

THE GREAT STORM THAT  
SWEEPED THROUGH: THE EFFECTS OF  
GLOBALIZATION ON INDIANA COUNTY

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*If there was a great storm, a tornado, that swept through Indiana County, spreading destruction overnight, there would be a great outpouring of financial and emotional support. It's ironic that over the long term, the effects of unemployment can be as great as one of those storms, but it's hidden, it's insidious.<sup>1</sup>*

In the 1960s Indiana County, Pennsylvania, was a booming community. High-paid jobs in the coal mines, power plants, and factories were abundant and the community was rapidly developing. By the beginning of the 1980s, however, all of this had changed. Jobs began disappearing and population began dropping. Crime and mental illness rates rose; the number of children living in poverty nearly doubled. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Indiana never recovered.<sup>2</sup>

The reasons for Indiana's failure to recover can be found in its economic history. In the beginning Indiana was an isolated agricultural community. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution Indiana became a major coal producer filled with

company towns, almost all of them built by the Rochester and Pittsburgh Coal Company (R&P). This company would dominate Indiana County for the next hundred years, leading it through the booms and busts of the coal industry and ultimately to its demise. It was this colonization of the region by the coal industry in the late nineteenth century that would lead to Indiana's inability to recover from globalization a century later.

### Globalization Comes to Indiana County

Globalization refers to a period of capitalism that began taking root in the 1960s and first began really showing its effect in the United States in the 1970s with the advent of deindustrialization. Globalization became possible as the technology for international transportation and communication advanced. Companies became capable of manufacturing in one location, assembling in another, and selling in yet another, all the while being headquartered somewhere else. Increased competition and an increased drive for maximum profit led U.S. companies to begin investing in foreign markets where environmental and labor regulation was low and cheap labor was abundant and kept under control by the government. Corporations also began using profits for mergers instead of technological upgrades. Huge corporate conglomerates with an enormous amount of power began forming.

In many respects globalization was a return to the kind of capitalism operating at the beginning of the twentieth century, capitalism free of Keynesian restraints where "free markets" are valued over government intervention. After World War II, the world underwent major changes. China and Eastern Europe joined the U.S.S.R. in becoming communist nations. European countries like the United Kingdom and France adopted socialist policies. The United States became the world's only remaining superpower, taking over the neo-colonial role European nations had played throughout much of the world. U.S. businesses prospered as a result. They passed on some of these profits to workers in exchange for stability; business leaders agreed to offer stable employment and higher wages if union leaders would agree not to disrupt operations with strikes (this included many unions weeding out their more radical members).

U.S. business domination ended in the 1960s and 1970s as Japan and Germany recovered from World War II and began competing effectively with

U.S. companies with more recent technology and Japanese methods of “lean production” involving exploiting labor as much as possible. Soon countries like Taiwan and South Korea as well as developing nations all over the globe were following. U.S. business responded by taking profits made from their U.S. manufacturing operations and investing them overseas. Agricultural communities were destroyed as low-paying, environmentally damaging factories were erected in places like Mexico while high-paying industrial jobs in the U.S. were replaced with service jobs, destroying industrial communities.<sup>3</sup>

Like much of the United States, Indiana County enjoyed a certain level of economic prosperity and stability in the post-World War II era. A 1966 *Indiana Gazette* article called the post-World War II growth “phenomenal” and declared, “the expansion of homes, schools, churches, businesses and industries in the years to come is a safe prediction.” This was in stark contrast to the situation directly after World War II. At that time, Indiana had practically no industry. McCreary Tire and Rubber was the only major manufacturer. From the years of 1940 to 1943 Indiana lost over 17,000 residents seeking high-paying jobs because while wartime industry boomed all over the U.S., Indiana sat stagnant with no industry other than coal.<sup>4</sup>

The Indiana Community Development Corporation was formed in the 1950s to bring new industries to the area. Indiana Sportswear, Robertshaw-Fulton Controls, United Door Company (later Season-all), and Fisher Scientific (makers of scientific equipment) opened up plants in the 1950s as a result. They all received incentives in the form of tax breaks, free land and low-cost loans. Funding drives were held in Indiana where hundreds of thousands of dollars were raised from donations by individuals and local businesses.

Other businesses like Syntron Company (tools), Fours Company (garments), King Leather Company, and Westinghouse Specialty Metals Company also moved in during the 1950s and 1960s attracted by Indiana’s “substantial labor surplus” advertised in brochures created by the I.C.D.C. to bring in new businesses.<sup>5</sup>

The companies expanded throughout the 1960s, increasing the number of people they employed. By the 1970s, they were employing thousands. It was a time when, “You could quit a job in the morning and have one before the afternoon was over. You didn’t need an education or connections like you do now.”<sup>6</sup> It was a time of prosperity. The coal industry had come out of a bust period in the late 1960s and 1970s. Three new power plants were being built. For the first time, Indiana had a strong and diversified economy. Population grew and retail sales rose dramatically. The area grew

steadily. At the time, people believed the growth would continue on through the 1970s and into the 1980s. Laid-off coal miner Wayne Miller states the mood at the time simply as, "Everything was supposed to be happy everlasting."<sup>7</sup>

