We are in a fight to the death now, and we will put on this demonstration Wednesday in a manner that will impress this community that the workers are organized.

—Michael J. Hartneady, September 10, 1934

The "fight to the death" that United Mine Workers (UMW) leader Michael J. Hartneady rhetorically vowed was not a struggle directly confronting the miners of his anthracite district, but a strike of the silk industry employees of the small city of Hazleton, Pennsylvania. Like mill hands in communities ranging from Maine to Alabama, the Hazleton silk workers had joined the call for a general strike in textiles on September 1, 1934. Directed nationally by the struggling United Textile Workers of America (UTW), the walkout affected up to 400,000 employees across the country and represented the largest strike in a single industry in

1 Hazleton Standard Sentinel, Sept. 11, 1934. Hartneady was president, District 7, United Mine Workers. He is commenting on the proposed General Labor Holiday.
American history. Demanding union recognition, industry-wide collective bargaining, work reduction with no change in pay, and the enforcement of federal labor guidelines, the UTW compelled America's unorganized textile workers to take dramatic action. In Hazleton, silk mill employees received strong support from area union members, like Hartnead's miners, and were able to generate a solid pro-union front in the midst of the Great Depression.

Hazleton strikers employed techniques that were common to other communities as well as some creative tactics of their own. As in other towns, "flying squadrons" of cars and buses took pickets to nearby factories still operating. Strikers confronted plant guards and city, county, and state police throughout the strike. Employees at the Duplan Silk Corporation, one of the largest silk concerns in the country, ousted the company loyalists who dominated their UTW local. In contrast to workers in other textile towns, Hazleton strikers requested area UMW locals to penalize miners whose relatives and kin continued to work in the silk mills. They also picketed and clandestinely attacked the homes of several scab workers. Most significantly, on Wednesday, September 12, organized labor in Hazleton called the only citywide general strike held during the national shutdown. Twenty thousand unionists, ranging from bus drivers to journeymen barbers, marched in a parade to support the strikers. Newspaper headlines proclaimed area industry "still for [a] day," and characterized the General Labor Holiday as "a mighty demonstration" of organized labor's strength in the community.

The strength of the Hazleton strikers' opposition to mill owners during the three-week general strike contrasted sharply with the efforts of textile union supporters in the rest of the country. A loosely defined guarantee of collective bargaining and an unenforceable set of industrial codes, combined

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\(^3\) *Monthly Labor Review* 40 (1935), 106; Bernstein, *Turbulent Years*, 313; Brooks, "United Textile Workers," 376. Bernstein and Brooks incorrectly date the Hazleton labor holiday as occurring on Tuesday, September 11. The *Hazleton Plain Speaker*, Sept. 13, 1934; and *Hazleton Standard Sentinel*, Sept. 13, 1934. Note that the two newspapers were owned by the same publisher: the *Plain Speaker* was the city's afternoon daily and the *Standard Sentinel* the city's morning paper. Many of the stories were printed word-for-word in both papers and no editorial differences can be discerned regarding the strike.
with the American Federation of Labor’s limited support, doomed the industry-wide strike to failure. Encountering violent opposition from both mill owners and state governments, the UTW won none of its demands. Several local studies have concluded that the workers’ situation in both southern and northern textile communities was inherently weak and unstable.\(^4\) Mill workers in these accounts had little or no militant experience prior to the walkout and received little support from other unions. Few southern mills were organized or had ever confronted their employers, while union locals for New England mills were unable to form their members into a disciplined front. Living in towns dominated by textile firms, working-class families had no choice but to depend solely on mill incomes for subsistence. When on strike, most families could bring few wages or none into the household. The strikers in these communities basically had to “go it alone,” lacking the resources, organization, and experience to win a prolonged strike.

Hazleton’s silk workers also faced hardened antiunion employers and three weeks of picketing, mass meetings, and violence, but the city’s particular industrial character, the cooperation of local unions, and the special family economy of workers in the area set them well apart from strikers in the rest of the nation. A movement led by the city’s middle class in the 1890s had successfully lured textile and garment manufacturers to the local mining economy, providing a limited diversity of employment for working families. In the early twentieth century, these industries employed the city’s population rather neatly according to sex: men worked in the mines, while mainly single women entered the silk and clothing factories. During prolonged labor disputes, strikers could depend on the earnings of other family members and sometimes even find temporary work for themselves.\(^5\)

By the early 1930s both the mine companies and shirt manufacturers


\(^5\) Interviews with Dan Yakubisin, March 18, 1991, and John Tomsho, March 21, 1991. Yakubisin, a union miner in the 1930s, worked as a mechanic during “short time” periods and long strikes. Both he and Tomsho, a union silk worker, assert that strikers did not receive state relief or help from area clubs and churches, but depended on the wages of kin and relatives. Tomsho: “Well everybody had families, so somebody was bringing a little bit in.”
employed unionized labor. The UMW and Amalgamated Clothing Workers (ACW) locals, together with the numerous trades affiliated with the city's strong Central Labor Union, had long experience with labor conflicts and readily gave moral and financial support to the silk strikers. The 3,000 silk workers in the area were themselves no strangers to labor militancy and organizing. Silk mill employees led two major strikes in 1930 and 1933.

The structure of working-class households further aided the silk strikers' cause, since the well-being of families depended on the wages of both parents and children. It was in the family's best interest to see that each member's employment was secure, provided an adequate wage, and exacted a reasonable workload. The depression severely threatened all of these needs in the city's silk industry, as jobs, hours, and wages were slashed and the dreaded "stretch out" made work in the mills even more exhausting. When local UMW chief Michael Hartneady claimed that "[we] are in a fight to the death now," he was not merely indulging in political melodrama but articulating the common interest of miners, tradesmen, and other local workers in the success of the silk strikers' demands.

In short, a set of important local circumstances distinguished the way in which Hazleton experienced the September 1934 walkout. To gain insight into the city's unique behavior during the strike, Hazleton's industrial and demographic growth will be studied as well as its history of working-class organization and unrest. The area's numerous ethnic groups and sexual division of labor are certainly crucial for understanding Hazleton in the 1930s. But these potentially disruptive ethnic and gender differences proved less significant than the points of similarity that brought workers of all backgrounds together in the General Labor Holiday parade. For most of America's textile employees, a national strike called by a national union and influenced heavily by national labor policies ended in failure in the fall of 1934. In Hazleton, the local struggle and the unity it achieved offer an incisive means for understanding a community's needs and aspirations during the early New Deal.

Although Hazleton is located in the heart of the anthracite coal region, coal interests dominated but never completely owned and directed its economy. In the late nineteenth century, the city functioned as a small commercial center for the Eastern Middle Anthracite Basin, providing services, retail goods, and entertainment for the nearby mining patch communities. Most male residents, however, labored in the mines.
Expansion of the coal industry after the Civil War generated rapid population growth. English and Welsh miners, Irish laborers, and Germans of various occupations had been coming to the area for several decades. By the 1880s, southern and eastern European immigrants added to their number, forming ethnic neighborhoods in the city. These immigrants worked in mines in the city limits as well as at patches within walking distance of their homes.⁶

As Hazleton expanded, the self-employed businessmen and professionals that serviced the mining population grew frustrated with the various constraints on their economic and social position. Decision-making power in the area rested with independent coal operators and the increasingly dominant Philadelphia-based railroad and coal corporations. The coal region's company towns and dependence on an unstable single-resource economy inspired Hazleton's middle class to call for industrial diversification.⁷ In the 1890s, boards of trade and improvement associations sprouted up in towns and cities throughout the hard-coal fields, all with the goal of attracting other various large-scale employers.⁸ Northern and central Pennsylvania held several basic attractions for prospective manufacturers. Hazleton enjoyed close proximity to New York and Philadelphia, a cheap, plentiful fuel supply, and efficient railroad transportation. To these attractions, boards of trade added free property, plant shells, stock subscriptions, and tax incentives as enticements.

Local improvement associations had a clear idea of the kinds of industries they wanted to attract: firms that would hire the area's large pool of unemployed women, increase its independent working population (as opposed to workers living in company towns), and create a cushion to the

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erratic employment of the mines. Such industries therefore supplemented rather than displaced the mining industry, as local merchants clearly did not want new rivals for community power. By 1897 benefits from the diversification campaign could be seen on Hazleton’s "factory hill," which was covered by a number of mills and a brewery.

