsequent alienation from his peers—all made him a pitiable character even by the heart-wrenching standards of coal towns.

Perhaps it was his privation that had ignited the spark of ambition. From the gripping poverty of his fatherless home in Braidwood, Mitchell ascended with remarkable speed to the lofty height of the UMWA presidency. Largely through his natural intelligence, his gift for conciliation, and his talent for inspiring confidence in his superiors, he had become more powerful than he ever could have dreamed as a lonely child. A practicing miner just five years earlier, in many ways he was little different than the rank and file he had been chosen to lead. Yet he also exhibited strong tendencies that would soon leave him divorced from rank-and-file sentiment. His ambition, his self-confidence, his compulsion to win the approval of elites—all had helped separate him from his fellow miners. And his newly-won power would soon widen the gulf between Mitchell and the membership.²

Once ensconced in power, Mitchell had to grapple with new responsibilities. A successful soft coal strike in 1897 had led to the establishment in 1898 of the interstate joint conference, a collective bargaining agreement covering four Midwestern states (known as the Central Competitive Field). The interstate agreement made the UMWA a permanent fixture in the soft coal fields, but it also implied obligations. One principal obligation of the union was to extend its control beyond the boundaries of the CCF and force all coal operators to pay union wages. Mitchell recognized the threat of nonunion fields all too well. In 1899 he conducted organizing drives and minor strikes across the nation, which led to significant membership gains for the union.

But Mitchell understood that aggressive organizing must continue until all miners were union members and protected by trade agreements. By
his own reckoning, there were still well over 300,000 diggers outside the union fold. Of these, nearly 150,000 were mine workers concentrated in the anthracite fields of northeast Pennsylvania. A single organizing drive could more than double the size of the union. It was thus natural that he should turn his attention to hard coal. Mitchell was the first UMWA president to devote any significant attention to the anthracite fields. The union was too weak in its early years to consider organizing hard coal, there seemed to be little interest among anthracite workers in the UMWA, and soft coal miners had little appreciation of the special problems and conditions of the anthracite industry. Mitchell shared this ignorance but was determined to overcome any obstacles.

The young union president would soon come face to face with the hard realities that made the anthracite industry all but impervious to unionization. By far the most significant impediment was the near monopolization of the industry. The geographical concentration that made travel less strenuous for union organizers also encouraged powerful railroad corporations, which had penetrated the area and bought up significant slices of the anthracite pie. In the 1890s the interests of J. P. Morgan accelerated the drive toward monopolization by reorganizing the railroads and establishing interlocking directorates. By the turn of the century, when all the lawyers’ ink had dried, six railroads controlled more than ninety-six percent of all anthracite coal lands. Coal prices, production levels, wages, and working conditions in hard coal were all determined in a few corporate offices located in New York and Philadelphia.

Thus the anthracite industry bore little resemblance to the bituminous industry, in which there were hundreds of operators, most of them far weaker than the union. In soft coal, operators needed the power of the union to impose some type of discipline over their workers; in hard coal, order and discipline of the workers was complete. It had been established from above. It is not surprising, therefore, that the owners of hard coal were among the most ferocious and calculating opponents of unionization. They did not need the trade agreement. They were not susceptible to Mitchell’s rational arguments about its positive impact. Monopoly control made the magnitude of Mitchell’s task historic. If he hoped to organize anthracite workers, he had to accomplish something never before achieved in American labor history. He had to succeed where the Homestead strikers had failed in 1892, where Eugene Debs and the Pullman strikers had failed in 1894. Success in anthracite meant cracking the nut of concentrated capital.

The degree to which the railroad corporations cooperated with each other to dominate their work force could be seen in their encouragement of immigrant labor to the area. Importing thousands of immigrants, mainly from southern and eastern Europe, not only provided an abundance of
cheap labor but also helped to divide the mine workers along ethnic lines. When the new immigrants arrived, many of the older English-speaking mine workers left the area, so that by 1900 well over one-third of all anthracite workers were eastern and southern Europeans. The resulting antagonism between ethnic groups so different in their language, customs, and religion was significant in helping to stymie collective action.

Despite the monopoly control by the railroad corporations and their resistance to unionization, Mitchell decided to forge ahead with with an organizational drive in early 1899. An investigation into the current state of affairs of the UMWA in anthracite could not have impressed him. The half-hearted efforts of the union up to that point had created but ninety locals, very few of which were in good shape, and only one district organization to cover all of anthracite, District 1.

As a first step, Mitchell decided to hold a convention of all organized miners in the district. He indicated his intention to attend in person this meeting slated for August 24 in the city of Wilkes-Barre, in the northern field. The twofold purpose of the meeting was to devise a strategy for the organizing drive and to demonstrate the national's sincere intent to succeed in hard coal. The Wilkes-Barre convention was successful in all respects. Mitchell's mere presence convinced many that the national, for the first time, was now interested in hard coal. Delegates resolved a long standing bone of contention by agreeing to reorganize the field into three separate districts. Henceforth the southern counties became District 9, the middle counties District 7, and the northern counties District 1. Also, a general scheme for the organizing drive was adopted.

The August convention also marked Mitchell's first visit to the anthracite region. He saw for himself the desperate conditions of industrial servitude, and he heard for the first time from the lips of mine workers the failure of past campaigns and their present grievances. Perhaps for the first time he became fully cognizant of the plight of these families. The hardships anthracite families endured were even more stultifying than those in bituminous towns. Mean annual earnings of about $375 were not enough to sustain a family, forcing women and children to seek employment. The number of working days averaged only 190 a year. In comparison to bituminous communities, the accident rates and death tolls were significantly higher, the system of company housing and company stores more rampant, and child labor more common.

Mitchell returned to Indianapolis with an even stronger conviction to organize hard coal. He flooded the field with organizers, he later explained, "in order to rouse from their lethargy the thoroughly subdued workers ... to revive their hopes and rekindle in their hearts the spirit of resistance." And he confided to union ex-Vice President Thomas Davis as early as September,
1899, he was “seriously contemplating a general movement in the Anthracite region.” John Fahy, president of District 9, dissuaded him for the moment by suggesting that any strike must wait until the membership had grown and depleted treasuries rebuilt. It was clear, however, that Mitchell was determined to organize the area and that he understood a strike involving the entire region would probably be necessary to achieve results.

