LABOR AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM IN EASTERN KENTUCKY, 1870-1930

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A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

McMaster University

June 1980

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (1980) McMASTER UNIVERSITY
(Sociology) Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Labor and the Development of Industrial Capitalism in Eastern Kentucky, 1870-1930

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NUMBER OF PAGES: v, 246

ABSTRACT

The development of industrial capitalism requires the emergence of a class of propertyless wage laborers and a class of capital investors. My goal in this dissertation has been to provide a concrete historical examination of various factors which helped give impetus and shape to this class relation in selected eastern Kentucky counties from 1870-1930.

After a theoretical chapter which outlines a framework for class analysis, the study is divided into two parts. The first part considers several factors which helped give impetus to the development of a capitalist mode of production. Attention centers upon 1) the policies of Kentucky politicians toward the issues of labor scarcity and how to best attract capital for economic improvement and 2) a concrete examination of patterns of capital investments in several counties. The main thrust in this section is that activities carried out by agents of capital and the state combined to play a fundamental role in the shaping of class relations in the area. This section concludes with a statistical analysis of the growth of a working class.

The second part of the dissertation offers a more detailed look at the formation of class relations in the region's dominant industry -- coal. Attention focuses upon 1) conflicting interpretations of living and working conditions by agents of capital and labor and 2) the institutional and ideological supports to class reproduction and capitalist hegemony. Special attention is given to the role of the state, monopolistic patterns of resource ownership, company towns, and single-industry labor markets as key factors which helped shape the class structure in Eastern Kentucky.

The data in the study suggest several conclusions. First, the importance of transcending individual-level explanations of the "Appalachian situation" is underscored. While undoubtedly important, the ideas and conclusions of cultural theorists need to be placed in a structural context; that is, the links between the structure of class and the problems of everyday living in Central Appalachia need to be adequately understood. Second, modernization and other theories which assume the efficacy of a free market cannot provide a realistic explanation because they cannot focus upon the repressive character that labor relations often manifest. Third, analysis of the coal industry underlines the importance of studying class development from a regional standpoint but within a national context. Finally, the data suggest that the researcher beware of interpretations of Central Appalachia which emphasize it as a 'unique' region. There may be some basis for examining the area as a special case of rural industrial development as even today Eastern Kentucky is perhaps the most densely populated industrial rural area in the United States. But, Eastern Kentucky in general and the coal counties in particular emerged in the context of national capitalist developments.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank a number of people who supported me in the preparation of this disseration. Carl Cuneo, chair of my thesis committee, gave much appreciated encouragement when it was most needed. His comments were both brutal and helpful. Other committee members included Wallace Clement, Stuart Seeley Sprague, Geoffrey Kay and Ralph Mathews. Each deserve my deepest appreciation. The comments of Dwight Billings, who read the dissertation as an external examiner, are also gratefully acknowledged.

Appreciation is also due to the various individuals who read my chapter rough drafts and provided human support during the writing. These include Howard Gabennesch, John Gaventa, Bob Goldman, Steve Fisher, Judi Jennings, Sally Maggard, Sherman Oxendine, Herb Reid, Rick Simon and David Walls. The assistance of library staffs, particularly those at the University of Kentucky (Special Collections), the State Archives, and the University of Louisville (Archives and Records Center) is acknowledged.

Finally, I want to thank Patty and the boys for their love and patience.

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Chapter One: INTRODUCTION

In studies of the Central Appalachian region, the problem of a lack of good, tight analytical studies of the development of class relations is complicated by many longstanding assumptions and modes of understanding the region. Some theorists, for instance, have paid careful attention to the pre-modern quality of everyday life in the area and seen these characteristics, or "traits," as barriers to area improvement. In addition to studies of Appalachian families, folklore and religion, one finds frequent reference to the pre-industrial character structure of the local inhabitants.[1] Others have attempted to carefully record observations of persistent poverty and tendencies toward underdevelopment in order to devise administrative formulas useful for area improvement.[2] Studies from this vantage point have typically adopted a neo-classical view of social-economic development which assumes that development emerged as a rational response to the laws of the free market. Individuals are depicted as social actors freely able to choose between various paths toward economic growth.[3] Underdevelopment results from a lack of material or human resources. Such studies have advocated, among other things, the 'modernization' of traditional social instutions, human improvement, and the development of 'growth centers' at strategic locations within the region.[4] Still others have centered their attention on the metaphor of an 'internal colony' to understand the historical roots and recent development of regional inequality.[5] None of these leading interpretations, which have contended in battle for several years, offer coherent and consistent answers to many critical questions, especially those dealing with a concrete-historical understanding of the development of modern class relations in the area. The first interpretation tends to offer psychologistic answers for questions dealing with a structural account of the development of a regional political economy. As William Ryan and Steve Fischer have clearly pointed out, such analysis frequently amounts to "blaming the victim."[6] The second interpretation focuses upon the relative mal-distribution of things such as income, jobs, social services and investments and possible ways to correct this so-called troublesome and unusual situation. Because these studies assume the efficacy of the market and the laws of supply and demand, the nature and structure of class relations are not critically examined and ameliorative politics wins out in the end. In addition, this view is unable to explain the repressive character of the labor market or the impact of class struggle on social development. The third interpretation, while it goes a step further by asking questions not asked by the others, often pits region against region--insider vs. outsider, center against periphery--in a seemingly conspiratorial contest. While heuristic on first sight, such analysis frequently assumes a moralistic tone and discourages a concrete understanding of complex social class relations. Moreover, strategy formulated from this perspective often emphasizes a kind of 'regional' liberation politics and/or a policy of a reformed capitalism which is uninformed by an understanding of the politics of class.[7]

In each of these three leading approaches to Appalachian Studies, there is an implicit, sometimes explicit, suggestion that the region somehow never underwent a normal industrial, and therefore class, transformation. In the first two interpretations, mountain people are simply characterized as quaint, backward folk and Appalachia is depicted as a region that exists outside industrial America.[8] In the third mode of analysis, the industrialization process becomes a central theme but careful class analysis is rarely worked out. Indeed, even those who devote considerable attention to the industrial transformation that took place around the turn of the century in many parts of Eastern Kentucky often write in a loose, romanticist style that serves only to obscure issues of class. In the introduction to his famous _Night Comes to the Cumberlands_, for instance, Harry Caudill writes that "coal curses the land and the people... It peoples this transformed land with blind and crippled men and with widows and orphans... It corrupts but never purifies." In addition, he refers to Eastern Kentucky as "an anchor dragging behind the rest of America."[9] While such statements sound good in a literary sense, they are often outright misleading in a social scientific sense. For one thing, such statements personify coal and thereby objectify people. For another, they assume a particular kind of relationship between region and nation that ought to be concretely demonstrated. And finally, such statements divert attention from class analysis. Although such a situation is commonplace in Appalachian Studies, there are some notable exceptions.[10]

There is no need to dwell on the theoretical drawbacks of these leading interpretations. Suffice it to say that while each view has contributed to our understanding and is correct at a low level of analysis, none has produced more than a partial explanation of the development of regional inequality. What is needed is a general theoretical framework that examines the structural conditions responsible for the special patterns of economic, political and cultural development that characterize Eastern Kentucky.

The basic purpose of this study has been to offer a concrete-historical account of the emergence and early development of a capitalist mode of production (CMP) in selected Eastern Kentucky counties between 1870 and 1930. The strategy has been to use class as an analytical tool for understanding social change. The usage of the concept class is important for a variety of reasons. First, where traditional analysis focuses on individual and cultural features of Central Appalachian lifestyles, class analysis offers a framework which places regional growth within the structural context of a mode of production. It allows one to study area social development in terms of structural linkages with the mode of production on a national as well as a regional level. Second, the essence of the CMP can best be understood through comparison with the non-capitalist relations out of which the capitalist relations emerged. Traditional analysis, especially of the first two variants, are typically ahistorical in that they focus upon existing social characteristics and therefore do not penetrate the special characteristics of the CMP. Class analysis, on the other hand, forces one into a more historical approach to social studies. Third, class analysis offers the opportunity to examine the repressive character of labor relations. For a variety of reasons, traditional analysis has failed to look at this dimension of work. Neo-classical theorists, for instance, assume a market based equality and thereby ignore any economic, political or cultural factors that might mitigate against such equality; they assume relations that ought to be concretely demonstrated. Culture of poverty theory, in its focus upon the internal deficiencies of laboring classes, is also unable to provide a critical analysis of the structure of labor relations. Finally, it should be pointed out that class analysis provides a more general and comprehensive framework for understanding individual-level issues and troubles in the context of the structural features of a mode of production and a social formation. The remainder of this introduction will consider an overview of the class model and a discussion of data sources and chapter summaries.

A Framework for Class Analysis

The area of class analysis has gained strength in recent years as a result of the publication of important books like E.P. Thompson's The Making of the English Working Class, Eugene Genovese's Roll, Jordon, Roll, Herbert Gutman's Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America, Harry Braverman's Labor and Monopoly Capital, and Nicos Poulantzas Classes in Contemporary Capitalism. While these studies have embraced varying conceptions of class, each have clearly demonstrated the powerful analytical potential of the concept. Each has gone beyond simple, economistic conceptions of class and developed a rich and lucid perspective on society.

Mode of Production

Two fundamental concepts used in Marxian class analysis include 'mode of production' and 'social formation.' A mode of production is an abstraction used to understand a complex set of economic, political and cultural relations that are involved in the production and distribution of goods and services. Each mode of production embodies a specific pattern of work relations and, in a broader sense, community relations or way of life.; it involves the social relations into which men and women enter as they transform nature.[11] The key to the utility of the term mode of production involves its focus upon how social relations support and reinforce a specific mode of appropriating surplus labor. Typical examples of modes of production include the Slave Mode of Production, the Feudal Mode of Production and the Capitalist Mode of Production. A social formation refers to real societal situations that are historically, socially and geographically concrete. Within each social formation, there may exist a combination of several modes of production although one will tend to be dominant.[12] To understand the general character of a social formation, class analysts find it useful to examine the dominant mode of production and the relations between it and other modes of production as well as shifting relations over time--that is, transitions from one to another dominant mode of production. These interactions coupled with the interaction that develops between classes in each mode constitute an important area of social scientific inquiry.

For each mode of production, class analysis focuses upon how surplus labor is socially obtained from direct producers. Class relations comprise a category of social relation which, among other things, are characterized by a material transfer of wealth from one class to another.[13] A look at class, then, involves an examination of the historical circumstances that allowed one class to appropriate the labor of another. Nicos Poulantzas has clearly identified this as a key aspect of class relations and class analysis. The relationship, he writes, "between direct producers and the means and objects of labor defines the exploited class in the relations of production. It can take various forms... In the capitalist mode of production ... direct producers are completely dispossessed of their means of production, of which capitalists have the actual possession...

The extraction of surplus-value is thus achieved by the way labour is incorporated into commodities."[14] Karl Marx stated the same methodological principle in more general terms:

> The specific economic form, in which unpaid labour is pumped out of direct producers, determines the relationship of rulers to ruled, as it grows out of production itself and, in turn, reacts upon it as a determining element... It is always the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producer--a relation always corresponding to a definite stage in the development of the methods of labour and thereby its social productivity--which reveals the inner-most secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure. (15)

Class analysis starts by recognizing the fundamental importance of labor in the production process. Under capitalism, development of capital is dependent upon the extraction of surplus-value from workers. Production will not commence or continue in any sector if the money capital advanced for wages and constant capital does not command a return--extracted from labor by paying wages less than the value of the commodities produced. "Labor," as Governor Stevenson of Kentucky remarked in the late 1860's, "is capital and capital is labor."[16] Or, in the words of Harry Braverman, capital "is labor that has been performed in the past, the objectified product of preceding phases of the cycle of production which becomes capital only through appropriation by the capitalist and its use in the accumulation of more capital."[17] Before anything else then, the working-class is an integral part of capital; it is, from the standpoint of capital, the raw material that yields the surplus for which all investment is forthcoming; it is both the basis for aggrandizement of capital and its most fundamental element.

Following this approach to social studies, societies, or social formations, are defined by the type of mode of production or form of labor that predominates and these relations are central to sociological analysis. It is, however, conceivable that one might find an economy which, on the whole, is not characterized by class relations of any sort. In this study, for instance, the pre-Civil War economy and society of Eastern Kentucky has been characterized as one consisting primarily of Independent Commodity Producers. In this situation, producers owned or had free access to the means of labor--the land. Accordingly, little was produced for the market. Simple exchange developed on the basis of equality and often this exchange took the form of barter. There is, in this case, no transfer of surplus-value. And while social differentiation often developed between producers, these distinctions cannot be casually categorized as class distinctions.[18]

The emergence of the Capitalist Mode of Production presupposes a combination of three conditions. First, under the CMP labor is separated from control over production. The historical processes leading to the progressive divorce of workers from control over production involves 1) the restriction of access to the means of production--especially land--and its monopolization by a minority of capitalists[19] and 2) the movement by representatives of capital to differentiate between mental and manual labor. The result of the latter process includes the ideological support of managerial prerogatives and the real loss of workers' conceptual control over labor processes.[20] Second, labor is free to be exchanged on a contractual basis; that is, capitalism presupposes the development of a 'free' labor market. This is significant in that pre-capitalist modes of production are characterized by a condition in which labor is either bound to a particular estate (plantation) or, as in the Independent Mode of Production, labor has relatively easy access to resources and therefore can avoid wage labor. When, under the CMP, labor is freed from pre-capitalist bonds and when access to resources is limited or restricted, the capitalistic labor market expands and laborers are free to compete with one another for scarce jobs.[21] Third, the development of a CMP presupposes that capital is free to be invested for its own self-expansion. Under pre-capitalist conditions, investments were severely restricted by political-geographical barriers and by negative attitudes toward acquisitive behavior. For the expanded accumulation of capital to develop unfettered, therefore, it is essential that political and ideological conditions favoring the free movement of capital (and labor) be established.

Surplus-Value

Surplus-value is another central concept in Marxian sociology. It helps clarify the nature of the relationship between classes and the structural basis for class antagonisms. According to Marx, the value of a commodity consist of the sum of constant capital, variable capital and surplus-value. Constant capital represents investments in the means of production such as raw materials, plant equipment auxilary materials, energy and buildings. This portion of the investment "does not undergo any quantitative alteration in the production process."[22] "Machines, raw materials, and auxilary materials merely transmit their value through production, they do not produce additional value. That is why they are called constant capital."[23] Variable capital represents the portion invested in labor power; that is, investments in wages. Investments in the means of subsistence for labor are called variable because labor power not only produces an equivalent of its own value but also produces an excess which may vary according to circumstances. Surplus-value, then, is this excess. Surplus-value is the wealth generated by labor and appropriated by representatives of capital. The surplus-value extraction process is the source of capital wealth. It is what I have referred to earlier as the material transfer of wealth that sets class relations apart from other social relations.[24]

For Marx, the appropriation of surplus-value is the historical mission of the CMP. Accumulation is the engine of capitalistic growth. What this points to is the structural antagonism underlying the CMP. What is beneficial to one sector of a social formation (higher rates of surplus-value for instance) is not necessarily in the best interests of other sectors (lowering standards of living for labor). Figure One illustrates this basic point in graphic form:

FIGURE ONE: The Working-Day

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a                         b             c
/_________________________/_____________/
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a-b= necessary labor

b-c= surplus labor

Necessary labor represents wage expenditures for the means of subsistence of the working-class. Surplus labor represents the labor provided 'free-of-charge' to employers. The employer hires labor for the surplus labor that can be obtained in the form of commodities, not for the purpose of benevolently providing people with wages. The greater the surplus, the greater the rate of capital growth. The employer, therefore, has a vested interest in reducing necessary labor as much as possible in relation to the total working-day. The reduction can be accomplished in various ways ranging from prolongation of the working-day to technological innovations which increases the output of labor. Given this view, it can be seen that such things as reserve pools of labor, divisions in the working-class (racism, sexism, etc.), and technological displacement of jobs which are not in the interests of workers can, in fact, serve the interests of capital by reducing wages and thereby raising the rate of surplus-value.[25]

If the historical mission of the CMP is the accumulation of capital, it follows that with each successive cycle capital is reproduced on a greater scale. With each successive cycle of capital reproduction, a portion of the surplus-value will be added to the original investment to produce even greater profits. There is, in a word, a permanent tendency toward producing on an ever larger scale. This is called the extended reproduction of capital.[26]

In reality, the progress of capital accumulation will encounter various barriers. Expanded production, for instance, may precipitate a shortage of labor which, in turn, might lead to greater labor costs and a disincentive toward future investments. Another barrier may develop as a consequence of the tendency toward overproduction. When capitalists order the production of goods beyond a certain limit--limits set by wage levels among other things--a realization crisis emerges in which capital cannot expand since surplus goods cannot be transformed into surplus-value. Other barriers to capital expansion might involve resistence from non-capitalist producers, traditional ways of living, cheap land access for laborers and/or, as noted above, insufficient effective demand for goods.

These barriers, however, have typically proved to produce only temporary impediments to capitalistic growth even though their occurrence has been a permanent feature of the mode of production. Analysis of how these impediments are overcome constitutes an important step toward understanding the internal dynamics of the CMP. Following Marx, at least four modes can be identified as crucial to the expanded reproduction of capital.[27]

1) Capital can expand into new spheres of activity. For our purposes here, this mode of expansion involves the organization of pre-existing forms of labor along capitalistic lines. Examples might include the transformation of small family farm based agriculture into corporate agriculture or the movement of industrial corporations into the company town and merchant business.

2) Capital can expand through the creation of new wants and needs.[28] These needs have typically been developed around product-lines which become 'social necessary' in the course of social development (T.V. & electronic items) or around brand names.

3) As capital expands, there is a tendency for a labor shortage to develop. This can provide an impediment in two ways: First, a labor shortage can present absolute limits on the possibilities for the exploitation of labor. Second, a labor shortage may allow workers to organize and make more effective demands which, in turn, can lower the rate of surplus-value. Accordingly, as capital expands, it must facilitate the expansion of a reserve of working-class recruits.

This expansion of a reserve pool of labor can be accomplished in various ways[29] but technological displacement of workers, displacement of non-capitalistic producers, regional labor markets characterized by high unemployment and low wages, special sectors of the labor market (the young, the old, the black and the female) and marginally employed elements are some important sources for the expanding labor market.

4) Finally, capital can expand through geographical mobility. This can involve exports of capital to other nations and the development of a world market but it can also involve mobility within a particular social formation to so-called backward areas.

There are, of course, absolute limits to the ability of capitalism to expand along the lines discussed above. At a certain point, the development of surplus capacity relative to markets results in serious crisis and economic downturn. At any rate, it is useful to develop a basic theoretical understanding of the various intensive and geographical modes of capital expansion. Each mode of expansion is important in understanding recent history in Central Appalachia. Such an understanding can 1) underline the important insights Marx had concerning the patterns and logic of capitalistic growth and 2) place the analysis of a particular social formation, Eastern Kentucky in this instance, squarely in the context of a world capitalist mode of production.

The Dimensions of Class

Class is not merely economic; it has economic, political and ideological (cultural) dimensions. Politics and culture often constitute expressions of class relations and, in turn, act as forces for the further reproduction of class. Class domination is never purely economic or political or cultural. Class is reproduced on all three levels and therefore cannot be seen in a one-sided sense.[30] Max Weber's famous examination of the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* , in a word, is not so much a refutation of Marxian class analysis as a brilliant contribution to it. Even Marx, when he discussed the importance of the relations between producer and owner as the key to the hidden basis of the entire social structure, was careful to express this qualification:

> This does not prevent the same economic basis--the same from the standpoint of its main conditions--due to innumerably different empirical circumstances, natural environment, racial relations, external historical influences, etc., from showing infinite variations and gradations in appearence which can be ascertained only by analysis of empirically given circumstances. (31)

Accordingly, the reproduction of class in Eastern Kentucky cannot be analyzed without paying careful attention to the cultural and political features of specific localities and groups. The influence of "boom town" psychology undoubted gave impetus to the rise of capitalistic social relations in Bell county in the 1890's.[32] The company paid sheriff system and the structure of politics in coal company controlled communities likewise cannot be underestimated in their impact on the emergence and structure of class. The role of Kentucky State politicans in recruiting labor for capital expansion was similarly important. From this point of view, labor was subject to the influence of unions, local patterns of working-class culture and resistence which further complicates the problematic development of class. The point, however, is that to look for class one has to look beyond the scope of static social-economistic analysis. The structure of class is always problematic and can only be uncovered through concrete historical study of economic, political and cultural practices.

The Structure of Class

When one discusses the development of working-class relations, it is important to recognize that the term class never identifies specific individuals as such but rather refers to ongoing social processes. To be sure, certain individuals could be identified as belonging to a particular class and others might be assigned contradictory class locations.[33] To simply develop a membership list, however, would result in confusion. Put differently, class analysis does not deal with individuals in the strong sense of the term. Rather, it deals with relations between classes, structural relations that are a product of human activity yet independent of the individual social actor's will.[34] When Karl Marx wrote the introduction to the first volume of Capital, he expressed this methodological principle thusly:

> To prevent possible misunderstanding, a word. I paint the capitalist and the landlord in no sense couleur de rose. But here individuals are dealt with only in so far as they are personifications of economic categories, embodiments of particular class relations and class interests. (35)

While such a statement might sound simplistic and obvious at first sight, its importance is hard to underestimate. How this statement is interpreted determines what the sociologist studies. Take, for instance, a study of the growth of the coal industry in a particular region. One might begin by collecting information about pioneer investors in the field, coal output data and levels of capital expenditures. The study might then analyze the quantitative impact of these factors on the region as measured in terms of jobs created, trade generated and new tax revenues generated. While undoubtedly valuable, such analysis examines quantitative indices and lends itself to administrative usefulness. While valuable, such analysis rarely focuses upon the repressive character of labor relations. Taking a different approach, one that places class relations at the center of analysis, a different mode of study emerges. First, it is historical because it defines social relations in terms of social processes, not static categories. Second, coal is no longer perceived in merely geological or statistical terms. Coal, when it is dug, hauled, bought and sold, is a social product. It is an object that embodies specific class relations. While it may be good natural science to ignore this dimension of coal, it is not good social science. Third, one commences to look more carefully at the qualitative impact of a particular mode of producing coal. The repressive and non-repressive character of working conditions and community life are open to analysis. One begins to grasp the meaning of what C. Wright Mills called the "sociological imagination"--the ability to understand the link between structural issues and personal troubles.

A Note on Data Sources

Anyone taking even a cursory glance at this dissertation will recognize the historical nature of the data sources. I have relied upon a wide range of historical materials ranging from census data, court house records, and government reports to company papers, personal correspondence, WPA materials, and various periodicals including newspapers. Working with this sort of material presents various challenges and rewards to the researcher. The problems encountered are many. First, one must be constantly aware of the wide range of quality of the data. Even statistical census data collected during the 1870 to 1930 period needs to be looked at carefully. Data collection procedures were far from perfect and often relied on voluntary reporting. Second, the researcher must also be on guard against slanted statements contained in periodicals which are often far from 'objective' in their reporting of events. Third, when employing census data, it is important to examine how categories were defined. In addition, definitions sometimes change and these changes can have serious influence upon 'what the figures tell' the researcher. The rewards of historical research, however, far outweigh these problems which, after all, are common to any type of social research. The depth and complexity offered by the wealth of historical data available in libraries and archives adds a new dimension to otherwise static analysis. Current developments can be located in historical social reality and the reseacher gains an appreciation of overworn statements like we 'must understand the past to understant the present' or less common phrases like Paul Sweezy's emphasis on seeing 'the present as history.'

The accounts of union officials, business interests, and journalists, among others, can hardly be accepted as objective, especially when they claim to accurately describe working and community conditions. Not only do sources vary in terms of their credibility, but, it must be recognized that there exist multiple perspectives on any aspect of social reality. Employer accounts of a given strike situation, for instance, will vary in terms of items of emphasis and issues of dispute from the accounts of labor representatives and/or sympathizers. The task of the politician might be to emphasize one point of view and make it seem the official-legitimate perspective, but, the social scientists' task becomes not so much to uncover a single truth as to disentangle the various statements to understand the basis of the conflict. To do this, one has to gather information from various sources and perspectives and to weigh the information against each other.