But in the late 1970s, business began declining. Syntron was a subsidiary of a larger corporation, FMC. In 1978, they began moving different operations within the plant to other plants in the western United States and their Indiana workforces began decreasing. Fours Company began having trouble in 1971 when it shut down temporarily due to foreign competition and finally closed for good in 1983. King Leather started having problems at this time too and closed its doors in 1985 because of foreign competition. McCreary Tire and Rubber, a local company in Indiana created before World War II, started downsizing in 1974 and sent most of its jobs down to a new plant in Piney Flats, Tennessee.<sup>8</sup>

Indiana Sportswear was a subsidiary of Campus Sportswear, a Cleveland-based corporation. The Indiana plant was shut down in 1981 because of foreign competition. Robertshaw, one of the top one hundred largest corporations when it shut down its Indiana plant, began using profits from its Indiana plant to invest in new plants in places like Mexico and the southern U.S. in the 1970s. It employed 1,200 people in the mid 1970s and by 1981 it had closed its doors altogether. Season-all set up new plants scattered across the U.S. throughout the 1970s. It began transferring lines to its Pelahatchie, Mississippi plant in 1983 and cut hundreds of jobs throughout the 1980s, finally shutting down in the early 1990s. Season-all defended this move by citing lower business taxes and government assistance in Mississippi along with weaker unions and no need to pay workers pensions. Fisher Scientific underwent a series of mergers and corporate restructurings in the mid-1980s that ended with the corporate headquarters of its parent company in California, Henley Group Inc., announcing all jobs would be sent to another plant to save money. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s Fisher made threats to leave but ended up remaining and cutting most jobs and lowering pay and benefits for the remaining workers. In the summer of 1995 they spent over three hundred million dollars acquiring a British company; that same summer they refused workers in Indiana any pay raise and took away ten of their holidays.<sup>9</sup>

In some instances the unions worked with the companies and in others they fought. The Robertshaw workers fought, rejecting cutbacks in wages and benefits the company requested of them in 1980. Robertshaw promised

to close if the union did not give in. An outside community group formed to help. These efforts failed to keep Robertshaw in Indiana. McCreary Tire and Rubber laid off a third of its workforce in 1980. In 1982 it came to the union asking for a pay freeze to allow the company to increase profits and make a recovery and the union agreed. They also agreed to conditions of working only two of three weeks to help the company. Profits did increase. McCreary took these profits and invested them in their new plant in Piney Flats, Tennessee, where all the Indiana McCreary jobs were moved. Both kinds of responses had the same effect in Indiana in the 1980s and 1990s; jobs were lost no matter what.<sup>10</sup>

Deindustrialization also began affecting Indiana's main industry, coal, in the 1970s. Over 280,000 industrial jobs were eliminated nationwide in the 1970s. In Pennsylvania, the steel industry began to feel the effects. Steel corporations in Pittsburgh and central Pennsylvania began declining. By the end of the 1970s, BethEnergy Mines, which was owned by Bethlehem Steel Corporation, had closed in Cambria and Somerset counties. It was only the first of many such closings to come.

The steel industry began deteriorating in the 1970s due to its failure to modernize technologically. Many of the local coal mines were producing metallurgical coal, which is used to make coke. As the steel companies began their layoffs, so did the coal companies servicing them. In 1986 the decline of Nippon Steel and Iron Company Ltd. led to the Barnes and Tucker Coal Company of Barnesboro closing. Other smaller mines followed.<sup>11</sup>

Beyond deindustrialization, coal mining in Indiana was damaged even further by the other aspects of globalization such as conglomeration and technology. Throughout the last three decades of the twentieth century, the number of coal companies decreased as the industry was again dominated by a few large corporations. The Interstate Commerce Act had once made it illegal for coal companies to own railroads to transport their own coal. Now, coal companies owned their own barges and train cars. They were able to dominate the coal market and transport their own coal at cost. Labor and transportation were the two most expensive aspects of coal production. Coal companies could now mine the coal where it was cheapest and transport it themselves. Like corporations moving their factories to less regulated areas as new environmental legislation was enacted in the United States in the 1970s, the coal industry now was also able to use globalization to increase profits in the face of environmental regulation; lower sulfur coal could now be shipped

in to power plants more cheaply than higher sulfur coal could be produced locally in many areas. Technology and this new mobility decreased the amount of labor needed and made workers less powerful.<sup>12</sup>

The decline of mining in Indiana County continued in the early 1990s because of the Conemaugh, Keystone, and Homer City generating plants. The plants were built in the 1960s by corporate conglomerates to make use of the abundant local coal by providing power to several states on the east coast. Mining and the power plants provided the area with high-paying jobs in the 1970s and into the 1980s and it was assumed they would continue to do so as long as there was coal in the ground. Plenty of coal remained, but in the early 1990s, the local power plants began buying their coal elsewhere and it became the beginning of the end for the local coal mining industry.

In 1991 Florence Mining Company, a major provider for Conemaugh generating plant, and Helen Mining Company, a provider for the Homer City generating plant, closed. The coal being produced in the area was less “clean” than coal from other regions and countries because it had higher sulfur content. A series of amendments were made to the Clean Air Act in 1990, including some aimed at “promoting the use of clean low sulfur coal and natural gas, as well as innovative technologies to clean high sulfur coal.”<sup>13</sup>

Power plants found it was less expensive to buy cleaner coal than to go through the process of technological upgrades on their plants that could have been performed to meet regulations. Section 125 of the Act provided for the Governor or President to prohibit power plants “from using fuels other than locally or regionally available coal or coal derivatives,” in an effort to protect local jobs. It was never enforced, however, leading many local miners to resent the government for not protecting their jobs and community.<sup>14</sup>