If he had developed a true personal sympathy for hard coal miners, he certainly did not yet understand them. His reference to “thoroughly subdued workers” was far from an accurate description. Indeed, in 1899 hard coal miners were impatient for a showdown against their employers. Numerous local strikes underscored a rising tide of rank-and-file militancy. In March and April, 1899, strikes involving more than 10,000 workers occurred at the District 1 towns of Nanticoke, Duryea, and Pittston. Local strikes were often against the wishes of district officials and organizers who hoped to preserve the union’s strength. Mitchell himself was critical of the Nanticoke strikers, stating he “would have preferred that the miners endured for some time longer before engaging in a strike.” The success of the eight-month Nanticoke strike in securing a wage increase and other concessions, however, certainly heightened enthusiasm for the UMWA throughout the region.

The success of the strike also emboldened the leaders of District 1, who then petitioned Mitchell and the executive board to inaugurate a strike throughout the anthracite field.

At the national convention in January, 1900, Mitchell presented a roseate view of the previous year’s organizing drive. Union growth in the region had been “almost phenomenal.” The supposedly unorganizable anthracite workers were starting to “realize the disadvantage and folly of isolation” and would soon join bituminous miners in the “onward march toward the realization of their hopes.” His assessment obscured reality. Membership in anthracite, which had been negligible one year before, now approached 9,000. This was significant, but hardly remarkable considering the expense and energy of the effort. Moreover, not all districts grew at the same rate. District 1 membership stood at more than 7,000, while District 7 had only 341 members. The high figure for the northern field suggested to many that UMWA organizers were less important than the recent Nanticoke victory. And while 9,000 members represented growth, it was far less than necessary to win concessions.

At the February, 1900, session of the national executive board, Mitchell addressed the petition of District 1 for a region-wide strike. The presidents of the other two anthracite districts were summoned to this meeting to express their views on the matter. Most intriguing about this meeting was the fact that Mitchell was more enthusiastic about the possibility of a strike than either of these district presidents. Benjamin James, a national
board member who spoke for District 7, opined that too few of the mine workers in his district were union members for a strike to succeed. District 9 president Fahy was even less inclined toward strike action. With so few men in the union, he said, a strike “would be futile.” After listening to these comments, Mitchell understood that a strike at the present time was impossible. While the union constitution gave him considerable power, he realized “it would be the height of folly for this Board to act favorably on the application” of District 1 with the other two districts opposed.15

Mitchell then tried to impress upon James and Fahy that, despite the weak organization of their districts, a region-wide strike was going to take place in the near future. He favored a joint conference involving officers and delegates from all three districts, at which the men would draw up a list of demands and invite the operators to meet with them. “If they fail,” he said in no uncertain terms, “a strike [will] be inaugurated at the proper time.” As to the dearth of members in Districts 7 and 9, he countered with the argument that “strike sentiment often carries unorganized men with it.” He concluded his remarks with the prediction that “if we get everybody working together, I believe it possible to inaugurate a strike that will sweep the district.”16 His prediction would prove uncannily accurate.

Operators in District 1 did not sit idly by while their mines were organized. According to T. D. Nicholls, district president, some of the collieries had announced wage reductions in a deliberate effort to spark local strikes. “I believe that the companies are trying to involve us in small strikes, and break our strength before we get ready to move together,” he complained to Mitchell. The only solution to the problem, Nicholls wrote, was for Mitchell to call a convention of all three districts “to consider the advisability of a general move.”17

Again District 1 was pushing for positive action, and again the other anthracite districts were hesitant. Fahy of District 9 counseled caution because only a handful of men were organized. In a particularly revealing statement, Fahy then offered his opinion on why so few anthracite mine workers joined and remained in the union. He believed it a matter of “childishness.” “It seems strange that in such matters coal workers talk and act so much like children, but they still do,” he confided, “and it seems to me that if it were not for this, what I might call childishness among them, that today our organization would have twice as many members.”18 Fahy did not stop to consider why workers hesitated to get themselves blacklisted and evicted from their homes to join a union that refused to move against their employers.

Mitchell held his own unflattering perceptions of the rank and file in hard coal, although he was more apt to refer to them as “cattle” rather than “children.”19 Nevertheless he considered Fahy’s position absurd. The orga-
nizing drive had achieved its success, perhaps not in terms of membership
growth outside District 1, but in terms of creating a martial spirit among the
men. Local strikes were expressions of that spirit. Militancy, however, was a
fleeting emotion. It would soon dissipate unless tangible rewards were
secured. Militancy must be used to force concessions from the railroad com-
panies; it could be used as a threat, but if the threat failed, the union must
be prepared to strike. Although Mitchell did not respond to Fahy directly,
less than two weeks later he sent two national board members to the
anthracite region to coordinate activities. Obviously he had made up his
mind that the time to act had come. “From this time on,” he wrote, “we
intend to center as much of our force in the Anthracite region as we can
spare from other Districts, preparing for our fall movement.”

More than mine worker militancy motivated Mitchell to initiate a
move in hard coal in the first half of 1900. The political situation also
favored action. 1900 was a presidential election year. Ohio Senator Mark
Hanna, chairman of the National Committee of the Republican party and
the leading force behind the reelection bid of President William McKinley,
had strong ties to the UMWA and kept close tabs on their activities. In 1900
Hanna was concerned with more than the voting power of the nation’s
largest union. The effectiveness of the Republican party’s theme of the “full
dinner pail” hinged on continued economic prosperity. Uninterrupted pro-
duction, high profits, and high wages would keep McKinley in the White
House. Thus to ensure prosperity, massive outbreaks of labor unrest had to
be avoided. By March, 1900, Mitchell had received word from the National
Committee of the Republican party that a major strike might jeopardize
McKinley’s chances. “From information reaching us some time ago,” he con-
fided to his friend Billy Ryan of Illinois, “we learned that the Republican
administration were very desirous of having all labor disputes settled before
the campaign opens, and particularly in the mining regions.”

To his great credit, Mitchell had the savvy to recognize the opportuni-
ty before him. If 150,000 mine workers were ready to walk out and cre-
ate a fuel shortage, then Hanna would be forced to intervene and apply
political pressure on the railroad corporations to grant concessions. The
Republicans’ need to curtail strikes played into Mitchell’s hands. Reflecting
on events in hard coal two years later, Mitchell was frank about the political
opportunism he displayed in 1900. “We cared nothing for one party or
another,” he said matter of factly. “It made no difference to us who won or
lost.” If the Republicans required labor peace, the UMWA should take
advantage. “If the political organizations of this country are in trouble, and
the coal miners can benefit by their trouble, I am willing to see the coal min-
ers benefit, even if the political organizations suffer.” Just thirty years old,
he was learning the art of economic and political warfare at the highest level.
On July 17, he issued a circular calling for a convention of Districts 1, 7, and 9 to meet August 13 in Hazleton, Pennsylvania. The stated purposes of the convention were to draw up a list of demands and to arrange a joint convention of both mine workers and operators. In addition to wages, the convention would also address the need to abolish the “infamous system of dockage” and the long ton. The term “long ton” referred to the all-too-common practice of mine bosses, who arbitrarily deducted for impurities so that miners often had to produce up to 3,200 pounds before being credited with a ton of coal. While Fahy and others believed few would attend this convention and that nothing positive would result, Mitchell was convinced that the August 13 meeting would not only be “the most important convention ever held” in anthracite, but that it would eventually lead to a strike call. “Unless things turn out different from my anticipations,” he told his lawyer friend in Spring Valley, “within the next month there will be a movement made in mining affairs which will startle the country.”

