Labor-Management Cooperation: An 1897 Case

In order to further our understanding of the ways in which Americans adjusted to the conditions of industrial society, historians have focused, in time, upon the Progressive Era and, thematically, upon the compatible themes of organization-building, professionalization, and bureaucratization.* This approach, summed up by the phrase "the organizational synthesis," has illuminated, among other matters, the impulses of business organizations toward the control of internecine competition, and the growth of the trade union movement, especially among those workers in organizations affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, seeking to gain control over wages, hours, and working conditions through the processes of collective bargaining.† These dual impulses often occurred independently of one another, and the story of industrial relations in the first four decades of twentieth-century American history is replete with conflict between trade unions and business firms. Not all industries experienced the same pattern of development in labor-management relations, however. Although conflict is an appropriate theme to emphasize in the over-all history

* This work was supported, in part, by the Ohio State University through its Junior Faculty Summer Fellowship and Grant-In-Aid programs.

of industrial relations, conflict itself posed an ideological and practical problem to reformers in the Progressive Era seeking to build a more orderly, controllable "organized society." Holding a vision not of a classless society, but of one in which relations among the classes, "capital" and "labor," were harmonious, some Americans looked upon exceptional industries as models for resolving the persistent conflict in industrial relations. Here the separate interests of labor and business intersected to form three compatible opinions: a common concern with harmonious relations, a policy of accepting of unions as an appropriate organizing device, and a joint desire to control competition.²

Bituminous coal was the largest such exceptional industry, and most basic to the economy. At the turn of the century western Pennsylvania, the largest bituminous producing region, was the scene of a two-month strike which gave rise to a system of cooperation, not conflict, in industrial relations. Prominent Pittsburgh and Ohio coal operators, in concert with the leaders of the United Mine Workers, resolved the strike by agreeing to develop a system of "interstate joint conferences" to stabilize internecine competition and improve wages, hours, and working conditions. One significance of the strike was to make the UMW the nation's largest trade union, an integral part of the process of establishing a nationally important and lasting labor movement between 1897 and 1902. Another result, equally important, was to feed hopes that the cooperative industrial relations born in soft coal might be adapted to other industries and provide a basis for a labor-management harmony as the modern economy matured. This essay explores the conditions which led to the 1897 strike, the events of the conflict, and the emergence of the "interstate joint conference" which was a principal outcome.

² Samuel Haber, Efficiency and Uplift: Scientific Management in the Progressive Era, 1890-1917 (Chicago, 1964), furnishes an important general analysis of the ideology applied to labor problems. Robert Zieger, Republicans and Labor, 1919-1929 (Lexington, Ky., 1969), 1-16, summarizes the intellectual history of "the labor problem" as perceived during the early twentieth century. In the late nineteenth century many observers looked upon arbitration as the solution to conflict. William Akin, "Arbitration and Labor Conflict: The Middle Class Panacea, 1886-1900," The Historian, XXIX (August, 1967), 565-583. The circumstances of the soft coal industry seem to have fed the same social values as those contained in the arbitration movement, though they led eventually to different responses.
In the last third of the nineteenth century soft coal mining became a major industry, replacing wood fuel in the burgeoning midwestern cities and powering great industries. In 1898 over 163 million tons of bituminous were mined by about 245,000 miners. Some basic features of the industry meant that, unlike most other giant enterprises, it almost defied rationalization and organization. Its marketing and producing practices were both chaotic and complex. The problem from the organizational point of view lay in part because coal was not uniform in quality, nor was it equally accessible from mining region to region, or even among individual mines in the same region. It was located at varying distances from markets, and was subject to seasonal fluctuations in demand. Because it was an industry which required relatively small investments of capital for entry, there was a tendency, thanks in part to the greater demand in wintertime, toward overexpansion even in prosperous times. Geographical dispersion (soft coal is found in nearly every part of the country) compounded these difficulties, discouraging the impetus toward integration and control through mergers of competing firms which was common to other major industries at the time. Of especial importance was the "lake trade," the mining of coal during the navigation season on the Great Lakes for cheap shipment and storage for sale in northwestern markets. This trade was crucial to the industry, for it provided work during an otherwise slack season. Competition for lake contracts, as they were known, was fierce, with firms in western Pennsylvania vying with companies in Ohio or elsewhere for the relatively lucrative market.

Although in general the coal market was growing, the depression of the 1890s severely crippled the business. During the depression mine operators faced a peculiar cost situation. Since maintenance costs remained relatively steady whether or not there was produc-

4 Morton S. Baratz, The Union and the Coal Industry (New Haven, 1955), xv, 19. As late as 1943 some 128 financial groups accounted for only 60 per cent of the total tonnage produced. Ibid., 1. See also Graebner, "Great Expectations," 60-62.
5 Thirteenth Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines (Columbus, 1887), 5-6.
tion, there was a strong incentive for mine owners to extract coal and hope for the best in the depressed market. The effect was to make the scramble for sales contracts especially cutthroat even at depression prices. Of course, the most flexible and largest cost of mining was labor, and the pressure for reducing labor costs was intense. As a result, the tens of thousands of men who worked in the mines suffered the most severely from the effects of market disorganization and depression.\(^6\)

In this setting coal men did not stand apart from a contemporary development of new organizational values of cooperation, efficiency, and control. Disturbed by the chaotic, depressed, and cutthroat nature of the industry, at least a few coal operators and many miners' leaders had developed an alternative vision of organization. Their view at its core was simple. It rested on the assumption that capital and labor had a mutual interest in a prosperous and harmonious industry. Cooperation rather than conflict would benefit both sides. Industry disorganization, which kept all concerned embroiled in conflict which only further damaged business, prevented the realization of this mutual interest. A solution lay in organizing a system of joint conferences in which representatives of both operators and miners would fix fair wage scales, with differentials among fields appropriate to eliminating any significant competition. Historically these ideas were promulgated by labor leaders who had experienced the agony of depressed working conditions, analyzed the problems of the industry, and set out to correct them. They hoped to develop a trade union movement in coal strong enough to establish such a system of joint conferences across the entire industry as a recourse available for solving the industry's ills, including the improvement of wages and working conditions. In the absence of any industry-wide operator organization, some businessmen joined union leaders in promoting the joint conference concept.\(^7\)

\(^{6}\) One description of these conditions can be found in John E. Short, "Coal Mining," *Twenty-First Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Ohio Executive Documents* (1897), 116–117.