When possible, I have tried to measure. In this task, census statistics have been the most consistently available and reliable source of information. But, as is so often the case in sociological research, the subject is often the quality of life, not quantity, and this makes measurement extremely difficult. One problem with statistical research into the 1870-1930 period involves gaining an awareness of the limitations of some of the data. While often the best available, census data must be suspect. In the 1870 Agricultural Census, for instance, information was obtained by visitation of each farm.[36] This did help improve the accuracy of previous censuses but it does raise some question about the data. Given the limited transportation of the time and the manpower limitations, how many farms were not even included in the census? Another problem relevant to this involved finding county-level data. Kentucky state statistics were not suitable since only part of the state is Appalachian. For the purpose of this study, therefore, I focused upon four southeastern coal dominated counties and two northeastern manufacturing dominated counties.[37] At times, it was impossible to obtain needed data because it was not broken down by county. In addition, census data sometimes differed form other data sources such as the Department of the Interior's Mineral Resources and Kentucky Public Documents. The differences, however, were slight and a surprising amount of information was available.

There is one additional problem that needs to be mentioned. This problem has been hinted at but it deserves more explicit recognition because of the nature of this dissertation. Concrete-historical analysis of class relations requires that one look closely at developments from the standpoints of both capital and labor since only in the interaction between these classes can one properly speak of class relations. Class is a process, a relation, that cannot be extracted piecemeal from statistical reports. Frequently, the best that one can hope for is access to governmental reports, such as the 1925 Coal Commission Report, which attempts to examine labor relations from the standpoint of both capital and labor. In this dissertation, there is sometimes an imbalance in the data presented since information from the standpoint of capital is often more available through periodicals, company papers, and reports. Workers' reports are hard to come by. Union documents, labor papers, and government reports constitute the bulk of material available from the standpoint of labor. In addition, little has been done on class formation in Central Appalachia. Many reports are slanted in that they focus upon labor with little appreciation of the problems and perspectives of business. Others have been reluctant to coherently examine the region in terms of class. Perhaps one of the major factors contributing to this reluctance toward class analysis has been the preference to talk in terms of colonialism and dependence. The limitations of the internal colonialism model, however, are becoming clearer and there are signs that increasing attention will be placed on issues of social class and change in the near future.

General Overview

In 1870, Eastern Kentucky was characterized by an economy and society that rested upon the labor of Independent Commodity Producers. There was very little currency in circulation and almost no wage labor for hire. In manufacturing, the census statistics more often than not listed more manufactories than manufacturing wage earners. And rarely did more than five wage earners work at a single establishment. In the coal statistics, output data were rarely listed under the "commercial" heading until the turn of the century. Instead, it was the practice of government statisticans to place coal output from these eastern counties of Kentucky under the heading "farmers' diggins " Isolated by rugged terrain and by the flow of people and capital westward, many Eastern Kentucky residents labored hard in small relatively self-reliant communities of independent producers until well into the twentieth century.

Partly because of the lack of any sort of large-scale industrial development and partly because of the need for special raw materials after the Civil War, impediments to industrial capital were few. Kentucky politicans launched a surprisingly "progressive" campaign for state economic development and the eastern counties figured prominentlyin their plans. Agencies, for instance, were established to entice industrial capital and an "appropriate" labor supply from other regions and nations. Barriers to land access were established to facilitate the movement of people into the capitalistic labor market. Businessmen expressed enthusiastic interest in the area resources of timber, iron, coal, and fireclay and soon acquired large tracts of land and mineral rights. Private surveys by railroad corporations were conducted up various river valleys including the Cumberland River Valley into Harlan County. Interest in State Geological Survey estimates of quantity and quality of resources increased. State and corporate agents, in a word, were involved in planning the future direction of growth in the state and the region. What it meant for these state and corporate agents was industrial progress and the development of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. For area residents and others to come to the region, the industrial and class transformation would have more concrete ramifications for the structure of everyday life in the area.

By 1920, Carter Couty had the two largest and most modernized firebrick plants in the world. Each of these plants employed in excess of three hundred wage earners and other smaller plants in the area employed a substantial number of additional wage earners. In Bell, Harlan, Letcher, and Perry counties, nearly twenty thousand miners worked in the coal industry, mostly for large corporations. Harlan County in particular grew at a phenomenal rate as coal production exceeded thirteen million tons and population soared to over sixty thousand. Lynch, a company owned and built community, boasted the largest mine tipple anywhere by 1930. Far from being backward and outside Industrial America, then, Eastern Kentucky must be examined in the context of these dramatic industrial and class changes. Eastern Kentucky, in part, must be examined as a special case of rural industrial development.

My goal in this study has been to commence a concrete-historical analysis of the conditions which gave impetus and shape to these industrial and class transformations, and the factors which helped reinforce and maintain the new class structure until 1930. While the importance of manufacturing activity is acknowledged, attention centers upon the coal industry. No other single industry has had as great an impact on socio-economic development in Eastern Kentucky as the coal industry. The importance of manufacturing activity lies in its impact upon specific localities such as Northeastern Kentucky where the firebrick industry predominated or the Kanawha Valley in West Virginia where the chemical industry assumed importance. Concrete-historical analysis of these industries would constitute a significant contribution to Appalachian Studies and studies of social development.

The study is divided into two parts. Part I begins with Chapter Two which provides a background discussion of the pre-industrial setting in Eastern Kentucky. I have tried to look at the pre-industrial setting by isolating the various modes of production or forms of labor found in the region. Chapter Three examines the formative period of capitalistic development by looking at the various conditions which gave impetus to the growth of a CMP. Attention is centered on 1) the problem of labor scarcity and how Kentucky Politicians formulated a policy to develop an adequate labor supply, and 2) the coming of the railroads and industrial capital. Monopolization of the soil and the formation of a working-class consisting of displaced pre-capitalist producers <u>and</u> in-migrants constitute the major developments examined in this chapter. Chapter Four offers a statistical outline of the changing structure of the working-class between 1870 and 1930.

Part II offers a more detailed look at the structuralization of class relations in the region's dominant industry--coal. Chapter Five examines the ideological and institutional supports to class reproduction. An attempt was made to look at the industry from the standpoint of both capital and labor and thereby gain a more complex and true analysis. Chapter Six contains a more descriptive account of the 1917-1922 strike period in the Eastern Kentucky coalfields. A central feature of this chapter is the important role of the state as a mediator of class conflict.

Notes

1. Many of these accounts rely heavily on the anthropological research of Oscar Lewis. See "The Culture of Poverty," Scientific American, 215:41966, 19-25; and, The Children of Sanchez, (New York: Random House, 1961). The most popular account of this type on the Appalachian Region is Jack Weller's Yesterday's People: Life in Contemporary Appalachia, (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965).

2. Among others, see Thomas Ford, The Southern Appalachian Region: A Survey, (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1962); Mary Jean Bowman and W. Warren Haynes, Resources, and People in East Kentucky: Problems of a Lagging Economy, (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1963); Niles Hansen, Rural Poverty and Urban Crisis, (Bloomington: Induana University Press, 1970); Niles Hansen, Growth Centers in Regional Economic Development, (New York: Free Press, 1973); and Harry Richardson, Regional Growth Theory (New York: Wiley, 1973).

3. See Johathan M. Weiner, "Class Structure and Economic Development in the American South, 1865-1955," American Historical Review, Volume 84, Number 4, October, 1979.

4. See Thomas Ford, "Adapting Social Institutions: The Appalachian Case," in Research and Education for Regional Area Development, (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1966); and Niles Hansen, Growth Centers in Regional Economic Development.

5. The internal-colonialism is implied in Harry Caudill's Night Comes to the Cumberlands, (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1963). For a more explicit presentation of this conceptual framework, see Helen Lewis, "Fatalism and the Coal Industry," Mountain Life & Work, December 1971; and Helen Lewis, Linda Johnson and Don Askins (éditors), Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case, (Boone, N.C.: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1978).

6. William Ryan, Blaming the Victim, (New York: Vintage, 1971); Steve Fischer, "Victim-Blaiming in Appalachia: Cultural Theories of the Southern Mountaineer," in Bruce Ergood and Bruce Kuhre (editors), Appalachia: Social Context Past and Present, (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt, 1976). Devastating criticism of cultural theories of poverty have also come from Jack L. Roach and Orville R. Gursslin, "An Evaluation of the Concept 'Culture of Poverty,'" Social Forces, 45(March 1967), 383-392; and Dwight Billings, "Culture and Poverty in Appalachia: A Theoretical Discussion and Empirical Analysis," Social Forces, 53(December 1974), 315-323.

7. See Harry Caudill's comments from "Energy Development in Kentucky: Its Impact Upon Community Life and Higher Education," Colloquium Number 2, March 28,1979, University of Kentucky.

8. Ron Eller, "Toward a New History of the Appalachian South," *Appalachian Journal*, Autumn 1977; Ron Eller, "Industrialization and Social Change in Appalachia, 1880-1930: A Look at the Static Image," in Helen Lewis et. al., *Colonialism in Modern America*, 35-46; David Walls and Dwight Billings, "The Sociology of Southern Appalachia," *Appalachian Journal*, Autumn 1977.

9. *Night Comes to the Cumberlands*, Author's Introduction.

10. One recent work is John Hevener's *Which Side Are You On? The Harlan County Coal Miners, 1931-9*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978). Also see David Walls, "Central Appalachia: A Periphery Region Within An Advanced Capitalist Society," *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, Volume IV, Number 2, November 1976; Richard Simon, "The Labor Process and Uneven Development: The Appalachian Coalfields," Unpublished Manuscript, January 1979, (Urban and Environmental Systems, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University); Carl Cuneo, "A Class Perspective on Regionalism," in Daniel Glenday, Hubert Gindon & Allan Turowetz, *Modernization and the Canadian State*, (Toronto: Macmillian of Canada, 1978); Wallace Clement, "A Political Economy of Regionalism in Canada," in *Ibid*.; David Harvey, "The Geography of Capitalist Accumulation: A Reconstruction of Marxian Theory," *Antipode*, VII:2, 1975; and the "Special Issue on Uneven Regional Development," *The Review of Radical Political Economics*,

11. Michael Burawoy, "Toward a Marxist Theory of the Labor Process: Braverman and Beyond," *Politics & Society*, Volume 8 Number 3-4, 1978, 257-261.

12. See Nicos Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, London: NLB, 1975); Barry Hindess and Paul Q. Hirst, *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production*, (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975).

13. Nicos Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*; and Ralph Miliband, *Marxism and Politics*, (New York: Oxford University Press , 1977)

14. Nicos Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, 19.

15. Karl Marx, Capital, Volume I, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, n.d.), 791.

16. "Governor's Message," Kentucky House Journal, 1869-70.

17. Harry Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Capital, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), 377.

18. Classes in Contemporary Capitalism; and C.B. Macpherson, Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 13.

19. Karl Marx, Capital, Volume I, Part VIII; and Maurice Dobbs, Studies in the Development of Capitalism, (New York: International Publishers, 1963).

20. See Harry Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Capital; Michael Burawoy, "Toward a Marxist Theory of the Labor Process: Braverman and Beyond;" and Daniel Nelson, Managers and Workers: Origins of the New Factory System in the United States, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975).

21. Carl Cuneo, "A Class Perspective on Regionalism."

22. Karl Marx, Capital, Volume I, 202

23. Shinzaburo Koshimura, Theory of Capital Reproduction and Accumulation, (Kitchner, Ontario: DPG Publishing Company, 1975), 14.

24. In reality, surplus-value extraction is highly complex. One interesting attempt to grasp these complexities on both a theoretical and empirical level is Carl Cuneo, "Class Contradictions in Canada's international setting," Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology, 61(1), 1979.

25. Karl Marx, Capital, Volume I, Chapter XXV; also see Michael Perelman, Farming for Profit in a Hungry World, (New York: Universe Books, 1979).

26. Koshimura, Theory of Capital Reproduction and Accumulation.

27. David Harvey, "The Geography of Capitalist Accumulation: A Reconstruction of Marxian Theory," Antipode, VII:2, 1975, 10-11.

28. Stuart Ewen, Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1976).

29. Karl Marx, _Capital_, Volume I, Chapter, XXV, Section 3.

30. Ralph Miliband, _Marxism and Politics_; Nicos Poulantzas, _Classes in Contemporary Capitalism_.

31. Karl Marx, _Capital_, Volume III, 792.

32. See John Gaventa, "In Appalachia: Property is Theft," _Southern Exposure_, Volume I, Number 2, 42-52; Stuart Seeley Sprague, "The Great Appalachian Iron and Coal Town Boom of 1889-1893," _Appalachian Journal_, Spring/Summer, 1977.

33. The meaning of the phrase "contradictory class locations" is explained by Eric Olin Wright in "Class Boundaries in Advanced Capitalist Societies," _New Left Review_, July/August 1976.

34. Paul Sweezy, _The Theory of Capitalist Development_, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1942), 3-8; Nicos Poulantzas, _Classes in Contemporary Capitalism_, 13-41; Bertell Ollman, _Alienation_, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) 3-70.

35. Karl Marx, _Capital_, Volume I, 20-21.

36. _Industry and Wealth_, Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, 72.

37. These counties include Carter and Rowan in the Northeastern part of the state and Bell, Harlan, Letcher, and Perry in the Southeastern portion of the state.

PART I:

THE EMERGENCE OF INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM

Chapter Two: PRE-CAPITALIST PRODUCTION IN EASTERN KENTUCKY

The beginnings of the Capitalist Mode of Production are marked not so much by the existence of long distance trade or by a state of technique but rather by the separation of producers from real control over and possession of the means and products of labor and the contractual exchange of labor power for wages. Capitalism, as such, is not simply a system of production or trade but a form of labor--in which labor itself becomes a commodity. "The capitalist system," Marx wrote, "pre-supposes the complete separation of the labourers from all property in the means by which they can realize their labour."[1] Marx continued:

> As soon as capitalist production is once on its own legs, it not only maintains this separation, but reproduces it on a continually extending scale. The process, therefore, that clears the way for the capitalist system, can be none other than the process which takes away from the labourer the possession of his means of production; a process that transforms, on the one hand, the social means of subsistence and of production into capital, on the other, the immediate producers into wage labourers. (2)

This is not to say, however, that there exists some iron-law that capitalism necessarily rises in one particular pattern. Instead, it means that the CMP is based upon the monopolization of the means of production by a minority in society which, due to rights of ownership, are able to appropriate surplus labor. The specific patterns of capitalist development are highly problematic in that they depend upon numerous empirically variable circumstances and only through concrete-historical analysis can the structure of class in a social formation be understood.

In Eastern Kentucky, the CMP emerged against a background that was predominantly characterized by simple, small, petty, or independent commodity production. Each worked at and had access to the means and products of labor. Like any other social formation, however, there were elements of other modes of production in Eastern Kentucky that existed in combination with this Independent Mode of Production.[3] There was, for instance, some slave labor mostly confined to rich bottomlands and close to navigable streams. In addition, there is evidence of the existence of substantial wage labor relations in specific localities such as the iron industry in the northeastern counties of Rowan, Carter and Greenup prior to the Civil War. Until the closing of the nineteenth century, however, the IMP predominated. The CMP was of only marginal importance to the 'mountain' way of life.

The purpose of this chapter is to briefly examine the pre-industrial setting in various Eastern Kentucky counties by identifying various modes of production--or forms of labor. When mention is made to patterns of long-distance trade, it should be borne in mind that this trade does not constitute a mode of production or form of labor. Long-distance trade refers to activities that develop in the realm of circulation, not production. Nevertheless, this trade is important for one very crucial reason; namely, trade is essential in capital reproduction in that once production takes place it is necessary to transform surplus products into surplus-value. Long-distance trade is essential for access to markets and for the realization of surplus-value but it does not constitute a mode of production.

Pre-Industrial Setting

Prior to the 1860's, Kentucky was primarily, though not exclusively, rooted in an agricultural economy, or rather two agricultural economies. Outside Eastern Kentucky in the Bluegrass portion of the state where the majority of the population lived, a production system based upon large land holdings and black slave labor predominated. Planters settled large tracts of land and very quickly large amounts of surplus slave labor set the economy in motion. The Slave Mode of Production in the Bluegrass was made possible by rights to the legal ownership of black slaves and long-distance trade connections along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers which provided an avenue for the realization of surplus-wealth. As early as 1787 and 1788, under General James Wilkenson's private treaty with the Spanish Authorities at New Orleans, substantial exports of tobacco, hams, butter, and flour were floated downstream from Frankfort.[4] From its inception, this trade proved extremely lucrative and thereby led to the expansion of the use of slave labor. Trade with the southwest was stimulated by the use of steamboat navigation around 1820.[5] In the 1830's, a limited Kentucky railroad system was started and proved to be beneficial to planters and their mode of production.

In the mountain regions of Eastern Kentucky, production rested upon a wholly different foundation. To be sure, the Slave Mode of Production could be found in some counties but it was extremely limited. According to 1850 census and tax lists data, some owned as many as thirty slaves. This was, however, the exception and rarely did any Eastern Kentucky county have more than one hundred to one hundred and fifty slaves of all ages totalled.[6]

Production in these eastern counties consisted primarily of a self-reliant type of farming characteristic of many areas of North America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The mode of production rested not on the labor of slaves but rather on small land owning cultivators or Independent Commodity Producers. There was little reliance on wage labor and very little currency in circulation. Regular household needs from clothing and food to soap, lamp oil, spirits, sorghum, hand tools, and stoneware were satisfied through a local trading network based upon the exchange of products from household manufacture, limited farming and artisanship. The producers and consumers in this setting were virtually one and the same people.

So long as the mountains were not penetrated by railroads and a trading foundation for the realization of surplus-value was not available, the IMP predominated everyday life. Even if the mountain producer could accumulate sufficient surplus goods for export, the mountains themselves presented a formidable barrier, even to the most daring and enterprising individuals. Roads in the region were wholly inadequate for the reliable transport of large quantities of goods, and amounted in many cases to little more than paths. Even the major trans mountain routes were virtually impassable during the seasons of rain and snow. The only feasible trade links were provided by the rivers and streams. But the principal river system of the region presented a whole set of its own problems. The Kentucky River was only navigable for six months of the year. Moreover, the whole region was prone to flash flooding which was exacerbated by the fact that the Kentucky River is generally low lying between steep hillsides or cliffs. The results of this flooding and geographical setting was that on short notice the river could be transformed into a raging torrent. Other geographical factors such as the random flow patterns of the area's water systems provided even more impediments to the development of trading networks with the

Bluegrass and beyond. These impediments, in turn, provided temporary barriers to the emergence of either a Slave or a Capitalist Mode of Production for several years.

In spite of these limitations, some mountain men and women endeavored to send goods downstream to add to their meager incomes. While these early activities were largely characterized by Independent Commodity Production, other forms of labor were important. For a better understanding of how these different modes of production existed in combination in Eastern Kentucky, it will be useful to examine specific economic activities including timber, coal, salt and iron production.

The Independent Mode of Production was most clearly evident in the production of wood products and coal. <u>Timber</u> production in Eastern Kentucky, of necessity, started at an early date. Settlers found a vast hardwood forest in which a large variety of trees grew. White oaks were by far the most common species found and regularly attained a diameter of over three feet. Other trees of value included chestnuts, maples, walnuts (black & white), buckeye, ash, hickory, cedar, locust, linden, popular, and cherry among others.[7] Farmers had to clear the land and trees provided the logical source of fuel, building materials, household products, tools, and implements. Knowing that various species of trees had specific qualities, the mountain people quickly adapted them to their needs and thereby gained considerable knowledge in woodcraft. Hickory and ash, for instance, provided excellent materials for tool handles. Cedar and locust were used for posts due to their capacity to resist rotting. Popular and linden were favored because they were easy to "work" into house-boards, coffins, et. cetera. While these timberlands would become an important area of speculation and industry in the twentieth century, the pre-1860 period was characterized by very slow development. Production was geared to local needs and was carried out by Independent Commodity Producers. As Mary Verhoeff remarked:

> About 1835 the marketing of forest products began to assume a slight importance but so long as transportation was entirely by river.... the industry did not attain very large proportions. The operations were conducted entirely by farmers who lumbered each on his own woodlot and manufactured by hand or primitive sawmills small quantities of timber in semi-finished articles...(8)

The marketing of forest products was usually carried out in conjunction with some other activity rather than as an industry itself. In the Hanging Rock district (Carter & Greenup counties), timber was ruthlessly cut to supply the demand of the charcoal furnaces. Within a short period even the most reluctant recognized that if the furnaces were to survive, coal would have to be substituted for wood.[9] In other counties, farmers who lived close to suitable streams or rivers could supplement their resources through the forest industry. Select trees were cut, branded and stacked (or tied into rafts) near streams. The spring floods ("tides") would carry the logs downstream to Frankfort or some other destination (eg. Catlettsburg). In 1835, Verhoeff noted, nearly 3,000 logs were floated down from the upper reaches of the Kentucky River alone.[10] Another income opportunity for the farmer-lumberer involved the production of good quality cross-ties. Young trees were cut into lengths, hewed by hand with a broad-axe, and then floated downstream. With the coming of the railroads, the timber industry would attain, along with coal, a central place in the industrial structure of the region. But until then, the major part of the primeval forest remained untouched.

As in timber, coal production was carried out by small producers until the era of rail penetration. For the years prior to the 1890's, reports of the mine inspector have very little to say. Production levels hardly seemed sufficient to merit attention. Characteristically, the direct producers invested little capital and worked in small numbers. "The mining as well as the shipment of coal," Verhoeff wrote, "was in the hands of the farmer who owned the land and operated at such times as he was not engaged in lumbering or tilling the soil."[11] Mining methods were crude and often involved little more than digging at outcroppings of coal. One report, dated 1875, described these mines as nothing more than a "series of shallow pits."[12] In addition, census statistics listed coal output in most eastern counties during this period under the heading "farmers' diggings."[13]

Although some successful coal operations existed during the 1840's and 1850's, the industry was largely peripheral to mountain life. Wood was the predominant heating fuel and therefore coal was not in local demand. Only the iron-furnaces and blacksmiths used much coal and this small market was easily satisfied by the local farmer-miners.

Shipment of coal downstream was impeded further by two obstacles: one natural and one artifical. First, the rivers themselves presented considerable risk to the would-be entrepreneur. Lack of adequate water control systems would often turn a profitable journey into a tragic loss. Second, since the supply of mountain coal was intermittent, it could not compete with the better organized producers in Pennsylvania. When coal did reach markets, it was frequently sold at ridiculously low prices. Mountain producers could only collect what the market had to offer. Nevertheless, within a short time, Eastern Kentucky coal would form the cornerstone of the region's economy and hold an important position in national output. The high quality coal (low sulphur), the cheap labor, and the mountain setting[14] would soon give impetus to some of the biggest land, resource and railroad speculation of the period.

A different form of labor was important in the production of salt and iron in these formative years in Eastern Kentucky. While small in scale and scope, one must nonetheless recognize the importance of wage labor and the undeveloped beginnings of capitalist production.

Salt manufacture in Eastern Kentucky commenced early and reached a climax during the period from 1835-1845. The settlers had learned to extract salt from brine and therefore regarded proximity of springs rich in salt as a crucial factor in selecting a settlement site. The salt was essential to them for the preservation of meat and had to be obtained locally, as salt transport into the mountains was too dear to be a realistic alternative. Salt production for trade developed throughout the region. In Clay, probably the largest salt producing county, production reached 7,000 bushels annually as early as 1810 and by 1835-1845 reached 200,000 to 250,000 bushels annually. In nearby Perry county, one firm boasted a capital investment of $ 18,000 and a workforce of eleven.[15] Yet despite these beginnings, the manufacture of salt never reached very large proportions in the region. From its inception, it was hampered by internal and external limitations. Because of the small, independent nature of the mountain economy, salt was more often produced for local use than for export. Insufficient capital and labor scarcity were also cited as a limiting factor in the growth of the salt industry.[16] Another limiting factor was the Kanawha Salt Works in West Virginia which provided stiff competition for Kentucky salt producers as early as 1812 and would soon monopolize the market. And finally, the lack of any adequate transportation limited the trade. With the coming of the railroads, the potential for development seemed great but the salt industry fell into history as cheap transportation and stiff new competition made even local production of salt impractical.