As announced, at the conclusion of the tri-district convention, delegates issued a circular inviting operators to meet UMWA officials on August 27 in Hazleton to consider grievances. The operators, as expected, refused to respond. Delegates then reconvened on August 29, drafted a list of demands, and petitioned the national executive board to initiate a strike on Monday, September 10. Mitchell and the board did not respond to the petition until September 8, when the petition to strike was denied. On that same day, however, Mitchell wrote an open letter to the mine workers stating that if they could “restrain themselves” and “hold themselves in readiness,” the board would call a strike for September 17.

Mitchell had postponed the strike one week because he was then engaged in secret negotiations. Having demonstrated the resolve of the mine workers to walk off the job, he was hoping that Hanna’s influence would bring the operators to heel before inaugurating a strike of such magnitude and expense. Instead, he received his first taste of the intransigence of the railroad presidents. Hanna did in fact apply pressure, but he failed to arrange an interview between Mitchell and the railroad chiefs. Mitchell traveled to New York anyway, but despite Hanna's assistance he was not permitted entry to the corporate offices of the railroad chiefs. While he did meet secretly at the Astor House Hotel with Vice President G. E. Cummings of the Erie Railroad, Cummings only laughed disdainfully when Mitchell mentioned a possible strike.

Mitchell returned to union headquarters in Indianapolis dejected but wiser. He now had a clear notion of how defiant anthracite operators were. But if the reaction of the Erie’s vice president was any indication, Mitchell now also understood that the operators were unprepared for a strike. On September 12, Mitchell sent identical telegrams to the presidents of the
major railroads requesting that the “whole question of wages and conditions in the Anthracite coal fields be submitted to arbitration.” Operators were requested to respond by the end of the day.26 When the operators failed to respond, the call was issued by the national executive board for a work stoppage to commence on Monday, September 17. The strike of 1900 was about to begin.

“Congratulations, old man,” John Fahy gushed in a letter to Mitchell on the second day of the strike, “she’s a beaut, and all it needs is to continue for a short while as it has been and then as sure as the stars shine above tonight I feel we’re a winner.”27 Fahy, who had consistently opposed the strike and had predicted its early doom, was not alone in his amazement at the response to the strike call. Operators were also stunned. While exact figures will never be known, Mitchell estimated that on the first day between 100,000 and 112,000 of the 142,500 mine workers refrained from work. He later revised that estimate and suggested between 80,000 and 100,000 miners struck on the first day.28 Within two weeks the anthracite fields had virtually shut down.

Mitchell left an underling in charge of UMWA affairs in Indianapolis, and established strike headquarters at the Valley Hotel in Hazleton. He brought several members of the office staff with him, including his personal secretary, Elizabeth Morris.29 The Valley Hotel was not known for luxury, but Mitchell had little time to complain about his accommodations. His days were consumed by the onerous demands of managing a strike of such magnitude. And it was his unparalleled success as a strike leader in 1900 that transformed him into a truly national figure. The young man proved superlative in all aspects of strike leadership: negotiations, handling the press, avoiding violence, winning public support, forging community ties, and maintaining morale among the strikers. At all times he appeared in complete control of the forces he had unleashed, while his quiet resolve and readiness to negotiate won him respect from friends and foes alike.

Throughout the course of the strike, operators charged Mitchell with having stirred up a contented labor force, with exploiting the mine workers to quench his own thirst for power, with being a dictator in the strike field. To this last charge Mitchell pleaded guilty. As in all his union work, he believed that in this strike there were very few associates upon whom he could rely. While he considered his colleagues “earnest and honest,” some lacked experience and others were devoid of “cool deliberate judgment.” Thus against his own wishes he was “forced into the position of being almost a dictator, or autocrat, in this field.” He found that the anthracite men knew nothing about unionism, and the bituminous men he brought with him failed to assume responsibility. “The whole thing is forced on to my shoulders,” he lamented.30
Adding to his oppressive burden was his belief that the mine workers in hard coal were a particularly volatile lot prone to irrational behavior. Never one to praise the virtues of the proletariat, Mitchell described the largely ethnic work force in hard coal as even less sufferable than soft coal miners. Confiding in his friend Billy Ryan, he wrote: "Of course, these miners are not like the men we know in the West; they remind me very much of a drove of cattle, ready to stampede when the least expected. In our meetings they are so impressionable that they are swayed from one side to the other in accordance with the force or eloquence of the speaker." These were strange words indeed from a man soon to be all but deified by these "cattle." His harsh assessment of the anthracite mine workers stemmed in part from his anti-foreign views, which were quite ugly. When violence erupted at Shenandoah, he privately blamed the Hungarians, telling his secretary that Hungarians were "hard to control, and in the habit ... of throwing rocks every time a flag is raised, or a holiday comes along."31

Needless to say, Mitchell never uttered such ethnic slurs in public. Indeed, throughout the organizing drive and strike, he proved remarkably sensitive to ethnic concerns. The UMWA under Mitchell was one of the few unions of the time that actively sought to enlist immigrants from southern and eastern Europe.32 He overcame the language barrier by hiring organizers conversant in the various tongues. He demonstrated his concern for the welfare of the various nationalities by visiting many of their enclaves in person. And he showed respect for their institutions by establishing close ties to their religious leaders, especially Bishop Michael Hoban of Scranton.33 These actions made him immensely popular among the immigrants and helped ensure their participation in the strike, but his personal prejudices meant that the large number of immigrants would remain a constant source of worry.