Despite attempts in this direction, no one in the industry had ever commanded sufficient organizational strength to foster such a system. Operators had in some cases formed trade associations or marketing organizations which had local power in one coal field, but they never encompassed interstate regions which had long competed, especially for the relatively lucrative lake trade. Railroad companies had tried to exercise production and marketing controls, but again their power was not interregional. Finally, the trade union movement remained weak until the very end of the century. The United Mine Workers of America, formed in 1890, had for the most part ended rivalry between competing unions, but except for scattered fields in Ohio and western Pennsylvania, its power was negligible. The ideal of harmony and prosperity was very much alive into the depression of the 1890s, but that ideal required some powerful force behind it for any practical realization. In the late summer of 1897 such a force emerged in the form of a powerful UMW organization, as a result of a long strike and with the assistance of prominent operators like Francis L. Robbins of Pittsburgh and political leaders like Mark Hanna (who also owned large coal properties). The result was a system of organization, however imperfect, for the fields north of the Ohio River which lasted into the 1920s. The strike and its aftermath were a significant part of the general impulses toward orderly organization being felt in American society, and the joint conferences helped feed hopes that the next century would see a harmonious system of industrial relations in American industry.

The 1897 bituminous strike had complex origins arising from the peculiar market structure of the industry, the depression, and scheming by the lieutenants of Andrew Carnegie. The depression generated intense pressure for lower wages. Because its volume was largest, the Pittsburgh district wage scales served as a general base for miners employed elsewhere. When the operators of western

---

8 At the turn of the century there was not even a national trade association among coal mine operators. The National Coal Association came into being only upon the urging of the federal government during World War I. See Henry R. Seager and Charles A. Gulick, Jr., Trust and Corporation Problems (New York, 1929), 331. Efforts began at the end of the 1890s to control conditions through mergers of competing firms, but they were unsuccessful. See Graehner, "Great Expectations," 62–64.
Pennsylvania sought to cut wages below the prevailing seventy-nine cents per ton figure in 1894, the miners, led by the UMW, struck. It was not a happy experience. Although more than 100,000 miners walked out in the spring of 1894, enough continued working in West Virginia fields, where the union tradition and strength was especially weak, to supply the depressed market. Occasionally resorting to violence, frustrated miners in Ohio and Illinois sought to stop the flow of coal to markets by interrupting rail service, actions which resulted in the use of the militia to protect property and, in effect, break the strike. In June a compromise settlement was reached with the Pittsburgh operators who agreed to pay sixty-nine cents per ton. Not only had the strike failed to maintain wage rates, but it almost wrecked the young UMW as thousands left its ranks apparently in despair or disgust with its lack of power.  

Even this settlement, unsatisfactory as it was to the miners, soon collapsed in the face of the complex wage scales of the industry. These scales typically included differentials between mines whose coal seams were too narrow to allow the entry of mining machines (the so-called “thin-vein,” or “pick” mines where coal seams were undermined by hand) and those where the miner enjoyed easier access to the mineral, allowing mechanization. In the “machine” mines an individual miner could produce a higher volume of coal in a given day than his colleague using pick and powder; consequently the wage scale allowed him fewer cents per ton of coal produced. The sixty-nine cents rate in the 1894 settlement was for “thin vein” mines in the Pittsburgh district. Nor was the size of the seam the only factor to take into account in any wage scale agreement for the industry. Of equal importance was whether or not a screen was used to sort coal before it was weighed, and, if such a device was employed, the size of its mesh. Before the widespread introduction of automatic stokers in steam engines and furnaces, the large lumps of coal were desirable in the marketplace; it was this coal which operators weighed to determine the miners’ pay. In Pennsylvania and Ohio in the 1890s miners received pay

only for coal which did not pass through the screen. But the size of the screen mesh was not uniform from field to field, meaning that allowances had to be made in wage scales. The Ohio mines generally used a screen with a smaller mesh than the competing mines of western Pennsylvania, so Ohio operators insisted on a nine cents differential in the wage scales. Thus, a sixty-nine cents per ton wage rate in a thin vein Pittsburgh mine meant that a miner in a similar mine in the Hocking Valley of Ohio was receiving sixty cents per ton. Other industry conditions were not uniform, either. In remote mining camps some operators drew profits from company stores, others did not; and in other locations mine owners avoided selling goods to their employees altogether. Weights and measuring procedures, furthermore, varied considerably.  

These kinds of practical differences in mining customs made it difficult for operators and miners to agree upon a wage scale encompassing more than one coal field. Yet if the producers were ever going to control coal prices, it seemed necessary to try to arrange common labor costs. The complexity of the situation could be taken advantage of by an operator who saw some benefit in disrupting labor-management relations, or in having an unstable price structure for coal—so long as there was no trade association or union powerful enough to enforce stability. Such manipulation, conducted by a shrewd operator, William P. DeArmit, followed the 1894 strike. He sought to prevent fellow operators from collaborating with one another, to keep the union weak, and the price of coal low and uncontrolled. In the 1897 strike the UMW claimed the principal issue was "DeArmitism"; by the end of the strike it was, in part, the ability of a man like DeArmit to cause chaos which prompted other large operators like Francis Robbins to cooperate with the union in the interstate joint conference effort.

As President of the New York and Cleveland Gas Coal Company, one of the thirteen largest rail shippers in western Pennsylvania, DeArmit represented the interests of Andrew Carnegie in the bituminous coal business (apart from coke).  


11 Information on DeArmit and his firm is rather obscure. See History of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania (Chicago, 1889), 541; Pittsburgh Dispatch, Feb. 13, 1896; United Mine Workers Journal, Feb. 13, 1897, 4; Coal Trade Journal, Apr. 31, 1897, 202.
DeArmit largely because of his abiding interest in the vertical integration of his steel production, and not because he purchased large stocks of DeArmit’s coal. The lake trade in soft coal figured prominently in the steel magnate’s plans during the 1890s. In 1895 Carnegie purchased the Pittsburgh, Shenago and Lake Erie Railway, a small line that ran between Butler, Pennsylvania, and Conneaut, Ohio, a lake port. Carnegie planned to improve the line and connect it with the Union Railroad which linked his steel plants around Pittsburgh. The Bessemer line, as it was to be known, would complete a transportation system capable of bringing iron ore from the Mesabi range over the lakes in Carnegie ships, across the hills of northwestern Pennsylvania in Carnegie ore cars. The same system could profitably haul coal as a “return cargo.” With low railroad grades and the most modern equipment available, the Carnegie interests threatened to become a dominating force in the coal business. At the end of 1896 Carnegie had publicly announced that during the next season he would cut the freight rate on hauling coal from Pittsburgh to Lake Erie more than half, causing consternation among established coal dealers and railroads in both Ohio and Pennsylvania.