Some of the earliest settlers recognized the possibilities presented by the close proximity of ore and timber for the charcoal furnace manufacture of pig-iron. Mary Verhoeff pointed out that at least one such furnace was in operation along the fringes of Eastern Kentucky near the Red River in Powell County as early as 1793.[17] Several more furnaces were operating in subsequent years in the more easterly counties. According to the Iron Manufacturers' Guide, there were 18 furnaces located in Carter and Greenup counties along Tygart's Creek and its tributaries by the 1850's.[18] The reputation and importance of the iron produced in this region, known as part of the 'Hanging Rock' region, was well established at an early date due to the flex qualities of the iron when made into items such as wagon wheels. The industry's future looked promising. Indeed, it was believed that the iron deposits in this area were comparable, even superior, in quality and quantity to any other region in the United States. One mining engineer and geologist, Henry F. D'Aligny, was so impressed with the deposits in Carter County that in the 1870's he remarked in his report to industrialists: the iron deposits "can supply the demand for the whole Hanging Rock district for one hundred years."[19]

As early as the 1820's, there were indications of the existence of substantial iron furnace activities in both Carter and Greenup counties.[20] Relatively few men were required to operate the furnaces proper but hundreds were needed in the woods to dig ore, cut trees, cut cord wood, and haul charcoal and ore to the furnace sites. The 1870 census lists over 175 men employed in the manufacture of pig iron in Carter County and by 1880 the figure had increased to 320 men and 20 children. Similarly, in nearby Greenup County, 850 men and 50 children were listed as working in the industry.[21] A few of these workers, prior to 1860, were slaves but the majority, before and after the Civil War, were wage earners. To accommodate these workers, furnace communities were often built under the design and sponsorship of employers. While small, they were sometimes extensive. "Log houses were built for laborers, shops for blacksmiths, stores for general merchandize, stables for mules and oxen, and schools for employees' children. Practically every necessity of life was provided for by the furnace company."[22]

By modern standards, production capacities of these charcoal furnaces were by no means impressive. Capital investments were generally small and rarely did more than thirty wage earners work at one place. Nevertheless, some of these furnaces produced as much as 2,000 tons of pig-iron annually. While statistics for the years 1854-1856 are necessarily imperfect, these Eastern Kentucky furnaces alone produced 22,929 tons of furnace pig-iron in 1845, 16,180 in 1855, and 21,661 tons in 1856.[23] These levels of production, while small compared to a state like Pennsylvania which produced from 200,000 to 300,000 tons during these same years, were encouraging to most Kentucky furnace owners and prospective investors. With little resources or "skilled" labor, Eastern Kentucky furnaces put out approximately three percent of the nation's total output. From available papers and documents, therefore, it appears that what was lacking in techniques and skilled labor was more than compensated for by the seemingly unbounded prospects for the future. Within just a few years, many important investors would look to Eastern Kentucky and the surrounding region as the future iron capital of the nation, the Middlesbourgh of the United States.[25]

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have tried to outline some of the essential economic characteristics of Eastern Kentucky prior to and immediately after the Civil War. A central theme has been that the area rested upon a mode of production and a way of life that can best be characterized as small, petty, independent, or a simple commodity producer type. There was little reliance on wage labor and little currency in circulation. Communities were largely dependent upon the self-employed labor of local residents and upon a local trading network wherein products of Independent Commodity Producers were exchanged on the basis of equality.

Nevertheless, other forms of labor existed alongside that of Independent Commodity Producers. Slave and wage labor relations can both be located in specific industries and localities. These forms of labor were extremely limited in size and overall importance but their existence and importance in specific localities must be recognized in the analysis of social development.

Several factors contributed to the relative lack of development of the CMP prior to the twentieth century. Some of these factors will be examined in the next chapter but it will be useful to list them here. First, geography provided an impediment to the development of trading links with distant markets and therefore an obstacle to the reproduction of capital. The random drainage patterns of the region's streams and rivers, the lack of water control systems to prevent the problems that accompany flash flooding, and the mountain terrain were all important geographical impediments to the development of the CMP. Until a cheap means could be developed to facilitate the reliable and cheap transport of large quantities of goods, forced isolation delayed capitalist development. A second factor contributing to the lack of capitalist development in Eastern Kentucky prior to the turn of the century involved the question of need: whether the resources of Eastern Kentucky were needed badly enough to justify the huge capital outlays required for their development? And finally, one should examine the influence of a lack of a working-class in the area as a factor discouraging early capitalistic growth. Its non-existence meant that one would have to be created: a complicated and perhaps expensive process.

Any study of capitalist development would have to take these three factors into consideration to gain a full understanding of how economic changes at the turn of the century carried with them corresponding changes in the structure of everyday life. Access to markets was a fundamental pre-requisite for the transformation of surplus-products into capital in the accumulation process. This underscores the importance of railroads in overcoming the geographical impediments and linking Eastern Kentucky with the capitalist system. An adequate supply of labor was essential in that wage labor is the source of capitaliist wealth. And the resources of the area would have to be recognized as lucrative capital investments before the impetus for development would be forthcoming. As a result of these changes, everyday living would undergo fundamental alterations. Access to markets would introduce new standards of living and taste. Working for wages introduced new means of subsistence. New forms of authority would structure not only work but community living. These changes, in a word, would carry with them important changes that would permeate every aspect of daily living.

One more point. From the standpoint of those interested in the 'internal improvement' of the area's economy along capitalistic lines, the issues of geography, labor supply and investment (land control) were crucial. How these factors were understood and approached by politicans and capitalists constitutes an important focus for understanding the growth of a CMP in Eastern Kentucky.

Notes

1. Karl Marx, Capital, Volume I, (Moscow: Progress Books, n.d.) p. 668.

2. Ibid.

3. This term is used by Kevin Kelly in a perceptive article entitled "The Independent Mode of Production," Review of of Radical Political Economics, Volume II, No. I, Spring 1979, 38-48. It corresponds to small, petty, independent, and simple modes of production (all four terms are used).

4. To get an idea of how quickly this trade developed, consider that only a few years earlier (1775) Boonesfort, the first major settlement in Kentucky, was reached by Boone, settlers, and Richard Henderson of the Transylvania Land Company. Furthermore, dissatisfaction with the size and distribution of lots led settlers to send a petition to the Virginia Legislature which resulted in Boonesborough actually being established as a "town for the reception of traders" in the fall of 1779.

5. An October 1795 treaty with Spain gave Americans full passage and trading rights along the Mississippi River to New Orleans. Thus, there was one less impediment to Kentucky commerce.

6. For a listing of slaves by age, sex and county, see the "Tax Assessor's List," sometimes listed under the "Tax Assessor's Books," in the State Archives, Frankfort Kentucky.

7. There are various geological surveys of timberlands available through Kentucky Public Documents, Kentucky House and Senate Journals and special reports. However, two private reports which include discussions of the specific qualities and uses of local timbers are particularly interesting. See G.D. Fitzhugh, "A Report on 26,000 Acres Owned by Hull, Wyman, and Cains, 1890," Special Collections, University of Kentucky; and, R.C. Ballard Thurson, "A Report on Timbers on the Lines Proposed for the Extension of the Cumberland Valley Branch of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, 1887," Special Collections, University of Kentucky.

8. Mary Verhoeff, Kentucky River Navigation, (Louisville: Filson Club Publication No. 28, 1914), p. 187.

9. See Donald Rist, Iron Furnaces of the Hanging Rock District, (Ashland, Ky.: Hanging Rock Press, 1974).

10. Verhoeff, Kentucky River Navigation.

11. Ibid. p. 177.

12. Kentucky Geological Survey, 1875, also cited in Ibid.

13. Refer to the U.S. Bureau of the Census Mining Data for the years 1860 to 1900.

14. The mountain setting was important because the coal veins were above the water level. Mines could be drained by simple gravity without any artifical power. From reports, surveys and letters of the time, it is clear that this feature was no small consideration to prospective investors and industrialists.

15. Mary Verhoeff, Kentucky River Navigation, 151 and 154.

16. Kentucky Senate Journal, Appendix, 116, 1837-8.

17. Mary Verhoeff, Kentucky River Navigation, 154.

18. J.P. Leslie, Iron Manufacturers' Guide, (New York: John Wiley Publishing Company, 1859), a copy is available in the Special Collections, University of Kentucky.

19. Henry Ferdinand Quarie D'Aligny, "A Report to the Iron Hills Railroad Company on the Value of Iron Lands in Carter County," 1870, Special Collections, University of Kentucky.

20. See Iron Manufacturers' Guide; "The Rise and Growth of the Iron Industry in and about Ashland, Kentucky," n.d., Special Collections, Berea College.

21. Ninth Census of the United States, Volume III, 1870, 665-669; Tenth Census of the United States, Volume II, 1880, 243-249.

22. "The Rise and Growth of the Iron Industry in and about Ashland, Kentucky," n.p., Special Collections, Berea College.

23. Iron Manufacturers' Guide, 750.

24. See Stuart Seeley Sprague, "The Great Appalachian Iron and Coal Town Boom of 1889-1893," Appalachian Journal, Spring/Summer, 1977; investors' excitement concerning the lucrative potential of Central Appalachia can be found in the Manufacturers' Record, a business periodical for the south.

Chapter Three: LAND, LABOR AND CAPITAL IN EASTERN KENTUCKY, 1870-1915

There are at least two general reasons why Eastern Kentucky experienced such an investment boom from 1890 until around 1915.[1] First, there was rapid economic expansion during and following the Civil War. The northern economy was generating large amounts of economic surplus which was often invested in 'underdeveloped' areas. This, in large measure, accounts for the expansionist policies of the United States Government at the turn of the century.[2] The existence of large amounts of capital coupled with the 'opening' of southern states to outside capital investors provided a lucrative series of possibilities for the acquision and future development of predominately pre-capitalist territories. In addition, southern state legislatures were anxious to reconstruct their economies along capitalistic lines and therefore were willing and ready to provide special incentives and services to potential investors.

Second, the rapid growth of modern technology and production techniques around the turn of the century required special raw materials, many of which were abundant in Central Appalachia. Coal, iron, and timber were among the most important areas of investment. The quantity and quality of these area resources had been clearly established by pre-1900 state geological surveys and private reports.[3] In addition, the possibility of developing a non-union labor force isolated from the major producing districts provided strong enticement to outside investors. If only to build a buffer against other industrial competitors, then, investors were obliged to enter Central Appalachia and make plans for the future.

The purpose of this chapter is to deal with the factors instrumental in the growing importance of a capitalist mode of production in Eastern Kentucky. Attention will center upon 1) the policies of Kentucky politicians toward the issue of labor scarcity and how to best attract industrial capital for state economic improvement, and 2) a concrete-historical examination of the coming of capital investments and the railroads to selected Eastern Kentucky counties.[4]

The Emergence of Industrial Capitalism

The capitalist system, as mentioned earlier, pre-supposes the separation of direct producers from all property in the means by which they realize their labor. This separation of direct producers from control over productive resources is a complex historical process that cannot be dismissed cursorily as a natural response to mechanistic laws. In England, for instance, one finds a complex set of historical circumstances that made living, in many cases, hard for agricultural producers who found themselves displaced and transformed into a relative-surplus population which, in time, provided the raw recruits needed for the industrial labor force that supported the industrial revolution in that country.[5] In an area such as Eastern Kentucky, where cheap land and other inducements to independent commodity production and small farming were present, the development of an industrial labor force was even more problematic and complex. The complexity of capitalist development in an area such as Eastern Kentucky was clearly understood by Marx.

> Political Economy confuses on principle two very different kinds of private property of which one rests on the producers' own labour, the other on the employment of the labour of others. It forgets that the latter not only is the direct antithesis of the former, but absolutely grows on its tomb only. In Western Europe, the home of Political Economy, the process of primitive accumulation is more or less accomplished. Here the capitalist regime has either directly conquered the whole domain of national production, or, where economic conditions are less developed, it, at least, indirectly controls those strata of society which, though belonging to the antiquated mode of production, continue to exist alongside with it in gradual decay. To this ready-made world of capital, the political economist applies the notions of law and of property inherited from a pre-capitalist world with all the more anxious zeal and all the greater unction, the more loudly the facts cry out in the face of his ideology. It is otherwise in the colonies. There the capitalist regime everywhere comes into collision with the resistance of the producer, who, as owner of his own conditions of labour, employs that labour to enrich himself, instead of the capitalist. The contradiction of these two diametrically opposed economic systems manifest itself here practically in a struggle between them. Where the capitalist has at his back the power of the mother country, he tries to clear out of his way by force the modes of production and appropriation based on the independent labour of the producer. (6)

For Eastern Kentucky, the transformation of the small, independent commodity producer into the wage laborer employed by giant, non-resident corporations was a complex process which began immediately following the Civil War and continued into the first two decades of the twentieth century. This transformation involved fundamental changes in the everyday life of the region, which cannot be dismissed lightly as natural responses to mechanistic laws. The occupational structure, modes of work, distribution of laborers through industries, and relations between people, resources and work underwent radical alterations. The complexity of this process arises from the fact that the class structure of the pre-1860 period was composed almost entirely, with a few exceptions, of producers which were neither employed by capital nor employers of labor to a significant extent. Producers, in a word, fell outside the Capitalist Mode of Production. Yet, by 1915, a large portion of the workforce, which had increased greatly through natural increments and increments from in-migration, was employed by large capitalist firms. What forces led to the decline of pre-capitalist production relations (IMP) and to the increasing dominance of the CMP?

Kentucky Politicians on Capital and Labor

As early as 1828, some Kentucky politicians displayed dissatisfaction with the policy of granting land to small settlers at nominal prices. Land, they argued, should be granted to "monopolizing capitalists" for the "purposes of speculation."[7] Restrictive land policy, they believed, would benefit the state by promoting industry. The logic behind such land policy rested upon an understanding of the links between labor ownership patterns and conditions on the capitalistic labor market. The price of labor, from this standpoint, varies in relation to accessibility to cheap land and access to land creates a scarcity of labor for hire.

Systematic attention was not devoted to the problem of labor scarcity until after the Civil War. The growth of concern over labor policy was partially a product of the destruction of the slave system in the economically dominant, Bluegrass, portion of the state. One document, dated 1871, lists the evils inflicted by the war as follows:[8]

> ... Kentucky had an efficient and reliable system of labor. During the war... portions of her territory were ravaged and property of her citizens destroyed or consumed; the tranquil pursuit of agriculture was violently disrupted; living in the country from cities and military stations became perilous; the citizen and his family were subject to perpetual alarms; cattle and other livestock were slaughtered; horses were pressed into service; slaves were insubordinate and after several years of such demoralization the colored people were freed.

The sudden, according to slaveholders, emancipation of 205,781 slaves valued at over $ 100,000,000 "struck our industrial system down."[9] The bitterness of the slaveholding politicians was exacerbated even further by the fact that the "General Government, notwithstanding the formal obligation to pay for them ((the slaves)), was guilty of repudiation, and slaveholders received nothing for their property." At the very least, the slaveholders felt, the Federal Government could have slowly phased in the blackman's freedom, permitting them to become "somewhat habituated" to their new priveleges and responsibilities. After all, the Government should clearly see that "their interests ((the slaves and the slaveholders))were identical, not antagonistic."[10] But such was not the case, and the efforts to rebuild a labor system in the Bluegrass would produce profound effects for the mountain economy. It would open the entire state to outside industrial capital and support the pro-union Louisville and Nashville Railroad in its role as agent for carrying this capital and labor into Eastern Kentucky.[11]

The tone for the new flurry of labor policy discussions which followed the Civil War was established in the Governor's Message on January 6, 1868. "A change in the domestic policy of Kentucky," the Governor wrote, "has become forced upon her people by a fundamental alteration of her domestic institutions."[12] The message warned that policy changes were inevitable and permanent, and that lawmakers had to meet the challenge with reasoned and enlightened temperments. Then, he stated the problem and one possible solution bluntly: "The present need of the state is a sufficient supply of efficient labor. It can only be obtained by largely increased foreign emigration."[13] Kentucky, the Governor believed, should have little difficulty in attracting its share of prospective laborers--provided that sufficient information was made available to them. In the message, Kentucky was characterized as the "Garden of the American Union" and for that reason alone should be able to attract immigrants. Then, as if to underline the importance of this issue, the Governor stated that immigration "is now an essential requisite to our prosperity. It lies at the root of all social and material wealth. It is a question which towers in importance at this time over any, except revenue."[14]

This emphasis upon foreign labor underlines two important points about post-War conditions in Kentucky. First, for a variety of reasons, freed slaves were not perceived as suitable for industrial employment. Second, petty or independent commodity production was not immediately destroyed to the extent that displaced independent producers could fill the ranks of the capitalistic labor market. Thus, the emphasis and reliance upon labor from other areas including surrounding states.

In 1869, the appeals for a more sound labor policy were revived. In Louisville, at the Commercial Convention, businessmen took a position on what they believed to be the best method to encourage immigration. For them, it seemed more practical to establish a general immigration agency for the whole South. The agency, jointly financed by Southern States, would be authorized to prepare, distribute and translate propaganda favoring the South as a place to settle. For their schemes, white European immigrants were believed to be most suitable. Accordingly, the Convention suggested preparing advertisements in French, English, German, Italian, Dutch, Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian. Kentucky politicians saw the merits of this program in that it would distribute the costs among various parties, but they did not seem overly enthusiastic about its prospects, and therefore continued to forge their own separate policies.[15]

On December 6, 1869, Governor Stevenson (Kentucky) repeated the importance of an effective labor policy but he also broadened this plea to include not only labor inducements, but also capital inducements. "For a sufficient supply (of labor)," Stevenson wrote, "we must look to foreign immigration. But our need does not stop there. We must look to Europe also for capital... if we desire to increase our population and develop our industrial and mineral wealth. How then, is the tide of European immigration (and capital) to be induced to flow into Kentucky?"[16] To answer this question, Stevenson proposed a program which included the systematic promulgation of information favoring the Commonwealth (Kentucky) as a place for laborers to settle and as an area for capitalists to invest. For labor, propaganda should aim to remove prejudice from the minds of emigrants before leaving Europe and instruct them as to the resources of Kentucky and the advantages of permanent settlement. For capital, several methods of information distribution were proposed. Messages to specific interests was one means to familiarize outsiders with Kentucky conditions. "The iron-masters of Europe," for instance, "must become acquainted with our industrial and mineral wealth." The distribution of geological surveys showing that "Kentucky possesses a greater area of coal of good quality than is contained within the limits of any other State in the world" would also impress a favorable image upon the minds of European capitalists and laborers. Another method was the promulgation of information at the Industrial Expositions of England, France, Germany, and Russia. Specimens of Kentukcy coal, iron, and timber accompanied by exact geological survey statements could demonstrate the superiority of Kentucky resources. The aim of Stevenson's message was clearly to define the Government's position toward foreign capital and labor as well as to propose some instrumentalities to

> inform them of the rich and boundless deposits of iron ore which accompany the coal; the accessibility of both to commercial transit by rivers and railroads now completed or in the course of construction; the high elevation of our coal and iron bearing lands ... (To) impress upon foreign miners, furnace men, and machinists the inducements to emigration, as developed by the liberal compensation of the American workingman over the wages of Europe. (17)

Governor Stevenson's position was reinforced by a letter that he received from Colonel Blanton Duncan dated August 28, 1870. While in Europe, Duncan had made the observation that the conditions for inducing labor through immigration were favorable but that Kentucky had failed to seize upon the opportunity. To correct the situation, Colonel Duncan proposed that some sort of government agency be charged with the duty of co-ordinating immigration policy and activities. With the state in control of such authority, he believed, "influential men will be induced to take the lead, and the supply and demand of labor will go hand in hand."[18] The letter also stressed the importance of immediate action. To speed up the immigration process, Duncan suggested that the Government assure workers employment and even finance the journey to Kentucky (to be repaid with interest of course). The reason for propt action was given as follows: "The war now raging (in Europe) affords an additional argument. We have no powerful neighbors, no possibility of entanglements, no danger of conscription to take off the laboring classes..." There was, in other words, no time to waste with plans and discussions. The European war itself had created favorable conditions for emigration but, in turn, its prolongation would only worsen those conditions. Speaking of Germany, Duncan wrote that:

> there will be no surplus population... for the next ten years. The dead, the maimed, and the useless population... will not reach less than 500,000 adult males before the close of the war... The labor market will be so depleted that there will be ample occupation for every remaining laborer... and their government would feel bound to throw obstacles in the way of continued emigration. (19)

Early in 1871, Alfred T. Pope, chairman of the Committee on Immigration and Labor, presented a bill to the Kentucky State Legislature to establish a Bureau of Immigration. The bill was important in that it attempted to present a formal, comprehensive statement of the government's position on labor. Coupled with the other documents discussed thus far, it also offers a glimpse of the attitudes taken toward capital, particularly outside capital, as well as the preferred paths to economic development.

The bill recognized the crucial importance of systematic immigration as "not inferior... to any question that may come before the Senate."[20] The committee remarked that the "development of this country is not due to the labors of the gentile classes of England... but rather to the sturdy frames and strong arms of the humble and needy who have been hardened by a life of toil and privation."[21] The Committee, in other words, recognized the "immense capital value of immigration (labor)." To corroborate this notion, the Committee offered a statistical analysis which sought to establish that the increase in the wealth of the nation proceeded in exact ratio to the increase of labor (which had resulted largely from immigration).

Besides recognizing labor as the source of wealth, the authors also emphasized the crisis in social conditions which made large-scale immigration into Kentucky imperative. After the war, they wrote, "the colored people flocked to the cities, herded in tenements and ate the rations of idleness and indolence... The result was the general derangement and paralysis of our system of labor."[22] The labor crisis facing Kentucky politicians, therefore, was one in which a labor supply existed but was not available, at least not on the traditional terms of exchange. Ex-slaves had deserted the countryside only to create extreme labor shortages in some areas and surpluses in others, mostly urban areas. Unwilling or unable to deal with this labor supply, the only suitable substitute for the old labor system was perceived to exist in Europe where an "exhaustless supply" of labor existed--where land is scarce... where people are crowded, wages low and living dificult." According to the bill, therefore, immigration was the surest remedy to the disintegration of the old system of labor relations and it also offered the promise to furnish "men of our own race" for the laboring classes.

The Bureau of Immigration was designed to achieve three central objectives. First, it was designed to entice European labor first to this country, and then into Kentucky. Besides a commissioner, appointed by the Governor, three agents were to operate out of New York and Europe. Their functions included keeping in touch with the Chambers of Commerce of major European cities as well as the organization and distribution of information in relative surplus population areas. Second, the Bureau was designed to make maximum use of the railroad system. Accordingly, the Bureau's offices were located in Louisville, the railroad center of the state. The objective was to use the railroad as an economic means of distributing immigrants and also as a means to facilitate labor mobility. Finally, the Bureau was designed to serve employers by functioning as a sort of clearinghouse for labor. To better serve these business interests, the bill stated the intention not to actively plan methods of distribution but merely to "secure co-operation" in matters of labor and immigration activity and not to assume "exclusive control." As if to solidify this pledge, the commissioner was charged with the major responsibility of registering all applications for laborers, and then distributing them "equally" over the state.

Labor policy discussions continued into the 1880's and 1890's, but images of labor as well as the role of the State in internal improvement (development) were basically established by 1875. The view embraced contained the following points:

1) Labor was recognized as a crucial commodity for the

development of capitalist production. In the Governor's message of 1876, we find the statement that "labor makes capital and labor and capital together give life and impetus and strength to a State or nation."[23] Without reasonably priced labor, it was supposed that all the interests of a social formation were endangered as the production of social wealth would be discontinued. The role of government was, therefore, to protect all the interests of society by encouraging the growth of a labor pool sufficient in size to guarantee the proper balance between the forces of supply and demand on the capitalistic labor market.

2) Kentucky's economy needed more than labor. It needed an adequate capital base and a correct balance between capital and labor. To achieve this balance, Kentucky politicians followed two general policies. First, it sought to entice outside capital and labor through generous tax laws and through information peddling outside the state. Such was the purpose of the Bureau of Immigration, the staging of and participation in Commerical Conventions, and other organizations designed to attract specific industrial interests (for instance, the iron-masters of Europe and the coal interests of Pennsylvania). Second, to assure the development of a capitalistic labor market, politicians resolved to prevent immigrants from flowing into non-capitalist modes of production. They sought out immigrants who had little resources to set up as independent commodity producers,[24] and they had little

intention of granting them land.[25] Thus, even in this age of laissez-faire economics, Kentucky politicians saw the benefit of one form of government intervention; namely, to assure favorable conditions in the labor market for capitalists.

3) Politicians generally took a favorable stand toward the question of outside capital. They realized that, weakened by the war and by the loss of their labor force (slaves), many Kentucky business interests were not equipped to handle the task of reconstruction. Kentucky would have to look elsewhere for the capital and labor necessary to build a modern economy. Indeed, as we have already seen, Kentucky politicians actively solicited outside capital as the preferred avenue to economic development. This preference for outside capital, as opposed to indigenous capitalistic growth or non-capitalistic growth, encouraged patterns of absentee ownership which would characterize Eastern Kentucky throughout the twentieth century.[26]

4) Finally, politicians felt it their duty to provide essential services for those who owned the means of production by functioning as a sort of clearing house for the distribution of labor-power.