In addition to subordinates he did not trust with responsibility and a rank and file unschooled in responsible unionism, Mitchell felt other types of pressure during the strike. Newspapers that were owned or controlled by the operators made him a target of numerous personal attacks, hoping to destroy the confidence of the men in their leader. The relentless vilification of one's character might be easily handled by some men, "but you, knowing that I am naturally sensitive, can realize that false allegations ... do not rest lightly upon me." Operators also hired detectives who hounded him day and night. "I cannot even steal out of my room without being shadowed by detectives, who seem to have a peculiar desire to know what I am doing," he moaned.34

In the face of such pressure, and of the grueling schedule of strike meetings and negotiations and press conferences, it was not surprising that Mitchell looked forward to the conclusion of the strike. After just one week
he declared he needed a vacation. Just two weeks after the start of the strike, the problem of “extreme nervousness,” which had left him in the care of a physician in March, 1900, began to resurface. “The nervous strain under which I am laboring is fearful,” he wrote, “and if continued will unquestionably undermine one’s health.”

If the strike was a monumental personal burden for Mitchell, his spirits were buoyed by the admiration strikers and their families heaped upon him. While he had no love of the rank and file, he was moved by the affection they showed in return. Within a few weeks, he was already becoming the object of hero worship to the working people of the anthracite region. Exactly why this happened is a matter of conjecture. Some observers pointed to his success in bituminous coal, which held out the promise that he would bring that success with him. Others focused on his appearance and personality. To English-speaking miners he was regarded as a brother, one of their own kind; and to the foreign-born his somber and thoughtful visage, combined with his long western miner’s coat and high collar, reminded them of one of their own priests. Still other observers pointed to his message of unity, his public declarations that miners must forgo ethnic antagonisms and join hands in the struggle. He was often credited with having uttered, “The coal you dig isn’t Slavish or Polish or Irish coal, it’s coal.”

While these factors were certainly noteworthy, they tend to mystify Mitchell’s popularity. They suggest there was something peculiar in the makeup of working people in the anthracite region that made them especially prone to hero worship, or that there was something especially remarkable about Mitchell which made the rank and file tremble in awe. Nothing could be further from the truth. The admiration for Mitchell was neither mysterious nor unique. On the contrary, the strikers quite naturally looked to him, as strike leader and union president, as the champion of their demands and hopes for a better life. He had not created strike sentiment. He simply gave organization and direction to their protest through the strike and the union. Other strike leaders received the same adulation. John Siney, Dan McLaughlin, Chris Evans, William B. Wilson, and Mother Jones all became heroes for their leadership of coal strikes.

Whatever the reason for his popularity, Mitchell himself was moved by the reception he received. He was constantly on the go, visiting at least two meetings a day while in the strike area, and everywhere he went the response was the same. “There has been a constant ovation ever since I set foot in the region,” he exclaimed. “All the large meetings and parades I have attended have been the greatest turnouts in the history of the towns where they have taken place.” By the end of the strike he was aware that the strikers and their families had come to regard him as a “Moses whose [sic] has come to deliver them from their oppressors.” The hoopla and celebration attending the
many picnics and parades honoring Mitchell was a source not only of pride but also of amusement and amazement for the boy president.

Mitchell understood, however, that the applause he heard today would turn to jeers tomorrow if the strike went badly. His awareness of the fleeting nature of a labor leader's celebrity helped to temper his ego. "The labor movement is not like any other movement in this world," he told his brother. "For a time labor leaders are hailed as heroes, received with cheers and applause and their path is, figuratively speaking, strewn with roses." A lost strike would soon strip leaders of their hero status. If workers believed their interests had been betrayed, labor leaders would find that "instead of being idolized they are stigmatized; instead of being glorified they are crucified."

The accolades and enthusiasm of the mine workers and their families helped sustain Mitchell's spirits during the strike. So, too, did the sincere sympathy he felt for the breaker boys. Mitchell was not a man easily given to sentimentality. Having experienced deprivation as a youth and having witnessed so much suffering in his organizing work, he had become somewhat inured to poverty. Yet when he observed the breaker boys he was moved to pity. These boys, who had been denied their childhood for the sake of corporate profit, represented one of the most glaring expressions of capitalist exploitation. And perhaps because they reminded him of his own misery as a youth, Mitchell was quite touched by their plight. "I have never seen anything which appealed so much to my sympathies as the little breaker boys," he explained to UMWA ex-Vice President Thomas Davis. "At eight or ten years of age they seem as serious and thoughtful as men," and during parades they passed his carriage "they continually yell, at the top of their voices, 'What's the matter with Mitchell? He's all right. Who's all right? Mitchell!'"

Mitchell likened the strike to a military engagement, with one major exception: public opinion. The outcome of a strike, unlike the outcome of a battle, depended on more than strength and skillful maneuvers. A strike's resolution also hinged upon the ability of each side to cultivate public sympathy. If a union could plead its case effectively in the public forum and conduct the strike lawfully and peacefully, then that union stood a sound chance of forcing the employer to the bargaining table. He thoroughly understood the important role of the public, and he therefore utilized the press to an extent never before seen in American labor history.

He had the advantage of a generally friendly press from the outset of the strike. His willingness to arbitrate and the shocking poverty of the hard coal towns gained him the sympathy of most papers, even some of the most conservative ones across the nation. Mitchell must be credited, however, with his sophisticated understanding of how to maintain the press's friendli-
ness. Within a remarkably short time, he educated himself on the proper handling of reporters. He recognized which wire services were inaccurate and avoided them. He issued his press releases early enough for the wire services to distribute copies to affiliated newspapers before deadlines. He kept his press releases short so they were less likely to be butchered and distorted when presented in the papers. He seldom refused an interview, even when he had nothing new to report. And he frequently called the press's attention to letters offering moral and financial support.

Keeping the strike peaceful was the key to maintaining the support of the press and public. And to Mitchell's amazement, the "cattle" did not "stampede" in large numbers very often. At the 1901 UMWA convention he claimed there had been an absolute absence of lawlessness during the strike. That observation was absurd; disturbances occurred on an almost daily basis. Yet there was little blood spilled, and Mitchell successfully convinced reporters that the infamous coal and iron police had incited much of the violence which did take place. The press therefore focused on the peaceful nature of the strike and Mitchell's claim that the strike was singularly free of violence went unchallenged.

The one major outbreak of violence that did occur came early in the strike at Shenandoah. The large immigrant community at Shenandoah responded quickly to the strike call, but many of the English-speaking residents continued to work under police protection. On September 21 several hundred strikers went to the collieries and drove the scabs out. When the sheriff and his deputies tried to escort the scabs to safety, the immigrant strikers shelled them with rocks and beer bottles. The besieged police opened fire, killing one and seriously wounding seven others. Mitchell immediately condemned the killing and absolved the strikers of any blame. In his press statement, he said the shooting was "entirely uncalled for, inasmuch as the strikers had not injured a single member of the sheriff's posse." Governor George Stone disagreed. He ordered 2,200 troops of the state militia to restore order in the community. Mitchell, of course, publicly protested this action. He believed the strikers were "fully impressed with the necessity of observing the law and conducting themselves in a peaceful manner," and he criticized the governor for acting "without a thorough investigation." Privately, Mitchell complained that the strikers needed to remain "steady and patient" to gain victory.