DeArmit assisted Carnegie in these plans in a number of ways. He was included in the early discussions of building the Bessemer line, and helped it to secure a favorable, low-grade right-of-way. More important, DeArmit apparently planned a strategy to keep the union weak and unable to stabilize wage rates, and to disrupt operator attempts to collaborate and control the price of coal and the volume of shipment to the ports. He sought, in other words, to keep coal cheap, and to ensure a situation in which he could supply a high volume, shipped over the Bessemer railroad. His actions brought him into sharp conflict with other prominent coal operators in 1896, and with the UMW in 1897.

For the coal industry 1895 was a bad year. The lake shipping

---

15 DeArmit recalled some of these events later in his life. See DeArmit to Carnegie, Jan. 18, 25, 1905, Carnegie Papers, Library of Congress.
season was specially disappointing. The Ohio railroads tried to arrange an interstate pool which would control the flow of coal to Lake Erie and maintain a favorable price. The Pittsburgh operators, however, saw this as an attempt to steal trade from them, and they refused to cooperate with the pool. The business disaster which followed made some industry leaders determined to fashion an effective pool for the 1896 season. In March of 1896 Francis L. Robbins called together prominent coal men headquartered in Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Columbus, and Chicago in an effort to secure an agreement on dividing the business of the upcoming season profitably. After a prolonged discussion, these men agreed to limit lake shipments to a total of 5,000,000 tons, divided in a 60/40 ratio with the larger share going to Pennsylvania. The railroads were to enforce the agreement through their allocation of freight cars.

The arrangement quickly collapsed. DeArmit refused to cooperate and persuaded other Pittsburgh operators to join him. He successfully played upon their customary suspicions that their Ohio competitors enjoyed relatively lower transportation costs, and that the nine cents differential in wage rates was unfair. DeArmit refused to join the pool unless the nine cents differential were abolished, an action which the Ohio operators refused. Without DeArmit's mines a part of it, the pool could not succeed.

DeArmit's position on the idea of achieving uniform wage and production costs as a device to stabilize the price of coal was more confusing. He claimed to favor "true uniformity," seemingly an acceptable goal to the union. But after two years of maneuvering, the UMW leaders were convinced that DeArmit was their principal enemy. DeArmit had refused to accept the 1894 wage agreement. His mines were unorganized, and he continually insisted on paying

17 Ibid., Apr. 13, 1895, 491.
19 Ibid., Apr. 1, 1896, 191-193; Apr. 8, 1896, 205; United Mine Workers' Journal, Mar. 26, 1896, 4; Cleveland Plain Dealer, Mar. 25, 1896.
substantially less to his men than his competitors. He objected that they profited from company stores while he did not.20

His rejection of the 1894 wage agreement forced wage reductions throughout the industry. In the summer and autumn of 1895 the union tried to take into account DeArmit's objections in writing a new contract. The new scheme included a wage differential that penalized those firms which maintained company stores. DeArmit said he looked favorably upon the idea so long as the contract placed all operators in the Pittsburgh district on an equal footing not only with regard to stores and wages, but with respect to all other conditions of employment as well. The contract should insure the use of honest weights and measures, checkweighmen at all tipples, and standard screens for sorting coal—or "true uniformity."21

In December the UMW and DeArmit negotiated an agreement on these terms. In the thin vein districts, where "uniformity" conditions were met, wages were to rise to sixty-four cents prior to March 1 and seventy cents thereafter. A "Uniformity Commission" was to investigate the industry during January and enlist the signatures of operators to the terms of the contract; when 95 per cent of the firms had signed, "uniformity" would be declared in effect and DeArmit would permanently raise his own wages to the scale figures. The miners were to penalize those operators who refused to sign the contract with a twenty cents per ton wage premium. DeArmit, according to one union official, was "no longer a stumbling-block." Both miners and operators were hopeful of a brighter future.22

But DeArmit cleverly dampened their hopes by the onset of the 1896 lake season. In early January a uniformity commission of ten miners and operators proceeded to investigate mining conditions around Pittsburgh. They reported on January 11 that "practical" uniformity existed, with 99 per cent of the firms paying the sixty-four cents district scale. The conditions of the contract, they said, were in effect.23 But DeArmit charged that the report was false.

21 Ibid., Aug. 8, 1895, 1; Oct. 17, 1895, 5; The Black Diamond, Oct. 19, 1895, 499; Roy, History of Coal Miners, 339-340.
He expressed doubts that the investigators had actually checked weights and measures around the district during their brief tenure, that company stores in fact were suppressed, and that the twenty cents penalty on store operators was being imposed. He reaffirmed his belief in the desirability of uniformity and promised to conduct his own investigation, alleging that the first one had not been impartial. At the beginning of February he contradicted his competitors and announced that “true uniformity” did not prevail; his New York and Cleveland Gas Coal Company was dropping its mining rate to fifty-four cents per ton.

Angry and desperate, the union leaders tried to arrange a meeting with DeArmit in order to make another attempt, with his full participation, to arrange a uniformity agreement in the district. The original investigators reaffirmed the validity of their report and asked DeArmit to specify the offending mines. He declined to do so, but agreed to participate in another investigation. Although his actions angered his rivals, they concurred in the hope of reaching a stabilizing agreement. The new investigation proceeded, ending in renewed disputes among the union leaders, DeArmit, and his competitors. The union officers claimed to have enlisted the support of the required number of operators, only to have DeArmit change the ground rules by insisting at the last minute on the inclusion of mining companies which the union did not consider part of the Pittsburgh district.