The end of mining in Indiana County came in 1999 when the Rochester and Pittsburgh Coal Company merged with enormous conglomerate Consol Energy. Consol Energy Inc. is a two billion-dollar corporation with mines in Appalachia, the Illinois Basin, the Ohio Valley, the Western U.S., Western Canada, and Australia. They are in the business of coal as well as other areas of energy with investments on every continent. Seventy-four percent of Consol’s stock is controlled by German conglomerate RWE, an even larger corporation. Consol shut down all its mines in Indiana County and began filling orders with coal from other areas. Over 1,200 people were laid-off. Indiana had lost over 5,000 coal mining jobs between 1982 and 1999. Only a thousand miners remained but many of their jobs would be lost within the next few years.<sup>15</sup>

## The "New Economy" In Indiana

Globalization eliminated a lot of jobs through technology and moved others to countries with "better business climates," which meant fewer laws protecting labor and the environment. In place of these well-paid industrial middle class jobs America was left with a new service based economy and generally "lower wages, less full-time work, bigger wage gaps between workers, and less union protection." In addition, the higher paying service jobs (in finance, health care, computers etc.) were concentrated in urban centers and certain regions. A "bicoastal economy" was created with a healthy service-based economy on the coasts and an ailing industrial based economy in the Rust Belt and Appalachia. The majority of communities in the United States had nothing but a new McDonald's to look forward to as part of the new economy. Indiana County experienced the same rate of industrial job loss as the nation and state in the 1980s, but only a third as much growth in the service sector with fast food jobs, not medical and financial ones, being the service jobs produced. Retail stores like Wal-Mart and telemarketing companies like InterSearch and Com Com became the biggest employers in the county. What this meant for western Pennsylvania was a decrease in quality of life and an exodus of young adults.

The number of people employed in mining and manufacturing dropped sharply in western Pennsylvania. Displaced miners had a difficult time recovering. Few jobs in the area offered the twenty dollars per hour pay they were averaging. In addition, most did not have education beyond high school. High unemployment and decreased income were the result. Movement away from the area was another.<sup>16</sup>

In 1989 Indiana County's poverty rate was the fourth highest of Pennsylvania's 67 counties at 18.7 percent. Over 20 percent of children, 4,322, lived below the poverty line. This number had increased 76.2 percent in the 1980s. The median household income of Indiana as well as the other counties of western Pennsylvania were below the Pennsylvania state average in the 1980s and grew at just a little over half the rate of the state average. In real dollars (adjusted for inflation) median household income actually dropped 14.1 percent between 1979 and 1989 while the same figures went up for both the United States and Pennsylvania as a whole. Figures from 1993 and 1997 show no improvement. Even in 1997 Indiana County averaged about \$31,000 per year while Pennsylvania and the United States as a whole averaged around \$37,000.<sup>17</sup>

Unemployment rates were high in the area in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1991 Indiana County had the seventh highest unemployment rate in the state at 10.6 percent. Throughout the 1990s Indiana County lagged behind state and national employment growth.<sup>18</sup>

These economic problems led to a decrease in population. Indiana County showed a significant decrease in population from 1980 to 1990 and again 1990 to 2000. The same thing happened in counties throughout western Pennsylvania. The profile of those who left was very specific: men and women between the ages of 20 and 34. Between 1990 and 1996 more than 265,000 young adults left Pennsylvania and they continue to do so today. Indiana has lost even more young people than other counties within Pennsylvania with many young people from Indiana moving to Pittsburgh and southern Pennsylvania where the economy has shown partial recovery.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Reason for Failure: Colonization of Indiana**

Indiana County's failure to recover from deindustrialization was partly because the world was moving towards globalization but also partly due to the fact the area was trying to move away from internal colonization. Western Pennsylvania sat in a unique position, geographically, economically, and socially. It was on the fringes of the Industrial North while at the same time being part of Appalachia. Although it was not Southern, it did suffer from the same problems as the central Appalachian mining regions of West Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Globalization and deindustrialization required western Pennsylvania to enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century but it could not do this easily because colonization had prevented it from ever fully entering the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The internal colonization of Appalachia began with the advent of the Industrial Revolution in the United States. Elite men from major east coast cities came into the isolated hills of Appalachia in search of the coal needed to fuel the expanding economy. Helen Matthews describes the process in her essay "Family, Religion and Colonialism in Central Appalachia." She writes, "the invasion was well planned and well executed almost before the natives knew what had happened. A well trained force of lawyers, surveyors, geologists, and land buyers came into the mountains."<sup>20</sup> They bought up land at low prices from the locals, often cheating and forcing them to sell, never offering them a fair share of the wealth buried in their land. They then set up



coal towns, which allowed them total control. Indentured servitude developed from paying workers with scrip that could only be redeemed at the company store. Violent force was continuously employed to prevent workers from gaining wage and safety improvements.