In addition to refraining from violence, another key to maintaining the support of the press and public was to express a continued willingness to arbitrate. By standing ever ready to arbitrate the dispute, Mitchell was quite successful in presenting himself as eminently fair and depicting the railroad presidents as underhanded and greedy. Even though the railroad chiefs had refused to acknowledge every "cordial invitation" to discuss the issues of the
strike, he was still prepared to confer at any time. "It ought to go without saying ... that I am a staunch advocate of the principle of arbitration," he declared. He argued that the ideal solution would be one along the lines of the trade agreement established in soft coal. Yet he did not insist on a trade agreement for hard coal. Nor did he insist on any form of union recognition. If the railroad presidents "meet committees of their own employees and come to a peaceful agreement," he pledged not to make union recognition an issue. He thus appeared reasonable, and the operators, who continued to refuse arbitration, appeared intransigent.45

In truth, Mitchell had little desire to arbitrate the issue. As a public relations ploy, arbitration was useful, but the outcome of arbitration was too risky. He was banking on the operators' unwillingness to accept his offer. One independent operator, however, tried to call Mitchell's bluff. Since 1884, employees at G. B. Markle and Company, an independent firm in District 7, had been forced to sign a "no strike" contract as a condition of employment. The contract stipulated that employees would not join a union and that all labor disputes would be submitted to an umpire for binding arbitration. On September 19, when Markle's 2,400 employees held a meeting at the Jeddo school house to consider joining the strike, John Markle, manager of the firm, attended the meeting. At Markle's request, Father Edward Phillips of St. Gabriel's church in Hazleton also addressed the meeting and counseled the men to honor their contracts and vote against the strike. Phillips also announced that Archbishop Patrick Ryan of Philadelphia was willing to serve as arbitrator. This was one firm, then, that seemed to offer what Mitchell demanded. Markle was willing to meet with representatives of his workers and submit the issues in dispute to an impartial hearing. If mine workers rejected arbitration, the operators would win an important propaganda victory.

Mitchell also attended the September 19 meeting. His speech was not an emotional plea designed to stir the men, but rather a reasoned argument to show why arbitration in this instance should not be accepted. He had to tread lightly, for the public could not be expected to recognize immediately the difference between this arbitration plan and the one supported by Mitchell. Moreover, while it was relatively easy to question the morality of the J. P. Morgan interests, in the Markle situation he was dealing with a firm that claimed a close personal relationship with its employees. His argument was twofold. First, employees must not be bound by ironclad contracts they had been forced to sign as a condition of employment. Such "yellow dog" agreements were violations of the freedom of contract and need not be respected. Second, Mitchell contended that arbitration, to be effective, must cover the entire region. It simply would not work on a firm by firm basis. Even if a board of arbitration granted Markle's employees all they desired,
“that award could be lived up to by Markle only so long as the strike con-
tinued elsewhere.” Wages and other concessions won by Markle’s employees
would not endure long unless the same wages prevailed throughout the
region. To be effective, arbitration must include the railroad corporations
who controlled production.46

It is a rare occurrence when the force of one’s argument in a debate cre-
ates a change of attitude in one’s opponent. Yet Mitchell’s pitch led Father
Phillips to rethink his position. “The logic of his position impressed me so
forcibly and so favorably on reflection,” Phillips later recalled, “I acknowl-
edged the superiority of Mr. Mitchell’s judgment and tactics ... and professed
absolute confidence in the general and his plans.” The next day, at the sug-
gestion of Phillips, Mitchell and the priest traveled to Philadelphia to confer
with Archbishop Ryan. After this meeting, Phillips issued a press statement
informing Markle’s workers he now advised “the adoption of Mr. Mitchell’s
plans.” Markle’s employees then joined the strike.47

The Markle affair represented an important propaganda victory for
Mitchell. By defining the type of arbitration that was acceptable, he was able
to maintain the support of the press and public. By persuading Phillips to
accept his position, he had won for himself and the union the friendship of
a powerful priest.48 And he had demonstrated to all anthracite workers that
he was a wise general able to keep the strike intact. His victory in the affair
was so complete that even John Markle himself was forced to admit that
“The Laborers ... believed he could accomplish anything.”49

The tie-up was all but complete. The vast majority of workers held
firm and coal production was negligible. Violence had been avoided to a
remarkable extent and the union was winning the propaganda war. The rail-
road presidents, however, maintained their obstinate stance, declaring they
would never deal with Mitchell and the UMWA. It looked to outside
observers as though this strike might be of long duration since each side
showed equal resolution. But Mitchell was confident of victory from an early
date. After just one week of the strike, Mitchell privately declared “we are
sure to win.”50

His confidence stemmed from the political situation surrounding the
presidential election of 1900. His awareness that the Republican party
desired labor peace had been a major factor in his decision to call the strike.
Once the strike started, he knew that Hanna and the Republicans would
soon apply fierce pressure on the railroad presidents to grant concessions
before the strike grew violent and made a mockery of their “full dinner pail”
campaign.

His strategy worked to perfection. Throughout the strike, press reports
and editorials charged the walk-out was politically motivated. One New
York paper, for instance, asserted it was “an established fact” that the strike
was started and supported by "conspirators" who wished to secure the election of William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic candidate. But Mitchell's motives were not overtly political. He simply hoped to exploit the political situation and pressure Hanna and the Republicans into the role of peacemakers. And his calculations proved accurate. From the very beginning of the strike, Hanna goaded the coal barons to grant concessions and end the strike. Any prolonged strike, he warned, would result in a Democratic victory that would spell disaster for the propertied interests of the nation.

Hanna and Mitchell were not friends at this time. They had met on several occasions and each was impressed by the other, but there was little direct contact between them throughout the negotiations. While Mitchell and Hanna spoke on the telephone several times during the strike, the major path of communication between the union president and the Ohio senator went through Daniel J. Keefe, president of the International Longshoreman's Association. Keefe and Hanna were close associates. Keefe's union had a trade agreement with Hanna's shipping interests in the Great Lakes and both men were members of the Chicago Civic Federation. From Keefe, Mitchell learned he had Hanna's respect and trust. Hanna felt confident and satisfied, according to Keefe, "that there was one man connected with the Miners who could not be juggled with in any manner and that man was John Mitchell."