27 United Mine Workers’ Journal, Feb. 20, 1896, 4; Mar. 5, 1896, 4; Apr. 2, 1896, 1; Pittsburgh Times, undated typescript copy in Pennsylvania Bituminous Coal Investigating Committee records; testimony of G. W. Schuederberg and DeArmit, ibid. By this time DeArmit enjoyed a reputation among his fellow operators of being an untrustworthy, shady character. See The Black Diamond, Apr. 18, 1896, 498–499, and testimony of G. H. Sweadner, Pennsylvania Bituminous Coal Investigating Committee records. District officers of the
As a result, there was no wage or uniformity agreement in 1896. Coupled with the failure to arrange a marketing pool, the industry remained in a state of internecine competition. Many operators and union men alike blamed DeArmit. That summer the UMW faced an unpalatable choice. If it continued to try to enforce the seventy cents rate in Pittsburgh, it would, in effect, be punishing friendly operators and helping DeArmit; nor did the union wish to encourage wage reductions. In September, in anguish and desperation, the Pittsburgh miners agreed to drop the scale to DeArmit's rate of fifty-four cents and hope that competitors could punish him in the marketplace. Their decision caused consternation among workers in neighboring Ohio. That autumn many delegates to the Ohio miners' convention arrived prepared to vote for "61 cents or bust." But their officers, knowing that Ohio coal companies were adamant in demanding a forty-five cents rate, explained that such action would effectively destroy the union. They advised cooperating with their Pittsburgh brethren, for the only choices available were to destroy a portion of the state's trade or to reduce wages. The Ohio convention voted to leave the wage decision up to individual sub-districts. Hocking Valley miners accepted a scale of forty-five cents, but those in Jackson County and the Massillon district balked and went out on strike, which eventually failed. The fractured union and the operators could not agree on any state-wide scale for 1897.

The effort to achieve uniformity was revived briefly early in 1897 when the national executive board of the United Mine Workers conferred with a group of operators, including DeArmit, in Pittsburgh. DeArmit reiterated his long-standing position, claiming that

UMW claimed he tried to bribe them into helping his company by keeping up the pressure for uniformity until the lake trade opened. In the meantime, the New York and Cleveland Gas Coal Company would make contracts based on the knowledge that lower wage rates would eventually prevail. See testimony of William Warner and Patrick Dolan, Pennsylvania Bituminous Coal Investigating Committee records.


he ran his mines economically and was not making substantial profits, so his competitors, by offering to pay a higher rate, must be planning to cheat on uniform conditions. The union officers countered by suggesting that the New York and Cleveland Gas Coal Company conform to the practices of the other operators, not make them conform to its policies. The meeting broke up with the miners promising to use every means available, including public appeals, to expose and defeat DeArmit.30

Supported by sympathetic Pittsburgh politicians, the union arranged a state investigation into the causes of destitution among the miners. With a view toward determining the desirability and/or feasibility of legislative redress, the legislature commissioned a five-man committee which heard testimony from Pittsburgh newspaper reporters, coal miners, union officials, and operators, including DeArmit.31 They concluded that conditions of severe distress existed, but that they resulted from economic conditions that were only partly susceptible to legislative action. The legislators noted that some operators carried on "unfair and dishonest practices." Following the suggestions of M. D. Ratchford, the President of the United Mine Workers of America, the investigators recommended improved enforcement of existing regulatory laws and a series of new measures intended to bring about greater uniformity. These recommendations included provisions for abolishing company stores, requiring honest weighing of coal, and paying miners on a run-of-the-mine basis (before the screening and sorting of coal).32

Ratchford and his fellow officers sought this redress, but they did not wish to rely exclusively upon a capricious legal system to improve working conditions. So in the spring of 1897 they began discussing a strike for the entire industry. The goal was to dry up the supply of coal, increase its price, and hopefully with the help of political leaders raise wages in western Pennsylvania thin vein mines to sixty-nine cents, with appropriate adjustments elsewhere.

30 United Mine Workers' Journal, Feb. 4, 1897, 1; The Black Diamond, Feb. 6, 1896, 154.
31 Ibid., Jan. 2, 1897, 14; Feb. 27, 1897, 238; May 1, 1897, 499; Pennsylvania Legislative Record, House of Representatives, Mar. 8, 1897, 463, and Senate, Mar. 10, 1897, 541-542.
32 Report of the Committee to Investigate the Condition of the Miners of the Bituminous Coal Mines of Western Pennsylvania, copy in Pennsylvania Bituminous Coal Investigating Committee Records. See also M. D. Ratchford to the Investigating Committee, Apr. 30, 1897, ibid.
If the strike was successful, they hoped the power of the union would insure future industry stability.\textsuperscript{33} The officers preferred to use conciliatory methods, the editor of the \textit{United Mine Workers' Journal} explained, but such had failed. “Our methods have been rejected; a war of conquest has been forced upon us; it is proposed to obliterate us as a factor in the marketing, the mining or selling price of a ton of coal; our labor is to be contracted for and we are to be bound by ironclad \textit{[contracts];} our counsels are to be disregarded; our protests to pass unheeded; our advice is not to be sought nor our admonishments \textit{[sic] listened to, while our labor is to be disposed of as seems fit to our employers, and we are to accept such compensation as they agree upon. In brief we are to be led like sheep to the slaughter, without resistance, without protest on our part.” Any strike, he concluded, was simply the fault of the operators.\textsuperscript{34}

The decision to call the strike was both courageous and shrewd. The officers made their decision secretly, and, when they inquired, were told that a court could punish “every officer” for conspiracy under the Sherman Antitrust Act.\textsuperscript{35} The UMW, moreover, by the spring of 1897 was suffering dearly; in Pittsburgh the treasury was so depleted that district officers had to borrow from friends in order to survive. The failures of preceding years had discouraged paying members; immediately prior to the strike the UMW had only 10,678 members of whom 7,967 worked in Ohio and 1,975 around Pittsburgh. The union estimated that there were 111,000 miners and mine laborers in western Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois.\textsuperscript{36} The officers hoped that tens of thousands of these men would respond to their strike call. To enhance possibilities of success, they timed the walkout for July 4. Not only was the date of

\textsuperscript{33} Ratchford met with Senators Mark Hanna and Matthew Quay in April and secured their promise to try to bring about a wage settlement. \textit{United Mine Workers' Journal}, Apr. 22, 1897, 4; \textit{Coal Trade Journal}, Apr. 21, 1897, 198. On the strategy of the strike, see John E. George, “The Coal Miners' Strike of 1897,” \textit{Quarterly Journal of Economics}, XII (January, 1898), 186, 199.

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{United Mine Workers' Journal}, May 27, 1897, 4.