From the standpoint of Kentucky politicians, these policies were presumed to be good for all the interests of Kentucky. For the absentee owners of large holdings, this claim seems to hold some credibility. But, for the interests of those who worked for these corporations and for those independent commodity producers who would be displaced as a result of capitalist growth, these presumptions seem to be only partially valid, at best.

The Coming of Capital

In 1889, direct producers in Eastern Kentucky were almost exclusively involved in non-capitalist modes of living. In mining, there was barely a trace of a working class in the modern sense. Carter County, for instance, was among the largest eastern counties in terms of coal production. In the Annual Report of the Mine Inspector, there were 346 below ground (297 miners; 35 laborers; 14 boys) and 72 above ground (9 mechanics; 57 laborers; 6 boys) wage earners listed for all Carter County mines. Given the number of mines in operation (8-10), the average number of workers per mine could not have exceeded fifty. In addition to being peripheral to the mountain economy, the miners of Carter County were consistently maintained at wage levels below the state average.[27] As Table One indicates, the only category of mine worker to exceed the state average was the "above ground laborer" and this was merely a cent a day advantage. The other categories of mine workers all fell well below the state average. In addition, for other counties, coal production figures were listed under the heading 'farmers' diggings.' While curious sounding at first sight, this heading indicates clearly the mode of production which predominated in coal in various counties.

TABLE ONE: Average Wages in Carter County Coal Mines, 1889
(average wages per day)

	(Above Ground)			(Below Ground)		
	Mechanics	Laborers	Boys*	Miners	Laborers	Boys
CARTER	$ 1.70	1.31	.59	1.54	1.30	.54
STATE	1.81	1.30	.75	1.75	1.56	.70

*under 16 years of age

TABLE TWO: Statistics for Manufactories in Selected Eastern Kentucky Counties, 1889

	Bell	Carter	Harlan	Perry	Rowan	Leslie	Totals
Firms	36	14	4	2	35	4	95
Employees	178	378	34	10	575	15	1190
Capital ($)	210,000	93,000	4,500	3,500	358,550	2,500	672050
Agr. Imple. Companies		1					1
Planning Mills	3		1		3		7
Sawmills	30	12	2	2	20	4	70
Wooden & Willow Wares					1		1
Flouring Mills					3		3
Furniture					1		1

From a capitalist standpoint, manufacturing was also highly undeveloped. For the seven counties which include Bell, Harlan, Leslie, Letcher, Perry, Carter, and Rowan, there were a total of 1,190 manufacturing wage earners in 1889, an average of 12.5 per manufacturing enterprise. As Table Two indicates,[28] of the ninety-five manufacturing firms in this area, seventy were saw-mills. The others included planning mills, flouring mills, a furniture manufacturer, an agricultural implements company and a willow ware establishment. All totalled, these ninety-five firms boasted a capital investment of only $ 672,050.

Experts and businessmen were well aware of the undeveloped social relations that characterized Eastern Kentucky. From their standpoint, there was little to prevent their modern business organizations from establishing a dominant position in the region. But, more importantly, these men had been familiar with the lucrative resource potential of Eastern Kentucky since the 1870's at least. Geological Surveys, sponsored by the state, combined with the private reports of railroads and industrialists offered detailed estimates of timber, iron, and coal reserves and also contained sophisticated analyses of coal quality, timber varieties, and iron deposits. Therefore, when Kentucky politicians developed a policy that fostered large investments by outside interests and guaranteed an adequate supply of exploitable labor (wage labor for hire), promoters, speculators, and industrialists responded with predictable excitement and interest.[29] What was next necessary was for these investors to acquire sufficient land to guarantee their dominance.

For decades, land speculation in Eastern Kentucky had been a sort of sport for high society in the Bluegrass, among other interests. Land was cheap, surveys indicated future potential, and much land was not even registered. Thus, prior to 1880 considerable land concentration can be found. In Bell County, for instance, forty percent of the assessed acreage was owned by taxpayers who owned greater than 1,000 acres. In 1856 approximately fifty percent of Harlan, twenty-one percent of Letcher, twenty-nine percent of Rowan, and approximately thirty percent of Leslie Counties were concentrated in the hands of these "large taxpayers."[30] Some industries developed out of this early land speculation. One notable example is the Asher Lumber Company. In 1890, when this company was chartered under the laws of the State of Michigan, the Asher brothers brought to it vast land holdings in ten Eastern Kentucky counties--a product of years of speculation--and sawmills in both Bell and Clark Counties. But, these early investors were not, typically, the ones that contributed most to economic growth in the region. Even the Asher brothers, one of the most important early investors, were squeezed out of the lumber company by 1896 as it was taken over by Michigan interests and renamed the Burt and Brabb Lumber Company.[31]

The casual speculation of the pre-1880 period was soon replaced with a qualitatively different form of investment. The "new" investors typically operated on a much grander scale. Frequently, in this region where the only towns had consisted of a few hundred souls usually at the county seat, complete cities were built. Some were designed to include such features as parks, luxury hotels, hot springs, theaters, and resorts. The pace and volume of these investments varied from place to place but it should be borne in mind that they did not occur all at the same time. In some places, for instance, investment was booming as early as 1890. In others, a similar stage was not reached until after 1910. But whatever their form and timing, these investments contributed in a major way to 1) the establishment of capital-labor relations, and 2) the transformation of land into capital.

In 1892, these "capital" investors had made considerable headway into the region and were clearly identifiable. In the tax lists, the names of large taxpayers were increasingly those of outside interests, usually land, lumber, coal, development and/or mining companies. That is, the names of individuals were increasingly replaced by those of corporations. What this represented was more than a mere acquision of land by corporations in a "free" market;

it represented a new form of property which grew and developed in the compost of the old form. Figure Two contains a partial listing of large taxpayers for 1892 in selected counties.[32] First, note that, in the coal counties at least, there is a certain recurrance of names. Besides the Asher brothers, Stearns Land and Lumber, Kentucky Coal, Iron and Development, and F.A. Hull (president of the Log Mountain Coal, Coke and Timber Company) were among these recidivists. Second, the list is interesting because it suggest that the large taxpayers were almost exclusively non-residents. With the passage of time and increased investment in Harlan, Perry, Letcher and Leslie counties, this tendency toward absentee ownership would become even more pronounced.

The penetration of outside capital into Eastern Kentucky can be demonstrated in another, more concrete, manner. In 1892, the last year in which the tax list for all Eastern Kentucky counties are available, the amount of land concentration in the hands of the top twenty to thirty taxpayers of each county was quite impressive. It would be twenty years before the railroads and the coal operators would overtly appear in Harlan, Letcher, Leslie, and Perry counties. It would be over twenty years before the brick-making plants would dominant Rowan and Carter counties. In fact, Bell County, the most developed at that time,

FIGURE TWO: Partial List of Large Taxpayers in Selected Counties, 1892*

Bell

Middlesborough Town Land Company**

American Association**

Asher Brothers**

James Davis

Log Mountain Coal, Coke & Timber Co.**

F.A. Hull**

Jamie Innis**

Smith & Noble**

Letcher

J.B. Stearns**

Kentucky Coal Co."

Kentucky Coal, Iron & Dev. Co.**

W.H. Nickels

Wm. H. Marie

Leslie

Asher Brothers**

Kentucky Coal, Iron & Dev. Co.**

Jamie Innis**

F.A. Hull**

Stearns Land & Lumber Co. **

Kentucky Coal Co.**

Harlan

Asher Brothers**

W.F. Hall

M.Matt Davis

Jessie Howard**

Kentucky Coal, Iron, & Dev. Co.**

Nils Kant

Carter

Smith & Gregory**

W.L. Geiger

Stone City Land, Lumber & Mining Co.**

Lexington & Carter County Mining Co.**

K.B. Grahn**

Belfort Iron Marks Co.**

Rowan

Joseph Roadbaum

Chamey Miller**

Baldwins**

Joseph Bush**

Perry

C.W. Schoap**

F.A. Hull**

Kentucky Union Land Co.**

Kentucky Coal, Iron & Dev. Co.**

* Large denotes greater than 1000 acres

**denotes non-resident

TABLE THREE: Land Concentration in Selected Eastern Kentucky Counties, 1892

County	A # large taxpayers*	B Total Assessed Acres	C Acres Held by Large Taxpayers	D Acres Held by Large Non-Res	C as % of B	D as % of B
BELL	29	375,404	303,343	197,374	80.5 %	52.6 %
CARTER	21	178,286	67,423	n.a.**	37.8	-
HARLAN	38	315,564	194,728	n.a.	61.7	-
LESLIE	33	239,899	149,768	115,580	62.4	48.2
LETCHER	31	287,067	119,774	n.a.	42.0	-
ROWAN	18	253,759	154,718	127,998	60.9	50.4
PERRY	40	410,803	263,480	194,367	64.1	47.3

* A "Large" Taxpayer denotes one that owns greater than one thousand acres.

** not available. In these counties in 1892, residents were not distinguished from non-residents.

had only been involved in the commercial production of coal since 1891. Yet a virtual land monopoly had already been created. As Table Three indicates,[33] Bell County was over eighty percent owned by non-residents. Harlan, Leslie, Letcher, and Rowan counties were all approximately sixty percent in the hands of large taxpayers. And in the counties where non-resident data were available (Bell, Leslie, Rowan & Perry), non-residents controlled in the neighborhood of fifty percent of the total assessed acreage. Only Carter County had less than forty percent of the county in the hands of large taxpayers.

While the calculations in Table Three appear rather exaggerated, there are two good reasons to believe that they are more likely to be conservative estimations. First, there is good reason to believe that a number of "large" taxpayers understated their true land ownership for tax purposes. In Bell County, for instance, there are at least two examples of this practice. In the tax list, the American Association Ltd., owned by a group of English investors, claimed ownership to 19,000 acres. Yet, in their other public statements,[34] they claimed ownership to 80,000 acres and an additional 5,398 acres through the Middlesborough Town Company (which is not even listed in terms of acres in the tax list). That leaves 66,398 acres for these two large taxpayers which never even entered into the calculations based upon the tax list. Another Bell County example of this practice is the Log Mountain Coal, Coke, and Timber Company. For tax purposes, this corporation claimed title to 20,204 acres in 1892. But based upon the company's own correspondence, there is very good reason to believe that the company owned at least 26,000 acres and probably more.[35] Second, there is good reason to believe that the "non-resident" category is understated. According to tax procedures at that time, if a company had an office in the county in which it held land, then, that company was considered as a resident by the tax assessor. Therefore, the English investors behind the American Association are listed as residents in the Bell County tax lists as is the Middlesborough Town Company. There are other considerations which suggest that the calculations in Table Three represent underestimations of the true degree of land (resource) monopoly. Chief among these is that these figures only account for outright land ownership, and hence do not take account of mineral and timber rights purchased with just as great a zeal. The point, however, is merely that Table Three offers a very conservative estimate of the true level of land (resource) monopoly in 1892.

The conquest of the region's productive resources was a profound development which could have been little comprehended by the local population. It <u>weakened</u> the material basis upon which the farmers and independent commodity producers operated and <u>strengthened</u> the inflow of outside capital. It generated irrepressible tendencies for the gradual decay of the Independent Mode of

Production. With the coming of the railroad, workers for the new industries could be drawn, with the aid of the government, from the surplus population of other areas. Such was one of the many blessings of the railroad; its role in facilitating labor mobility. Other laborers could be obtained among those displaced from the IMP. While the coming of capital did involve the subjugation of the IMP, it is important to recognize that many independent commodity producers continued their activities and some, undoutedly, flourished with access to new markets. Nevertheless, the coming of capital meant the increased flow of workers into the capitalistic labor market in which their exclusive function became that of the expanded reproduction of outside capital.

The manner in which this class transformation was accomplished varied from place to place, but the general effects were clearly evident. In the first place, the creation of a land monopoly prior to the "industrialization" of the counties destroyed the conditions under which it was possible to carry on the IMP and, in turn, to its gradual decay. The development of a labor market which offered income, through jobs, to purchase the means of subsistence <u>from capital</u> further weakened the petty mode of production. And finally, the dominance of capital over the everyday life of the new recruits to industry was reinforced and strengthened through an almost exclusive control over the towns, stores, and recreational facilities--that is, the means of consumption.

To better understand the transition to a capitalist mode of production, it will be useful to identify the historical period in which the change took place. One indication of when capital entered a particular county can be found in coal output data. In large part, the rise in commercial coal production was the product of the activities of very large corporations. Indeed, it was not uncommon for one firm to be responsible for half of a particular county's coal output and the top four or five usually were the major producers. At any rate, the rise of commercial coal production generally followed a series of big land deals and the construction of rail links into the particular area. Table Four suggests that there were at least two stages in which these counties were brought into capitalist relations of production.[36] The first period can be found in Bell County around 1890. The second, twenty years later, can be found in Harlan, Letcher, Leslie, and Perry Counties.

Bell County was brought into the capitalist world within an amazingly short period of time. In 1885 or 1886, Alexander A. Arthur, a representative of Scotch and English capitalists who owned and lumbered a large tract of land in North Carolina, entered Bell County through the Cumberland Gap to examine, first hand, the famous tracts of timber as well as the coal and iron deposits.

TABLE FOUR: Commercial Coal Production in Selected Eastern Kentucky Counties, 1890-1926

(Tons)

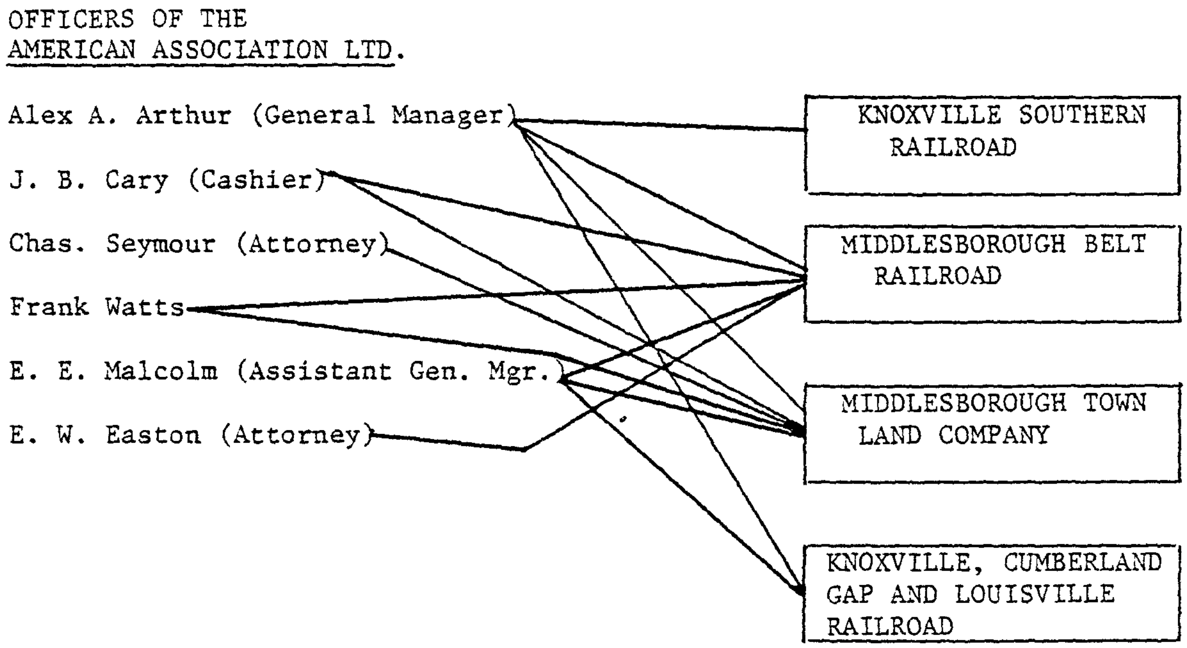
	Bell	Harlan	Letcher	Perry
1890	-	-	-	-
1892	16,528	-	-	-
1894	63,022	-	-	-
1896	89,534	-	-	-
1898	86,892	-	-	-
1900	204,954	-	-	-
1902	379,929	-	-	-
1904	514,576	-	-	-
1906	969,993	-	-	-
1908	1,434,172	-	-	-
1910	2,068,900	-	-	-
1912	2,191,030	383,327	-	1,400
1914	2,433,203	1,249,940	1,539,070	243,661
1916	2,237,340	2,204,533	2,506,691	995,091
1918	1,972,447	3,201,733	3,279,715	2,120,223
1920	2,044,242	4,597,433	3,315,644	2,966,426
1922	1,847,178	6,158,152	3,414,719	4,280,981
1924	1,859,055	9,076,269	4,851,806	5,229,066
1926	2,669,528	13,377,382	6,295,445	6,647,807

Within the year, he was in England giving glowing accounts of what he had seen to the directors of the banking house of Baring Brothers of London, the stockholders of the Watts Iron and Steel Company of Middlesborough, and other prominent English capitalists. After receiving the reports of other qualified experts, the American Association Ltd. was capitalized with a stock valued at $ 2,000,000. In the 1887 Mine Inspector's Report, the name of the American Association Ltd. appeared for the first time as a Bell County coal operator.[37] Having reached an agreement with the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, a branch line from Corbin, Kentucky, to Pineville was completed in 1888 (see Map on page84). According to local hsitorians, the coming of the L & N marked the beginning of the new industrial period in Bell County.[38] What it more accurately marked was a significant moment in the reshaping of class relations and everyday life in the area. Soon the predominately rural, independent, economy would be replaced by an urban, industrial, one. Middlesborough would grow from a town of fifty souls in the spring of 1889 to an industrial city of 15,000 in 1892.

The rise of capitalist social relations in Bell County was, in part, accomplished through the systematic development of a number of closely related business organizations.[39] The centerpiece of this business network was the American Association Ltd., through which 80,000 acres of Bell County was owned. Not only was this corporation used to control vast acreage, but it was also the instrument through which the English capitalists controlled the other businesses in the network. The second piece of the puzzle was the Middlesborough Town Company, later named the Middlesborough Town Land Company, which owned 5,398 acres right in the middle of the American Association tract. With this company, the development of the town was clearly in the hands of these same investors. Another company, the Cumberland Gap Park Corporation, was formed to commence building a luxury Hotel, a Sanitarium, and a Casino in 1890.

The influence of the American Association, however, did not stop with merely controlling development within Bell County. It also controlled, in varying degrees, three railroads which provided the infrastructure for industrial operations. One, the Middlesborough Belt Railroad, circled the town with branch lines leading to mine sites. Another, the Knoxville, Cumberland Gap, and Louisville Railroad, operated the 73 miles of track leading to Knoxville. And the third, the Knoxville Southern Railroad, involved 110 miles of track between Knoxville and Atlanta. Other companies could undoubtedly be added to this network. For instance, the Watts Iron & Steel Syndicate controlled large tracts of land containing iron and coal deposits only five miles south of

FIGURE THREE: Interlocking Executive Relationships in Selected Enterprises in and around Middlesborough, Ky., 1890



Middlesborough around a town named Arthur, Tennessee. But the point is merely to suggest that capitalist development was achieved not merely through technological superiority, but rather through an almost exclusive control over the key business organizations, including the railroads, and thereby of both productive resources, transportation links, and the means of consumption.

To better appreciate this, refer to Figure Three.[40] The names of the English investors behind this business network only appear in the information directly dealing with the American

Association proper. In the case of other companies, their American representatives, some of which were listed in Figure Three, acted both as directors and as executive officers. Starting with these American representatives who acted as executive officers for the American Association, it can easily be demonstrated that they held an important position on the boards of directors of various critical corporations.

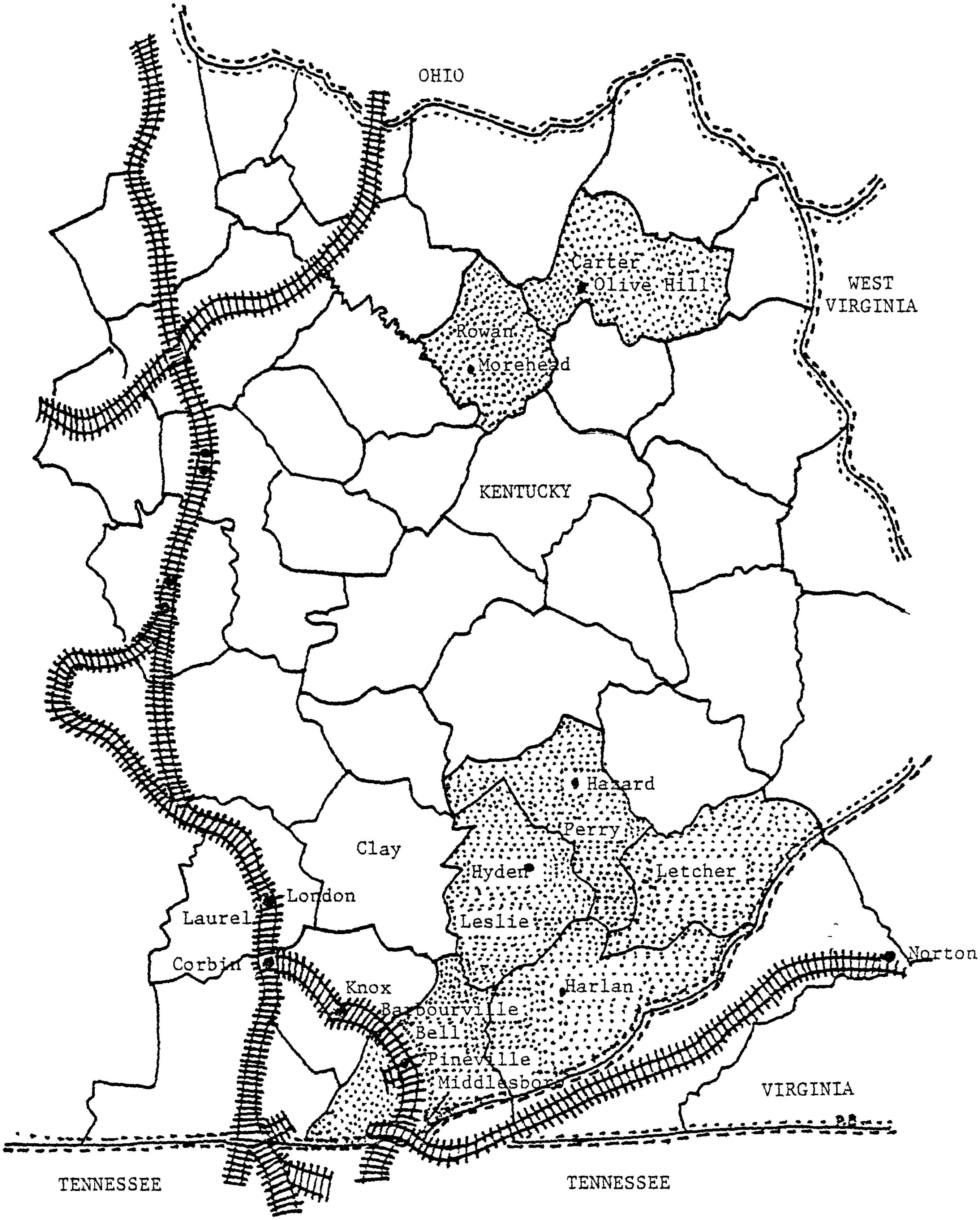
The plan of development embraced by those controlling this network proposed that the American Association assume the position of landlord--building a few initial industrial structures in addition to some town facilities, but mostly restricting activities to the leasing of property rights. According to one brochure, dated 1890, the plan was to "lease, on royalties... coal, iron, clay, timber and quarry privileges... rent cleared farms on reasonable terms (and)... sell or lease lands suitable for manufacturing industries of all kinds."[41] Town lots, of course, were to be leased or auctioned off through the Middlesborough Town Company. Another large land owner in Bell County , the Log Mountain Coal, Coke, and Timber Company, followed a similar plan of development. With26,00 or more acres, it planned to "strictly maintain the position of landlords... leasing coal mines, stone quarries, clay beds, and farms, selling specified timber stumpage for tanneries, charcoal for iron-furnaces, saw-mills, carriage and wagon material, furniture, and other woodworking factories, selling village and town lots, controlling all water supplies for both domestic and manufacturing uses, and generally to extract from the property the actual intrinsic value of its resources."[42]

While the emergence of capitalist social relations in Bell County were limited, in some respects, by conditions on the world market, few restrictions posed much of a problem at the local level. The whole pattern of development rested upon the absolute domination of the means of production and consumption. All forces of resistence were swept away or rendered impotent through a combination of resource monopoly and modern business organization.[43]

This pattern of development, as Table Four suggest, was not confined to Bell County, although there are important variations. In at least two other coal producing counties (Harlan and Letcher), similar patterns of transition can be found.