Men were constantly injured and killed in the dangerous mines. Housing and utilities were primitive and poorly maintained, remaining at turn-of-the-century levels well into the 1970s. Nineteenth century sanitation and inadequate healthcare dominated the underdeveloped region. There was a lack of doctors, education, sewage, water, and roads. To keep a surplus of labor willing to work such a dangerous and unpleasant job, coal companies made sure no other industry developed in the area. All of this was justified with racist ideas that began appearing in the nation's newspapers in the form of articles on backwards, inbred hillbilly culture.<sup>21</sup>

This pattern of internal colonization can be seen clearly in the history of Indiana County. In the late 1800s Indiana County was still a small agricultural community made up largely of farmers. Because the railroads did not pass through, it was essentially cut off from civilization. New York and Philadelphia lie to the east and Pittsburgh and Cleveland to the west, but the Appalachian plateau in between was little more than an obstacle to traveling between the two. With landscape described as "a sterile, stony upland deeply carved by streams into a chaos of narrow valleys, knobs and isolated tablelands," western Pennsylvania was "the equivalent of living in Siberia."<sup>22</sup>

This changed when powerful men from New York and Philadelphia decided they wanted what western Pennsylvania had. The Industrial Revolution was taking off and coal was driving it. East coast investors had begun investigating western Pennsylvania's potential in 1836 when the state authorized a geological survey. A second survey was allowed in 1874. On the team of geologists this time were men like Franklin Platt of Philadelphia, who would later go on to join with his eastern friends, Walston H. Brown and Herbert and Frederick Iselin of New York, in forming the Rochester and Pittsburgh Coal and Iron Company.<sup>23</sup>

Railroad men began expanding their lines into western Pennsylvania and setting up coal mines. Steel makers too became interested and began establishing mines and ovens to convert the coal to coke to ship to their steel plants in Pittsburgh and Cleveland. Transportation was a major factor in the cost of coal. Large railroad companies that owned mines could ship their coal at cost and then charge the smaller mines in the area excessive fines to ship theirs, driving them out of business. Soon a very small number of large

companies owned most of the coal in Indiana. Local investors with smaller operations could not compete. The Interstate Commerce Act of 1887 outlawed such activity, but the coal companies simply changed things on paper. It was at this time that R&P began creating its subsidiaries such as Consolidated Coal & Iron and Jefferson and Clearfield Coal & Iron Company so that it could get around regulatory laws trying to prevent monopolies.

Residents at the time viewed the men coming to exploit their land as outsiders. Accounts in newspapers at the time always referred to the investors as "eastern capitalists" and "eastern concerns."<sup>24</sup> Many people resented the eastern capitalists coming in and profiting from their land. One letter to the *Indiana County Gazette* lamented "there lies today undeveloped . . . millions of money in black diamonds and iron ore. The time is not far distant when capitalists will take hold and dig from the bowels of the earth vast fortunes. They will come from afar, as is always the case."<sup>25</sup>

Capitalists were able to buy the land inexpensively and make enormous profits. Land was bought for twenty-five to thirty dollars an acre or less and was later being re-sold by the coal companies for 1,500 dollars an acre.<sup>26</sup> One coal man made a joyful comparison to similar land transactions that had taken place in the east, writing, "The United States and Canada are rich in examples of great advances in land values. There have been many great bargains in real estate. Every one knows that the whole of Manhattan Island was sold by the Indians for twenty-four dollars. Look at the great value there now."<sup>27</sup> Like the indigenous Americans before them, local residents were having Indiana stolen out from under them.

The eastern capitalists recruited the help of local elite who were as hungry for profit and willing to exploit as they were. Judge Harry White was an enormous help to the coal companies in Indiana County. When Lucius Robinson, president of R&P, came to Indiana in 1901 to buy land, Judge White hosted a reception for him. At the reception Robinson spoke to the local elite about all the good his company would do for Indiana County. "When an aggregation of capital comes in and develops your mineral resources," he argued, "value is created. . . . They are constantly creating value, bringing other industries and reaching out to their communities. . . . [The coal business] is bound to develop your county, extend and broaden your values and in the near future be a benefit to all."<sup>28</sup> Robinson's speech was little more than a fairy tale, though. The coal companies would cause the underdevelopment of Indiana instead of development and growth. They began the process quickly. In 1891 Glenn Campbell, the first of many coal towns in Indiana County, was established by R&P.<sup>29</sup>

The advent of mining in an area is very destructive. When coal mining is established in an area, there is a huge influx of people. The rural area has a low population that cannot provide enough labor. Thousands of workers are brought in and a town is quickly erected. There is a shortage of housing as well as strained infrastructure, such as schools and hospitals. The new men and families experience the stress of a new home and a demanding, dangerous job. Crime and alcohol consumption rise dramatically. The agricultural way of life the community has practiced for years is replaced with a new industry that depletes and contaminates the natural resources of the area.<sup>30</sup>

The population of Indiana County rose dramatically in the first decades of the twentieth century. This brought on a housing shortage that lasted for years. The coal companies failed to provide enough company housing in their towns. In some towns boarders slept three to a bed. In addition, the housing was company housing, so striking workers were often evicted. Schools had a hundred or more students and only one teacher.<sup>31</sup>

The workers brought in to work the mines were largely immigrants. They were Polish, Hungarian, Scots-Irish, Swedish, Slovak, Russian, English, Scottish, French, German and Italian. Italians, Slavs and Hungarians made up the majority.<sup>32</sup>

R&P recruited immigrant workers like many other mines and industries at the time. Immigrants were cheap and easy to control. They were also used to break strikes and create ethnic tension to divide workers. There was a joke at the time that if an Italian worker was killed it was no big deal because "for twenty-five dollars in New York harbor they could get another one to take his place." This referred to the transportation fees the coal companies would pay to bring in new immigrants to the coal mines. The joke continued, "Never wanted to kill a mule because a mule you had to pay for and Italians you could get for free."<sup>33</sup>

There was a clear ethnic divide in Indiana: eastern and southern European immigrants were miners and English immigrants and their descendants were owners, supervisors, and foremen. Newspaper accounts of mine accidents at the time were filled with names like Slinazky, Balarrino, Yaccooppi, and Petroski for miners and names like Reed, North and Harrington for supervisors and constables.<sup>34</sup>

Ethnic bias took hold quickly in the local media, courts, and law enforcement. The *Indiana County Gazette* used derogatory terms like Huns for Hungarians and referred to immigrants as foreigners while referring to native-born citizens simply as people, thus dehumanizing the immigrants.