\textsuperscript{35} M. D. Ratchford, W. C. Pearce, and John Kane to George K. Nash, June 28, 1897, John Mitchell Papers, Catholic University of America Archives; Nash to Ratchford, Pearce, and Kane, June 29, 1897, \textit{ibid}.

symbolic importance, it meant that instructions could be spread while men were off the job. They hoped that their timing would catch operators and their customers by surprise, before they had built up large stocks of coal.\(^37\)

The response exceeded all expectations. An estimated 150,000 mine workers walked off their jobs.\(^38\) In Illinois, "the organized miners engaged in missionary work with all the zeal of converts to a holy cause, appealing to their fellow craftsmen to cooperate with them. . . . No crusade was ever attended with greater success. From town to town the marching miners went—with banners, band and orators."\(^39\) In Ohio some Hocking Valley operators closed their mines in support of the strike's aims.\(^40\) The Governors of West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois expressed a sympathy with the strikers that was echoed in the editorial columns of major newspapers and trade publications.\(^41\) The American Federation of Labor promised to lend a helping hand in recruiting additional miners to the cause.\(^42\) Even some corporations rendered indirect support. The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad raised its rates on coal still being mined in order to bring pressure to bear for a settlement, while the Pennsylvania refused to haul West Virginia coal in some cases in order to maintain the good will of important Pittsburgh shippers who were shut down.\(^43\) The strike, according to an editor in the Hocking Valley who recognized the causes, was "a struggle not so

---


\(^{40}\) *Athens Journal* (Ohio), July 8, 1897.


\(^{43}\) *New York Times*, July 17, 1897; *Coal Trade Journal*, July 28, 1897, 387.
much between capital and labor but between capital and capital..."44

Within a few days officials in the state arbitration bureaus of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois tried to bring the warring coal operators together and resolve the competitive conflicts that had brought about the walkout. These officials had been keeping a watchful eye on the conditions of the industry.45 Soon after the strike began, they met in Indianapolis, and, supported by their respective governors, sent a delegation led by John Little of Ohio to Pittsburgh to seek a resolution of the dispute.46 After discussing the situation with the UMW leaders and the operators, they decided to try to arrange another uniformity agreement to serve as the basis of a wage settlement. The delegation, of course, had no legal authority to intervene in a dispute that technically lay outside of their state jurisdictions, but they hoped that their positions as public servants would encourage the warring operators to come together and agree to stabilize employment conditions in the industry.47 From Washington, Senator Mark Hanna promised to lend his support to the effort.48

Although their intervention received considerable support from a variety of editorial writers, the principals were suspicious of the arbitrators' actions.49 Ratchford recalled the bitter experiences of earlier efforts to arrange a uniformity agreement among the operators. In fact, the decision to call the strike had stemmed largely from these earlier frustrations; the union now was following a

44 Athens Messenger and Herald, July 8, 1897.
46 Ibid., 1897, 28; New York Times, July 7, 1897. U. S. Commissioner of Labor Carroll D. Wright was invited but did not participate. Pittsburgh Dispatch, July 10, 12, 1897.
48 New York Times, July 17, 1897. The precise role of Hanna in the strike and its resolution remains elusive. The available sources indicate only a probable role, one not susceptible to normal documentation. It was clear that Hanna's coal firm led the effort eventually to settle the strike. But as far as Hanna was personally concerned there is no direct evidence to indicate either his actions or his ideology of "corporate liberalism" bearing on the events of the strike.
49 "The Western Coal Miners Strike," Iron Age, LX (July 15, 1897), 19; Columbus Dispatch, July 29, 1897.
different strategy that did not rely on the support of the operators but which looked toward the generation of collective bargaining power over the entire interstate field as a means of bringing the mining firms together and improving the lot of the mine worker.\textsuperscript{50} Pittsburgh operators, meanwhile, reiterated their complaint that cooperation unduly benefited producers to the west. Their suspicions were reinforced by the efforts of Thomas E. Young of the Hanna and Cleveland interests to encourage cooperation.\textsuperscript{51} DeArmit accused the arbitrators of trying to help elect Mark Hanna to the United States Senate that autumn. He did, however, reassert his earlier position on the desirability of achieving a uniformity agreement.\textsuperscript{52} But he insisted that any effort on his part to establish uniformity did not imply a willingness to recognize the union.\textsuperscript{53}

Their work cut out for them, the arbitrators proceeded in the last two weeks of July to arrange another uniformity contract and to enlist the signatures of the Pittsburgh operators. Antagonisms ran deep, and when they tried to bring the owners together at the end of the month, only a few attended; and of these only a bare majority could agree to the terms of the contract which provided for a uniform wage scale and outlawed company stores.\textsuperscript{54} Undaunted, the arbitrators added a provision for a permanent uniformity commission to resolve all disputes that might arise in the Pittsburgh district, and a system of interstate boards of arbitration to serve as a court of last resort.\textsuperscript{55} They hoped thus, in the words of John Little, "to adjust those questions which engender controversy between competitive districts" and avoid "that strife which so often disturbs commerce and the whole fabric of society at a great expense and injury to the whole people."\textsuperscript{56} A letter circulated to all Pittsburgh coal companies early in August outlined the plan which embraced "principles whose application would prove to be a long

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{New York Times}, July 17, 24, 1897; \textit{United Mine Workers' Journal}, July 22, 1897, 5. The Pittsburgh operators felt the arbitrators were unjustly focusing public attention on them. \textit{Pittsburgh Dispatch}, July 13, 1897.

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Coal Trade Journal}, July 21, 1897, 374.


\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Ibid.}, July 28, 1897.

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Athens Journal}, July 29, 1897; \textit{The Black Diamond}, July 17, 1897, 68; July 31, 1897, 126.