When the Louisville and Nashville Railroad completed the branch line to Pineville in 1888, a decision was made, partly influenced by the American Association, to develop the rail links south to Knoxville and Atlanta rather than to enter other Eastern Kentucky counties where known coal reserves were located. Thus, while the L & N had a branch line going to Big Stone Gap and Norton, Virginia, none entered Harlan, Letcher, Leslie, or Perry

LOUISVILLE AND NASHVILLE RAILROAD IN EASTERN KENTUCKY, 1905



counties (see Map on page84).[44] Some L.& N executives strongly protested the decision to bypass these counties, but it would take pressures of a wholly different kind to move H. Walters, chairman (New York) of the railroad, and others, to order this line built.

Between 1900 and 1910, two important developments began to take place in the southeastern Kentucky coal counties. First, several coal land deals were negotiated. Heavy investments were placed in "Harlan and other mountain counties... in Kentucky by Eastern and Northern capitalists. According to the Manufacturer's Record, these investments were regarded as "the forerunners of a railroad extension into one of the richest regions of the State."[45] The Kentenia Corporation, probably the largest coal land owner in Harlan County, boasted title to 100,000 acres, although for tax purposes only 39,000 were claimed.[46] The Wisconsin Steel Company, a subsidary of the Morgan-McCormick International Harvester Corporation, purchased another 20,000 acres on which it was equipping its mines with "electrical machinery . . . for a daily output of 2,000 tons of coal and constructing 300 coke ovens."[47] In nearby Leslie County, the Fordson Coal Company (Henry Ford) was allegedly in the process of acquiring approximately one-half of that county's acreage.[48] In short, what was taking place was the creation of a land monopoly prior to rail penetration. One possible explanation of this process of monopolization is that 1) capitalists sought to get a better deal on land by buying it before the railroad came and the old landholders realized the "actual intrinsic" value of their property and 2) through the creation of a land (resource) monopoly, capitalists secured a hegemonic position in the new class structure and thereby made it possible to shape development in their interests--that is, in the interest of capital accumulation. The second important development taking shape was that the Southern Railroad had purchased rights of way for a railway extension from Middlesborough into the Harlan coal fields. The line was started prior to 1904 but was never completed.

The increase of capital investments coupled with the initiative of the Southern Railway helped generate the impetus for the Louisville and Nashville Railroad to enter Harlan County and thereby play an instrumental part in the transformation of Harlan into a major area of capitalist coal production. In 1904, in a letter marked confidential, H. Walters described the situation to Morgan Jones, a large landowner in Harlan County and a railway builder. The letter is worth quoting at length:

> I think I told you while you were here that I had information that the Southern Railway had made a survey up the Cumberland River to Harlan court house... at the solicitation of the Harvester people of Chicago who purchased coal land in that

> valley. I would be very glad to see a line built up the Cumberland River by someone who was independent, so that the Louisville & Nashville could make some kind of contract with them by which it would enjoy the business. We do not propose to let Southern get into that territory... Under a trackage right, they now use our tunnel down to Middlesborough, but they have no right to go beyond Middlesborough, according to our lawyers.
>
> What would be your plan for building this road? How would you provide the money and how would you expect to operate it? (49)

By 1914, the Louisville and Nashville had built its own branch line into Harlan and several other southeastern counties (it entered Harlan in 1911). At that time, over seventy percent of the total assessed acreage of Harlan County was concentrated in the hands of 26 large taxpayers. Over sixty-one percent was owned by large non-resident taxpayers. And the top eight, which included the Kentenia Corporation, Wisconsin Steel Company and Black Mountain Corporation, controlled forty-five percent of the total assessed Harlan County acreage.

That the dominance of a few major producers was firmly established at the time of rail penetration can also be demonstrated through a cursory examination of coal output data. In Harlan County, for instance, Wisconsin Steel Company produced forty-three percent of the total county output for 1911. And when Wisconsin Steel tonnage is added to that of Wallins Creek Coal Company, another Morgan controlled corporation,[50] the percentage changes to seventy-six percent.[51] A similar pattern can be found in Letcher County where the Rockerfeller controlled Consolidated Coal Company produced 1,273,248 of the total 1,539,070 tons for 1914.[52] That's eighty-two percent of the county total. Only Perry County had a different pattern; in 1914, seven major companies, none of which produced more than 60,000 tons, operated.

Conclusions

This chapter has dealt primarily with the question of how economic investment coupled with political policy worked to structure the general character of class relations in Eastern Kentucky during the early part of this century and the last part of the nineteenth century. Kentucky politicians, responding to development needs generated by the Civil War, looked outside the state for both capital and labor power to reconstruct the economy. Partially because of these efforts to entice capital interests to the state, there was an investment boom in many parts of Eastern Kentucky and the consequent reordering of the class structure. Similarly, population figures rise dramatically as a reflection of both indigenous population increase and substantial increases resulting from in-migration.

While the absolute level of independent commodity production may have remained rather stable, the importance of the IMP underwent drastic decline in relative terms. As the next chapter will show, the number of wage earning coal miners listed in the Harlan, Letcher and Perry county census data rose from zero in 1910 to over 22,000 in 1930. In Carter and Rowan Counties, manufacturing wage earners increased in number from 300 in 1910 to over 1,600 in 1930.

The development of a land monopoly is also an important aspect of how capital influenced the region. Even today, mountain communities bear the imprints of these early investments in the form of one industry economies and labor markets and inferior social services. The point, however, is that monopolization of the soil was the starting point of the CMP, not the end product of capitalistic growth. This suggests a need to distinguish, as Marx did, between different forms of property: one that rests on the producers' own labor and the other on the employment of labor. The development of a corporate land monopoly gave impetus to a relative decline of the IMP and the increased importance of wage labor as a means of subsistence.

The main thrust of this chapter has been to examine the role of the state apparatus and economic investments in promoting particular patterns of social development. Accordingly, attention was centered upon the activities of politicians and capitalists--how they sought to establish conditions for capitalistic growth. Labor was therefore only superficially treated although the impact of these developments on labor was a constant consideration. As we turn in the next few chapters to an examination of the structure of labor, it is important to keep this in mind and to be reminded of the mutual interaction between capital and labor.

Notes

1. Stuart Seeley Sprague, "The Great Appalachian Iron and Coal Town Boom of 1889-1893," Appalachian Journal, Spring/Summer, 1977.

2. See Philip S. Foner, The Spanish-Cuban American War and the Birth of American Imperialism, 2 volumes, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972); and, David Healy, U.S. Expansionism: The Imperialist Urge in the 1890's, (Madision: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970).

3. Many of these early public reports can be found in Kentucky Public Documents. Private reports are harder to come by but many can be found in Special Collections, University of Kentucky.

4. For the purpose of this study, attention has centered on Bell, Carter, Harlan, Letcher, Perry and Rowan counties.

5. See Karl Marx, Capital, Volume I, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, n.d.) Part VIII; also, Maurice Dobbs, Studies in the Development of Capitalism, (New York: International Publishers, 1963), 221-254.

6. Karl Marx, Capital, Volume I, 716-717.

7. "Governor's Message," Kentucky Senate Journal, 1828.

8. Kentucky Senate Journal, 1871, 208.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Prior to the Civil War, the Louisville and Nashville Railway appears to have been little more than a local operation with little anticipation of expansion. During the war, however, the L & N became a crucial instrument in the hands of the Federal Government for the transportation of troops and munitions. Indeed, it was one of the few southern railroads to come out of the war better than it went in. Subsequent L & N history involved rapid expansion as it became one of the largest southern railroads and as it played a major role in the development of Eastern Kentucky. For a look at the growth of the L & N from the company's standpoint during this period, see Mr. J. H. Ellis's remarks (Secretary of the L & N) to the L & N Traffic Club on February 21, 1914, "In the Days of Auld Lang Syne," Special Collections, University of Kentucky.

12. "Governor's Message," Kentucky House Journal, 1868, 21-4.

13. Ibid., 22-3

14. Ibid., 21

15. Interest in a southern regional immigration (labor) agency declined during the next five years. In fact, by 1871, the State Legislature had authorized the creation of its own agency to satisfy the labor needs of Kentucky.

16. "Governor's Message," Kentucky House Journal, 1869-70, 22-25.

17. Ibid., 23.

18. Letter from Colonel Blanton Duncan to Governor Stevenson, dated August 28, 1870, reprinted in the Kentucky House Journal, 1871, 31.

19. Ibid., 31.

20. "Bill to Establish a Bureau of Immigration," Kentucky Senate Journal, 1871, 207.

21. Ibid., 215

22. Ibid., 211

23. Ibid., 215

24. Clearly spelled out in the "Bill to Establish a Bureau of Immigration."

25. Kentucky politicians were generally more interested in offering inducements to labor which did not involve land grants. In 1871, Governor Stevenson wrote that "in new countries the grand feature is their ability to endow the immigrant with a free homestead, which overcomes the reluctance to encounter hardship and to give up the comforts and protection afforded by more civilized settlements. To meet this difficulty Kentucky, having no lands to give, might substitute other inducements (to labor)." Kentucky Senate Journal, 1871-2.
    This statement regarding the inability of Kentucky to offer cheap land to prospective immigrants is highly suspect. During the same year and in the same document, it was pointed out that Kentucky had a population density per square mile less than any other mid-western or southern state with the exception of West Virginia. Kentucky Senate Journal, 1871, 211.

26. That these patterns of land ownership have changed very little in Eastern Kentucky or Central Appalachia can be seen in a recent study prepared at the Appalachian Center, University of Kentucky. David S. Walls, Dwight B. Billings, Mary P. Payne, & Joe F. Childers, Jr., A Baseline Assessment of Coal Industry Structure in the Ohio River Basin Energy Study Region, (Washington, D.C.: Office of Research and Development, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, June 1979). The statistical appendix (bound separately) to the ORBES study contains revealing information regarding land ownership.

27. Source: "Annual Report of the Inspector of Mines," Kentucky Department of Mines. 1891.

28. Source: "Statistics of Manufacturers in Kentucky by County," in the Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture, Horticulture, and Statistics, Kentucky Public Documents. Volume I, 1889.

29. See Stuart Seeley Sprague, "The Great Appalachian Iron and Coal Town Boom of 1889-1893," Spring/Summer 1977; also, investor's excitement concerning the lucrative potential of Central Appalachia can be found in issues of the Manufacturer's Record, an important business periodical for the south.

30. Throughout this chapter, the term "large taxpayer" will refer to those holding greater than one thousand acres. Figures were calculated from data in the county "Tax Assessor's Books," for the respective years and counties. State Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.

31. For information on the Asher Lumber Company's land holdings, see "Records of Land Grants and Warrants," and "Abstracts of Titles of the Burt & Brabb Lumber Company's East Kentucky Lands," Box 7, File # 4. For the official version of how the Asher Lumber Company became the Burt & Brabb Lumber Company, see the minutes of the board of directors, "Proxies and Minutes," Box 1, File # 2. All of the above materials are included in the Burt & Brabb Lumber Company Papers, Special Collections, University of Kentucky.

32. "Tax Assessor's Books," respective years and counties, State Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.

33. Calculated from Ibid.

34. A prospectus for investors, "American Association Ltd.," Special Collections, University of Kentucky.

35. Letter from Log Mountain Coal, Coke and Timber Company to investors, dated around 1890, Special Collections, University of Kentucky.

36. Source: "Annual Report," Kentucky Department of Mines and Minerals, 1926.

37. Available secondary accounts of Bell County development include the following: History of Bell County, Two Volumes, Kentucky Collection, Morehead State University; Charles Blanton Roberts, "The Building of Middlesborough--A Notable Epoch in East Kentucky History," Filson Club Quarterly, 7(1933), 18-33; F. L. Lee, "Middlesboro Owes Fact and Name to British Industry," Christian Science Monitor, Boston, December 14, 1925; and John Gaventa, "In Appalachia: Property is Theft," Southern Exposure, Volume I, No. II, 42-52.

38. History of Bell County, Volume Two.

39. See "American Association Papers," Special Collections, University of Kentucky; also J. H. Bartlett's Scrapbook, "Collection of Papers Relating to the American Association, Middlesboro, Kentucky," Special Collections, University of Kentucky.

40. Based upon information contained in the prospectus to investors put out by the American Association around 1890, Special Collections, University of Kentucky.

41. Ibid.; also, see the "Annual Report of the Inspector of Mines," Kentucky Department of Mines, 1888, 38.

42. Letter to investors from the Log Mountain Coal, Coke and Timber Company, dated 1891, Special Collections, University of Kentucky.

43. Up to this point, data concerning the growth of a capital labor relation has been superficial in that attention has has been centered upon investments and capital and not labor. More data will be presented on labor in the following chapter.

44. Based on a map issued by the Immigration and Industrialization Department of the L & N Railroad dated 1905. Louisville & Nashville Railroad Company Papers, University Archives and Records Center, University of Louisville.

45. "Kentucky Coal Fields," Manufacturer's Record: A Weekly Southern Industrial, Railroad and Financial Newpaper, September 24, 1908, 48.

46. Ibid.

47. "Wisconsin Steel Development," Manufacturer's Record, 1910.

48. Cited in Harry Caudill, Night Comes to the Cumberlands, 65.

49. Letter from H. Walters to Morgan Jones, dated October 31, 1904, File # 208, L & N Company Papers, University Archives and Records Center, University of Louisville.

50. Anna Rochester, Labor and Coal, (New York: International Publishers, 1931); also Anna Rochester, "Who Owns Harlan County Mines?" in Harlan Miners Speak, 1931.

51. Calculated from "Annual Report of the Inspector of Mines," respective years.

Chapter Four: THE STRUCTURE OF THE WORKING-CLASS IN EASTERN KENTUCKY, 1870-1930

As noted in the previous chapter, from the Civil War until World War I, several Eastern Kentucky counties were characterized by a period of intense capital investment. The American Association Ltd. purchased over 85,000 acres in Bell County and additional land across the border in Tennessee by 1890. Between 1900 and 1910, the Kentenia Corporation acquired over 100,000 acres in Harlan County. Morgan-McCormic interests under the Wisconsin Steel and Wallins Creek Coal Company also acquired substantial acreage in Harlan County. In nearby Leslie County, Henry Ford allegedly bought over one-half of that county's acreage. And Consolidated Coal was firmly established in Letcher County by 1913.

Along with the intensification of capital investments, there was a corresponding growth of working-class activities. An analysis of this growth of labor, in the context of capital expansion, is a crucial task for understanding class relations in the area. Placing the working-class in the context of capital serves to provide a framework for examining how the structure of labor is influenced by the flow of capital.[1] It aids in understanding how everyday work and community life is constrained and limited by the activities of bosses and owners in their search for capital accumulation. In what follows, a brief statistical summary of the growth of the working-class in selected Eastern Kentucky counties is presented.[2]

Agricultural Sector

Prior to the penetration of outside capital investments into Eastern Kentucky counties, farmers formed the largest group of Independent Commodity Producers (see chapter two). Satisfaction of all essential material needs was either directly or indirectly linked to the activities of these farmers and their families. In addition to their obvious importance in food production, farmers performed an impressive variety of other services. The farmers' position in lumber and coal production, for instance, was formidable because of their control over resources (land). In addition, the handles and other wooden parts of agricultural implements were often worked by local farmers and artisans with a skill that could impress even some excellent modern craftsmen. Farmers and their families also produced much of their own furniture and sold surplus products in the local market. Then, there was the whole aray of activities that were centered in the household and under the control of the farmer's wife. Food processing and preservation, clothing and soap manufacture are some obvious examples of household production.

With the dominance of capital interests, the agriculture sector remained important as a part of the industrial structure of the region. The role of farmers, however, changed in many important respects. To be sure, some agricultural producers did maintain themselves, perhaps even prospered with the growth of new markets for their goods. But, no longer did the farmer play a central part in local economic life. Often, the activity of the farmer was either reduced to that of a manager or share-cropper on a farm that he previously owned or was transformed into a wage laborer in the mine and forest industries. Put differently, instead of providing the products essential for the survival of the local economy, farmers provided much of the land and labor essential for the accumulation of capital by these new investors. And with the establishment of company stores, or commissaries as they were called, the activities of the farmers' wives and children were often taken out of the household (in the name of convenience, purity, and fashion) and sold to the family through a network of capital owned and operated enterprises.

The transformation of agriculture in Eastern Kentucky cannot be seen at first glance from the agricultural statistics. As Table Five indicates, there was no appreciable decline in the number of farms in Bell, Carter, Harlan, Letcher, Perry or Rowan counties between 1870 and 1930.[3] The figures, in fact, demonstrate the opposite: namely, that the number of farms actually increased.

In Carter County, for instance, the number of farms rose from 1,013 in 1870 to 2,394 in 1930. And while Harlan County shows no appreciable change between 1870 and 1930, it should be borne in mind that between 1870 and 1900 the number of farms increased from 745 to 1,674.

TABLE FIVE: Number of Farms in Selected Eastern Kentucky Counties, 1870-1930

	Bell	Carter	Harlan	Letcher	Perry	Rowan
1870	n.a.	1013	745	701	735	419
1880	796	1326	847	1022	816	539
1890	739	1616	1033	1120	985	726
1900	1420	2738	1674	1487	1347	1112
1910	1349	1513	1593	1596	1716	1179
1920	1649	2644	1452	1601	2336	1303
1930	1302	2394	786	1674	2087	1261

From this data alone, it might appear that the agricultural sector was largely unaffected by the changes brought about in conjunction with the inflow of capital. However, to better understand the transformation that was taking place in the agricultural sector, it is necessary to go beyond these figures by placing them in the context of several other, closely related, factors. Then the census statistics begin to take on a clearer meaning.

One factor worth consideration involves the impact that population growth has on the data in Table Five. The rate of population growth between 1870 and 1930 was very great in some parts of Eastern Kentucky. Bell County, for instance, increased from 3,373 in 1870 to over 30,000 in 1930. Similarly, Carter County grew from 7,509 to 28,839 during the same period. Harlan County rose from a mere 4,415 souls to 64,557 in 1930; Letcher County went from 4,605 to 35,702; Perry County population increased from a meager 2,991 in 1870 to 11,000 in 1930.[4] While much of this population increase can be attributed to in-migration of laborers who settled in towns, an estimate of the number of farms as a percentage of the population offers one indication of the relative decline of agriculture--see Table Six.[5] Note that the coal counties are particularly influenced and this is where land monopolization was at its highest.

Another indication that farmers were particularly hard hit at the time of increased capital investments can be seen in data regarding the size of farms. Between 1870 and 1930, the average farm size in six Eastern Kentucky counties declined from 212.7 acres to 72.5 acres. While this trend was more pronounced in the coal counties where capital investments and land monopolization was heaviest, other counties also show a significant decline in average farm size.[6] As Table Seven incates, Bell County farms

TABLE SIX: Number of Farms as a Percent of Population in Selected Eastern Kentucky Counties, 1870-1930

	Bell	Carter	Harlan	Letcher	Perry	Rowan
1870	n.a.	13.5	16.8	15.2	17.2	14.0
1880	13.2	10.7	16.0	15.4	14.5	12.2
1890	7.1	9.4	16.6	16.2	15.5	18.1
1900	9.0	13.5	17.0	16.2	16.2	13.4
1910	4.7	6.8	15.0	15.0	15.2	12.4
1920	4.8	11.7	4.6	6.5	8.9	13.7
1930	3.3	8.3	1.2	4.6	4.2	11.5

TABLE SEVEN: Average Farm Size in Selected Eastern Kentucky Counties, 1880-1930

(acres)

	Bell	Carter	Harlan	Letcher	Perry	Rowan
1880	190	123	260	250	291	162
1890	192	110	206	186	227	166
1900	101	77	107	109	128	100
1910	73	74	102	97	102	109
1920	55	83	93	83	105	101
1930	46	82	74	66	65	103

averaged 190 acres in 1880 but by 1930 the average had fallen to only 45.8 acres. Harlan County farm size dropped from an average of 260 acres to less than 74; Letcher County farms fell from 250 to 65.5 acres. And in Perry County, average farm size decreased from 291 acres in 1880 to less than 65 acres in 1930. Rowan County farm size declined from 162 to 103 acres.

These data clearly suggest that agriculture in the region was in a steady decline from 1870 to 1930. An increasingly smaller portion of the population was working on farms which were shrinking in size. Indeed, not only was agriculture declining in the context of population growth and farm size, but, in four of the six counties, even the absolute number of acres in farms underwent a decline. Bell County farm acreage, for instance, decreased from 151,250 acres in 1880 to less than 60,000 acres in 1930. Harlan County farm acreage dropped from 220,000 to 57,850 acres and Letcher county figures fell from 255,500 to 57,850 acres. Outside the coalfield, in Carter and Rowan counties, there was an increase in the number of acres in farms but the increment was not all that great.[7]

The trend toward decreased farm size is the opposite of what might be expected as a response to industrialization. From studies of other areas and countries, one might expect increased farm size and increased mechanization and consolidation of farms. Smaller farms would be consolidated into larger units. Why, then, did farms decrease in size in Eastern Kentucky during a period of rapid industrialization? Two important reasons should be pointed out. First, capital investments went into industry, not agriculture. The area itself was not well suited to large-scale farming at the time and investors' interests rested in the timber, coal, iron and other resources of the area. Many farmers sold large parts of their land, which was not farmed extensively anyway, such as hillsides. This land, therefore, was, for statistical purposes, taken out of agricultural use. This is an important point in that it suggests that the level of farming may not have declined much in absolute terms. For our purposes, however, the trend toward the relative decline of farming and the transfer of large tracts of resources to capital interests is the crucial point. Second, the decrease in farm size is partially a reflection of the way that farm was defined in the census materials. According to the census, a farm consisted of a single tract, or collection of separate tracts, that was managed by one person or with the assistance of family members or hired hands. The farm had to exceed three acres.[8] What this meant is that "when a landowner has one or more tenants, renters, croppers, or managers, the land operated by each is considered a farm."[9] Given a possible rise of non-owner operated farming, the probability of the simultaneous decrease in farm size and consolidation of land tracts becomes more understandable.

Along with the decline in the number of farms as a percentage of the population and the decreased farm size, significant changes developed in patterns of ownership. That is, the number of non-owner operated farms increased as industrial capital entered the region. Among the non-owner operated farms, there are three important categories used in the Census Data.[10] First are the manager operated farms. While this form of farm tenure would increase in frequency in later years, it was rarely found in Eastern Kentucky between 1870 and 1930. Second was the cash tenant farmer. This group was larger than the first but not nearly as large as the third group. Together, the first two categories of farmers rarely amounted to a quarter of the total non-owner farms. The third involved the labor of tenants who operated on a share basis. Sharecroppers were by far the most common in the non-owner operated farm category and regularly constituted over three quarters of the entire group.

Table Eight offers an estimate of the degree of non-owner operated farming in six Eastern Kentucky counties.[11] Note that 1870 farm tenure data were not available. Also note the historical context. Following the Civil War one would expect to find unusually high levels of non-owner operated farming throughout the south. In an attempt to reconstruct productive social relations in agriculture, former slaves and others with little opportunity for alternative

TABLE EIGHT: Non-Owner Operated Farms as a Percent of Total Farms for Selected Eastern Kentucky Counties, 1880-1930

	Bell	Carter	Harlan	Letcher	Perry	Rowan
1880	20	34	26	17	24	22
1890	24	28	33	28	24	29
1900	55	41	45	38	35	28
1910	55	38	58	40	39	25
1920	48	26	53	33	31	20
1930	47	28	44	34	36	26

employment farmed small portions of old plantations with former slave masters. As the 1870 census cautioned, "the plantations of the old slave States are squatted all over by the former slaves, who hold small portions of the soil, often very loosely determined as to extent, under almost all varieties of tenure."[12] While this factor does not play as significant a role in Eastern Kentucky as in other areas of the South, it is worthy of mention in that one would expect abnormally high degrees of non-owner operated farming following the war and continuing up till 1880 at least (when our data begins). However, as Table Eight indicates, this was not the case in Eastern Kentucky. In fact, the rise of non-owner operated farming seems more closely related to the rise of capitalism than to the decline of the pre-Civil War economy.

Between 1890 and 1900, when Bell County was experiencing the investment boom begun by the American Association, non-owner operated farming increased from twenty-four percent of the total farms to over fifty-five percent. Similarly, in Harlan County, non-owner operated farms increased in association with the rise of capital investments. In 1880, the number of non-owner operated farms rested at slightly over a quarter of the total farms. By 1890, that figure had risen to a third and by 1910 it approached three fifths. Perry and Letcher county estimates of non-owner operated farms follow similar patterns, though not as exaggerated. Only Carter and Rowan counties had less than thirty percent of the total farms operated by non-owners in 1930. Also note that in these counties non-owner operated farming declined after 1910 when capital interests were more secure and the laboring population became more permanent.