The board of trade’s successful campaign for the Duplan Silk Corporation serves as a good example of the offers made to prospective businesses. Jean L. Duplan, a French textile magnate, personally visited the city in 1898 while on a tour of possible locations for his first major mill in the United States. He had practically ruled out the small city after viewing the proposed mill site, a muddy tract of land scarred by mine cave-ins. Not only did an open sewer run through the property, but Duplan considered Hazleton’s high altitude inappropriate for making fine silk fabric. Reports that the area’s workers comprised an "undesirable element" inclined to militancy further dimmed Hazleton’s prospects.

Eager Board of Trade representatives, however, offered incentives the textile owner could not refuse. A vigorous fund-raising drive collected $10,000 to pay for the property, as board members pleaded their cause in lodges, schools, and churches. Contributions from individuals poured in, ranging in amount from $200 to nickels and pennies. The Lehigh Valley Railroad, eyeing the opportunity for increased transportation on its network, gave $5,000. Local banks issued $40,000 worth of bonds to help with

9 In its assessment of the "Reasons for Locating the [Silk] Industry in the Anthracite Coal Region" the U.S. Immigration Commission claims the surplus of female labor was a major factor: "Before silk mills were erected in this section there was no industry in which young girls could secure employment . . . the young girls who were employed as domestic servants received . . . only about $1 per week and [there was] not much demand for their services." "Immigrants in Industry," Report of the U.S. Immigration Commission, pt. 2, 11:95. A contemporary social analyst saw only early marriage or moral degradation as alternatives for young women, "who are subject to serious temptations because of lack of means." Peter Roberts, Anthracite Coal Communities (New York, 1904), 14-15. Also, Aurand, "Diversifying the Economy," 55-56.

10 The new clothing and silk mills that came to Hazleton, employing mainly young men and women at low wages, did not represent a challenge to mine owners. Mine operators acquiesced to limited diversity, and did not view it as a source of competition with the wage structure they offered in the mines. Area workers, however, felt strongly that the coal interests did prevent well-paying, mass-production industries from locating in the area. Interview with John Tomsho; see also John Bodnar, Anthracite People (Harrisburg, 1983), 2, 78-79. Aurand, "Diversifying the Economy," 60.

11 The following narrative is derived from "Duplan Tells Why He Came to This City," Standard Sentinel, March 1, 1918; Plain Speaker, Aug. 26, 1941; and "The House of Duplan, 1898-1918," a special twentieth-anniversary pamphlet given to employees. Greater Hazleton Historical Society Archives.
construction costs. Within three years of opening, the Duplan Silk Corporation's first plant in the United States paid off the bond issue. Expansion of the mill in 1908 and 1909 made it one of the largest silk fabric concerns in the country, employing nearly 1,800 workers.

Population figures and city directories from the early decades of the twentieth century best describe the benefits Hazleton reaped from industrial diversity. In 1925, five area silk mills employed roughly 3,000 workers, while seven shirt firms employed another 2,000. Population also reached a high level of stability as chain migration and high reproductive rates among young, ethnically diverse residents increased the 1920 census figure to over 32,000. Italian, Greek Orthodox, Polish, Slovak, and Tyrolean Catholics branched out from the existing Irish St. Gabriel's Church to establish their own parishes, further proof of the desire for permanent settlement. Commercially, a new triumvirate now reigned, consisting of the coal companies and their banks, the silk and clothing manufacturers, and the larger Broad Street retailers. Anthracite coal production, though beginning its steady decline during the late 1920s, still employed nearly 20,000 local men. Up until the Great Depression, Hazleton seemed to offer a good deal for local businesses and residents.

The growth of organized labor paralleled Hazleton's industrial and commercial development, and area unions represented machine operatives as well as craftsmen by 1934. Of the various unions that marched in the General Labor Holiday parade, none was more important or powerful than the thirty-four locals of the United Mine Workers. Repeated attempts to organize miners in the anthracite region met complete failure in the late nineteenth century. The activities of the Molly Maguires and the 1897 Lattimer massacre are only the most famous events in a labor struggle that lasted several decades. Mine operators remained nonunion through force and by playing off ethnic differences and the lack of solidarity among workers in the three major hard-coal fields. Union victory did not come until most of

12 Directory listings for silk and shirt manufacturers increased from three to fifteen between 1901 and 1928; see Williams' Directory of Hazleton and West Hazleton, 1901-02, 1903-04, 1909, 1912; R. L. Polk & Co.'s Hazleton City Directory, 1914-18, 1921-30.

the mines were consolidated under the directorship of large banking interests and after Roosevelt's federal intervention during the Anthracite Strike of 1902.14

Two factors in the UMW's turn-of-the-century success were the new organizing strategies employed by the union and the pro-union bulwark formed by the area's Slavic miners. As UMW president John Mitchell often stated in mass meetings, "the coal you dig is not Slavish [Slovak] or Polish or Irish coal. It's coal!" The union created ethnically based locals, deployed multilingual organizers, printed union literature in several languages, and cultivated the support of area clergy.15

What gave these tactics their driving force, however, was the militancy of the area's Poles, Slovaks, Lithuanians, and Ruthenians.16 When the Slavic community gave consent to strike, their unity permitted little dissension or individualism. Any lack of compliance with the strike call, whether by a Slav or another nationality, resulted in harassment and physical violence. "Flying squads" of pickets marched to mine shafts, forcing operations to shut down; Slavic miners and their families cultivated vegetable patches and livestock, depended on their children's small earnings, and harvested coal and huckleberries to support themselves during long strikes. Strikers also received support from Slavic immigrant newspapers, local and national mutual aid societies, and fraternal orders. Though not employed in the mines, Slavic women added muscle to the strikers' coercive arm. Large groups of miners' wives verbally and physically assaulted scab workers and coal and iron police alike.17 Coal strikes at the turn of the century thus had a definite ethnic

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16 The following is derived from Greene, Slavic Community. For a detailed discussion of the Slavs' "determined, almost fanatical, immigrant sentiment" during strikes, see pp. 102, 143-44, and 183-87.

17 John Bodnar also describes the ferocity of Slavic miners' wives during the United Anthracite Miners' strikes of the mid-1930s. Women reportedly stoned the funeral procession of a scab miner and threw garbage into his open grave. A policeman had to be posted in the cemetery to restrain women from digging up the body. Bodnar, Anthracite People, 8; and Bodnar, The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America (Bloomington, 1987), 91-92.
character. The UMW could offer a structure for organization and collective bargaining, but the Slavic community provided the necessary cast-iron discipline.

After winning union recognition in 1902, the UMW was able to forge a solid organization across the three mine fields. Each field comprised a distinct union district, Hazleton area miners belonging to District 7. Through the ten contracts that covered every workday from 1903 to the early 1930s, anthracite miners gradually obtained an eight-hour day, local grievance committees, union coal weighmen, and a modified dues checkoff system. By the time the children of Hazleton miners struck for a union in the silk plants in the early 1930s, the UMW had achieved a virtual closed shop in the local mines.\(^{18}\)

Craft unionism in the Hazleton area evolved alongside the miners’ struggles, but in a less confrontational and collective manner. In the 1880s, the Knights of Labor attempted to embrace all local workers within its chivalric robes. But the Knights’ class rhetoric and all-inclusive organizational policy never attracted great numbers, and coal operators dealt a death blow to the union in the bitter 1887-88 anthracite strike. Out of the wreckage emerged smaller, occupationally based unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. Skilled craftsmen formed locals of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, International Typographical Union, and the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners in the 1890s, and established the Hazleton Central Labor Union (CLU) in 1901.\(^{19}\)

In the early decades of the twentieth century, UMW District 7 and the various crafts that made up the Central Labor Union gave considerable support to semiskilled workers in local industries.\(^{20}\) Hazleton’s bakers, brewery workers, and bus and truck drivers established durable and

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\(^{19}\) Harold Aurand cites a faith in economic individualism among Hazleton’s workers as the reason for the growth of specific trade unions and the Knights’ decline: “each of the occupational organizations was narrowly focused upon promoting the economic interests of the particular group. . . . The concept of class rather than occupation did not appeal to the workers.” Aurand, Population Change, 56. Charter Certificate for Central Labor Union of Hazleton and Vicinity, dated March 5, 1901. (Lower) Luzerne and Carbon Counties, Pa., AFL-CIO Local Central Body Charter Files, the George Meany Memorial Archives, Silver Spring, Maryland.