\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Pittsburgh Dispatch}, Aug. 1, 1897.
and lasting step toward repose, stability and living returns.” From “a coldly selfish standpoint” it deserved at least a one-year trial.\(^6^7\) He confidently predicted a uniformity agreement by the end of 1897.\(^6^8\) Early in September the officials secured DeArmit’s signature; encouraged, through the fall they continued enlisting the required signatures of 95 per cent of the area operators.\(^6^9\) But the conflict of the strike by this time overtook the uniformity movement, and at the time of the Interstate Joint Conference in 1898 it quietly died.\(^6^0\)

During the summer of 1897, the most pressing problem of the UMWA leadership was to keep enthusiasm high among the miners and to encourage men in unorganized fields to join the strike in order to insure a famine in the coal supply. In 1894 the miners’ strike had failed principally because the union could not enforce its will on the West Virginia fields which continued to supply the market. The meager union resources, moreover, meant that funds were not available to support either union organizers or the hungry families of the strikers. Nationally known labor leaders, such as Eugene Debs and James R. Sovereign, traveled through the hills of West Virginia encouraging support for the strike. At the outset Ratchford and Gompers anticipated an organizing effort of ten to fourteen days.\(^6^1\) Hostility from the courts, particularly in the form of injunctions, hindered organizers.\(^6^2\) Gompers responded by calling a labor conference in Wheeling in an unsuccessful attempt to counteract a court injunction issued against them.\(^6^3\) Nevertheless, of the 22,000 Mountain State miners, some 10,000 eventually walked off their jobs.\(^6^4\) In Illinois, whose important coal fields also had little worker organization, young John Mitchell and others

---

\(^5^7\) *The Black Diamond*, Aug. 7, 1897, 154.
\(^5^8\) *Ohio State Journal*, Aug. 31, 1897.
\(^5^9\) *Coal Trade Journal*, Sept. 8, 1897, 473.
\(^6^3\) Samuel Gompers, “Strikes and the Coal Miners,” *The Forum*, XXIV (September, 1897), 33.
\(^6^4\) The state labor commissioners released the data. *Coal Trade Journal*, Sept. 8, 1897, 473.
spread the union gospel so successfully that 86.5 per cent of the miners at one time or another joined the strike.⁶⁵

Although coal never disappeared from the markets of major midwestern cities during the summer, the union strategy was sufficiently successful to cause panic among consumers.⁶⁶ At the onset of the strike, railroads confiscated coal under consignment to other customers, and some cut back on train service.⁶⁷ The union leaders realized that their announced strategy of causing a coal famine required a sustained strike effort lasting through the lake season in order to bring pressure to bear on the major operators to settle on terms favorable to the miners. Such a strategy was difficult to maintain, since the preceding years of hardship had already exhausted the personal savings of individual miners.

Direct relief for strikers and their families was a critical problem facing union leaders. Other labor organizations sent support, and in the mining towns the men organized relief committees that foraged for foodstuffs among neighboring farmers and townspeople.⁶⁸ At the end of July Governor James Mount of Indiana commissioned two officials to investigate the need for relief in that state. They reported that conditions were bleak, and Mount appealed for charitable efforts in support of the strikers.⁶⁹ In Ohio there were similar developments. Governor Asa Bushnell in August charged the state's Inspector of Mines and his assistants with the task of collecting and distributing relief supplies.⁷⁰ They were disappointed with the response of the state's citizens, collecting only about $1,500 in

---

⁶⁷ Railroad Gazette, July 16, 1897, 509.
cash plus a variety of contributions in kind. The inadequate donations pressured the union leaders to bring an early end to the strike, although the governmental sanction of the relief drive allowed them bravely to predict the collection of sufficient resources to continue the walkout into the autumn.

The most dramatic episode of the strike took place near the mines of the New York and Cleveland Gas Coal Company on Plum Creek outside of Pittsburgh. DeArmit had bound his miners to an "ironclad" contract which required each individual to forfeit a portion of his wages until its terms were fulfilled. Nearly three-fourths of his workers were recent immigrants who did not speak English. In order to publicize the strike among them, the union organized a march on Plum Creek at the beginning of August and established an encampment from which the strikers could encourage the DeArmit miners to join the cause. DeArmit responded by obtaining a federal court injunction that forbade the strikers from engaging in any demonstration to menace, intimidate, or cast "opprobium" against his workers. He enlisted the help of the Sheriff of Allegheny County in enforcing the court order. When local deputies were unable to stop the strikers, he desperately telegraphed Governor Daniel Hastings to bring in the militia. He predicted violence and bloodshed. Hastings posted State Factory Inspector James Campbell at the scene, however, and, learning that DeArmit was exaggerating the situation in order to break the strike, refused to call out troops. DeArmit then enlisted the support of a number of prominent Pittsburgh businessmen and tried again. "It is now

71 United Mine Workers' Journal, Sept. 2, 1897, 4. The Ohio mining inspectors were highly sympathetic to the strikers. The Chief Inspector reported to Governor Bushnell that his action and the people's response "was of the greatest possible assistance to the miners during their struggle to secure living wages." Twenty-third Annual Report, 894. For further details of the episode see Governor of Ohio, Correspondence Relative to Miners' Relief, Aug. 16 to Nov. 1, 1897, Series 643, Archives Department, Ohio Historical Society.


73 Public Opinion, Aug. 19, 1897, 254; Aug. 26, 1897, 264.

74 DeArmit to Hastings, Aug. 2, 1897, Daniel Hastings Papers, Executive Correspondence, Division of Archives and Manuscripts, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission; Sheriff Harvey A. Lowry to Hastings, Aug. 2, 1897, ibid.; Col. Thomas J. Hudson to Hastings, Aug. 2, 1897, ibid.; James Campbell to Hastings, Aug. 3, 1897, ibid.

beyond any reasonable doubt," he wired the Governor, "that the sheriff of allegheny [sic] county is unable to cope with the Mob now congregated at and about our mines in this county . . . twenty four hours of delay means bloodshed. Prevent it in some way for God's sake." Governor Hastings remained impassive, however, and some of DeArmit's workers for a time late in August joined the strike.78

Concurrent with the drama along Plum Creek, a number of Pittsburgh area operators, frustrated over the possibility of losing an entire season in the lake trade, resolved to try to break the strike. Twenty-four of the largest Pittsburgh firms, over the objections of the Hanna coal interests, argued that contracts made with customers at the fifty-four cents mining rate could not be broken. They began planning to reopen selected mines with strikebreakers if necessary, with all the operators sharing in the expense.79 After newspapers reported the plan, they requested a conference with UMW officials. The union leaders agreed to a joint conference with operators from the entire interstate field, but the Pittsburgh producers replied that such arrangements were impractical. The UMW executive council then agreed to confer with them on August 23.80

The episode brought together a large number of operators who had previously refused to bargain. Although no agreement was reached, the issues dividing the two sides were clarified. The Pittsburgh coal companies wanted contract negotiations to take place, but on a state-by-state basis as before the strike, no doubt hoping to preserve some competitive advantage in the lake trade. When union leaders insisted on an interstate agreement, the Pittsburgh operators angrily accused them of being tools of the Ohio interests. They offered a raise in Pittsburgh of seven and a half cents per ton; the miners held out for a fifteen cents raise.81 Both sides could agree on the need for contract negotiations, but not the method, state by state or interstate, and not the pay scale pending the final