Taken together, these tables show a steady decline in the importance of the agricultural sector and a loss of direct control over production by many independent commodity producers. From the standpoint of capital, the importance of the agricultural producer rested not so much on their capacity to produce goods for the local economy but rather in their control over resources and in their potential as a source of labor for the new mine and forest industries. Accordingly, the displacement of independent producers in agriculture developed hand in hand with the growth of capitalist enterprise.

Producers 'freed' from agricultural production provided labor recruits needed in the new economy. Of course, a great deal of imported labor helped fill the ranks of the industrial army. But there is a dearth of information on the proportion of the population which consisted of in-migrants and displaced farmers and other Independent Commodity Producers for Kentucky.[13] The data that does exist indicates that those who did migrate into Eastern Kentucky were not, in large measure, foreign-born, black or oriental. Instead, they consisted of white, native-born Americans.[14] The point, however, is that the transformation of agriculture was a crucial part of the development of industrial class relations in Eastern Kentucky. Producers were 'freed' or displaced to some degree; and, the local population coupled with in-migrants were increasingly dependent upon a capitalistic labor market for their means of subsistence.

Resource Sector

There are three important points to consider when examining the growth of a working-class in Eastern Kentucky. First, the corporations that operated in the region were often involved in a wide variety of resource extraction operations. Corporate names frequently revealed their diversity of interests. Examples can be found in Figure Two or in the Tax Lists.[15] Second, data pertaining to the structure of labor in timber, and, in some cases, in coal are hard to come by, particularly at the county level. Besides the steady migration of many resource sector workers from coalfield to coalfield or from forest to forest, the data collection requirements of corporations were not very rigorous. Accordingly, the data on coal was derived from a variety of sources and the information on timber is particularly difficult to come by. Third, the resource base was more pronounced in some counties than in others. Bell, Harlan, Letcher, and Perry counties, for instance, were heavily rooted in timber and, more importantly, in the coal industry. Carter and Rowan counties, on the other hand, were more firmly rooted in the manufacture of fire-clay into firebricks. This illustrates a crucial point: All Eastern Kentucky, or Central Appalachia for that matter, cannot be treated as one big coalfield. It is very easy to overlook the diversity of the region and thereby make inaccurate generalizations.[16] For this reason, the discussion on the resource sector concentrates on the southeastern counties where coal was dominant. In a later section of this chapter, manufacturing activities in Carter and Rowan counties will receive some attention.

Prior to the era of large capital investments in Eastern Kentucky, the importance of resource extraction activities was not very significant. Loggers and miners formed only a very small portion of the local population. The resource extraction activities of this period were usually performed by independent farmers who worked during slack times of the year. These producers were not dependent upon what thet earned from their resource industry for survival. What incomes they derived from their work in coal or timber supplemented an already meager income. Work in the resource sector, in other words, was predominantly carried on outside the CMP.

Around the turn of the century, significant changes were taking place in the development of a working-class in the coal industry in the region. Bell County, where the American Association established dominance, was the first of the six counties to show the changes that would soon develop elsewhere. Between 1900 and 1910, the number of coal miners in Bell County increased dramatically from only 304 to almost 3,200. By 1910, the coal companies had acquired substantial land in Harlan, Letcher, and Perry counties and were in the process of building the coal extraction facilities necessary for future operations.. The Louisville and Nashville Railroad was less than two years away.

Between 1910 and 1930, the development of a working-class in the coal counties was well underway. As Table Nine indicates,[17] Bell County employees increased to 4,079 in 1920 and then declined to 3,276 in 1930. In Harlan County, the number of mine employees rose from virtually nothing in 1910 to7,391 in 1920 and 11,920 in 1930. Similar developments can be seen in Letcher and Perry counties where coal mine employment exceeded five thousand each in 1930.

TABLE NINE: Coal Mine Employees in Selected Eastern Kentucky Counties, 1870-1930

	Bell	Carter	Harlan	Letcher	Perry	Rowan
1870	--	--	--	--	--	--
1880	--	--	--	--	--	--
1890	--	--	--	--	--	--
1900	304	274	--	--	--	--
1910	3197	116	--	--	--	--
1920	4079	301	7391	3989	4064	--
1930	3276	--	11920	5884	5088	--

The large number of employees working directly for the coal industry in Bell, Harlan, Letcher, and Perry counties was a reflection of the coal operators' hegemony over local affairs. Not only did the corporate interests possess a monopoly over the region's productive resources but they also enjoyed a situation in which a large proportion of the county population was dependent upon them for employment--a job monopoly. Anyone or anything that threatened the land monopoly, the employers' profits and/or the employers' dominant position represented a potential threat to the livelihood of the working population. More than once, this situation would turn upon miners as operators sought higher levels of profit.

The central place of miners in the working-class in Southeastern Kentucky is reflected in a cursory look at their numbers as a percent of the local population[18] As Table Ten shows, mine employees in coal counties totalled over twelve percent of the population in Bell County in 1920. In the same year, miners constituted over twenty-three percent of the Harlan County population and over sixteen percent in both Letcher and Perry Counties. By 1930, the number of coal miners as a percent of the local population declined slightly but the figures are still impressive. If each mine employee supported only three dependents, between thirty-four and eighty percent of the local population was directly dependent upon coal operators for their means of subsistence. While only speculative, this index of dependency is likely a very conservative estimate in that 1) secondary wage earners (boys and women) did not account for a very large portion of the coal mine employment, and 2) families frequently had more than four members.

TABLE TEN: Coal Miners as a Percent of Population in Select Counties

	Bell	Harlan	Letcher	Perry
1910	11.2	--	--	--
1920	12.5	23.0	16.0	15.6
1930	8.5	18.5	16.5	12.1

A better indication of the important role played by coal miners in Southeastern Kentucky can be found in the 1930 Population Census which, for the first time, detailed, by county, the occupational categories of all gainfully employed workers.[19] When male mine employees are calculated as a percent of all male gainfully employed workers, the dependence of wage earners upon operators for their means of subsistence becomes apparent.[20] In 1930, for instance, Bell County miners formed roughly forty-four percent of the gainfully employed male workforce. In other counties, figures were even higher. Perry County miners totalled over fifty-three percent of the male workforce; Letcher County coal mine employees constituted sixty-five percent and, in Harlan County, the coal operators employed seventy-five percent of the male labor force.[21]

For the southeastern counties, then, these data clearly suggest that the resource sector in general and the coal industry in particular was rapidly assuming a dominant place in the structure of labor, and industry, from the turn of the century until 1930. At the time when agricultural producers were displaced, the resource sector not only filled the gap in an abstract economic sense, but also, provided an excellent opportunity for jobs to those looking for a place to start a new life. And the transformation of pre-capitalist producers into mine employees coupled with the entry of new recruits for the local labor market signified important steps toward the fuller consolidation of capitalist social-class relations.

Along with the development of a large working-class and the concentration of workers in the resource sector of the southeastern counties, significant changes developed in the character of firms dominating economic life. Unlike the farmer-miner of the pre-1860 period, the capital interests which had earlier established a resource monopoly in the area typically operated on a scale unimaginable in previous times. In 1920, three corporations, the Wisconsin Steel Company, Black Mountain Corporation and United States Coal and Coke, produced over forty-eight percent of all coal produced in Harlan County. Similarly, Consolidated Coal Corporation alone produced forty-eight percent of the Letcher County coal produced in 1920.[22] Thus, despite the fact that there were seventy-five coal companies in Harlan County at the time and twenty-eight in Letcher, a large amount of production, and thereby a large percentage of the working-class, was concentrated in a small number of firms.

Notwithstanding the dramatic inequality of size among coal companies, the increasing concentration of workers in larger and larger firms can be seen in an examination of the average number of employees per coal company.[23] As Table Eleven indicates, the average number of employees/coal firm increased from a 1910 average of eighty-two in Bell County to a four county average of over 225 in 1930. The concentration of investments and production, in a word, also meant the concentration of working-class members in fewer and fewer large corporations. For instance, as the number of Harlan County coal employees/firm increased from 98.5 in 1920 to over 300 in 1930, the number of coal companies decreased from 75 to 38. And while Letcher County coal miners/firm rose from 142.5 in 1920 to 309.7 in 1930, operating coal companies decreased in number from 28 to 19. Again, in Perry County, the number of coal companies decreased from 50 in 1920 to 31 in 1930 as the average number of workers/coal firm increased from 81.3 to 164.2.

TABLE ELEVEN: Estimate of Average Number of Employees Per Coal Company in Selected Eastern Kentucky Counties, 1910-1930

	Bell	Harlan	Letcher	Perry
1910	81.9	--	--	--
1920	74.7	98.5	142.5	81.3
1930	121.3	313.7	309.7	164.2

Taken together, these tables show a rapid increase in the number of coal miners in selected southeastern counties from around the turn of the century. From the standpoint of the local population, these developments meant the rise to dominance of capitalist interests which often had little more in mind than the cheapest possible mode of resource extraction and exploitation of labor. It also meant the emergence of a new set of social-economic relationships in which 1) a significant portion of the population was transformed into wage labor (through displacement and in-migration) and 2) much of the local economic life was centered around one major industry--coal. In fact, by 1930, there were well over 52,000 new wage earners in Bell, Harlan, Letcher and Perry counties. Of these, 27,000 (over half) were directly dependent upon their work at coal company properties for their means of subsistence. This underlines the central role of coal for the region's social-economic development and for the shaping of working-class relations and community life.

To understand the development of work, culture, and politics in these areas, then, it is necessary to pay careful attention to the coal industry. Indeed, coal miners were so central to the working-class of some areas that any attempt to understand social and cultural life without a close look at coal is futile.

Manufacturing Sector

The penetration of rail links into Eastern Kentucky coupled with the development of a coal industry and the growth of a labor surplus worked hand in hand with capitalist expansion into the manufacturing sector and thus to the further expansion of working-class activities. From the standpoint of capital, the impediments to economic development were few and the economic potential for profit was lucrative. Not only was the resource availability excellent, but, a reliable labor supply had been developed in Carter and Rowan counties from their work in the iron industry which was in a state of decline. As early as 1890 in Bell County, the American Association emphasized their dependable labor supply in their bids to entice manufacturing interests from other areas.[24] Their emphasis, which was placed upon a "suitable labor supply" and coal-timber-iron related manufactories, fit in neatly with their ambitions to prosper as the county's landlord. Around 1900-5, the Kentucky Public Documents (Kentucky Geological Survey) emphasized the excellent fire-clay and the favorable labor conditions in the northeastern portion of the state:

> There are two reasons why every possible effort should be made to promote the development of our clay resources--one sociological and the other purely commercial;... first, the well settled fact that clay working communities are among the most stable of those that are made up mostly of 'laboring' classes with the further fact that since a large part of the 'labor' used need have only simple skill, readily acquired, clay working plants would give employment to a numerically important element of our population... and, second, clay working industry will call for a greater development of our coal fields. (25)

This is not to say, however, that government agencies pioneered the thrust to develop the clay industry. As the report later stated, "Kentucky affords the highest quality flint fire-clay known in this country. Practically all known areas of the famous Carter Clay have been taken up by the firebrick companies."[26]

In terms of overall importance, the manufacturing sector in Eastern Kentucky must be considered as secondary to the resource sector. The number of wage earners and the amount of capital invested in manufacturing was insignificant when compared to coal employment and investments. In 1930, for instance, there were more coal mine employees in Harlan County (over 11,000) than there were manufacturing workers in Bell, Carter, Harlan, Letcher, Perry, and Rowan counties combined (4,000).[27] Also, consider that a great deal of the region's manufacturing activitiy was closely dependent upon resource extraction activities. Some examples of resource based manufacturing activities included iron and steel making, coke production, woodprocessing, and firebrick making. These industries were all central, at one time or another, to the region's manufacturing sector and therefore could be cited as reason for the secondary influence of this sector on social-economic development.

Nevertheless, when one analyzes capitalist development, it is not always good sociology to merely focus on one particular sector because of its overall importance. For Eastern Kentucky, this is especially important because many counties, which were not dependent upon coal operators for jobs, followed a path to development which was shaped, in large measure, by manufacturing interests. While this thesis concentrates mainly on coal and labor in the coal industry, this theme is important in that there is frequently a dearth of good social-historical analysis of specific localities other than coal communities.

Aside from the years running from the early 1800's to about 1875 in the iron furnaces in Carter and Greenup counties, the pre-1900 period was characterized by an absence of a working-class in the manufacturing sector. In 1880, only Carter County had any trace of a working-class and it was linked with iron production.[28] In 1900, independent commodity producers were still important in many manufactories. Census data, for instance, shows that Harlan, Letcher and Perry counties all had more manufacturing firms in operation than wage workers employed in 1900.[29] That's less than an average of one worker per firm. Barring any major oversights by government statisticans, this clearly indicates that manufacturing activity was structured in these counties in such a way that owners, perhaps with family members, performed all essential productive activity. They operated, in a word, outside the CMP.

The central importance of pre-capitalist producers, however, was soon diminished.[30] As Table Twelve indicates, there were over 750 wage earners in the manufacturing sector in Bell County by 1900. Similarly, Carter and Rowan counties had 225 and 264 respectively. And although it is not as dramatic as changes in the resource sector, Table Twelve dmonstrates a steady increase in the number of manufacturing workers in all six counties. Between 1890 and 1930, the number of wage earners in the six county area increased from 483 to almost 3,000.

TABLE TWELVE: Manufacturing Sector Wage Earners in Selected Eastern Kentucky Counties, 1870-1930*

	Bell	Carter	Harlan	Letcher	Perry	Rowan
1870	--	175	--	--	--	--
1880	--	340	--	--	--	--
1890	151	194	19	--	--	122
1900	771	255	7	16	8	164
1920	565	1093	162	100	228	562
1930	796	998	326	89	274	408

* data for 1910, by county, was not available.

As the number of wage earners increased and the central position of Independent Commodity Producers was undermined, significant changes developed in the number and character of manufacturing firms operating in the region. The number of firms, for instance, steadily decreased in number in all six counties. As Table Thirteen clearly shows,[31] between 1900 and 1930 the number of firms in Bell, Carter, Harlan, Letcher, Perry, and Rowan counties declined from over 190 to less than 30. The most impressive changes can be found between 1920 and 1930 when firms decreased in number from 136 to only 90.

TABLE THIRTEEN: Number of Manufactories in Selected Eastern Kentucky Counties, 1900-1930*

	Bell	Carter	Harlan	Letcher	Perry	Rowan	Total
1900	42	48	27	21	19	35	192
1920	45	21	24	24	24	22	136
1930	24	10	15	14	18	9	90

* data for 1910, by county, was not available

A result of these two trends wherein workers increased and firms decreased in numbers was the concentration of workers in fewer and larger firms. Table Fourteen[32] offers an estimate of the average number of manufacturing wage earners per firm in selected counties from 1900 to 1930. The least dramatic changes can be found in Harlan, Letcher, and Perry counties where coal interests held a firm monopoly over economic life. While the number of manufacturing workers/firm was less than one in these counties in 1900, the 1930 figure had jumped only to 6.35 in Letcher, 15.2 in Perry and 21.7 in Harlan counties. With so few workers/firm, one is hard put to even talk about them in terms of capitalistic social class relations. In Bell County, however, the average number of workers/firm increased from 18.4 in 1900 to 33.2 in 1930. The greater importance of manufacturing in this coal county was a reflection of the more diverse interests of the American Association during the period when the industrial structure was in the planning stage. The most impressive changes, from the standpoint of statistics, can be found in Carter County where the average number of workers/manufacturing firm rose from 5.3 in 1900 to over 52 in 1920 and then to 100 in 1930. The higher concentration of workers/firm in Carter County was closely linked with the rise to dominance of clay refractories which played an important part in economic development as early as 1895 when the first firebrick plant was constructed in Olive Hill. Finally, Rowan County followed the Carter County pattern in that the concentration of workers/manufacturing firm rose from an average of 17.4 in 1900 to 18.4 in 1920 and then to 45.3 in 1930. While the clay works were not as central to Rowan as they were to Carter County, they were not an insignificant factor as several plants located there, one employing over 300 workers.

TABLE FOURTEEN: Average Number of Manufacturing Wage Earners Per Firm in Selected Eastern Kentucky Counties, 1900-1930

	Bell	Carter	Harlan	Letcher	Perry	Rowan
1900	18	5	.25	.76	.42	17
1920	13	52	7	4	9	18
1930	33	100	22	6	15	45

Conclusions

What is important in the tables presented above is not so much the exact statistical figures as the trends they describe. Prior to 1910, census statistics do not offer a great deal of information. The mining census, for instance, places coal output from these eastern counties under the heading "farmers' diggings." The language used may sound derrogatory, as if production never really took place in the mountains until the coming of the giant corporation. But, it is indicative of the mode of production which characterized everyday life for a long period.

Nevertheless, it was precisely in this pre-1900 period in which significant capitalistic developments were taking place in the coalfields and in the firebrick counties. On the one side of the development, the productive resources--the land--was transferred into the hands of those representing industrial capital and preparations for large-scale operations were planned or actually commenced. On the other side, a process wherein the pre-capialist modes of production declining in relative importance assumed importance. Independent farming as a way of making a living declined by almost every statistical indicator used.

Between 1910 and 1930, these changes were clearly reflected in census statistics. Land ownership patterns assumed very monopolistic forms as over half of the land and almost all of the resources were concentrated in the hands of a few giant corporations. The growth of a working-class was correspondingly both dramatic and rapid as total wage earners in the six county area exceeded 52,500 by 1930. Similarly, the average farm size in 1930 was merely thirty-four percent of the 1880 average. The level of non-owner operated farms increased to around half in some southeastern counties although there was a slight reduction by 1930. And the percent of the population directly dependent upon independent farming for subsistence declined from probably over seventy-five percent in 1870 to less than twenty percent in 1930.

Note that the manufacturing sector was not selected for special attention in this chapter merely on the basis of numbers. As Table Fifteen indicates,[33] other sectors had, at one time or another, more wage earners than manufacturing. What is important about manufacturing as well as the resource sector is their productive qualities and their importance in social control. For one thing, it was in these two sectors that the commodities which generated income and wealth for the region was produced. This makes manufacturing and resource industry special in that the other sectors, in many important ways, rested upon them. For another thing, companies in the transportation and communication, trade and service sectors were not only dependent upon but often owned by resource and manufacturing interests. Railroads in Bell County, for instance, were owned in part by the American Association Ltd.. Similarly, stores, motels, resorts, parks, et. cetera. were owned by the Middlesboro Land Company and the Cumberland Gap Park Company which, in turn, were owned by the American Association. Other coal companies followed similar patters as company stores and other coal interests owned enterprises were commonplace. And even in Carter and Rowan counties where the coal town boom was absent, stores and railroads were often controlled, in some degree, by manufacturing interests (mostly Firebrick Companies). The point is that it is necessary to start with the dynamic sectors and with the productive labor found in them.

One final point. Women have been little mentioned. The reason for this apparent neglect can be found in Table Fifteen.

TABLE FIFTEEN: Structure of the Working-Class by Economic Sector in Selected Eastern Kentucky Counties, 1930

(men/women)

	Bell	Carter	Harlan	Letcher	Perry	Rowan
Resource	1470/21	807/2	11825/53	5402/29	5504/26	172/0
Mgf.	1067/374	1071/31	688/50	425/6	326/37	337/8
Trans. & Comm.	895/58	333/22	1307/49	438/20	932/37	131/11
Service	810/867	246/317	1033/1180	411/455	608/837	185/139
Trade	919/209	356/68	1173/198	436/53	641/133	153/23

Women played no direct part in the resource extraction sector. Except in Bell County where clothing factories were in operation in 1917, a similar situation existed in manufacturing. After 1930, the importance of women and girls would grow as more clothing mills and runaway shops provided employment in manufacture throughout the region. But before 1930, women were largely concentrated in service work in hotels, boarding houses, food establishments, laundaries, and in domestic and personal work. As Table Fifteen indicates, over seventy percent of the female workforce was employed in the service sector. And if employees from the trade sector are added (workers at banks, insurance companies, automobile agencies and other wholesale and retail outlets), one can account for over eighty-four percent of the women workforce.

Notes

1. Note that working-class culture and life are not, in the narrow sense, determined by the practices of management and capitalists. The two are in constant opposition and cannot be understood with any unilateral notion of causality. To be sure, working-class culture and life was contrained, restricted and structured by management and capital in many important ways. But, the production of the working-class can best be understood as a continuous response to, not strongly determined by, the flow of capital and the practices of management.

2. Statistics presented in this chapter are frequently derived from the Agricultural, Mining, Manufacturing and Population Censuses published every ten years by the Bureau of the Census. Ideally, occupational data would have served well in many instances but such data, by county, was not available until 1930.

3. Sources: _Industry and Wealth_, Ninth Census of the U.S., 1870, Table VII; _Statistics of Agriculture_, Tenth Census of the U.S., 1880, Table V; _Statistics of Agriculture_, Eleventh Census of the U.S., 1890, Table 6; _Agriculture_, Twelfth Census of the U.S., 1902, Part I, Table 19; _Agriculture_, Thirteenth Census of the U.S., 1910, Volume IV, Table 2; _Agriculture_, Fourteenth Census of the U.S., 1920, Volume VI, Part 2, County Table I; _Agriculture_, Fifteenth Census of the U.S., 1930, Volume I, Part 1, "The Southern States," County Table I.

4. _Population_, Twelfth Census of the U.S., 1900, Volume I, Part I, Table 4; _Population_, Thirteenth Census of the U.S., 1910, Volume II, Table 1; _Population_, Fourteenth Census of the U.S., 1920, Volume III, Table 9; _Population_, Fifteenth Census of the U.S., 1930, Volume III, Part 1, Table 11.

5. Calculated from Agricultural Census data for respective years. See _op. cit._

6. Calculated from _Ibid_.

7. These figures were calculated by multiplying the number of farms per county times the average farm size. Data for these computations can be found in the Tables in this section.

8. <u>Agriculture</u>, Fourteenth Census of the U.S., 1920, see explanatory remarks next to Table 2.

9. <u>Ibid</u>.

10. Tenure categories changed slightly from year to year. These remained the most important and consistently used headings.

11. Sources: <u>Industry and Wealth</u>, 1870, Table VII; <u>Agriculture</u>, 1880, Table V; <u>Statistics of Agriculture</u>, 1890, Table 5; <u>Statistics of Agriculture</u>, 1902, Table 19; <u>Agriculture</u>, 1910, Table 2; <u>Agriculture</u>, 1920, County Table 1; <u>Agriculture</u>, 1930, County Table 1.

12. <u>Industry and Wealth</u>, Ninth Census of the U.S., 1870, 72.

13. In West Virginia, data on the social origins of miners in the early period can be found in the Mine Inspector Reports for that state. See Kenneth Bailey, "A Judicious Mixture," <u>West Virginia History</u>, Volume 34, Number 2 (January 1973).

14. see Population Censuses for respective years.

15. Names of corporate land owners can be found in the County Tax Lists, sometimes called "County TAx Assessor's Books," which are located in the State Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.

16. Many Appalachian studies fall into a mode of generalization wherin coal becomes the only productive activity worthy of attention. For instance, Brit Hume, in <u>Death and the Mines</u>, writes about those miners displaced by technology in the fifties: "Out of work and out of luck, there was little they could do, for mining remained the region's only industry " (p. 24). While there is obviously something to such statements, they overlook the regional diversity of economic activity. It leads one to overlook the diversity between areas with different economic basis and also the diversity of economic activity within a particular community.

17. Sources: <u>Industry and Wealth</u>, 1870, Table XV; <u>Mining Industries</u>, Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Table 29; <u>Report on Mineral Industries</u>, Eleventh Census of the U.S., 1890, 381-384; <u>Mineral Resources</u>, 1900-1930, (yearly publication of the Department of the Interior, later put out by the Department of Commerce), relevant data can be found in respective years under "Kentucky" and "Coal."

18. Calculated from _Mineral Resources_, respective years under "Kentucky" and "Coal."

19. _Population_, Fifteenth Census of the U.S., 1930, Volume III, Part I, 902-911, Table 11.

20. Women played a very small role in the coal industry. For Harlan, Bell, Letcher, and Perry counties, there was a total of 121 females listed as coal employees in 1930. Contrast this to 26,374 male employees.

21. Calculated from the 1930 Population Census, Volume III, Part 1, Table 11.

22. "Annual Report of the Inspector of Mines," Kentucky Department of Mines, 1920.