One week after the start of the strike, Mitchell provided Hanna, through Keefe, with an outline of the terms he would accept for a settlement. First, he desired a conference between the operators and himself. If this proved untenable, he would accept a conference between the operators and their own workers, but only if these meetings were held in the same city on the same day so that he could direct matters behind the scenes. Second, he listed "the grievances which would have to be remedied": abolition of the company store, reduction in the inflated price of blasting powder miners had to purchase from their employers, "and an advance on day labor of at least ten per cent." On September 26, Hanna met the railroad presidents in the offices of J. P. Morgan. One of the operators present, George Baer, president of the Reading Railroad, recalled that Hanna presented Mitchell's offer with dire warnings about the future of the nation were it to be rejected. Hanna "insisted that if the strike was not settled it would extend to Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, and the election of Mr. McKinley and Mr. Roosevelt would be endangered." At the conclusion of the meeting, the operators agreed to advance wages ten percent.

Mitchell was ambivalent about the results of this meeting. He was pleased that the power of the Republican National Committee had been brought to bear against the railroad presidents and had secured the ten percent advance. And personally he favored acceptance of the offer, knowing it
would “result in a big organization.” He despaired, however, that the offer failed to mention how long the advance would remain in effect and that it did not “correct many of the abuses under which the mine workers labor.” The offer thus placed him in a difficult position. Mine workers themselves might reject it. He feared that if he brought this settlement to a vote in convention, “a large majority of the miners will favor continuing the strike.” This scenario filled Mitchell with dark thoughts. If mine workers rejected the wage advance and held out for a better settlement, Mitchell believed, the “pangs of hunger” already being felt by some strikers would force them to yield. He needed to convince mine workers to accept the proposal. “If they are not guided by my advice I fear that they will be whipped so badly that they will never, at least for years, get together again.”

By October 2, three of the leading operators had posted notices of a ten percent advance and encouraged its employees to resume work. At a mass meeting in Wilkes-Barre, where 25,000 people were expected, Mitchell told the mine workers not to return to work. He was going to call a convention where workers would decide, in democratic fashion, whether or not to accept the wage advance. Even though he instructed his listeners not to allow any single person, not even himself, to decide their destinies, he concluded his speech with a ringing endorsement for acceptance of the wage advance: “Now, my fellow workingmen ... you cannot reasonably expect to remove and eradicate all the evils, all the injustices that have been heaped upon you for forty long years of no organization, but I do believe that a victory has been gained.”

At the same time he began to sell the acceptance of the wage advance to the mine workers, he also applied pressure on Hanna to see if he could obtain a better settlement. He informed Keefe that his organizers had been sent to “feel the pulse of the people,” and that mine workers were overwhelmingly opposed to any settlement that did not establish an advance for a fixed period or abolish the company stores. Mitchell would remain true to his word. When all operators posted notices of the wage advance, he would call a convention and try to convince them to accept the terms. However, he could make no promises regarding the outcome of the convention. “Notwithstanding my position with the men,” he wrote, “I am almost convinced that they would refuse to accept my advice in a convention.” In a veiled political threat to Hanna to continue his pressure on the coal barons, he stated the union would soon have to make public appeals for the financial support of the strikers. Were the public appeal to go out, Mitchell wrote, “politicians of the opposing party would use the cries of distress ... to dissipate the prosperity arguments which are made by those favoring the administration.”
On October 8, Mitchell sent out an official call for a tri-district convention to be held October 12 at Scranton, where delegates would vote on the operators' offer. More than 800 delegates attended. In his opening address, Mitchell pointed to the achievements of the strike thus far. In addition to the wage advance, there had been tremendous growth in the power of the union in hard coal, and through the union greater unity in the region. While the union would not be recognized as a result of the strike, the day when recognition would be granted was not too distant. The strength of the union could be seen in the fact that "there can be no resumption of work in the anthracite field until the United Mine Workers of America gives its consent." As Mitchell had predicted, a majority of the delegates disapproved of the operators' offer as it stood. While some wanted to continue the strike until the union was officially recognized, the majority accepted Mitchell's advice and resolved not to return to work until all operators agreed to abolish the sliding scale, maintain the wage increase until April 1, 1901, and arrange to meet with committees of their employees to settle all outstanding grievances.

Most of the operators soon posted notices agreeing to these demands. Union officials then met on October 24 in Hazleton to decide whether to conclude the strike or wait until all operators posted notices. Mitchell was in haste to close affairs for numerous reasons: the expense of the strike; editorial opinion turning against a union that appeared reluctant to call off hostilities; and employees of companies that had already posted notices were becoming anxious. Concerning those operators who had not yet posted notices, he was certain they would fall into line. Again Mitchell had his way. The following day, therefore, union officials issued the order to all hard coal mine workers to resume work on October 29. The strike of 1900 had ended.

The strike of 1900 was of immense historical significance for the anthracite mine workers. For the first time since the Long Strike of 1875 and the mass importation of southern and eastern European labor, the workers demonstrated an ability to overcome regional, ethnic, and skill differences and present an organized front to their employers. Their new found unity and discipline represented the real victory for mine workers. Their proven ability to act together without violence sent a message to the railroad presidents and union officials who had heretofore considered them incapable of sustained and coordinated strike action. Through their own efforts they had created a greater sense of confidence in their own ability to challenge the complete control of the railroad corporations.

To what extent Mitchell deserves credit for cultivating this unity is conjectural. It is safe to say that Mitchell in many ways helped foster latent solidarity. His conviction that anthracite workers could in fact be organized
and would strike in unison ran counter to many district officials. Thus his expressed confidence in the workers themselves helped them develop their own confidence. His special attention to the organization of immigrants helped make them feel an equal part of the struggle. Despite his own anti-foreign prejudices, the effort he made to win the support of the Catholic clergy, and his use of immigrants as organizers, made the immigrants believe he was sincerely concerned about their welfare. Mitchell's deep concern with the plight of the breaker boys, which became something of a personal crusade, gave mine workers an emotional focal point that helped them bridge the differences between them. Finally, the hero status accorded to Mitchell himself at the outset of the strike both reflected and inspired camaraderie. At the parades and rallies honoring Mitchell, skilled miners and unskilled helpers, Poles and Irishmen, boys and old men, all stood side by side to hear Mitchell's message of strength through solidarity.

If anthracite workers could rightly declare victory, the railroad presidents could remain smug in defeat. The ten percent advance had been surrendered, but operators had not been forced to consider any of the grievances regarding methods of payment, working conditions, and company stores. Operators had faced the greatest show of militancy ever to occur in the region and had emerged as they had entered — in complete control over all aspects and conditions of mine work. Despite the intense political pressure exerted on them, the railroad presidents had kept Mitchell and the UMWA out of their affairs. They had succeeded in their adamant refusal to negotiate with or in any way recognize the union. The coal barons rightly regarded Mitchell and the trade agreement as a direct challenge to the entire system of social control they had established in anthracite, and if a ten percent advance was the price they had to pay to maintain control, they were willing to pay it.