77 De Armit to Hastings, Aug. 12, 1897, Hastings Papers.
79 Cleveland Leader, Aug. 18, 19, 20, 1897.
80 Ibid., Aug. 21, 22, 1897; Roy, History of Coal Miners, 356-357.
81 Pittsburgh Dispatch, Aug. 22, 23, 24, 1897; Cleveland Plain Dealer, Aug. 24, 1897; Cleveland Leader, Aug. 25, 1897; United Mine Workers' Journal, Sept. 2, 1897, 1; "The Coal Strike," The Black Diamond, Sept. 4, 1897, 207.
award. The operators threatened to employ strikebreakers, the union threatened to recruit additional support for the strike from national labor organizations, and the conference ended in an impasse.\textsuperscript{82}

The first break came as both sides girded for further battles. A group of small producers in Pittsburgh, anxious for a temporary advantage over their larger rivals in the lake trade, announced they would reopen their mines on the union's terms.\textsuperscript{83} While the operators planned strike-breaking tactics and the UMW rallied labor support at a special conference in St. Louis, Thomas E. Young of the Hanna interests arranged a settlement. "I have been trying to get both sides together for some time," Young told reporters. He arranged a sixty-four cents rate in Pittsburgh pending negotiations on an interstate basis.\textsuperscript{84}

Young was successful because of conditions, both short and long-run, relating to the lake trade. In the short-run, the operators wanted to ship coal before winter closed the route. They were in danger of losing much of their market to West Virginia competitors.\textsuperscript{85} Moreover, they had begun to recognize that labor peace was in their long-term self-interest.\textsuperscript{86} On Wall Street J. P. Morgan was taking control of the coal-hauling railroads in Ohio, promising to integrate them with the Chesapeake and Ohio and Norfolk and Western lines in a through system from tidewater to the lakes. This system would eventually give the investors who were expanding their holdings in the southern Appalachian coal fields an advantageous rail route to the north.\textsuperscript{87}

The executive committee of the UMW met with leading operators in Columbus on September 2. After three days of negotiations


\textsuperscript{83} Columbus Dispatch, Aug. 28, 1897; Cleveland Leader, Aug. 29, 31, 1897.

\textsuperscript{84} Cleveland Plain Dealer, Sept. 1, 1897.

\textsuperscript{85} Ohio State Journal, Sept. 1, 1897.

\textsuperscript{86} For evidence of this realization, see Coal Trade Journal, Sept. 29, 1897, 512.

\textsuperscript{87} On Morgan's growing involvement, see \textit{ibid.}, Nov. 16, 1896, 645; Aug. 11, 1897, 416; \textit{Poor's Manual of Railroads of the United States}, 1897, 398; Carl Snyder, \textit{American Railways as Investments} (New York, 1907), 97, 323, 686. On the expansion in coal interests, see "Bituminous Interests Combining," \textit{Public Opinion}, Jan. 27, 1898, 125. For an example of an eastern investment interest in southern Appalachian coal lands, see Charles H. Evans (comp.), "Report on 503,000 Acres of Pocahontas and Kanawha Coal Lands and Eleven Going Coal and Coke Operations," 1907 typescript, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
in which the union leaders tried to obtain the sixty-nine cents scale, the two sides agreed to a sixty-five cents rate pending the convening of an interstate joint conference the next winter to negotiate a contract for 1898. DeArmit was the only large Pittsburgh producer who was not included; the strike was to continue in his mines.88

The strike had succeeded insofar as it had brought the operators together and raised the miners’ wages. But what about the union? Would its leaders successfully persuade the rank and file to settle for less than the original sixty-nine cents goal? The national officers realized that the strike could not continue for long. Organizers were reporting that strikers in West Virginia and Illinois were drifting back to work. Ratchford believed that if the strike continued in order to press for the higher rate, the large Pittsburgh operators would break the union and enforce the lowest possible wage. He said the failure to close down mining operations completely in West Virginia and elsewhere compelled the compromise.89 In calling a national convention to decide upon acceptance of the offer, the executive council pleaded with the locals to send their delegates without instructions; in other words, open to persuasion by the national officers.90

Despite the plea, there were troubles in the convention, for many delegates came with instructions to press on for the sixty-nine cents scale. The mood of the meeting at the outset was hostile to the compromise. With a conflicting perspective on events, the national officers had somehow to persuade those delegates that no more could be won from management.91 Leaders from Indiana and Illinois pressed for a clear provision for an interstate settlement to include their districts. When the Indiana operators offered to settle the strike on their own local terms, the union leaders declined; they were determined that the final settlement would fairly manage and

88 Columbus Dispatch, Sept. 2, 1897; Ohio State Journal, Sept. 3, 4, 1897. Both Hanna and President McKinley were in Columbus at the time of the meeting, but there is no evidence that they took part. Columbus Dispatch, Sept. 3, 1897.
89 United Mine Workers’ Journal, Sept. 16, 1897, 4; Ratchford to Powderly, Sept. 14, 1897, Terence Powderly Papers, Catholic University of America Archives; New York Times, Sept. 4, 1897.
90 Coal Trade Journal, Sept. 15, 1897, 484.
91 Columbus Dispatch, Sept. 7, 10, 1897; Ohio State Journal, Sept. 8, 1897; New York Times, Sept. 9, 1897.
stabilize the industry in as many states as possible. They promised to continue the strike in Illinois seeking to lessen competition between northern and southern operators in that state, and to maintain the organizing drives in West Virginia. Finally, after three days of debate, on September 11 the convention agreed to the settlement arranged by the Hanna firm with a promise to use union power to extend the conditions of the contract, with appropriate regional adjustments, to all operators who resisted.

This agreement established the United MineWorkers as a powerful industrial union. Prosperity followed the strike as producers rushed to fill contracts before the close of navigation on the lakes. Union membership increased dramatically. John Mitchell, rising to prominence in the union, worked successfully to resolve differences in Illinois. In Pennsylvania, the UMW was able to renew its effort against DeArmit who was resisting the new state of affairs in the industry. When operator and union representatives met in joint conference in Chicago in January, 1898, he was the last major producer north of the Ohio River to hold out. The remainder of the northern field, however, thanks in large part to the union's bargaining power which now stretched across Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and western Pennsylvania, disregarded the Carnegie interests and arranged a contract for the year.