A 1921 article on the new company town of Commodore assured readers that “the foreign speaking families are good, Americanized citizens.”<sup>35</sup>

The police showed little concern for the safety of immigrants, but went after them when they harmed an “American.” During strikes the police sided with the company and waged violent attacks on immigrant workers. In 1906, local constables shot six miners in the back as they fled when a worker parade turned violent. English Constable William North killed Italian miner Tony Macero. The courts continued the abuses started by the police. In the 1906 case, North was found not guilty after a rather shady trial. Local workers erected a monument to honor Macero later. Judge Langham of Indiana passed judgments against striking workers in the 1920s that included denying them naturalization and prohibited them from singing and praying.

Crime was rampant in Indiana County throughout the early 1900s. Alcohol consumption was high and often led to drunken brawls involving knives and guns. The company town of Whiskey Run became famous for its high murder rate. Fighting among immigrants or violence directed at immigrants by Americans was ignored by the police. Violence was also common between the laborers and the companies. The police often took part in it on behalf of the companies.<sup>36</sup>

Workers had good reason to strike in the early coal towns. Workers were seen as a natural resource to be exploited for profit. Accidents resulting in major injury and death were common.<sup>37</sup> The land and water of Indiana were also being exploited. Coal companies needed local water supplies to function, but they used up and contaminated that water. They saw it as their right to exploit the environment for profit. In 1955 an R&P exploration report on the possibility of opening a new mine near the town of Shelocta stated, “The high sulfur content of the coal will probably create an acid condition in the water from the pit . . . this would create a serious problem in view of the Crooked Creek recreational area that is located downstream.”<sup>38</sup> Mines were opened up in the area a decade later when Keystone power plant was built; the multi-million dollar clean-up effort for Crooked Creek is still going on. It is paid for in full with taxpayer money; R&P, no longer in existence, does not pay at all.<sup>39</sup>

## The Colonizer Called R & P

It was R&P that essentially made Indiana, and it was R&P that sold Indiana off for profit in 1999. Throughout the company’s history, it presented an

image of R&P and Indiana being in partnership, of R&P as a loving, paternal company, of R&P and its leadership being part of the Indiana community. This was only an image, though. R&P was Indiana's colonizer from the beginning right up to the end.

The Rochester and Pittsburgh Iron and Coal Company was incorporated in 1881. It was initially owned by Philadelphia and New York financiers Platt, Brown and the Iselin brothers Frederick and Herbert and was later bought out by Adrian Iselin, a New York City financier. His family would retain the majority of stock in the company until its end. Lucius Robinson brought R&P to Indiana County in the early 1900s. His family maintained "luxurious homes" in Rochester, Florida, and Indiana, a stark contrast to the way their workers would live throughout the century.<sup>40</sup>

R&P did make limited contributions to local charity, but they cost the community millions more. Their disregard for the health and safety of the miners, the condition of the land and water, and the development of the community was anything but charitable.

In 1967 the Pennsylvania Department of Health held hearings on the conditions of the water and sewage systems in Indiana County. Local sanitation officials testified about "human waste overflowing, houses falling down, rubble and waste strewn everywhere and other conditions conducive to rodents and disease." The Department stated that the problem was "due mainly to coal mining in these areas." The Kovalchek family had bought all the company housing from R&P in a million dollar deal in 1949. At the hearing, Nick Kovalchek blamed residents for the problems. He could not defend his decision to refuse to sell water rights to local boroughs asking for a chance to improve service. Some residents had water only one-half of the time, others had dirt and worms coming out their taps. Thomas Chalmers, a water specialist, said, "Indiana County is now paying for the prosperity of the coal mines with a poor water supply." The only problem with that assessment is that most people in Indiana never did share in the prosperity enjoyed by R&P executives and stockholders.<sup>41</sup>

R&P resisted paying for the environmental and health and safety damage it caused. It spent large amounts of money going to court trying to avoid paying black lung benefits and acid mine runoff clean-up costs. The case of *McManus versus Rochester and Pittsburgh Coal Company* is a classic example of dozens of court cases brought by R&P in the 1970s and 1980s. In this extended legal battle R&P fought to get out of paying black lung benefits to a man who had worked in their mines for thirty-seven years by pointing to a

technicality in the way the claim was filed. A 1978 inter-departmental memo at R&P discusses the success they have had in avoiding payment to the Department of Environmental Resources for contamination in local water from the Margaret Refuse Pile.<sup>42</sup>

In 1975, 85 percent of Indiana County residents believed that availability of doctors was a problem. Adequate medical care never developed in the colony of Indiana County. By 1994, the state of Pennsylvania had an average of 238 physicians per 100,000 people; Indiana County had 98 for each 100,000.<sup>43</sup>

Coal trucks have damaged local roads and created noise and air pollution as well as traffic congestion. Taxpayers pay for this damage, which amounted to \$62 million nationwide in 1978. Local residents have also suffered from land subsidence and other problems and found R&P unwilling to take responsibility. The cost to some residents goes into the thousands.<sup>44</sup>