\(^{20}\) A primary concern among the founders of the Hazleton CLU was to provide support for organizing efforts in the anthracite fields. Victor Dougherty to AFL secretary Frank Morrison, March 3, 1901, Meany Memorial Archives.
expanding organizations with the CLU’s aid and consultation. In July 1933, the city’s 2,000 shirt factory workers won union recognition in an enthusiastic organizing campaign that lasted only a month and required no strike call. Organizers from the Amalgamated Clothing Workers acknowledged the local UMW’s “unfailing and spirited cooperation.” “A great many of the shirtworkers were daughters and sisters of the miners,” they noted, “who looked upon the fight of the shirtworkers as their own.” With the ACW victory, the Hazleton Central Labor Union represented nearly 24,000 area workers in fifteen different trades, becoming a formidable power in the Lehigh Valley. Only the silk industry remained as the last major nonunion employer in the city.

Despite their unorganized status, the silk workers of Hazleton shared a great deal in common with the shirt factory employees, since the turn-of-the-century campaign for industrial diversity had a similar impact on the structure of their working-class families. The new silk and clothing mills offered little to male heads of households: only a small number of skilled machine-fixing and foremen positions were available. The overwhelming majority of plant workers were working-class sons and daughters who made up more than eighty percent of the silk and clothing plants’ respective labor pools (Tables 1 and 2). These young men and women, mainly in their teens, provided a small but necessary extra income for their large families. Their fathers worked in the mines and their mothers stayed in the home, occupied with the duties of cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, and raising numerous children.

Organizer of the city’s shirt industry, the other large-scale employer of young women in Hazleton, provides an interesting contrast to local labor’s decades-long struggle with the silk mill owners. Hazleton’s four shirt companies sent flowers to the ACW chartering ceremony, and Dr. Henry Moskowitz, arbitrator for the first contract negotiations, commended both the union and the employers for “the spirit of fair play and open-mindedness they displayed.” Plain Speaker, July 24, 1933. For more on the ACW victory, see A Chapter in Labor History: Pennsylvania Joint Board, 1933-1958 (Allentown, 1958), 4-8, and Report of the General Executive Board and Proceedings of the Tenth Biennial Convention of the ACWA, May 14-19, 1934, 51-56. Bread and Roses: The Story of the Rise of the Shirtworkers, ACW pamphlet (New York, 1935), 18.

Standard Sentinel, Sept. 5, 1933. Much of this increase can probably be attributed to the overwhelming presence of the UMW and its industrial union outlook. The mine workers dominated the strategy and activities of the region’s Central Labor Unions during the 1930s.
Table 1. Silk and Shirt Factory Employees by Sex*

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<th>Sex</th>
<th>Silk Factories</th>
<th>Shirt Factories</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n (%)</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>678 (70.4%)</td>
<td>414 (80.7%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>285 (29.6%)</td>
<td>99 (19.3%)</td>
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Table 2. Silk and Shirt Factory Employees by Relation to Head of Household*

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<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Silk Factories</th>
<th>Shirt Factories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n (%)</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head</td>
<td>55 (5.7%)</td>
<td>20 (3.9%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>202 (21.0%)</td>
<td>75 (14.6%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>608 (63.1%)</td>
<td>361 (70.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>96 (10.0%)</td>
<td>57 (10.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Both tables include figures for Hazleton, West Hazleton, and Hazleton Township. Compiled from U.S. Bureau of the Census, Manuscript Census Returns, 1910, reels 1367 and 1370.

The experiences of actual Hazleton and West Hazleton families and individuals give an idea of the roles of different family members and the sexual division of labor in the mills. Raised by Slovak immigrant parents and one of six children, John Tomsho got a job at “the Duplan” at the age of fifteen. A coal miner’s son, Tomsho worked in the weaving department and as a floor hand, while his sister worked as a weaver until she married. Tom Poniatowski, who would later become president of Duplan’s UTW local, started working at fourteen and eventually became a skilled loom fixer. Stella Sterba, whose father emigrated from Poland in 1905, was hired at Duplan as a shuttle filler in her early twenties. Both her father and younger brother worked in the mines. The Kubishians of Hazleton represent a typical
working-class family of the period. Michael, the father listed in the 1910 census as “Austro-Slovenian,” emigrated to America in 1899 and earned enough money to bring his wife and three children over the following year. By 1910 the family numbered eleven, with Michael employed in the mines and his children Mary, Susie, and Michael, Jr., working as silk weavers in area mills. None of the wives in these families worked. In the silk mills, young, single women worked as machine operatives in the spinning, quilling, warping, and weaving departments, while young men served as floor or “smash” hands, doing the heavy lifting and handling of material. In the first decades of the twentieth century, the female-to-male ratio was two to one, but with increased mechanization, the ratio of women to men grew considerably higher. Female operatives would become the dominant force in the strike activities of the 1930s.

What differentiated the silk workers most from their counterparts in the city’s clothing mills was the vehemently antiunion policies of Hazleton’s foremost textile employer. In 1918 the Hazleton Board of Trade held a special dinner to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Duplan Silk Corporation’s arrival in the city. Former president William H. Taft and Jean L. Duplan himself attended the banquet, held inside the silk plant. When Duplan spoke, he recounted an anecdote from his first visit to the city. Having doubts about locating in Hazleton, Duplan and his advisers were walking from the mill site when they passed a school just letting out: “All of a sudden we were surrounded by a big crowd of healthy-looking youngsters, with rosy cheeks, happy faces . . . We were interested also by the various types that these boys and girls represented. There were Irish, Italians, Poles and Hungarians and maybe a few Bolsheviki children.” Hazleton’s trade representatives and middle class were surely charmed by this tale of a vigorous industrialist’s interest in children and his desire to bring prosperity to a growing community. But Monsieur Duplan was by no means a naive

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23 Information on the Kubishian family was compiled from Bureau of the Census, Manuscript Census Returns, 1910. Former Duplan employees Eva Keck, Antoinette Tomaino, Katherine Ranick, and Michael Sabol came from similar large family backgrounds—father a miner, mother at home, other siblings working in the mines and mills. Interviews with Keck, Tomaino, Ranick, and Margaret Yenchko, Sept. 24, 26, 27, 1991.

24 When asked if the female-to-male ratio in the 1930s was possibly four to one, Tom Poniatowski commented, “no, ten to one, I’d say.” Interview, March 22, 1991.

25 Standard Sentinel, March 1, 1918.
altruist. He wisely decided that despite low population estimates, the city actually held a promising future labor pool. It is significant that the French textile operator remembered this episode. The Duplan Corporation's profoundly paternalistic labor policy cultivated and firmly disciplined its workforce. The image of a large man standing among children represents an especially apt allegory for the Duplan management and its workers of "various types."

Duplan, by far the largest textile firm in Hazleton, basically determined what kind of representation silk workers in the area would have. In the early 1930s, the Hazleton Heights, Progressive, Lieberman, Arrow, Standard Broad, and Hazleton Silk companies only employed between sixty and 200 workers each. The Louis Roessel Company had a labor force of 325, but Duplan employed anywhere between 1,400 and 2,000 workers at a time. The Duplan management, however, was totally opposed to labor unions and used numerous open-shop and welfare capitalist devices to keep all of Hazleton's silk workers unorganized.

By 1918 the Duplan Silk Corporation operated over 1,500 looms at its massive complex on North Wyoming Street and East Diamond Avenue. The plant consisted of a five-story building that housed the throwing, warping, and winding departments, a long, high-ceiling structure for the quilling and weaving divisions, and a special building that contained lunchrooms and employee lockers. The plant's interior, fixtures, and furniture were painted white and kept scrupulously clean, while electrical lighting and telephones facilitated operations in all departments. The complex also contained offices, craft and machine shops, textile designing rooms, first-aid facilities, and a chemical laboratory. In addition to the training provided to newcomers to the mill, the company offered a vocational school program

26 In 1934 Textile Labor Board investigator Robert Rissman reported that Duplan's labor policy represented "the key to the entire silk situation in the locality. Several other mills already, when interviewed and questioned on discrimination charges, countered with the remark, 'What is being done at the Duplan?' " Robert Rissman, "Preliminary Report to the Executive Director," Textile Labor Relations Board, Nov. 3, 1934, in "Records Relating to Labor Disturbances in the Textile Industry," Box 38, Entry 402, Records of the Textile Labor Relations Board, RG 9 (National Recovery Administration [NRA]), National Archives (NA).