Despite his failure to achieve union recognition, Mitchell could also claim victory for the union. At the January, 1901 UMWA convention, he boasted that the strike had been "the most remarkable contest between labor and capital in the industrial history of our nation." Remarkable because of the number of strikers, because of the lack of violence, "and last, but not least, because it was the only great contest in which the workers came out entirely and absolutely victorious." The union was now an established force among anthracite mine workers. From the 7,000 District 1 members at the end of 1899, more than 53,000 were members at the conclusion. District 1 became the second largest district in the entire union behind Illinois. District 9 had become the fourth largest. Moreover, Mitchell remained sanguine that the union could achieve true recognition from anthracite operators in the near future without having to resort to another strike. "I feel confident," he told delegates, "that the time is not remote when, if the present
policy in regard to that field is continued, harmonious relations will be established between operators and miners."\(^{62}\)

All three participants — the union, the railroad presidents, and the workers themselves — were thus able to claim victory after the strike. The failure of the strike settlement to address fundamental grievances, and the adamant refusal of the operators to deal with the union, however, made it quite clear that the strike had resolved very little. The peace proved fragile. It was nearly destroyed in 1901 when negotiations broke down, and it collapsed altogether in 1902, when mine workers and operators engaged in a titanic five-month struggle that ended in a compromise victory for the workers.

The most obvious victor in the anthracite strike of 1900 was John Mitchell himself. He won for himself the admiration and friendship of Mark Hanna. Mitchell had started the strike as a political opportunist, but during negotiations, he demonstrated his appreciation of the broader political ramifications. He quickly came to recognize that Hanna's efforts on the union's behalf carried with it an obligation to toe the Republican line. Well before the strike had concluded, Mitchell revealed his awareness of the price tag on Hanna's intervention. In a letter to Daniel Keefe, he wrote that "For the Senator ... I have the highest esteem ... and you can assure him, for me, that I shall be ever vigilant in keeping out of the movement anything that would militate against the success of the interests he represents in this campaign."\(^{63}\) He implicitly understood that he had to keep the strike peaceful and, more importantly, he had to end the strike after Hanna's political pressure had secured a compromise offer from the operators, even if that offer was not acceptable to the majority of the mine workers. Mitchell's ability to control the strikers, to get them to return to work before their grievances had been addressed, to prevent headline-making bloodshed, all helped ensure the labor peace necessary for a Republican presidential victory. Here was a labor leader that Mark Hanna could trust.

Mitchell passed Hanna's test of trustworthiness with flying colors, and the two men quickly established a mutually beneficial relationship. The use of Daniel Keefe as a communication link slowly disappeared as the bond between Mitchell and Hanna became intimate. Mitchell affectionately referred to Hanna as "the Captain," and he frequently corresponded with him and even visited him at his Cleveland home. In the wake of the strike, Mitchell often turned to Hanna to assist in anthracite negotiations, to temper recalcitrant operators in soft coal, and to press for positive mining legislation. Mitchell also saw in Hanna a veritable mother lode of opportunity to obtain government patronage posts for his friends. Until his death in 1904, Hanna stood ready and able to assist his working-class ally.
The 1900 strike not only earned for Mitchell a powerful political ally, it also transformed the “boy president” into a truly popular national figure. Editorials across the nation praised his conservative generalship, his willingness to compromise, his rational style. Offers asking for commercial endorsements crossed his desk, organizations of all descriptions asked him to give lectures and attach his name to their cause, and one of the leading national magazines, the Independent, paid him to publish his account of the strike. Within the labor movement, Mitchell was being touted as the next AFL president. Statements appeared in the Chicago papers that he would be a candidate to replace Gompers at the December, 1900, AFL convention. Mitchell also was invited to attend the first conference of the National Civic Federation, an organization designed to bring together the most powerful people in the nation. Mitchell, with more than 150,000 miners now under his command, had entered the power elite.

The strike also was a victory for Mitchell in the sense that the limited nature of the settlement did not detract from the prestige accorded him by the hard coal mine workers. He remained their savior, their Moses, and they showered him with gifts and other signs of affection at the conclusion of the strike. Union members in hard coal voted October 29 “Mitchell Day,” a holiday in his honor. At the conclusion of the strike he began what he called a “jollification” tour, stopping at numerous towns throughout the region to receive the gifts and accolades of the people. The highlight of the trip was a celebration at Scranton, where thousands of breaker boys paraded through the streets in his honor and presented him with a gold medallion. In many ways, the respect and affection of mine workers for their president that developed in 1900 explains why they were able to stand united during the five-month struggle of 1902.