R&P also maintained an uneducated workforce. Throughout its history in Indiana new miners were not required to have a high school degree. This allowed the company to keep control of the workforce. Bonnie Boyer, a miner for R&P from 1981 through 1999 said, "They keep people doing what they want them to do. In Germany to be a miner you need almost an engineering degree. The last ten years you've needed a diploma here, not even that before." High school graduates in the 1970s could make more money from mining than they could with the typical job they would get with a college degree. These same workers would find themselves laid off by the time they hit midlife, if they were not injured or otherwise forced to leave before that. Miners in this situation in 1989 faced a job market where high school graduates made \$21,000 less than college graduates.<sup>45</sup>

Another method of ensuring a labor pool was R&P's refusal to allow other industries into the area that would compete for workers and bring the area economic independence. This was possible because of R&P's power both in the business world and the influence this bought in local and national government. For instance, R&P had control of the Indiana Chamber of Commerce because its executives held positions as president and vice president consistently. It was the Chamber of Commerce that launched a campaign to pull in new industry in the 1950s. The 1950s also happened to be the time when the coal industry was on the decline due to oil and gas competition, and unions had agreed to allow technology upgrades that permanently decreased the number of miners needed. Even the industry that did move in was related to the coal industry's economic underdevelopment of the area: it was largely garment manufacturers who paid wives of laid off miners low wages.<sup>46</sup>

Then in 1999, R&P merged with Consol Energy and left the community it claimed to be a part of behind to fend for itself. R&P vice president Joe Engler lamented, "It hurts anytime you lose a company like R&P that has been an anchor in an area. Who knows what long-term decisions will be made by a company that is not tied closely to the community."<sup>47</sup> But the remarks of R&P president Thomas Garges were a more accurate picture of the company's real ties, "R&P board of directors last year agreed it would be in the best interest of the company and stockholders to sell the company."<sup>48</sup> The stockholders were the only ones to whom R&P had ever felt any loyalty. The Iselin family was the first to approve the merger, selling their stock for \$43.50 a share. The rest of the board of directors voted in favor of the merger at a meeting in Philadelphia on September 22, 1998. The next day sixty R&P employees at the corporate headquarters in Indiana were let go so that Consol headquarters in Pittsburgh could take over their work. The top twenty executives had buyout agreements and received sizable payments. The rest of the employees, some of them with the company for decades, were given one to three months' severance pay and no offer to help them find a new job.

By the end of 1999, Consol had shut down all of the former R&P mines. It was common knowledge in Indiana at the time that the reason Consol had bought out R&P was to get its lucrative contracts with the power plants so that it could fill the orders with cheaper coal mined from its mines in Washington County southwest of Indiana. R&P and Consol continuously assured workers and the community the mining operations would remain running and even expand, but they had no such intentions. With four hundred million tons of coal still in the ground, all the major mines of Indiana County were shut down. The mines were still producing a profit for Consol, just not maximum profit. R&P sold out and got out of town very quickly for a company that considered itself part of the community.<sup>49</sup>

### Attempts At Recovery and Ways of Surviving

The coal company that had been Indiana's largest employer for the past century was now gone. Its capitalist owners left with millions in profit, and Indiana got nothing. More than this, Indiana now suffered the after-effects of the colonial damage caused by the coal industry. This damage would have serious consequences for Indiana's attempt to develop.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s Indiana's local government and business leaders continued using the same development strategy they had used in the 1950s. They tried to use tax incentives and low-interest loans to pull in plants of outside businesses to the area.

There was little recognition of the problematic nature of this method of development in Indiana. Under the PROSPER (Promoted Rehabilitation of Subsidized Property for Economic Revitalization) Plan, businesses were granted an exemption even from school taxes if they would move in or expand. The results of this kind of policy, even when business is successfully brought in, are detrimental to the community. The companies fail to contribute to the tax base, thus exacerbating what is already the greatest weakness of a post-colonial area like Indiana. Schools, roads, sewage, and environmental clean-up all need money if the area is going to develop. And as the events of the 1980s in Indiana showed, once businesses are pulled in, they must continually be offered such incentives to stay; in the new globalized business climate, businesses have the upper hand. There is no reason for a business lured in by tax breaks to contribute to the development of Indiana when it could go elsewhere and operate with higher profits because it was not obligated to contribute to the community there.<sup>50</sup>

One positive aspect of the strategy employed in Indiana was the extension of these tax breaks to local businesses that wanted to expand. Local businesses did take advantage of this incentive. The Small Business Incubator also worked on helping to start up new local businesses in addition to helping other businesses interested in coming into the area. It had a variable success rate throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

This is the way to bring development instead of underdevelopment to Indiana, but the problem comes in the numbers. The number of jobs lost when the large manufacturers and coal mines shut down simply could not be replaced. Even in 1995, Indiana County's growth rate was at a low 0.2 percent with only four new businesses established in the county that year. In addition to this, the same problems that prevented industry from moving in prevented local industry from developing: lack of access to the outside world via highways and air, inadequate sewage and water supply, bad roads, lack of an educated workforce as well as lack of recreation, medical care, and other quality of life factors.<sup>51</sup>