27 Rissman comments: "There is no doubt in my mind that the policy of the firm [Duplan] is opposed to labor organization in its plants and that they will take steps necessary to discriminate against union workers or those persons whom they suspect of having union affiliations." Rissman, "Preliminary Report."

28 The following description of Duplan's operations and services is provided in the company pamphlet, The House of Duplan, Twenty Years of Development, 1898-1918 (New York, 1918).
based on the Gary Plan of education. Boys between the ages of fourteen and sixteen could learn various mechanical trades, while girls were taught cooking, sewing, and other domestic skills. Other company services included an employee fire brigade and a company nurse who administered first aid and gave lectures on hygiene.

Next to the plant stood the equally impressive girls' clubhouse, which overlooked an eleven-acre tract used as a playground area for the company's young workers. The clubhouse contained tennis courts, a gymnasium, and a swimming pool. Workers could take advantage of a library, darkroom, and greenhouse during their lunch breaks and after work hours. The company also sponsored the Duplan Tattler (employee newspaper), a girls' athletic association, and a theatrical group that performed plays and "minstrel follies." During World War I Duplan allotted four acres of company land for workers to cultivate "war gardens" and offered employee stock-ownership plans in the decade after the war.

Many corporations responded to the "labor question" of the early twentieth century with similar education, welfare, and leisure programs. Manufacturers felt they could produce a more reliable and efficient workforce by reforming their immigrant employees' work habits, hygiene, and social attitudes. Services such as newspapers helped bind an organization together and personalize management. Companies developed stock-ownership plans to divert workers' attention from wage demands and to foster a commitment to the company and the market. Recreational activities created a sense of family among employees and served as a source of favorable public relations. Duplan certainly fit well within the welfare capitalist trend of American business in the 1920s.

Since little evidence beyond the company pamphlets still exists, it is difficult to determine when and how long the company operated these programs. For example, none of the former Duplan workers I interviewed, who worked at the mill collectively from the 1920s to the early 1950s, remembers a vocational school.


With so little documentation available on the programs and the managerial thinking behind the welfare work the company conducted, it is difficult to provide the detailed analysis that historians have offered for other large manufacturers of the period. It should be kept in mind, however, that the pre-depression textile industry was much more competitive and the profit margin much leaner than in industries like steel, automobiles, electrical goods, and meat-packing. Duplan's employment of young men and women rather than heads of household reflected this need for a competitive edge in textiles, and the welfare programs it provided were equally lacking in largesse. For discussions of welfare capitalism, see Brandes,
Despite the company's welfare offerings, all was not well at Duplan. A hard-fought strike and unionization drive during the early depression ended in total failure. In 1930 Duplan management responded to reduced demand for silk fabric by laying off hundreds of workers and cutting wages three times between January and November. The company also added a whole new chapter to its employees' book of grievances by drastically increasing the pace and workload of each worker. In Hazleton, as in the rest of the textile industry, the "stretch-out" became the premier complaint of the 1930s.

The strike began on November 17, 1930, but never completely shut down operations at the mill. Roughly twenty percent of the employees continued to work, and city police protected their entry into the plant. Hundreds of strikers, meanwhile, flocked to UTW meetings and began mass picketing. Within a week organizers formed Local 1702, United Textile Workers, claiming that a majority of the Duplan workforce had joined the union. Hazleton mayor James Harvey responded to the conflict by arranging a conference on December 1 "to bring about tranquility, peace and harmony" between the union and the Duplan management. Company officials did not attend this meeting but met with worker representatives on the invitation of state and federal mediators on December 8. Newspapers the next morning reported that "hope for an amicable settlement had failed" and described the conference as "fruitless."

In a statement to the press, Duplan president Paul C. Debiy claimed that the company could not consider any of the workers' grievances. Due to depressed economic conditions, Duplan could only operate along the lines of its extremely competitive industrial rivals. Debiy also made clear the company's refusal to recognize or negotiate with the newly formed local. Operations in Hazleton, he claimed, had been steady and peaceful for over three decades because "all differences have always, in the past, been settled..."
in the constructive and friendly spirit of the open shop, by direct negotiations between our employees and the management. We will pursue the same policy and expect equally satisfactory relations in the future.”

The walkout continued and bitter feelings intensified, leading to threats and violence between strikers and employees still going to work. On December 12, 1930, the Standard Sentinel reported that strikers threw rocks at four scab workers’ homes and that a man and three women were being held on $500 bail each for picket-line fighting. Although UTW activists and Local 1702 president Andrew Quinney exhorted members to stop the “mob picketing,” Duplan obtained a court injunction on December 16. The injunction restrained strikers from “forcible picketing and preventing Duplan employees from going to work.” In less than a week, the Wilkes-Barre sheriff's office issued forty separate writs for infractions ranging from verbal threats to egg and rock throwing.

The company finally defused the strike in late December by restoring the wage cuts, with the condition that workers disband their fledgling union local. UTW vice president William F. Kelly reported that the Duplan management threatened to close down the mill if the local were maintained. To dramatize this threat, the company moved “a few hundred antiquated looms” from the plant to a nearby town. Union militants watched helplessly as frightened workers disbanded their organization, only to be subjected to “one reduction after another in wages” shortly after the strike.

A press release issued by the union during the 1930 strike expressed concern over a new context for labor relations at the mill. The statement argued that anyone who knew “what the conditions formerly were at the Duplan plant must realize that something very serious has taken place to compel the workers to take on this action.” Here the workers were not only referring to wage cuts and an increased workload but to the elimination of the benefits previously offered by the corporation. Management had recently terminated the company's profit-sharing plan, closed down the vocational school and recreational facilities, and later sold the girls' clubhouse to the Fraternal Order of Eagles in 1931.

Duplan, like other American corporations of the period, had very

37 Textile Worker 20 (1932), 196.
38 Standard Sentinel, Dec. 9, 1930.
deliberate motivations for offering welfare plans and activities. Aside from the desires of Progressives and Taylorite consultants to produce a better employee, many corporations developed welfare programs mainly to prevent labor unrest and reduce employee turnover. With company services and long-term incentive plans, employers believed they could avoid union organization and the expense of constantly training replacement workers. Historians of company welfare work in the United States have argued over issues of periodization, the intentions of corporate leaders, the attitudes and involvement of employees in the programs, and whether workers would have inevitably challenged their employers. In any case, the depression inflicted a coup de grace to much of this post–World War I form of welfare capitalism. Corporations during the early 1930s consistently kept only the company unions, which they maintained (or created) to satisfy national labor codes. At Duplan, welfare programs helped to cultivate a fierce sense of loyalty to the company among a sizeable minority of the employees. In the ongoing fight to create an autonomous union local at the plant, the workforce was no longer divided between craftsmen and machine operatives, but across skill levels, between union partisans and company loyalists.

In 1930 Duplan was able to defeat an organizing campaign in a direct confrontation with its employees. By 1933, however, two new forces had emerged that placed labor conflict at the company in a much larger setting. Both the American Federation of Silk Workers (AFSW) and the National Industrial Recovery Act took major steps to stabilize the silk industry’s cutthroat competitiveness and sweatshop conditions.

UTW representatives from silk manufacturing centers in New Jersey and Pennsylvania held a series of important conferences in the spring of 1932. Condemning the drastic wage cuts and increased workload that plagued the industry, union leaders concluded that conditions for silk workers were worse than ever. A new association was needed within the UTW to concentrate specifically on the silk industry and its employees. Union leaders from


40 Lynch, “Pennsylvania Anthracite,” and interview with Poniatowski, March 22, 1991. In the 1913 IWW-led strike, a sharp division between the attitudes of skilled and unskilled workers toward unionization severely hampered Duplan’s organizing effort. In the 1930s, however, no such clear divide appeared. The first two presidents of Duplan’s UTW local reflect this change. Harry Pickenheim and Tom Poniatowski were both skilled loom fixers, but Pickenheim remained pro-company during his brief tenure during 1933-34, while Poniatowski led Duplan strikers during the 1934 walkout.
Paterson, Phillipsburg, Allentown, Stroudsburg, and Easton rapidly drew up a constitution that would make the American Federation of Silk Workers "a truly industrial organization." They conceived the new division not only as a more coordinated means to organize silk workers, but as an attempt to save the industry by establishing uniform wages and production levels. "The American Federation of Silk Workers," they proclaimed, "is the first step taken to bring order out of chaos." The federation enlisted Roy F. Kling, a former employee at the Louis Roessel Company, to serve as business agent for the Hazleton area. By mid-1933, Kling had made serious inroads into the smaller Hazleton silk factories, affiliating large numbers of skilled workers with Local 1937, AFSW.