This system of resolving labor-management differences as part of an effort to control the conditions in the soft coal business continued for the next quarter of a century. In these meetings the operators and miners worked out a relatively simple set of rules. After airing their viewpoints in a general meeting, union delegates and coal firm representatives met in a smaller scale committee which hammered out specific contract terms. Agreements had to be

---

92 George, "The Coal Miners' Strike of 1897," 206-207.
94 United Mine Workers' Journal, Oct. 28, 1897, 1. In Illinois as a result of the strike, the union's membership grew from 1,000 to 35,000 men. See John R. Commons, "A New Way of Settling Labor Disputes," The American Monthly Review of Reviews, XXIII (March, 1901), 328-333.
unanimous among the participants from the four states. The goal was to arrange a contract running from January to January on the basis of which the coal companies could plan their production and marketing. Under this contract they were assured of not being disrupted by strikes and of knowing that competitors faced similar labor costs.

In the 1898 conference the union sought to establish the eight-hour day, payment on a run-of-the-mine basis, and to raise the scale by ten cents per ton. The eight-hour question was easily agreed upon, but the operators resisted the run-of-the-mine proposal. They distrusted the miners, suspecting that such a system would result in the careless blasting of coal into small lumps in order to increase volume. Since the Illinois miners had achieved the practice in their state, the interstate meeting agreed to allow its continuance there under an appropriate scale differential. Moreover, the operators of Ohio and Pennsylvania agreed to use a standard screen and the union to abolish pay differentials between competing fields. On the wage question, the miners eventually won out, obtaining a ten cents per ton advance.

The final contract designated the United Mine Workers as its enforcer. The national officers brought to bear the widest available perspective on the otherwise fractured industry. They established a "defense fund" to provide the resources for enforcement and continuously through the contract year acted to manage and control uniform employment conditions in the soft coal industry. They sought, of course, to expand their power over unorganized fields, principally in West Virginia, without success until the New Deal years. At the turn of the century the union provided the mechanism for adjudicating disputes in Ohio and Illinois. In Ohio the operators early in 1898 objected to the removal of their differential with the Pittsburgh fields in spite of the new equality in screen size. Ratch-

96 "A Preventive of Future Strikes," The Black Diamond, Dec. 4, 1897, 631. John R. Commons described his visit to the joint conference of 1900 in "A New Way of Settling Labor Disputes."
97 United Mine Workers' Journal, Jan. 27, 1898, 4; Feb. 10, 1898, 4; George, "Settlement in Coal," 452-454, 457; "History as It is Made," Chautauquan, XXVI (March, 1898), 672.
98 The contract is quoted in Annual Report of the State Board of Arbitration (Columbus, 1898), 20.
ford, in no uncertain terms, informed the Ohio coal men that they had to comply with the joint conference contract. Basic changes could be sought only at interstate meetings.\(^{100}\) Illinois posed a different sort of problem. The operators located at Virden and Pana objected to the scale, complaining that it did not allow them to compete in the Chicago market. They appealed to the national executive board of the UMW for redress, only, like their counterparts in Ohio, to be rejected. A series of “mine wars” ensued. The union was victorious in Virden in 1898 and Pana in 1899 after the militia prevented the importation of strikebreakers. Finally, all of that important state was under the control of the UMW.\(^{101}\)

The union’s success in Ohio and Illinois, however, was not repeated in West Virginia and the other states of the southern Appalachian field. In the years of the joint interstate conferences the northern operators exhorted the union to organize and control their southern competitors.\(^{102}\) The latter were able to use the local judiciary to their advantage, however, and defeat the union organizers in a series of conflicts lasting into the 1920s.\(^{103}\) However, although it failed nationally before World War I, the system of stabilizing the industry through joint conferences survived in the north. Until about 1910 the steady expansion of the market for coal postponed the effects of competition from the growing southern production. When the market for soft coal began to fall off after World War I, the joint conference system broke down completely.\(^{104}\)

At its inception, however, the system of resolving differences in the soft coal industry had an important impact on the development of social and economic thought. “The labor problem” was a major concern at the time. The use of this phrase by a variety of editorial writers, academic persons, businessmen and governmental leaders expressed their concern for achieving a system of harmonious

\(^{100}\) Ibid., Mar. 10, 1898, 1; Mar. 24, 1898, 4; Annual Report of the State Board of Arbitration (Columbus, 1898), 30–31.


\(^{102}\) Interstate Convention, Second Annual Joint Conference of Coal Miners and Operators of Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Pennsylvania (Pittsburgh, 1899), 3–5, 14, 23.

\(^{103}\) For one such incident, see Edward M. Steel, “Mother Jones in the Fairmont Field, 1902,” Journal of American History, LVII (September, 1970), 390–397.

\(^{104}\) Baratz, The Union and the Coal Industry, 45–46.
relations between the social classes, capital and labor. They sought a system of industrial relations which was orderly, which did not threaten violence toward property or person, disruptions of production, or alternatives to the continued existence of private enterprise. Some observers hoped that the joint conference system was a key to achieving class harmony elsewhere in American society. It was, in the words of John R. Commons, "constitutional government in industry." He looked upon the joint conferences as proof that when capital and labor were equally strong, they could work together for the common good despite basic differences. And the internationally known editor of the Quarterly Journal of Economics, W. J. Ashley, recommended such systems of labor-management cooperation as the only ultimate alternative to state control.\(^1\)

The system devised in 1897 and 1898 did not prove to be the final answer to labor-management relations in the soft coal industry. It did remain alive until the mid-1920s, but even so the joint-conference approach suffered a rocky history. Mine operators learned, for instance, that even though the conferences might bring about a stabilization of labor costs, the contracts did nothing about the volume of production. In periods of overproduction, a problem which became acute after World War I, the competitive scramble for markets caused internecine warfare within the industry. Nevertheless the system was tried for a significant period of time and under it the UMW maintained itself as a relatively powerful industrial union, helping to keep alive a tradition of industry-wide collective bargaining which prevailed in American life after 1935. Moreover, the joint conferences seemed for a time to offer the possibility of fulfilling in a practical way a widely held dream in the Progressive Era of realizing a system of socioeconomic relations of harmony among classes in a context of improved wages and conditions for workers and profitability for business.

Ohio State University

K. Austin Kerr