Mine workers had many terms of affection for Mitchell. One of the most apt was “young old man.” Still only thirty years of age, Mitchell had accomplished more than he ever could have dreamed. He had risen to the pinnacle of the labor movement, undisputed head of the largest and most powerful union in the nation. He consorted on a daily basis with national politicians, the national media, and other members of the elite. He counted among his closest personal friends leading soft coal operators, he was welcome in the home of Mark Hanna, and he had matched wits with J. P. Morgan across the conference table. The “young old man” had certainly come a long way in the past year.
Notes
1. Of the numerous books and articles that describe the 1902 strike, the most thorough is Robert J. Cornell, *The Anthracite Coal Strike of 1902* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1957), and perhaps the best is Perry Blatz, *Democratic Miners: Work and Labor Relations in the Anthracite Coal Industry* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993). While both Cornell and Blatz also discuss the 1900 strike, the strike itself has not been the subject of a monograph or even article-length analysis, and no previous scholar has specifically focused his research on Mitchell's role in the strike.
2. The only thorough discussion of Mitchell's youth and rise to power is found in chapter one of my *Divided Loyalties* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).
7. Mitchell first noted his intent to call this convention in his letter to Fahy of August 8, 1899; John Mitchell (JM) to Tom W. Davis, August 14, 1899, John Mitchell Papers, microfilm edition (JMP).
8. JM to Tom W. Davis, August 31, 1899, JMP.
10. Elsie Gluck, *John Mitchell, Miner: Labor's Bargain with the Gilded Age* (New York: John Day, 1929), pp. 67-74, claims that Mitchell spent the last five months of 1899 in anthracite and that by August 1900 he had been in the area almost a year. This was not the case at all. Mitchell returned to national headquarters after the Wilkes-Barre convention. He made numerous trips in late 1899, but none to northeast Pennsylvania.
11. John Mitchell, "The Miner's Life and Aims," *Cosmopolitan* (October 1901), 624; JM to Tom W. Davis, August 31, September 14, 1899; John Fahy to JM, September 22, 1899, JMP.
12. *United Mine Workers' Journal (UMW)*, March 10, August 24, December 21, 1899; JM to Tom W. Davis, August 31, 1899, JMP.
13. UMWA, January 11, 1900; JM to Charles J. Thain, January 4, 1900, JMP; UMWA, Minutes of the National Executive Board, February 3-4, 1900, JMP.
15. UMWA, Minutes of the National Executive Board, February 3-4, 1900, JMP.
17. T. D. Nicholls to JM, June 9, 1900, JMP.
18. John Fahy to JM, July 1, 1900, JMP.
19. So Mitchell referred to West Virginia miners in JM to Michael Ratchford, March 21, 1898, and anthracite mine workers in JM to Ryan, September 24, 1900, JMP.
20. JM to Ed McKay, July 10, 1900, JMP.
21. JM to W. D. Ryan, March 29, 1900, JMP.
22. "Address of President John Mitchell, stating his position on what course the convention should follow regarding the calling of a strike. Delivered to the delegates of the joint convention of Districts 1, 7 and 9, U. M. W. of A., Grand Opera House, Hazleton, Pa.,” May 15, 1902, JMP.
23. "Circular Call for Convention of Districts One, Seven and Nine," July 17, 1900, located in JMP; JM to William Hawthorne, August 10, 1900, JMP.
24. J. P Gallagher, John T. Dempsey, and George Hartlein to the Operators of the Anthracite Coal Fields of Pennsylvania, August 16, 1900, located in JMP; UMWA, Minutes of the National Executive Board, September 8, 1900, JMP.
25. "Address of President John Mitchell, stating his position ... Delivered to the delegates of the joint convention of Districts 1, 7 and 9, U. M. W. of A., Grand Opera House, Hazleton, Pa.,” May 15, 1902, JMP.
26. Copy of telegram in JMP.
27. John Fahy to JM, September 18, 1900, JMP.
29. JM to Daniel Keefe, September 14, 1900; JM to Sybil Wilbur, October 8, 1900; E. C. Morris to W. C. Scott, September 21, 1900, JMP.
30. JM to Tom W. Davis, September 22, 1900; JM to W. D. Ryan, September 29, 1900, JMP.
31. JM to W. D. Ryan, September 24, 1900; E. C. Morris to W. C. Scott, September 23, 1900, JMP.
34. JM to Tom W. Davis, September 22, 1900; JM to W. D. Ryan, September 24, 1900; Mitchell made the same complaint to his brother-in-law. See JM to James O'Rourke, September 28, 1900, JMP.
35. JM to W. D. Ryan, September 24 and September 29, 1900, JMP.
36. On Mitchell's popularity in anthracite, see the contemporary observations in E. C. Morris, "John Mitchell, the Leader and the Man," Independent (December 25, 1902), 3073-3078; Lincoln Steffens, "A Labor Leader of To-Day," McClure's (August 1902), 355-357; Frank Julian Warne, "John Mitchell, the Labor Leader and the Man," Review of Reviews (November 1902), 1044-1049; Walter Weyl, "The Man the Miners Trust," The Outlook (March 24, 1906), 657-662. See also the assessment of historians in Gluck, pp. 70-74; Greene, pp. 199-203. There is no evidence in the Mitchell Papers or in any other source to indicate that Mitchell ever uttered these exact words.
37. JM to Tom W. Davis, October 11, 1900; JM to David Mitchell, October 16, 1900; JM to M. M. Patterson, October 20, 1900, JMP.
38. JM to David Mitchell, October 16, 1900, JMP.
39. JM to Tom W. Davis, October 11, 1900, JMP.
40. A survey of the press's reaction on the eve of and during the strike is provided by Literary Digest (September 29, 1900), 361-362.
42. UMWA, Proceedings of the Twelfth Annual Convention, 1901, p. 28; John Mitchell, "The Great Coal Strike," Independent (November 1, 1900), 2615.
44. JM, press statement, September 22, 1900, JMP; JM to W. D. Ryan, September 24, 1900, JMP.
45. "Open Letter to the Public," September 21, 1900, JMP. One popular journal declared the reasons operators gave for refusing to arbitrate were "anything but convincing to the impartial mind." Review of Reviews (November 1900), 533.
46. Cornell, pp. 51-52; Mitchell's argument is taken from his "Open Letter to the Public," September 21, 1900, JMP.
47. Edward S. Phillips, "Letter to the Editor," The Scrantonian, April 9, 1901, copy JMP.
48. Phillips was so taken by Mitchell that the two became fast friends. Phillips even defended Mitchell when Irish Catholics in the area challenged Mitchell's Irish Protestant background, stating that Mitchell's wife and children were Catholic and that many Irish patriots, including Robert Emmett, Wolfe Tone, and Charles Stuart Parnell had been Protestant. See ibid. 49. Cited in Greene, p.164.
50. JM to W. D. Ryan, September 24, 1900, JMP.
51. New York Sun, quoted in Literary Digest (September 22, 1900), 335.
53. Daniel J. Keefe to JM, September 19, 1900, JMP.
54. JM to Daniel J. Keefe, September 24, 1900, JMP. The September 26 meeting is mentioned in New York Times, September 27, 1900.
56. JM to W. D. Ryan, September 29, 1900, JMP.
57. Copies of these notices are found in the JMP.
58. Copy of speech in JMP; see also E. C. Morris to W. H. Scott, October 1, 1900, JMP.
59. JM to Daniel J. Keefe, October 4, 1900, JMP.
60. Minutes of the convention at Scranton, October 12-13, 1900, are found in JMP.

61. “Minutes of a meeting,” October 24, 1900, and “End of strike order,” October 25, 1900, both located in JMP.
63. JM to Daniel J. Keefe, October 4, 1900, JMP. Emphasis added.
65. JM to W. B. Wilson, December 8, 1900; JM to W. D. Ryan, November 16, 1900; JM to Edward Soppitt, November 1, 1900; Ryan to Mitchell, November 17, 1900, JMP.
66. JM to Mae Leedom, October 26, 1900, JMP.
67. Mitchell remained president of the UMWA until 1908, when chronic alcoholism forced him to retire. From 1908 until 1911 he worked full-time for the National Civic Federation, and thereafter served as a bureaucrat for the state of New York, eventually becoming chair of the state Industrial Commission. He died of pneumonia on September 9, 1919, and is buried in Scranton, Pennsylvania.