The city of Hazleton, meanwhile, enthusiastically embraced the guidelines and trappings of the National Recovery Administration in the fall of 1933. Hundreds of local employers, including the silk and clothing manufacturers, pledged to "do their part" for the recovery program. Over 20,000 residents signed NRA consumer cards, the mayor organized a "Buy Now" shopping campaign, and the city held a Blue Eagle parade. Hazleton established its own NRA mediation board, headed by Chamber of Commerce president R. Emerson Buckley, to handle labor disputes. The UMW's Michael J. Hartneady and city solicitor John Bigelow also served on the board. Five days after its formation, the agency helped end conflicts at the Spalding and Hazleton bakeries. Most encouraging to the area's silk workers, however, were the Blue Eagle's wage and hour codes and the right to form unions and bargain collectively granted under Section 7(a). The Duplan Silk Corporation would now have to confront national government policy when labor problems arose.

The new pressures that the AFSW and the NRA represented to Hazleton mills converged during an industry-wide silk strike in the fall of 1933. More than 50,000 silk workers in Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey struck over dissatisfaction with the recently approved NRA textile code. The code did not differentiate between divisions in the textile industry, and based its thirteen-dollar-a-week minimum wage on the

41 Textile Worker 20 (1932), 59-60; 20 (1932), 15; 20 (1932), 61, 540.
42 City papers listed the businesses that signed the NRA certificate of compliance throughout the month of October 1933, and the "Buy Now" campaign lasted from October to December 1933. Plain Speaker, Oct. 5, 9, 1933. Standard Sentinel, Sept. 9, 14, 1933.
low-paying cotton industry alone. The AFSW claimed that silk manufacturers were using this standard as a maximum wage level and demanded a separate code for silk and rayon workers. In Hazleton the ensuing strike lasted three months, from September to December 1933. Although workers at the Louis Roessel, Progressive, Standard Broad, Hazleton Heights, and Hazleton Silk companies joined the walkout, Duplan staved off heated opposition and maintained operations during the entire strike.

Under the direction of Roy Kling, membership in AFSW's Local 1937 grew rapidly in mid-September, as operatives at the smaller factories picketed, attended rallies, and signed union cards. Despite the overwhelming demand for union recognition, the smaller silk manufacturers remained adamantly opposed to any changes in their plants. Kling, Local 1937's president Henry Margavich, and UTW organizer Arthur Thompson knew that as long as Duplan remained unorganized the smaller operators would stick to the open shop. After closing down operations at the Progressive and Roessel shops, the local directed picketing at the Duplan complex and brought in union activists from New Jersey and other Pennsylvania silk mills to increase public pressure on the company. The Duplan management responded swiftly to this new challenge by claiming the union was illegally interfering with operations at the mill. The seventy-five pickets brought in from Paterson, Allentown, and Scranton represented an "outside influence," a clear violation of rules established by the city's NRA mediation board.  

The company also produced a petition, signed by 1,300 Duplan employees, that requested the mayor to end all picketing at the mill.  

On September 20, 1933, the entire city police force and ten deputy sheriffs, armed with clubs and tear gas guns, prevented a large group of Hazleton and nonresident silk workers from picketing at Duplan. Two days

44 Standard Sentinel, Sept. 13, 21, 28, 1933; Nov. 14, 1933.
45 "We demand the necessary protection to keep us employed... We therefore petition the mayor of Hazleton to prevent further picketing at the mill, as this picketing creates uneasiness." Text of petition published in the Standard Sentinel, Sept. 28, 1933. Although no proof exists that the company coerced workers to sign the petition, Hazleton papers stated that many Duplan employees attended AFSW Local 1937's meetings during the strike. In 1934 Roy Kling testified that Duplan provided a blacklist to other silk manufacturers of union activists the company fired after the 1930 strike. That a noninterference request was made freely by so many Duplan workers seems unlikely. For Kling's testimony, see "Hearing," Philadelphia Regional Labor Board, Nov. 8, 1934, in Docket no. 619, "United Textile Workers of America, Complainant, and Duplan Silk Corporation, Respondent" in Records Relating to Labor Disturbances in the Textile Industry, Box 38, Entry 402, Records of the Textile Labor Relations Board, RG 9 (NRA), NA.
later the same police squad entered a union meeting unannounced, drove the strikers out of the hall, and ordered all outside activists to leave the city. Mayor R. Alvan Beisel finally prohibited all picketing at Hazleton silk mills on September 27. Within a week municipal leaders in Weatherly, Freeland, and Forty-Foot issued their own antipicketing orders. The Duplan Silk Corporation's influence in the area seemed stronger than ever.

Over eighty percent of the silk employees in the smaller shops, however, continued their walkout and looked for new sources of aid. Local 1937 requested Governor Gifford Pinchot to lift the antipicket orders and asked the governor's wife to visit the city and support the strike. UMW locals in the area also pledged to put pressure on miners whose family members were working at Duplan. On October 11, 1933, mass rioting broke out when a large group of strikers and union miners assembled in front of Duplan's main entrance to intercept workers during the ten o'clock night shift change. City police were unable to handle the crowd, which grew to roughly 5,000 people, and a state police unit was called in to end the turmoil. Strikers threw hundreds of rocks at the factory, attacked a bus passing through the area, and nearly succeeded in destroying the plant's boiler room. A roving band of strikers damaged cars believed to be owned by Duplan employees still working inside the plant. While the group shouted and sang, a striker sneaked around a targetted car, letting the air out of the tires undetected. "The shouting noise," informed the Plain Speaker, "was intended to drown out the hissing noise of the air leaving the tires." Duplan operatives, meanwhile, had to remain inside the mill until after midnight and were escorted home under police protection. The raw violence of the evening must have stunned the city. Clearly the strike was not going to go away quietly. Rather than subduing labor unrest, the mayor's antipicketing orders had ignited some of the worst rioting in Hazleton's history.

NRA mediation board members Michael Hartneady of the UMW and city solicitor John Bigelow decided that the Duplan Silk Corporation had to make a major change in its labor policies. Bigelow, former legal counsel for Duplan's Pennsylvania operations, met with company officers and announced on October 17 that the company did not object to the formation of a union. On October 18 Hartneady conducted a meeting for Duplan workers that excluded all other silk mill operatives and members of Local 1937

46 Standard Sentinel, Sept. 29, 1933. Neither request was granted.
AFSW. The company stopped operations at five o’clock and canceled its evening shift so that all employees could attend. Stating that he would act for the UTW, Hartneady offered to apply for an independent union charter. The Duplan workforce would therefore not be under any other union local’s jurisdiction. John Bigelow then read a statement from the company and delivered his own “eloquent address” that strongly supported the establishment of a UTW local. After two-and-a-half hours of speeches and discussion, the 1,000 Duplan workers in attendance unanimously voted in favor of a union. On October 23, the newly formed Local 2033, United Textile Workers, elected a slate of officers. With Duplan organized, the city’s smaller silk manufacturers finally agreed to the unionization of their plants. The Louis Roessel, Hazleton Heights, Progressive, and Hazleton Silk companies all recognized Local 1937 of the American Federation of Silk Workers to represent their employees by the end of December 1933.

The Duplan local’s independence, however, allowed the company to dominate it and blunt any real challenge to managerial authority. In a hearing before the Philadelphia Regional Labor Board, UTW organizer Curtis Yerger claimed that the company “really left the workers under the impression that they were backing the organization whole-heartedly.” There were, however, “officers put in selected by the Duplan Corporation. These officers naturally never had any complaints or took up any complaints. They had meetings in the Duplan cafeteria and made it a company union even though they had a U.T.W. charter.” Local 2033’s first president, Harry Pickenheim, was a company loyalist. One of the local’s delegates to the UTW international convention in 1934 had been arrested for punching a union miner during picketing at Duplan. The local, meanwhile, kept its union charter and records at the plant and collected dues in the cafeteria

47 Plain Speaker, Oct. 12, 17, 20, 1933.
48 Duplan managers clearly wanted to avoid recognition of AFSW Local 1937 as a bargaining agent. Local 1937 president Henry Margavich and business agent Roy Kling were aggressive and combative union leaders. Margavich held rocks in both hands and had more in his pockets when police arrested him during the Oct. 11 riot. Kling rapidly built a tenacious labor organization and had argued bitterly with John Bigelow over the antipicket orders at a City Council meeting. Hazleton City Council Minutes, Sept. 26, 1933.
49 Standard Sentinel, Oct. 21, 1933; Dec. 8, 11, 15, 1933.
50 Philadelphia Regional Labor Board hearing, Nov. 8, 1934, 10-11.
51 Interview with Poniatowski.
52 Duplan employee Stephen Kucher struck Joseph Cherlock, a UMW member, in the face. Both men were charged with assault and battery. Standard Sentinel, Sept. 29, 1933; Sept. 11, 1934.
during lunchtime. A year after its formation, Hartneady declared that Local 2033 had become a "company set-up," and that its members showed "such little interest that the organization appeared to 'be dying a natural death.'" 