23. Calculated from the "Annual Report of the Inspector of Mines" and _Mineral Resources_.

24. "American Association Papers," Special Collections, University of Kentucky.

25. "Kentucky Geological Survey: Report on the Progress of the Study for the Years 1904 and 1905," _Kentucky Public Documents_, 1905, 18-19.

26. _Ibid_., 32.

27. Information on the number of wage earners in the manufacturing sector in select counties can be found in Table Twelve.

28. Of the 340 manufacturing wage earners in Carter County in 1880, 320 were employed in the, soon defunct, iron and steel industry.

29. _Manufacturing_, Twelfth Census of the U.S., 1900, Volume VII, Part II, Table 6.

30. Manufacturing Censuses for the respective years.

31. _Ibid._

32. _Ibid_.

33. 1930 Population Census, Volume III, Part II, Table 11.

PART II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LABOR IN THE COAL INDUSTRY

Chapter Five: IDEOLOGY AND LABOR RELATIONS IN THE COAL INDUSTRY IN SOUTHEASTERN KENTUCKY

While the coal industry did not play a prominent role in the development of the northeastern counties of Carter and Rowan, it was clearly significant in the southeastern counties of Bell, Harlan, Letcher and Perry. Indeed, in terms of the coal industry itself, these counties were among the most 'developed' in the world. Harlan County, for instance, boasted production of more than thirteen million tons of coal per year during the 1920's and, in turn, had a labor force that was highly influenced by the structure of the industry. In Lynch by 1930, a single corporation, U.S. Coal and Coke, employed over two thousand miners and owned the largest mine tipple anywhere.[1] Similarly, in Bentham, Wisconsin Steel employed nearly fifteen hundred workers. One local Harlan County historian, J.R. Wood, went to great length to give credit to the coal industry for the benefits it had brought to the area. In Lynch, he wrote, one could find the "most beautiful mining town anywhere" complete with bath houses in which "dirty, grimmy miners" entered and then came out "dressed as any other businessman."[2] By any measure used or any source consulted, one cannot escape the conclusion that the coal industry was the most important factor shaping everyday life in these counties during the early part of the century.

The point, as mentioned earlier, is that for these southeastern counties coal was much more than a physical substance which, at first glance, appears as a thing. Coal, as it was dug, hauled, bought and sold, became a social product--a commodity--which was produced through specific social class relationships. While it may be good natural science to ignore this dimension of coal, it is not good social science or good sociology. Social analysis should aim to uncover the underlying social class relationships embodied in things rather than taking them for granted. In the previous chapters, attention was centered upon the pre-conditions for the emergence of a capitalistic labor market and the subsequent growth of working class activities What follows is an analysis of the general structure of capital-labor relations in the Central Appalachian coalfields in general and Southeastern Kentucky in particular. How was this capital-labor relation structured? How was it perceived by social agents representing capital and labor? The analysis begins in this chapter with an examination of the conflicting interpretations about the nature of working conditions in the industry. In the next chapter, attention will move toward an examination of the 1917-1922 strike period through which the structuring of class relations takes on clearer meaning.

Class Relations in the Coal Industry: Operators' Standpoint

From the earliest days of coal production in the region, coal operators expressed great concern over the problems of labor. Originally, these concerns were focused on the problem of labor scarcity, particularly the scarcity of 'skilled' mine workers. However, as company towns grew and the problem of scarcity diminished in importance, attention soon shifted to problems of militancy and labor stability. By labor stability, employers meant a 'disciplined' labor force in which each man and woman contentedly carried out their task, without question. They also meant a labor force in which workers recognized the value of individual, rather than collective, wage agreements; that is, a non-union labor force. Like many other owners of their day, then, Eastern Kentucky coal operators were vigorous in their support of an open shop policy.

Partly in response to their desire to control the work force under open shop agreements and partly in response to conditions beyond their control, many coal operators went to extraordinary expense to provide facilities for labor. Starting from scratch in previously unindustrialized wilderness, some employers built comfortable towns complete with theaters, parks, hotels, and public bath houses for miners. In some respects, this extra expense to apparently satisfy the needs of miners was well appreciated as labor flocked from the hillsides and hollows and as miners worked hard and long hours 'for the company'--often accepting wage cuts in times of so-called business adversity. Indeed, the hitherto unseen marvels of some of the better company towns must have dazzled many mountain people, encouraging them to leave their old way of life; it must have also worked to lure many outside laborers into the area's coal industry. In other respects, however, these marvels presented unseen dangers. In time, the miners' shiny new houses would become uncared for collections of houses situated so close to the mine tipple that any pretense of proper sanitation, such as clean clothing, neat houses, or proper sewage and water, was hopeless. And even worse, these marvelous company towns would remain in the hands of corporate officials and thereby function as an integral part of a structure of social control which contributed toward the transformation of miners into objects (commodities) of and for the coal company. In an industry characterized by instability, and investors' understandable reluctance to invest in constant capital, the tendency to pick up and then discard labor, like any other component of production, is a formidable problem for labor.

One of the finer company controlled communities was Jenkins, Kentucky. According to company papers, this community was among the finest places anywhere for men to work and live.[3] The coal seams near Jenkins were reported to be thick enough for a miner to stand upright and work in comfort. No props were used on any entries due to the "fine construction of the coal roof" and the mines were about 150 feet above water level which reduced the problem of drainage. Safety, the report claimed, is central to the operation of every mine. Ample clearance was made on the brake side of coal cars for miners and frequent inspections guaranteed safe operations. Indeed, "every precaution conceivable was taken to ensure the safety of the miners."[4]

The town itself was described as a model of civility. Large sums were spent making streets and sidewalks (board) which made it possible to "get around without inconvenience."[5] A Y.M.C.A., a large auditorium (five hundred seats), a moving picture house, two bowling alleys and four pool tables were purchased by the company. Jenkins also boasted such advantages as a news stand, a barber shop, and a shower bath for miners (but not for their wives or families). Miners' houses, company officials claimed, "were the best built anywhere for this purpose."[6] Each house, for instance, had frontand back porches, was plastered within and contained a fireplace. To guarantee good sanitary conditions, rules were enforced to prohibit town residents from keeping hogs and other animals, and garbage pick-up was assurred. Also, a resevoir was located on Pine Mountain where it was fed by clear mountain streams and branches. All in all then, it was a fairly healthy surrounding--

costing only $ 7.50 per month plus a flat rate for the electricity which lighted their houses.[7]

For most operators, this was their image of the average coal miner's community. When miners went out on strike or complained about conditions in their company towns, owners often responded with understandable confusion, anger, and, sometimes, with severe penalties. Local coal operators' associations and national groups developed quickly in response to this perceived 'unreasonable' discontent in general and to the threat of unionization in particular. Frequently, the thoughts and opinions expressed by operators and investors through these organizations were printed in various newspapers and in business journals. These printed statements offer some of the best glimpses of the world views held by operators and management in the coal counties of Southeastern Kentucky during the early part of this century.[8]

One theme frequently found in the writings of coal operators and their representatives involved the quality of working conditions found in company controlled towns. Jenkins, Kentucky, as noted, was often cited by local operators and reporters as a superior place to work and live. But, this positive image of corporate paternalism was generalized to cover the whole of Central Appalachia. Even Cabin Creek, where a savage mine war between miners and operators raged in 1912, was cited as proof that high quality working conditions could best be obtained from corporate paternalism and free enterprise. To emphasize this particular point, the Manufacturers' Record, an influential weekly covering southern business, finance, and railroad affairs, sent Albert Phenis, a reporter, to Cabin Creek for an on-site evaluation of working conditions in 1922. Phenis commenced his article in logical fashion: "FACT OR FICTION .... MARKED IMPROVEMENTS... WHERE UNION ORGANIZERS FAILED TO COERCE."[9]

According to Phenis, the alleged privations and the wretchedness of mining conditions had been exploited in an appeal to public sympathy for the union's cause (UMWA) and in an attempt by sensationalistic presses to make a fast dollar.[10] An accurate picture of the real situation, he believed, was very different from the picture painted by these unreliable sources. An accurate account, in fact, begins with a proper appreciation of the contributions of the coal operators to the region.

> Railroads were built up the creeks and rivers and the coal men did come in and open up the mines, bringing such wealth to the land owners as they have never seen before, and giving employment and a hitherto unknown supply of money to every man who wanted to work. There was contact with the outside world, there was opportunity to visit the cities, in many cases untried adventure to the women and children and even to many of the men, and for the first time there began an acquaintance with the comforts, the conveniences and even the luxuries of civilization. (11)

Workers, Phenis believed, clearly recognized the value of the modern coal corporation. They appreciated their "comfortable, attractive cottages, with garden plots and the free additional use of all the tillable hillside ground they were able to cultivate."[12] Miners, moreover, were "healthy," of "normal development," and of a "pronounced American type." To this staunch group of miners, the corporations have granted, gratis, land for "a great Y.M.C.A. building, an auditorium, and recreation-reading rooms."[13] Swimming pools, tennis courts, bridges and roads are all added to the Phenis list of amenities which prove the virtue of corporate paternalism. And as Mr. Phenis concluded, "... there is little or no actual want today as the appearance of the people and their well-kept flower beckoned homes would seem to indicate."[14]

How, then, did Phenis and others explain labor insurgency? The answer to this question entails two separate but closely related answers. On the one hand, Phenis argued that miners have become lazy and overfed from their resort style of living--at the company's expense. "Piece workers," he claimed, "make all kinds of money--from ten to eighteen dollars per day, so I have been repeatedly told."[15] Moreover, one of the peculiar facts of modern mining, according to Mr. Phenis, was that "these big money-makers" rarely work over three days a week and sometimes no full days at that "although under present conditions of shortage of men in all the newly made open shop mines they could work six full days, if so disposed."[16]

On the other hand, our attention is diverted to external forces as the cause of labor insurgency. More often than not, these forces took the form of either the alien with foreign ideologies, or the union agitator, with the plot to limit American liberties. Native Appalachians, however, were seen to be largely immune from these influences. Phenis wrote:

> The Aaron Burrs among the union organizers have seduced an occassional Blennerhassett among the native... miners; but as a rule the miner cherishes his freedom and doesn't want to be bothered with union restrictions and extractions. Left to himself, given the conditions which he prefers, the miner will produce an enormous quantity of coal.... and he will be contented, happy and prosperous at his work. He will be hospitable, even aimiable, if not 'put upon' (by unions). (17)

Neither argument used to explain labor insurgency was new to Central Appalachian coal interests, or miners. During various crisis periods in the industry, these arguments emerged to assert the admirable character of the captains of industry and to place blame for existing conditions squarely on the shoulders of either the miner or his union. During the 1919 national coal strike, for instance, the Manufacturers' Record quoted a union miner named Mr. Morgan:

> When any miner or miner's committee declares that the average day's wage of the miners ranges from \$ 4.50 to \$ 5.00 a day, he and they know it means that the real miners, men who know the business, expert and experienced miners, of whom there are many, are making \$ 12.50 to \$ 15.00 a day. And that is the class of miner engaged in organizing this strike and pulling it off. They want to make their \$ 62.50 to \$ 75.00 a week and work only five days of six hours each. (18)

The editors, delighted to have found such an enlightened miner, concluded that 1) the strike was unjustified and 2) while a large portion of the miners in 1919 wanted to ignore the UMW strike order, "they lacked the courage and backbone to assert their manhood. They made enemies of millions of Americans for themselves and for all labor unions and doomed themselves to national discredit and doomed their union to national hostility"[19] (see Chapter Six for more on the 1919 strike). Two years later, based upon the reports of southern coal operators, the editors of Manufacturers' Record presented an analysis of the coal situation from the standpoint of labor costs and profits. "War time wages," coupled with "voluntary absenteeism" make mining almost impossible at any price.[20] Throughout the area, "operators claim that it now takes three men to do what two men easily accomplished before the war so that fuel is increased by one third as a result of inefficiency alone."[21] Miners, the report claimed, did not take advantage of opportunities to increase their annual earnings. "They lay off when work is available... and this necessitates carrying more men on the payrolls than are needed." Labor costs, in other words, are one of the largest components of the price of coal and, if the cost to consumers is to go down, labor costs must come down. The report calculated that for every dollar received for coal, the operators put out 68 percent in wages, 12.6 percent in supplies, 10.8 percent for operating expenses and 8.8 percent for general expenses including the salaries for the management and executive officers.[22] From this, one can only conclude that something was certainly amiss in the coal industry. Operators and their representatives believed, sincerely or not, that working conditions were far too generous for the miners of the Central Appalachian region, that union protection allowed workers to 'lay-off' whenever they pleased, and that miners and their union were out to take operators and the public for a ride.[23] These themes can frequently be found in the statements of those representing the business side of the industry on both a regional and a national level.

A second theme frequently found in the writings of coal operators and their representatives involved what might best be called the combined problem of Americanism and the Great Union Conspiracy. Business interests repeatedly pointed out that unionization drives in the mining districts of Central Appalachia often represented alien inspired attempts to dismantle the basic structure of American Democracy, the structure upon which "all civilization rests."[24] Union men were, operators insisted, all too often inspired by undemocratic, un-American ideologies or by what Albert Phenis called the "Karl Marxian hatred of order, religion and God Himself."[25] Unions must be eliminated or made to conform with modern business practices. The open shop was seen as the cornerstone of all American liberties.

Nelle Shumate, a contributor to the WPA materials for Bell County, spoke freely of the "attempts of the so-called reds or communists to gain a foothold among the miners" of that county.[26] And while Thelma King, another local historian, was not critical of the UMWA, she spoke about the National Miners Union and the Progressive Miners Union "which have caused considerable trouble in Bell County by their attempts to organize. They are very radical unions and thought by many to be affiliated with the communists."[27] It was almost universally believed that these radicals represented only outside interests and that local miners were merely duped into compliance. One report in the <u>Manufacturers' Record</u> stated with assurance in 1919 that "there was positive knowledge that funds for stirring up the unrest... were furnished at least in part by Lenine and Trotsky, masquerading as the Russian Government."[28]

According to operators, miners' suffering, if there was any, was not linked to their material living standards; that is, their strikes were not based upon economic need. This industrial warfare represented "rebellion against constituted authority--human and divine."[29] Unionism, at its base level, oppossed all democratic institutions by "making it appear that mobocracy and democracy meant the same thing."[30] Union men, operators claimed, were either blind or motivated by an anti-democratic impulse which was likely the result of their foreign heritage:

> These are the people who are now clamouring for all kinds of revolution in this country, who not only proclaim their desire for sweeping changes, but accompany their manifestos with threats as to what they are going to do if they do not get what they want. As a rule, these disturbers of peace represent the most disorderly elements of the several countries from which they came... How much more rope is America going to give these aliens who are bent on its destruction? (31)

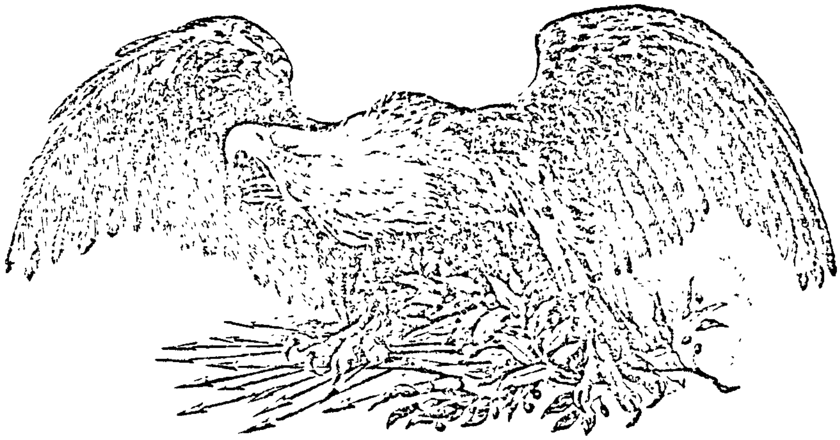
The solution to problems of labor stability, then, is clearly hinted at in this sort of analysis. In an article entitled "The Rattlesnake and the Bolshevist," the editors of the Manufacturers' Record more clearly approached the question concerning what should be done about agitators in the coal industry and radicals in general. The analogy is intended to be instructive. Why, for instance, would you let a bolshevist poison the "nation's life" if you would not let a rattlesnake poison a person's body? You would, of course, eliminate the rattlesnake; so why not the bolshevist? "No man," the editors concluded, "who seeks to overthrow the Government should be allowed to remain in America unless closely guarded in a prison."[32] Or to put it bluntly:

> The bolshevists should be sent back to the country from which they came or imprisoned for life. Never again should they be permitted to put their feet on American soil... This is a land dedicated to human freedom but not to the wild license of those who would destroy this freedom. (33)

If this alien bolshevist was the un-American type which caused much of the industrial turmoil during the early part of the century, who was the American type--what was Americanism? Americanism referred to a type of person who did not question corporate paternalism--that is, did not question the employers' freedom and who rejected all forceful, collectivistic means of social change. Figure Four, for instance, contains a full page ad of the Association to Promote Americanism.[34] In the display, one can easily get an idea of the businessperson's idea of the meaning of the term. Immediately beneath the picture of an eagle is the slogan "America for Americans" in bold print. Note also the platform and the pledge which, in fact, defined Americanism as many perceived it. Perhaps the meaning of the term is more clearly expressed in the following poem:

> This is my work; my blessing not my doom;
> Let me do my work from day to day
> In the field or forest, at the desk or loom,
> In roaring market-place or tranquil room;
> Let me but find it in my heart to say,
> When vagrant wishes beckon me astray,
> "This is my work; my blessing, not my doom;"
> Of all who live, I am the only one by whom
> The work can best be done in the right way.
>
> Then Shall I see it not too great, nor small,
> To suit my spirit and to prove my powers;
> Then shall I cheerful greet the laboring hours,
> And cheerful turn, when the long shadows fall
> At eventide, to play and love and rest,
> Because I know for me my work is best.[35]
>
> --Henry Van Dyke

The way in which operators perceived problems of labor was a crucial material force which helped structure class relations



America for Americans!

At this time when Bolshevism, Radicalism, I. W. W.ism and Anarchy are cropping out in every section of the country, it is necessary for thinking, patriotic men to state freely their attitude, but mere words are not sufficient—concerted action is necessary. For this reason "The Association to Promote Americanism" has been organized.

The Association to Promote Americanism

WE ANNOUNCE THE FOLLOWING PLATFORM:

1. We will promote a spirit of loyalty for United States of America by precept and practice.
2. We will oppose radicalism of every kind, making it the solemn duty of all members to put down any evidence of disloyalty, and to this end we will hold ourselves ready at all times for duty under the supervision of city, county, State and Federal authorities in the maintenance of law and order.
3. We will protect all men and all classes who obey the law, and we will use every effort to bring to justice those who refuse such obedience.
4. We will turn the spotlight of publicity on all organizations, institutions and individuals who, either openly or secretly, seek to undermine our duly constituted Government.

The Association to Promote Americanism is not a political organization. It is organized and officered by ex-service men, who openly avow that their first and paramount duty is to their country.

THE PLEDGE

In the name of God, and for the sake of this, my country, I do solemnly swear to be a loyal citizen of these United States of America, in thought, word and deed.

I do hold the welfare of this nation as a whole to be above the profit of any class therein, and will fight against autocracy of politics or capital or labor, wherever it appears.

I believe in the constitutional right of citizens to work when and where they please, and will do all that in me lieth to make this right secure.

I believe that the way of safety for this country is the way of industrial peace. I hereby pledge my support, both moral and physical, to the constituted authorities of city, county, State and nation in the preservation of law and order and the safeguarding of life and property, and, if necessary, will bear arms under their supervision and at their command.

To the safeguarding of this nation from foes within and without, I pledge my heart and hand, and I will be faithful to this trust forever, So Help Me God!

Name ....

Address ....

The war in Europe has ended. The war in the United States has just begun. Will you join an Army of Patriots and help defeat those who seek to overthrow your Government?

Membership in this Association is open to every patriotic citizen who indorses our stand and who is willing to prove himself 100 per cent American. It is not necessary to have been in the service of the Government during the recent war, though the men who are the charter members of the Association are all ex-service men who STILL HOLD THEIR OATH OF ALLEGIANCE BINDING.

There are no dues. Sign the pledge and mail it to "The Association to Promote Americanism," care The Age-Herald, The News, or The Ledger.

We have nothing to hide. Our slogan is "AMERICA FOR THE AMERICANS."

in the coal counties of Southeastern Kentucky. Their views were instrumental in the widespread growth of an open shop movement and the pattern of tightly controlled company towns. Convinced that workers were better off under the benevolent protection of their corporate bosses rather than the irresponsible, alien union representative, operators were equipped with an intellectual arsenal with which to prevent collective organization of workers; that is, workers were discouraged, indeed prevented, from organizing as a potent social force <u>for their own good</u>. To assure the smooth operation of the democratic system, operators felt it was necessary for workers' control over community and work to be mediated by a benevolent industry representative. In relation to the means of production, workers' positon can best be characterized as one of structured dependence. Their attempts to better themselves, their families, and their community were often dismissed summarily as uncontemplated, communist-inspired idiocy.

Politicians on Class

While it may appear that the importance of the attitudes of employers toward problems of labor have been exaggerated, it is much more likely that their importance has been underestimated. One reason for the importance of employers' attitudes is that it was these attitudes that found their way into the law books. On the national as well as the state level in the early twenties, the same anti-labor sentiments expressed by operators and business-persons generally were repeated by politicians and, more importantly, were institutionalized as a part of the legal system. In 1920, for instance, the Secretary of Labor published an "Opinion" with regard to membership in the Communist Party of America. Through a two page analysis of selected quotes from the manifesto of the CPA and not from any overt actions carried out by its members, Secretary of Labor Wilson concluded that the organization sought to "conquer and destroy the United States Government in open combat."[36] Thus, it was manditory, he felt, "to take into custody aliens who are members of this organization and deport them in the manner provided for in the immigration act of February 5, 1917."[37]

Similar actions were initiated in the Kentucky Legislative hearings of 1919-1920. During this period, state representatives directed their attentions on the formulation of strong legal sanctions which could be imposed upon specific working-class organizations. A Bill was finally introduced as an "act to prohibit anarchy."[38] By anarchy, the authors of the Bill meant "Bolshevism, Industrial Workers of the World and Syndicalists" and anyone else who undermined the principles of Americanism. Democratic or not, the rise of this particular piece of legislation was closely related to the perceived threats of coal operators, among others, and can possibly best be understood as a weapon in the armories of hegemonic classes with which to sanction "appropriate class relations." At any rate, the Bill quickly passed into law and continued to be used up until the 1960's.[39]

In simple terms, the Kentucky Criminal Syndicalism and Sedition Bill of 1920 represented a vague law which provided stiff penalties for anyone who even appeared to challenge the operators' class hegemony. Consider, for instance, the legal definitions of criminal syndicalism and sedition. According to the Bill, criminal syndicalism referred to "the act of committing, aiding or counselling crime, physical violence, arson, destruction of property, intimidation, terrorism, or other unlawful acts or methods, as a means of accomplishing political ends, or as a means of bringing about political revolution."[40] Sedition was defined as "the advocacy or suggestion by word, act, deed or writing of public disorder or resistence to the Government of the United States or of the Commonwealth of Kentucky..."[41] For these crimes of syndicalism and/or sedition, the legislature authorized penalties of up to twenty-one years at hard labor and up to $ 10,000 in fines, or both.

That these laws were sufficiently vague to be used as an instrument of control in industrial struggles can be seen in the affadavits of several Harlan County miners who were jailed for simple possession of a copy of the Daily Worker, a weekly distributed by the National Miners Union in the late 1920's and early 1930's.[42] Further evidence can be found in the text of the law itself. According to the Bill, anyone who defied a strike injunction and could somehow be characterized as one who held un-American ideas was not only liable to be prosecuted for disobeying the injunction but also for sedition, which was far greater in severity. Moreover, the evidence for the case of sedition against the miner could, and often was, provided by local coal operators.[43] Another indication of the seriousness of the law can be found in article eight where it states that "if the death of any person shall occur in the course of, or by reason of any violation of this act... the person or persons so violating this act shall be guilty of murder and shall be punished by death or confinement in the State Penitentiary for life."[44]

There are two important points to add concerning the Kentucky Syndicalism and Sedition Bill. First, the law covered virtually every form of expression and raises several questions about the civil liberties of workers in general and miners in particular. According to article nine, it was unlawful to "print, publish, utter or circulate, or to have in his possession, any book, circular, picture, or other thing which advocates, suggests, counsels, or advises forcible resistence to constituted authority..."[45] In brief, anyone found connected in any way with a radical paper, thought, picture, et. cetera. was subject to legal-political prosecution. Mere physical proximity to a piece of literature justified incarceration. Second, special attention was given to those who publicly disseminated radical views. Article ten contains the remark that it was unlawful "to incite or fix emnity, discord, or strife or ill feeling between classes of persons for the purpose of inducing public turmult..."[46] That this activity sounds like the employer's image of a union agitator cannot be simply dismissed as coincidence. Finally, it should be pointed out that public dissemination of seditious ideas included the display of any "revolutionary banner, flag, placard, tag, sticker, circular, device or picture" and any person violating this section of the act was guilty of a felony and upon conviction was liable to be punished in the same manner as other sedition and syndicalism violations.