One large employer to move into Indiana County in the 1990s was the prison. Indiana made several attempts to be chosen for new state prisons and in 1996 was successful in winning the contract for a maximum security



youth offender prison. A local citizens group, Concerned Citizens for a Safe Indiana County, protested unsuccessfully. The farmer who owned the land the prison was built on was not consulted when the government decided on the location. Those against the prison were forced to accept it or move away. Most became resigned to the idea and tried to focus on the positive aspect: jobs. Nearly 4,000 hopeful applicants lined up to apply for the 400 job openings when the prison opened. Today what was once farmland is a concrete compound, encircled in barbed wire with bright search lights on twenty-four hours a day.<sup>52</sup>

Inability to recover cost the people of Indiana financially. Economic decay created not only economic but also psychological loss. Residents tried to make sense of events and to formulate answers beyond what was being offered by local government. Many were angry and blamed businesses, government, or both. Some offered constructive solutions. One article at the time by local professor Irwin Marcus proposed a plan of economic democracy for Indiana County where workers and community members would share in decision-making instead of business and government having all the control.<sup>53</sup>

There was little rebellion, though. No major attempts to institute economic democracy were made. An attitude of resignation in the face of this overwhelming and confusing situation was a common response in Indiana. John Gaventa examines the quiescence of Appalachian people in *Power and Powerlessness* and comes to the conclusion that this lack of rebellion should not be seen as a fault in the people or an indication the system is working well but instead as a symptom of the system itself. Internally colonized people really have been without power, dominated by an imperial elite. The elite imposed this system through force and maintained it for generations. Flowing from this brutal physical colonization of the body comes the colonization of the mind. It is the ultimate form of control. This sense of powerlessness combines with a lack of education to create a people denied an understanding of their situation and incapable of organized, large-scale resistance.<sup>54</sup>

Many residents were reluctant to blame the businesses responsible or to offer a critique of capitalism in general. A common response among those residents not connected to the unions was to blame the unions and the union workers instead of the companies. Union workers were characterized as lazy and greedy, giving the companies no choice but to leave for a better business climate. Consideration of the events shows that this explanation is inaccurate. Even unions that cooperated in Indiana, giving up benefits, wages, and hours, were handed a pink slip once profits went up and could be invested elsewhere.

There was some logic to this common view, though. America was going through a process of de-unionization. In the 1950s, seventy percent of Indiana County's labor was unionized. Throughout deindustrialization, this number dropped. Coal mining too began a process of de-unionization in the 1970s continuing through to the present. Companies were leaving Indiana for areas of the United States and the world with labor that was non-union or less demanding in regards to having a say in wages, safety, and company decisions. Cities began entering into bidding wars trying to get plants to locate in their area, and the bidding was based on who could provide the most docile workers, the lowest wages, the least environmental regulations and the lowest taxes. This was precisely how Indiana had lured industry in the 1950s. The difference now was that some other poor community could offer even lower expectations to industry. It makes sense that residents would hold this view.<sup>55</sup>

The response of unionized workers varied. Some unions chose to try to work with the company while others fought. Individuals within the unions saw the problem several different ways. Some located the problem within a larger context. Ex-coal miner Bonnie Boyer talked about de-unionization, decreasing real wages nationwide, and the desire of the U.S. government to keep a pool of cheap labor not educated for the global job market. Others saw it more as a matter of that particular company making a decision. Many were angry. Some were just desperate to hold on to their way of life. One local miner recently laid-off by Consol talked about considering moving to Kentucky or Australia so he could continue mining.<sup>56</sup>

There was an increased level of Ku Klux Klan activity in the 1980s and 1990s, indicating that some people blamed people of color for the problem, but the Klan rallies were poorly attended and generally had more people protesting against them than actual members. The Klan was largely trying to take advantage of the economic situation but met with little success. One reason for this was that it was not local African Americans and Jews being blamed, it was foreigners. There was an awareness that jobs were being sent overseas to foreign workers being paid low wages. It was common for people to blame the foreign workers, resenting them for being willing to work for such low wages. The Klan's anti-immigration policy sat well with many people, but few looked to them for the answer.<sup>57</sup>

Along with the psychological need to make sense of the situation and place blame was the physical need to survive. The number of people seeking government assistance rose during the 1980s and 1990s. It was during this

time, however, that welfare reform laws were passed, restricting the amount of aid individuals and families could receive with a five year limit. When these restrictions appeared in 1996, almost 60 percent of Indiana County's welfare recipients were children.<sup>58</sup>

One result of rising unemployment is rising crime rates. Areas that underwent deindustrialization experienced dramatically higher crime rates, and Indiana was no exception. Increasing poverty and stress combined with a decreasing tax base to pay for police. Crime rose in the 1980s and 1990s and the total number of prisoners in Pennsylvania increased from 8,582 in 1980 to 36,457 in 1999.<sup>59</sup> Drinking, drug use, vandalism, and delinquency all increased in the teenage population. Indiana County's youth participated in these criminal activities at significantly higher rates than the rest of Pennsylvania.

One of the groups that has suffered most from the economic problems of Indiana County is the youth. All the negative effects of unemployment, underemployment and decreased wages and quality of life end up affecting children and young adults both directly through the home and indirectly through the community as a whole. Poverty rates throughout this period have been higher for children than adults; most of those receiving welfare in the 1980s and 1990s were children. The stress of parents losing their jobs affects children too. One son of a laid-off coal miner wrote about feeling

. . . periods of sadness. Last night Sarah and I were about to fall asleep and I got this rush of anguish. I started thinking about my parents, my dad's job situation, my childhood, and what the future could be like. I got scared . . . and just started crying. I hated it, visions of my dad losing his job, and then my parents not being able to afford the house that we built as a family.<sup>60</sup>

Children and adolescents growing up during deindustrialization were not forced to go to work in factories like children growing up during the Industrial Revolution, but like those children, they faced adult problems at a young age. Young people in Indiana County in the 1980s and 1990s, like adults, worried about lay-offs and mortgages.