On Saturday, September 1, 1934, the United Textile Workers of America called a general strike of all cotton, silk, wool, and rayon workers in the United States to demand union recognition, industry-wide bargaining, a reduced workload, and enforcement of the NRA's Section 7(a). Robert Brooks called the strike "unquestionably the greatest single conflict in the history of American organized labor." By September 15, the New York Times reported that the walkout affected over 400,000 textile workers nationwide. Employees at Hazleton's smaller silk plants responded immediately to a strike call, for the second time in less than a year, while Duplan and the officers of its union local continued to work. Although the three-week general strike obtained little for workers on a national basis, Duplan employees in Hazleton finally established a truly autonomous union local.

Three local events during the 1934 strike—the experience of a Hazleton flying squadron, a crucial planning meeting of the Hazleton Central Labor Union, and the General Labor Holiday parade—deserve special attention. These examples of working-class activism are significant because they reflect both change and continuity with the miners' strikes at the turn of the century. Hazleton had experienced a major transformation in its industrial and labor structure since the organization of the anthracite fields. But the hard coal miners of 1902 and the silk workers of 1934 shared one essential trait in common. They both confronted their employers and social circumstances as families, not as individuals.

A press account of the flying squadron raid on a Wilkes-Barre silk mill on September 13 represents the most detailed discussion of the squadrons' activities in the anthracite region. Hazleton picket squadrons had been taking three to four trips a week during the strike, leaving early in the morning to intercept workers entering factory gates for the six o'clock shift. On September 5, pickets went to the McGowan Silk Mill in McAdoo where they broke windows and slightly injured a foreman. Police used clubs to disperse the strikers, but the squadron succeeded in closing the plant. They

54 Brooks, "United Textile Workers," 379.
55 Kennedy, "General Strike in Textiles," Table III, 48.
continued on to the Berlinger Mills in Weatherly and booed workers entering for the afternoon shift, broke windows, and forced the management to close the mill. At one point during the disturbances Weatherly police arrested a striker. The man had to be released, however, because mobs threatened to break in the jail door. Strikers returned to Hazleton that evening to parade in the streets. On Monday, September 10, plant guards at the Duplan throwing mill in Slatedale used fire hoses to hold back Hazleton pickets. Again, the squadrons succeeded in shutting down operations.  

On Thursday, September 13, a group of buses and cars filled with Hazleton silk workers traveled to the larger cities of Scranton and Wilkes-Barre. After picketing in Scranton, the squadron went to the Empire Silk Company mill on the outskirts of Wilkes-Barre. A Standard Sentinel reporter followed the action:

The "peaceful picketing" policy of Ben Rymovich, president of Local 2158, United Textile Workers . . . which has been closely followed since the strike began on September 4, was ignored as the Hazleton pickets, in the presence of Wilkes-Barre strikers, stormed the mill . . . They laid down a barrage of rocks soon after arriving.

Inside the mill, girl employees huddled together in the office and other protected rooms to avoid injury. Afraid to run the gauntlet of the picket line, they remained for more than an hour after their shift ended at 3. They left the mill after the crowd outside was dispersed by a detail of deputy sheriffs and state police.

Armed with a shotgun, Adolf Rieger, superintendent of the mill, challenged the progress of the flying squadron, stating that he would shoot the first man who forced entry into the plant. In reply, the flying squadron increased its bombardment.

Rieger charged that Hanover township police stood by and allowed the pickets to have their own way. The strikers ran in all directions when they saw the state police coming, he said.  

Two aspects of the raid are especially significant. First, only county and state police acted to restrain the strikers; local police did not respond. As John Tomsho recalls, "there weren't too many arrests, though, the cops were pretty good with the strike. They were starting to get unionized in this area.

56 Plain Speaker, Sept. 6, 11, 1934; Standard Sentinel, Sept. 6, 8, 1934.
at that time." State police reports note that during a large demonstration in front of Duplan, municipal officers stayed away from pickets and did not act to keep spectators moving. Second, although the newspaper does not distinguish the strikers by sex, the Hazleton caravans were mainly filled with female pickets. Tom Poniatowski maintains that women were involved in strike activities "more so than the men. They'd do all the hollering and everything. They were more militant. . . . The men would be more reserved." John Tomsho agrees: "There was a lot of women involved in the flying squadrons. In fact, they're the ones that did more aggravating than the men I think, you know as far as being forward. Yeah, they were forward."

Women did of course outnumber men on the shop floor and would most likely have appeared in greater number on the picket lines as well. That women responded so strongly to strike activities in the anthracite region should not be surprising. As in the hard coal struggles at the turn of the century, women, particularly wives, provided solid support for striking miners. The flying squadrons of 1934 moved from mill to mill just as the flying squads of miners and miners' wives marched to working collieries during the UMW campaigns. The female silk operatives certainly had fathers, mothers, and relatives who had endured the long United Mine Workers' walkouts of 1902, 1922, and 1926-27. These young women supported their families with the small pay packets they brought home; they also received support and encouragement from their families when they themselves went on strike.

Another reason for the women's aggressiveness emerges from the sexual

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58 Interview with Tomsho. Hazleton City Council Minutes reflect these attitudes among municipal policemen. Although the Hazleton Police Department received the highest number of complaints (203) in the month of September, the month's arrest totals were the fourth lowest of 1934 (43). Hazleton City Council Minutes, 1934.

59 Strike Report, Capt. Samuel Gearhardt to Pennsylvania State Police superintendent Lynn Adams, Sept. 10, 1934. State police officers, unlike local lawmen, did not have roots in the communities affected by the strike, and responded quickly to end disturbances and riots. Ethnic differences may also have acted to color the state policemen's attitudes toward strikers. Gearhardt, in a strike report dated Sept. 11, 1934, commented: "They [the pickets] are of an illiterate type and their actions are similar to Communists." Most of the state policemen cited in the strike reports had traditional Anglo- and German-American surnames—such as Plummer, Francis, Clark, Carr, Hartman, Connolly, and Newman. RG-30, Records of the State Police, Box 3, Pennsylvania State Archives. I am indebted to Harold Aurand for bringing the state police documents to my attention.

60 Interview with Poniatowski.

61 Interview with Tomsho.
division of responsibilities on the shop floor. Although the stretch-out affected all employees, women in the Hazleton mills performed an especially difficult and aggravating set of work routines. They operated the bulk of the industry's machinery, while men supplemented their activities as floor hands and loom fixers. Most machine operatives worked for reduced piece rates, so the extra responsibilities of running more machines and doing more prep work were not compensated with increases in take-home pay. The flaws or "floats" that came up in their material also meant lower wages, since the companies never paid for labor spent repairing mistakes. Although employees frequently helped each other to mend flaws, foremen inevitably discovered some mistakes and subjected workers to severe verbal abuse in their offices. The nervous tension and pent-up frustration involved in working the machines, compounded by the sheer physical exhaustion all textile employees experienced, took vehement expression in the women's flying squadron activities.

It is also important to consider the generational and cultural context in which these young women had grown up. At the time of the strike they were mainly in their teens, unmarried, and held few long-term responsibilities. Though still under the firm authority of the family patriarch, they differed greatly from their immigrant mothers, not only in the American education they received but in their roles as family wage earners and consumers in a new popular culture. The 1920s and 1930s witnessed the creation of a limited leisure culture for these young women: movie houses, dance halls, department stores, and the popular music and programs broadcast on radio. The excitement of loading into cars and buses, singing strike songs, and picketing with work, school, and neighborhood friends generated tremendous energy on the flying squadron's visits to area mills. The 500 broken windows and thousands of dollars' worth of damage at the Empire Silk Company amply attested to the women's vigor and toughness. A potent combination—youthful rebelliousness, workplace frustration, and a family heritage of strike experience—thus came together in the flying squadron raids.

The city's other unionized workers were also restless as the general textile strike entered its second week. Plans for a mass demonstration in support of the striking silk workers began with an important meeting of the Hazleton

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Central Labor Union, held at the St. John’s Greek Catholic school auditorium on Sunday, September 9. Although advertised as a special assembly of local union officers, hundreds of concerned miners and textile operatives also went to the meeting. These rank-and-file members clamored loudly to turn the assembly into a rally. They also demanded that the CLU authorize a general strike and all-out picket action against Duplan on Monday, the following morning. After an hour of wrangling and fierce debate, CLU president William Schmauch decided to conduct the meeting as planned and ordered all nondelegates to leave.\textsuperscript{63}

The closed meeting, prefaced by the miners’ and silk workers’ demands for drastic action, also proved divisive. Union representatives for the city’s teamsters, bakers, and dairy and brewery workers strongly objected to a walkout of their members on such short notice. They argued that if a strike were called for the next day, their unionized employers would unfairly suffer. Cutting deliveries and production for a day would damage the bakery goods, milk, and other perishable items these workers handled. Faced with the possibility of a severely fractured union demonstration, UMW District 7 president Michael Hartneady agreed on a compromise plan with the delegates. Rather than risk violence and harm the city and its industries, Hartneady recommended that the CLU coordinate an orderly parade of every union member in the area. By staging a “labor holiday” three days later, on Wednesday, September 12, the bakers, brewers, and delivery truck drivers could notify their employers, get orders out the night before, and make provisions for urgent deliveries. The Central Labor Union accepted the plan, which would go into effect unless Duplan agreed to shut down operations for the rest of the strike.\textsuperscript{64}

Hartneady’s influence on the CLU’s course of action illustrates not only the power of the UMW in the local labor structure but also the miners’

\textsuperscript{63} Plain Speaker, Sept. 10, 1934; Anthracite Tri-District News, Sept. 14, 1934.
\textsuperscript{64} Plain Speaker, Sept. 10, 1934; Anthracite Tri-District News, Sept. 14, 1934; Standard Sentinel, Sept. 11, 1934.
heavy involvement in the textile strike. On the second day of the walkout, UMW District 7 publicly declared its full support for the silk workers. The endorsement specifically targetted Duplan, where miners were reportedly escorting family members through the picket lines. Within a week, several UMW locals announced sanctions on miners whose sons and daughters still entered the silk factories. One local’s penalty was suspension from union membership for ninety-nine years. Union miners also kept surveillance on scab workers at the mills, solicited names from UTW locals, and filed reports for eventual disciplinary action. At the annual District 7 convention, held on September 20, delegates wrote a modified form of these measures into their constitution. Any miner who allowed a family member to work during the strike would be suspended from membership for ninety days. The severity of such a sentence cannot be understated; finding work in the anthracite mines during the early 1930s depended on union membership.

The Central Labor Union meeting also symbolized how the rank and file’s desires and tactics often contrasted with those of the local union leadership. As seen in the UMW organizing campaigns at the turn of the century, the success of a strike depended greatly on strategies that union leaders did not plan or endorse. Unauthorized pressure tactics and violence directed at people still working at Duplan occurred throughout the walkout. Duplan plant manager Irvin Lewin reported that women entering the mill “were stamped” and “pushed in the stomach,” resulting in a great number having to be given first-aid treatment, while others were in a fainting condition.” Three union miners interpreted their local’s sanctions on

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65 Although District 7’s commitment to the silk workers’ struggle was sincere, Hartneady probably had ulterior motives for choosing the particular form of demonstration. In the fall and winter of 1934, competition between the UMW and the rival United Anthracite Miners (UAM) was at its height. A demonstration of UMW power in support of the textile strikers would surely bolster the union’s position. For the UAM challenge, see Bodnar, Anthracite People, 1-15. The miners’ weekly paper attacked critics that claimed Hartneady pressured the CLU to stage a parade for political purposes. Hazleton native and UMW international secretary Thomas Kennedy was elected lieutenant governor of Pennsylvania in November. Hartneady left the District 7 presidency soon after to become the state’s secretary of mines. Anthracite Tri-District News, Sept. 14, 1934.

66 The need for area UMW locals to take such action illustrates how the family economy of the city’s workers could also lead some miners to ignore union loyalties and insist that their children and relatives continue to work during a strike.

67 Standard Sentinel, Sept. 6, 11, 20, 1934; Plain Speaker, Sept. 21, 1934; interview with Yakubisin; Bodnar, Anthracite People, 51.

68 Tom Poniatowski points out that despite the claims of Duplan officials and the Hazleton newspapers, the union had no part in these activities. Interview with Poniatowski.
relatives working in the silk factories by stopping cars that contained people attempting to get to work. They forcibly removed two women, who were being driven to plants by their foremen, and intimidated several others to go back to their homes. When police later arrested the three men, they found wooden clubs and a bandolier filled with .30 caliber rifle cartridges in the back of the miners' car.  

Strikers or strike supporters acting on their own picketed and attacked the homes of scab workers. They wanted total conformity with the strike call and did not discriminate between mill hands and shop managers. On September 10, unidentified individuals smashed windows, threw paint onto front porches, and nailed placards that branded workers as scabs onto the doors of five homes. After midnight on the thirteenth, a jar filled with paint and ink was hurled into the home of foreman John Cassic, ruining carpets and furniture. Strike sympathizers thus supplemented the orderly activities of the textile union organizers and Central Labor Union with their own unauthorized form of community pressure.

Despite round-the-clock efforts by Chamber of Commerce representatives to negotiate an agreement, the Duplan management never responded to the CLU's ultimatum. On Tuesday night, September 11, Michael Hartneady announced that the citywide strike would take place regardless of whether the Duplan plant closed down, and the Central Labor Union received permission from Mayor Beisel to hold a demonstration march. The General Labor Holiday, lasting from midnight Tuesday until six o'clock Wednesday afternoon, affected several public and private services in the city. The newspapers did not publish and bus service, except for the mail, was cancelled, as were most milk, bread, beer, and ice cream deliveries. Movie theaters held no matinees, all building activity was called off, and unionized factories and coal mines were shut down for the day.

The Hazleton Central Labor Union called for all of the city's twenty-six unions to march in a labor parade. Joining the 3,000 striking silk workers
were members from the city's craft and industrial unions. The building trades locals included the area's carpenters, plasterers, bricklayers, electricians, plumbers, steamfitters, and painters. Rank and file from the United Brewers, International Typographical Union, and Amalgamated Clothing Workers marched with unionized bus and milk truck drivers, musicians, motion picture machine operators, bakers, and journeymen barbers. Fourteen thousand miners finished out the parade, representing thirty-four locals of the United Mine Workers.\(^\text{73}\)

The demonstration, "marked by smiling faces, numerous American flags, interesting signs, good music and perfect order," represented one of the largest parades in Hazleton's history. Most marchers came in their best suits and dresses, but some wore the clothes of their trades. The city's bakers "made an impression" in their immaculate white workclothes. Pressmen sported the folded paper hats traditionally worn in the printshop, with their union local's number printed on the side. Painters wore the familiar caps of their profession and barbers marched in their white jackets. "If proof were needed that all in the line of march were workers, one Eckley marcher was ready to prove it. He came dressed in working overalls." Seventy-five to 100 members of the Unemployed League of Lower Luzerne County also paraded, calling out "We want jobs."\(^\text{74}\)

Marchers carried banners and signs with various slogans: "We're for the NRA—Where do the Bosses Stand?" "Hurray for Union Labor," and "We Fight For Those Who Are Right" among others. The Hazleton and West Hazleton Liberty Bands, three popular orchestras, and drum and bugle corps from area American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars posts provided music throughout the three-and-a-half mile procession. Color guard units entertained the crowds with their precision drills, and McAdoo's football team paraded in full uniform. Marchers kept themselves amused by singing songs like "The Duplan Ain't What It Used to Be" to the tune of "The Old Gray Mare" and "Hang the Mayor to a Sour Apple Tree" to the melody of "John Brown's Body." The demonstration was orderly, and no incidents were reported. Above all the fanfare, the Plain Speaker commented: "Most spectators marveled at the large numbers included in the various mine locals. To

\(^{73}\) "[The miners' position in the march] brought up the real symbolism of the fact that they were in there to back up the striking international." The Anthracite Tri-District News, Sept. 14, 1934.