Rising crime rates during deindustrialization meant more children with parents in jail, more children with parents abusing drugs, more parents becoming violent in the home and outside. Rising suicide rates, mental health problems, and alcohol abuse meant more children dealing with parents and other adults in

their life with these problems. Many of the youth of Indiana in the 1980s and 1990s had an unstable home life; they all had an unstable community.

In addition, the declining population depleted the tax base for education just as the economy was shifting to one where education was key to finding a good job. Young people graduating from high school and college were forced to choose between leaving their homes and families behind to find a decent job or staying in Indiana and facing a rather bleak situation.

Beyond these obvious problems there are less tangible and perhaps more damaging ones. The declining area created in its adult population a general resignation, memories of better times and acceptance of the present decay. This was in addition to the increased violence, drug abuse and poverty. The decline also caused an outpouring of 20–34 year olds. All of this led to a sense of hopelessness and a desire to “get out” on the part of many youth.

The economic decline also led to a lack of positive youth culture. Ex-coal miner and lifelong Indiana resident Tom Cervi talked about the higher rates of teenaged drinking and delinquency and noted, “I don’t see nothing for younger people to entertain themselves. I see nothing for the kids to do.” He mentioned the Red Rooster dance club and the fun he had there when he was young. Indiana in the 1960s and 1970s pulled in national performers such as Bobby Vinton and Tommy James and the Shondells to the under 21 dance club, the Red Rooster. All-night drive-ins and bowling allies gave teenagers a place to hang out. High school sporting events and dances held a place in the lives of teenagers that became filled instead by drugs and delinquency in the 1980s and 1990s.

The words of a teenaged punk band that formed in the town of Rossiter in the early 1990s state the situation of youth at the time well,

God, I’m bored/ I’m going down to the tennis court/ Gonna see what’s going on/ Just a place where we hang out everyday/ In Rossiter PA/ I don’t know what’s going on in the world today/ I’m just living in Rossiter, PA/ We’re all here/ Everyone’s skating and drinking beer/ Like you don’t know what’s going on/ Just a place where we hang out everyday/ In Rossiter PA/ Nothing’s changed, it’s all the same/ In Rossiter, PA.<sup>61</sup>

The song highlights the boredom and feeling of disconnection from the outside world experienced by teenagers living in an internally colonized area undergoing economic decline. The extreme boredom of living in an area that is declining is conducive to drinking as well as vandalism and delinquency.

The song is an especially poignant statement about internal colonization when the history of Rossiter is considered. Rossiter was once a booming coal town. Long abandoned by the coal companies today, the tiny town became known in the 1990s for its high levels of drug use.

Attempts were made in the 1990s to provide something for teenagers to do. Two failed teen centers were built in the town of Indiana. The YMCA Teen Center formed after a survey of local teenagers revealed 96percent of them wanted a place to hang out. The center was not in operation very long, though. Neither was the failed Club TNT. The Punxsutawney teen center called JC's also failed. Another teen center was started up in the Punxsutawney area, Nate's Place, in the late 1990s and has been successful, drawing in crowds of up to 140 kids at shows. It does not provide the nationally famous acts the Red Rooster once did, but does offer shows by local bands and a place for Punxsutawney adolescents to hang out without being preached to like the former Christian-centered teen centers.<sup>62</sup>

The number of teenagers forming political punk bands has grown steadily throughout Indiana County in the 1980s and 1990s and local kids flock to the shows, burning off frustrated energy and creating a youth culture of their own. Like the original punks of late 1970s London youth subculture, some Indiana kids have been able to use the music and subculture as a form of resistance to the effects of deindustrialization.

For the youth especially, deindustrialization, globalization, and internal colonization in Indiana have been an insidious storm, tumultuous and violent, but impossible really to understand. Local schools do not teach courses on the subject. Local politicians do not run on platforms of economic democracy. Local media do not often run critical stories on the subject. It has been a struggle for all people in Indiana County to survive and resist.

## Globalization Continues

It is a storm experienced all over the world in different forms. In Chiapas, Mexico, Maya people fight to survive in the face of devastating effects from the North American Free Trade Agreement. In southern China, peasants leave the land to work in the new sweatshops. Globalization has done to agricultural communities all over the world what was once done to Indiana, destroying their subsistence economy and creating dangerous, low-paying jobs that destroy the environment. At the same time it has taken industrial

communities in the U.S. that were finally achieving higher wages and safety and environmental advances and destroys their economy, creating unemployment, low wages, and economic decay.

Deindustrialization is now being followed by the same breakdown of the service economy in the United States. Computer programming and other technical jobs as well as telemarketing and other service jobs are now being outsourced to countries in eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia. Cities like San Francisco that once prospered from globalization now find their populations falling like the industrial cities did in the 1980s. The economy is growing but unemployment remains high.<sup>63</sup>

Workers have been forced to compete internationally, seeing who can work for the least wages in the worst conditions. It is a game Indiana has been competing in since the nineteenth century when the U.S. economy went from local to national with the Industrial Revolution. Now that the competition is global, though, Indiana can no longer win. There are other colonies to exploit now.

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