\(^{74}\) Anthracite Tri-District News, Sept. 14, 1934; Plain Speaker, Sept. 13, 1934.
many it was the first real knowledge of the union strength of the community."

In stark contrast to the conflicts of the anthracite miners at the turn of the century, the labor parade symbolized the essentially nonethnic character of working-class protest in Hazleton in the 1930s. City newspapers never identified workers by ethnicity as they had during the initial UMW strikes and pre-World War I struggles at Duplan. Similarly, textile union leaders did not have to rely on foreign-language-speaking organizers or literature as their miner colleagues had found necessary three decades earlier. The clergy of area immigrant churches did not have a prominent role in the parade or the strike: newspapers did not mention a single Catholic priest or Protestant minister during the entire textile conflict. The American Legion and the VFW, usually considered to be nativist strongholds in the interwar period, provided color and entertainment for the union march in Hazleton. Union leaders and rank and file held meetings at Legion and VFW posts as well as at ethnic parochial schools and immigrant-owned dance halls. Interviews with miners and mill workers employed during the 1920s and 1930s reveal an atmosphere of community rather than conflict among ethnic groups in the mines and factories. Despite the city's distinctive ethnic neighborhoods, churches, and social organizations, a sense of togetherness pervaded relations in the workplace. If any nationalistic sentiment characterized the labor parade, it was American patriotism and enthusiastic support for Franklin D. Roosevelt and the NRA program.

Most importantly, however, the General Labor Holiday parade perfectly exemplified Hazleton's unique response to the national textile strike. In sharp contrast to the essentially company-directed towns of the South, municipal authorities in Hazleton granted march permits and police helped maintain order throughout the course of the procession. Local support clearly ran strong and deep. Organized workers in a wide variety of occupations sacrificed a day's pay to appear in the parade, and large crowds watched and cheered as they passed by. Generations of city residents marching together—war veterans and young female seamstresses, miners from the UMW's early days and breaker boys in their teens—symbolized the mutual dependence among wage-earning fathers, sons, and daughters during the Great Depression. Conditions in Hazleton thus readily provided the

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75 Interviews with Yakubisin, Keck, Sterba, and Poniatowski.
local civil and economic support that textile workers in other parts of the country severely lacked.

On September 22, 1934, the UTW's national leadership called off the general strike, claiming its members had won a great victory. In reality, the international union could do nothing but accept the weak measures that the Textile Labor Board had drawn up and the president had signed. Despite the strike's severity, the board felt recognition for the UTW as a bargaining agent for the entire industry was "unfeasible."

Hazleton silk workers, meanwhile, returned to their factories. But a dramatic change had taken place for textile labor in the area. Union activists at the Duplan plant had ousted most of the leaders from the company's UTW Local 2033, giving the organization a truly autonomous voice on the shop floor.\(^76\) Claiming that Harry Pickenheim and other union officers "took orders from mill bosses," Duplan workers elected Tom Poniatowski to lead the local and support the industry-wide general strike on September 10. The new leadership quickly organized strike activities, scheduled fund-raising dances, and released a detailed statement of workers' grievances at the mill.\(^77\) The newly formed local, aided by the public pressure of the General Labor Holiday, succeeded in forcing the Duplan management to shut down operations for the remainder of the strike.

After the national walkout ended, Local 2033 immediately filed unfair labor practice charges and picketed Duplan's headquarters in New York on behalf of union members who were not rehired. The company had discontinued its share-the-work policy and discriminated against seventy union activists. After investigations and a hearing before Textile Labor Board agents, Duplan eventually took back all but seven of the men and women by early November. Meanwhile, hundreds of union members who returned to work with no problems received threat notices. Local 2033 president Tom Poniatowski himself received such a warning: "Your [sic] like all the rats—dam glad to come in your hole. Organize and close the mill just like the Standard. Better wise up rat."\(^78\) Relations between the union and the plant's management would remain difficult for the rest of the company's ex-

\(^76\) Standard Sentinel, Sept. 11, 1934.
\(^77\) Duplan management claimed that its employees had no grievances and were being pressured to join the national strike against their will. Standard Sentinel, Sept. 20, 1934.
\(^78\) The note refers to the Standard Broad Silk Company, a local unionized employer that closed in early 1934. Duplan Silk Corporation files, RG-9, Records of the NRA, NA.
istence in Hazleton. But the virulent antiunion policies that reigned in the plant for nearly four decades had been defeated, as workers finally obtained an independent means for handling grievances and negotiating contracts.

Although social and labor historians have written a good deal on textile and garment manufacturing in the United States, they have largely overlooked Pennsylvania’s importance to the growth of both industries. Silk and shirt production rose dramatically in the eastern part of the state during the first decades of the twentieth century. The cheap labor pool of young women with few employment alternatives and little union experience, along with the attractive offers made by area boards of trade, enticed manufacturers to move operations to the anthracite region. Labor organizers of the period were well aware of what historians have since neglected. Leaders of the silk and clothing workers’ unions called this trend the “out-of-town” movement, when employers made their first major exodus from the traditional manufacturing centers of Paterson and New York City.

Through the 1920s, working-class families in Hazleton depended heavily on these new industries for survival. Immigrant sons and daughters were expected to leave school in their early teens and find jobs as breaker boys, floor hands, silk weavers, or sewing machine operators. The small wages they brought home were crucial for maintaining a tenuous hold in a difficult industrial environment. During the Great Depression, the family economy that Hazleton workers had developed was pushed to the limits of its capacity. Frequent production lulls in the anthracite mines and an official unemployment rate of over thirty percent in Luzerne County made the income of children more important than ever before.

During the depression, the city’s silk mills imposed major wage cuts, layoffs, and the stretch-out system on their workforce. Employers in 1934, however, found that they were affecting not only the young people employed

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79 Interview with Tomsho.

80 On the eve of the depression, the newer, larger Pennsylvania mills dominated the silk industry, employing over twice as many workers as their counterparts in New Jersey. Grace Hutchins, *Silk and Labor* (New York, 1929), 25-26, 182-83. In 1934 over 80,000 people worked in cotton, silk, and rayon plants in Pennsylvania, making the state the third largest textile employer in the nation. Kennedy, “General Strike in Textiles,” Table III, 48. For the garment workers’ perspective on the shirt industry’s flight to the “countryside,” see *Report of the General Executive Board, ACW*, 51-52.

in the mills but a larger family structure. The silk workers' demand for union recognition and the aggressive manner in which they confronted their bosses were both family-based responses. The strikers demanded unionization not only to improve wages and working conditions but also to secure stable employment, end favoritism in hiring, and establish control on the shop floor. The General Labor Holiday was, therefore, more than a demonstration of labor's strength in the city. The protest and march articulated an awareness of class interests powerful enough to unite people of numerous ethnic backgrounds and such disparate groups of workers as anthracite miners, skilled tradesmen, and female machine operatives.

The General Labor Holiday thus represents a union success story: the organization of the Duplan Silk mill in the midst of one of American labor's worst economic debacles. Before the passage of the National Labor Relations Act and the creation of the CIO, Hazleton workers had fully organized all of the city's silk and shirt factories. A "culture of unity" clearly existed among workers of various sexes, ages, and ethnicities when they paraded down Broad Street. More important for Hazleton's mill hands was the ability of other family members to continue to support their working-class households. This unity of family interests and the city's powerful coalition of labor unions made the crucial difference between union triumph in Hazleton and union defeat for most of the nation's textile workers in September 1934. Industrial diversity, the rallying cry of the city's independent middle class at the turn of the century, provided a firm basis for working-class organization three decades later.

I would like to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to Jon Butler, Jacqueline Jones, Sam Bass Warner, Jr., Stephen P. Rice, Martin J. Sklar and the Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography referees for their thoughtful advice and criticism of this paper. I would also like to thank Harold Aurand, David Montgomery, and Nancy Cott for their suggestions of readings and sources that proved very helpful to this project.

Although Lizabeth Cohen's *Making a New Deal* has opened new avenues for interpreting labor history, her conception of a "culture of unity," of a convergence of various forms of worker self-identification, seems less important a factor in the organization of Hazleton's silk workers. A "culture of unity" in her terms, and its being recognized and utilized by labor organizers, had been part of Hazleton's working-class activism since the turn of the century. See Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, 333-49.