The important point is that Kentucky Politicians held views on the problem of labor that were strikingly similar to those of coal operators and their representatives. Whether these politicians were pawns of the coal barons is not at question here. What simply needs mention is that they represented a material interest that, while not identical to that of operators, was sufficiently similar.[47] They displayed the same fears over the conspiratorial character of unions and the un-American character of workers as those of coal operators. Indeed, it may well be that political control of workers was among the influential factors supporting the open-shop arrangements in Kentucky mines. Time and time again these anti-labor sentiments emerged and the militia was called out to quell civil disobedience (see Chapter Six). While the story of the repeated use of militia to quiet industrial strife in Eastern Kentucky is largely an unwritten story, its completion would constitute a significant contribution to the social-history of labor relations in the area.

Class Relations in the Coal Industry: Miners' Standpoint

Notwithstanding operators' arguments that working and living conditions in company controlled communities were excellent, miners, their union representatives and many sympathetic observers repeatedly expressed doubts as to these claims and, in the process, lodged many specific complaints about how operators controlled their towns and their labor force. While some of this resistence was likely the product of sensationalism in the presses, there are some very good reasons to believe that there was a good foundation to miners' allegations and that the undesirable aspects of life in company towns may have actually been underreported. At any rate, increased miner dissatisfaction, whether the product of outside agitators, press coverage or actual working conditions, clearly served to provoke operators into adopting repressive measures in an attempt to minimize labor unrest and to stifle the publication of articles on labor discontent. Such reactions on the part of operators led to some of the bitterest, yet most famous, episodes in United States labor history. Through accounts of these conflicts in newspapers, periodicals, and other sources such as government reports, one can come to an understanding of some of the miners' grievances and the problems which they sought to overcome. This section, then, is intended to outline the miners' case and contrast it with that of the operators. In the next chapter, a more detailed look at specific strike situations can be found.

Official Violence

One of the most important sources of conflict between capital and labor in the coalfields in general, and in Eastern Kentucky in particular, involved the operators' use of repressive measures to restrict unionization. In their efforts to maintain an open shop, operators and their agents denied many miners their basic civil rights to free speech and free association. According to one government document, "a few operators attempted to compete with the Union for the loyalty of their employees, but most of them have resorted to methods of force which fall into two groups--those that affect the rights of workers as citizens and those that are more purely industrial practices."[48] Moreover, given the industrialists' attitude that workers were indolent and that their unions were conspiratorial and undemocratic, repressive measures could convincingly be passed off in the name of free-enterprise and other American principles. As several coal operators from Bell and Harlan counties put it in 1919: "the policy of the closed shop is un-American. Every man should be permitted to work at his own chosen occupation wherever he may be able to secure employment... a man's ability to perform work for which he seeks employment is sufficient right for his employment regardless of whether or not he is affiliated with any labor organization."[49] As operators saw it, the use of overt physical violence to control unions was legitimate. They were not only fighting for their freedoms but also the freedoms of labor.

The paternalistic practice of enforcing repressive measures to preserve the fundamental liberties of miners and their families took various forms. Such practices ranged widely from minor reprimands to basic denials of civil rights and police harrassment. That such practices were sufficiently widespread to warrant alarm is corroborated in the Report of the 1925 Coal Commission. The report remarked that:

> Abundant evidence has been received that in the campaign against the union the mine workers in many non-union fields have been denied their rights of free speech and free assembly, of intercourse with persons objectionable to the company, and of free movement from place to place. The operating companies have been able to abridge these fundamental rights through ownership and control of the communities in which workers live, an ownership often including not only houses and stores, but roads, and public buildings and, at times, the post office. (50)

Law officials, the report states, were frequently paid directly from corporate payrolls. This gave additional incentive for local law officers to pay careful heed to the wishes of the coal companies. More to the point, this practice gave additional encouragement to police to practice repressive measures to restrict unionization. As one company town sheriff frankly told the 1925 Coal Commission: "It is my job to keep the union out of __________ county."[51]

It should be emphasized that the use of repressive measures by operators was often combined with the use of militia (State and Federal) to quell what miners thought were legitimate strikes and this, in turn, was another source of conflict in Eastern Kentucky.[52] Indeed, mining districts throughout the country were vocal about this use of government authority. At the United Mine Workers Convention in 1920, several delegrates spoke at length about the role of the militia, particularly in the so-called outlying districts which included Tennessee and Eastern Kentucky. In Tennessee, it was pointed out, the Governor demanded that coal operators compel miners back to work or throw them out of their company houses, and in West Virginia miners were simply forced back to work at bayonet point.[53] In most of these discussions, miners expressed the belief that the deployment of troops was not merely a way to protect owners' property but rather was a way to smash their strike and their union. There was, in a word, little to convince them that the state operated as a neutral arbitrator in industrial conflicts. As far away as Wyoming, one delegate stated, Federal troops had put miners back to work and prevented miners' activities to better themselves through the issuance of notices such as the following:

> ... all assemblies, except those for religious services and public schools, are hereby prohibited at Rock Springs, Superior, Lyons, Gunn, Reliance, Dines, Sweetwater and Winton.
>
> An assembly may be authorized by the Governor of Wyoming or the undersigned, commanding United States Troops in the Rock Springs district. All authorized assemblies will be open and attended by representatives of the Civil and Military authorities.
>
> Signed,
>
> H.A. Meyer [54]
> Captain 15th Cavalry

The use of private and governmental coercion to maintain social order in the coalfields was a central theme used against the coal industry because of the obvious infringements on individuals' basic civil rights. To many observers, it was also painfully clear that the use of police-type repression was not simply a means to preserve miners' freedom, but also served to maintain advantageous labor relations for operators. Others feared that this partisan performance of the government was bound to give rise to questions of legitimacy. As many miners understood, however, physical violence was simply one aspect of a structure of social control that guaranteed appropriate class relations and profitable investment climates. Indeed, it is commonplace sociological wisdom that any society based on physical coercion for stability is inherently unstable and destined to dissolution, unless some more reliable means of social control is found. There were, then, many other more or less subtle techniques of social control which provided the impetus for capital-labor conflict. While often subtle, these techniques of control were often more effective in their influence on workers' everyday lives and on profit margins.

Living Conditions in Company Controlled Communities

One often repeated theme expressed by miners and sympathetic observers involved the high degree of control that outside capital interests had over the conditions of life and work in the mountains. This control was imposed through various instrumentalities. A cursory examination of work contracts, housing leases, and other documents quickly reveals the foundation of these complaints and, it should be emphasized, reveals that these outside interests were class interests.

Work contracts in Central Appalachia in general, and Eastern Kentucky in particular, were frequently written in such a way as to preclude the opportunity for workers to organize in their own interests and, thereby, helped to assure employers' hegemony. Such contracts were unaffectionately known as 'yellow-dog' contracts and were very common in Eastern Kentucky until they were outlawed in the early thirties. Such contracts were easily reinforced through the use of the 1920 Kentucky Sedition Law.

Table Sixteen contains the text from a standard type contract used in the non-union mining districts of Central Appalachia during the 1920's.[55] Note that the contract commenced with a right-to-work clause which claimed to assure the miner that his democratic interests would best be served. Of more importance, however, were the specific details elaborated in the second paragraph of the contract. Employees were not allowed to be a member or in sympathy with any labor organizations. The list of outlawed organizations included not only the I.W.W., which was an openly revolutionary union, but also such conservative organizations as the U.M.W.A. "or any other mine labor organization." What constituted a violation of this contract was largely a matter of discretion left to the mine foreman, operator and local officials. Word from the mining offices that a miner had pro-union sympathies was sufficient cause for firing or, if the miner resisted, incarceration on the grounds of breech of contract, threat to private property, and/or sedition. The contract also included "molesting" or "annoying" either customers, employer or employees as grounds for dismissal. Under such restrictive conditions, miners were not only prohibited from strikes, picketing, boycotting and the like, but also from openly expressing bad feelings toward their employer, the industry and from openly sympathizing with their fellow workers. In such a situation, the point where legitimate restriction to promote freedom and repressive measures to assure the accumulation of capital begin and end is extremely hard to distinguish.

TABLE SIXTEEN: Standard Type Contract Between Non-Union Operator and Individual Miner

In order to preserve to each man the right to do such work as he pleases and for whom he pleases and the right to payment in proportion to services rendered, to preserve the natural and constitutional right of individual contract, to preserve to the individual the fruits of his own labor, and to promote the interests of both parties hereto, _______company, employer and __________ employee, agree as follows:

That employer hereby employs employee to work at its coal mine, and employee accepts such employment, and that so long as the relation of employer and employee exist between them, the employer will not knowingly employ, or keep in its employment, any member of the United Mine Workers of America, the I.W.W., or any other mine labor organization, the the employee will not join or belong to any such union or organization, and will not aid, encourage or approve the organization thereof, it being understood that the policy of said company is to operate a non-union mine and that it would not enter into any contract of employment under any other conditions, and if and when said relations of employer and employee agree that he will not then or thereafter, in any manner molest, annoy, or interfere with the business, customers, or employees of the employer, and will not aid or encourage anyone else in so doing.

Witness the following signitures this, the ___day of ___, 192_

Company______________
Employee_____________

By officer or agent,
Witnesses:__________
____

It should be borne in mind that these special contracts were appended to traditional work contracts which outlined grievance procedures and defined the rights of management, among other things.[56] These special contracts allowed management to beyond the mere management of industrial relations. Indeed, it allowed corporate bosses to impose strong political and ideological pressures which went well beyond the workplace.

Another crucial issue that drew miners' criticism and, again, can best be understood as part of the total structure of social control in company towns in that it supported favorable class relations, involved housing leases. For most miners, working for a company meant living in company owned housing--coal camps. Housing leases varied in phraseology from place to place but they did not vary much in real terms. A typical lease would allow a miner and his family to occupy a company house only insofar as they met the following conditions: 1) the miners right to occupy the house terminated whenever he ceased to work for the company; 2) rent would be deducted from the miners' paychecks as would deductions for cost of damages incurred in repairing the houses; 3) only five days notice, on the average, was necessary for eviction; and, 4) the miner's family was, in some cases, prohibited from harbouring or entertaining persons objectionable to the company. As if to avoid legal complications, some leases also carried the stipulation that the lease did not create a tenant--landlord relationship. An example of how this stipulation might be worded reads thusly: "And it is expressly agreed and understood that this agreement shall not operate or be construed to create a relation of landlord and tenant."[57] Through this, operators had constructed a social situation in which they were unfettered even by the meager restraints of existing tenancy laws. Miners, in turn, were placed in a condition of dependency upon the good will and good judgement of those in positions of local power. Housing leases, then, were worded in such a way as to allow operators to use housing tenure as a means to ensure more effective control over the labor market. The legally secured mechanism for ensuring insecurity of house tenure and the marked limitations placed on individuals' community control are factors which fit neatly into the mode of structuring class relations.

It should also be pointed out that housing was not always of the superior quality boasted about in company advertisments. Indeed, one of the most frequently repeated findings in the 1925 Coal Commission Report involved the poor character of coal camp housing. According to the report:

> Ninety-five percent of the company owned houses... were built of wood. More than two-thirds were finished outside with weatherboard usually nailed directly to the frame with no sheathing other than paper, and sometimes not even that... Over two-thirds of the roofs were of composition paper. The houses usually rest on post foundations with no cellars... Of the approximately 71,000 company owned family dwellings included in the survey, 2.4 percent had bath tubs or showers; 3 percent had inside flush toilets; 13.8 percent had running water, though nearly 61 percent of the communities had water works systems; 66.3 percent had electricity or gas. (58)

There were two other important issues of a general character which served as a source of capital-labor conflict in the Eastern Kentucky coalfields during the early part of the century. One was the use of script and the other involved deductions from miners wages.

Payment in script was illegal in most states by the 1920's. In Eastern Kentucky, however, the practice flourished. Script was a system of granting company tokens (private currency) to workers in place of cash. Company commissaries would exchange the script for goods. Such a practice ensured the commissaries of a ready market, even though their prices were frequently not competitive. It also provided a lucrative prospect for coal companies in that it helped re-capture wage expenditures. One of the problems presented by script was that when miners went to the cheaper, independent stores, their tokens were discounted from ten to twenty percent of their face value.[59] The pauperization effect on the miners is easily seen as is its reinforcing influence on the overall structure of social control. Faced with substantial discounts and with company hostility toward buying outside the company store, miners were encouraged to purchase goods only through the company network.[60] Such a practice served to 1) funnel expenditures on wages back into corporate coffers, and 2) increase the level of dependency of miner upon operator. This system of payment for wages was commonly used and highly protected by both businessmen and politicians. In fact, in April of 1922, reformers had successfully drafted an anti-script Bill and had it ready to present to the Kentucky Legislature. The Tabor Script Bill, as it was called, sought not to do away with script, but merely to compel coal and other companies to redeem the face value of script on demand. At the last minute, the Bill had somehow mysteriously vanished and, therefore, could not be acted upon before the end of the legislative session.[61]

Second, the practice of making deductions from miners' wages became an important area of dispute, especially during the unionization drives in Harlan and Bell counties in the early 1930's. During the 1920's, it was customary for the company to deduct special occupational and personal charges from miners' wages. Part of the problem presented by this practice was that such deductions were extraordinary in many cases as commissary prices were often well above the "normal market prices." Given the operators' almost total control over accounting procedures--many did not even provide employees with a detailed account of the deductions--claims that operators were profiting at the miners' expense and that there was undue discretionary control over deductions were inevitable. Another part of the problem, which was more acute in the non-union field, involved the practice of docking workers' pay for supposed disciplinary infractions. Insubordination, poor attendance and UMWA sympathies were routinely given as cause for wage deductions.[62] This discretionary authority to reduce miners' purchasing power was another way to enforce labor discipline and ensure employer hegemony but it also led to bitter resentment. According to the Coal Commission, there was significant evidence to give credence to miners' claims that "operators make an undue profit off some of the supplies furnished and that the charges for services was exhorbitant."[63] Further, consider that in addition to occupational charges for smithing tools, powder, fuse and the like, there was a long list of personal charges such as household coal, rent, bills at the commissary, doctor, hospital, school, and bath houses among other things. All the social cost of production, in other words, were directly deducted from the miners' wages. A frequent complaint of the Harlan miners in the early thirties was that deductions had risen to the point where it completely offset income; indeed, many were left owing the company at the end of the pay period.[64]

Both practices--script and discretionary deductions--reinforced the paternalistic nature of the social control system and gave impetus to resistence on the part of workers.

<u>Special Workplace Related Issues</u>:

In addition to general issues, such as the infringement of civil rights, the use of script and the like, miners faced many specific workplace related problems in their dispute with operators. Among other issues, irregularity of work, dead work, wage inequality, and problems of weighing and measuring coal were important.

Perhaps the most important area of dispute between miners and coal companies in the formative years of the coal industry in Southeastern Kentucky involved the irregularity of work. According to one report, "Harlan County's mining industry is one hundred percent overmanned."[65] Aware of this unhappy, for workers, situation, operators in Harlan County and elsewhere developed a variety of more or less sophisticated arguments to explain why the situation persisted. Underemployment in the region's coal industry, for instance, was often seen as the result of the 'natural advantages' of competing coal fields. Transportation cost through the mountains and other geographical reasons were cited as the cause of the miners' dilemma. More frequently, however, this 'natural advantages' argument was combined with a 'market problems' argument. Profit realization, the argument went, was vulnerable to both natural and labor crises. Increased transportation costs and increased costs of labor (due to unionization) created a situation in which Kentucky coal was simply not marketable. Operators would be compelled to cut back or to simply stop operations completely--or workers would be compelled to take a cut in wages. The point is this: whether geographical factors, market fluctuations or labor costs are cited as explanatory variables, we have the same result in that the causes of the workers' undesirable circumstances were located outside the mine offices and outside the coal industry. More often than not, the solution for workers' lack of work opportunities--the general condition of underemployment or irregularity of work--was shifted to the workers themselves in that they were expected to accept less due to extenuating circumstances.

The importance of irregularity of employment involved the direct relationship between number of days worked and annual income. The standard of living could be drastically lowered if days worked fell too low. And according the the 1925 Coal Commission, Southeastern Kentucky miners worked only an equivalent of about six to eight months per year between 1916 and 1921.[66] The condition of underemployment was widespread in the Central Appalachian field during the years. Indeed, the UMWA demand for a thirty hour week in the 1919 strike was rooted in the desire by miners to distribute work more equitably.[67]

For miners, there was the often unstated but devastating possibility that the underemployment situation was not, in fact, the product of geographical factors, labor costs, or market fluctuations. How probable was it that the whole situation was the result of conscious calculation on the part of the coal industry's representatives? The benefits to business of an 'overloaded' labor market are easy to see when one considers the isolated, one-industry nature of the coal town economy and the monopolistic control operators had over resources and the labor market. During periods of expansion, for instance, a large labor pool would be readily available to meet increased production demands. During gluts, or periods of recession, a large labor surplus would assure strong competition within the labor market and thereby promote low-wage labor. While the Coal Commission did not delve into conspiracy theory, it did much to corroborate the notion that there was a close relationship between size of the surplus labor pool and drastic wage cuts.[68] One other report went one step further by simply stating that the practice of overmanning the labor market was "calculated to keep the men and their families dependent upon the good will of the operators."[69]

Another important issue of dispute between representatives of management and labor in the Central Appalachian field involved differences of opinion over the method of payment for dead work. Dead work can be defined as any work done by miners which was apart from the main task of cutting, shooting, and loading coal. For instance, dead work might have involved laying track up to the coal face, removing cars, working timbers into place, or removing debris from the workplace. Dead labor, as the miners called it, was only indirectly useful in that it did not result in more coal produced.

Given a mine which required a great deal of dead work and given a wage system based upon a certain rate per ton of coal delivered to the tipple, the miners' difficulties are easy to understand. The whole system encourage short-cuts, gave rise to dangerous mining conditions, and was strongly resisted by workers. Indeed, next to irregularity of work, dead work was the most mentioned conplaint by miners put before the coal commission.[70]

What led to much of the irritation was the definition of what exactly constituted dead work and what was the appropriate method of payment. Operators repeatedly claimed to provide adequate reimbursement for dead work. Outside the main union fields, however, there is little to corroborate these claims and even less to indicate that any uniform system of payment was in existence. Miners frequently claimed to the coal commission that there was no system of payment for dead work and in its final conclusions the authors of the report remarked that "there is a mass of testimony that dead work is not paid for."[71]

Haggling between workers and management usually involved disputes over miners' claims for dead work reimbursment. Miners, during these years, enjoyed a high degree of autonomy from direct supervision. Because of the relative autonomy from direct supervision, miners could easily overstate the amount of time devoted to dead work and thereby substantially increase their pay. Management, then, was often suspicious of miners' claims. But, management enjoyed another, more decisive, advantage. Because of the high degree of discretionary authority in the hands of foremen and others, an authority whose roots went well beyond the workplace to control over home and community, management representatives could depress the rate for dead work and/or simply understate the number of hours for which dead work was to be paid for. During periods of business difficulties, this practice often could help the beligered coal companies absorb the cost of hard times by shifting the burden onto workers. Such practice was frequently resorted to and thus the problem emerged and then re-emerged again as a bone of contention between workers and company officials.[72]

The whole system of measuring time spent on dead work and the rate of pay for dead work was based upon the honesty of both the foreman and the worker. In Eastern Kentucky, primarily non-union in the 1910-1930 period, the problem loomed large.[73] Most decisions were ultimately solved through managerial fiat. Foremen, under pressure to produce profits for owners, were simply <u>obliged</u> to slight workers by paying them the minimum possible amount for dead work. Couple this with a condition in which miners had little recourse against management. It would have been a sad day in any month for the miner who enraged the man who controlled not only his job but also his total living conditions. Having honesty as the sole basis for determining fair rates of dead work reimbursement, in other words, did not help the miner a great deal. The contest was rather unequal.

Wage rates and wage inequities presented another area of capital-labor dispute during the formative years of the coal industry in Eastern Kentucky. Wage demands were especially crucial around 1919. Miners' wages, which had been frozen during the war, were greatly reduced as a result of rapid inflation.[74] In 1922, operators, looking for a way to improve the profitability of the industry, went on the offensive and tried to substantially reduce labor costs.[75] Each of these situations led to much discussion and various strikes throughout the Southeastern Kentucky coalfields. Other situations emerged during the 1919-1930 period in which a more or less continuous debate about wage levels was fought.

One of the most important factors contributing to the setting of wage rates in the coal industry during the pre-1930 period involved the relative trading strengths of capital and labor. In times of labor scarcity, wages rose. As coal towns grew and labor markets were flooded, however, the bargaining position of miners was greatly weakened. For example, the development of a coal glut and the overdevelopment of a labor supply which characterized the 1920-1922 period saw miners' share of the cost of production significantly decline. In the Southern Appalachia Field, which included Bell and part of Harlan counties, labor's share of the cost of production dropped from approximately seventy-two percent to less than sixty-four percent with no change in the level of technology used in the mines.[76] In the

Hazard Field, labor's share fell from seventy-two to fifty-three percent.[77] Indeed, outside the Central Competitive Field, which included Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois and Indiana, there was little attempt to develop a uniform wage policy. And, in the words of the Coal Commission, there was "no attempt to correct wage inequities."[78] Miners, isolated in their company owned mountain communities, were in a poor position from which to bargain effectively to abolish low wages or wage inequities. Again, the contest was rather unequal.

Another managerial practice that frequently led to miners' walkouts was the practice of cutting wages by ten, twenty or more percent during times of slack business. As a general rule, Eastern Kentucky miners, having no strong union and little means to oppose such cuts, were obliged to go along with small reductions on the promise that wages would be restored when times improved. But too often, small cuts only led to further reductions and/or layoffs as management sought to improve further the company's profitability. Such wage-cutting behavior was especially acute during the pre-1930 period. Unwilling to invest a large amount in machinery, because of the unstable nature of coal mining, investors built labor intensive work processes on the belief that there was less to risk. Eastern Kentucky operators, then, often simply cut wages because they were trying to get by and labor, through lay-off or wage cuts, was more flexible and less risky than other forms of investments. The Report of the

Coal Commission offers some corroboration that this practice was commonplace and that miners' claims of unfair treatment had some substance. There is a

> marked tendency in non-union fields to cut and keep rates below the union scale in bad times, and as a consequence to operate more steadily at the expense of those operators who deal under agreements with the Union as to wages... In times of prosperity, scarcity of labor for hire and possible unionization, the rates tend to come up to the union scale... There are many operators, however,... who do not bring up rates in the prosperous years.(79)

Such practices can best be understood in the context of an interest to accumulate capital; the shift of the burden of economic difficulties onto the shoulders of working persons is merely the result of such economistic decisions. Wage cuts served the interests of neither Kentucky miners nor Kentucky communities, as both were left pauperized.

One final complaint of miners involved the methods of weighing and measuring coal. This issue was of great immediacy to miners in that wage payments were usually based upon a piece-work system. Difficulties arose because miners' workplaces were located far away from where the coal was weighed or where cars were counted. Given this situation, miners were frequently suspicious that operators were short weighing them. For instance, it was common practice to equate 2,400 or 2,600 pounds with a ton to "take account of impurities." Suspicious of operators' intentions miners frequently complained that these margins for impurities were too high or that the scales used to weigh the miners' coal were rigged. Even more disputes emerged when coal was measured by carloads. This unit was very imprecise and it left a great deal of discretion to management. Also, the Coal Commission pointed out, size of cars was sometimes changed without any increase in the price per car.[80] To resolve some of these difficulties, miners generally sought the establishment of a checkweighman, a miner responsible to miners to keep an eye on the scales and the workers' interests. While the demand for a checkweighman was often resisted in the non-union mines, its adoption usually went a long way in resolving labor-management disputes over this issue. Indeed, it was a demand almost universally adopted in the union district.

Taken separately, these various issues seldom caused any major strikes.[81] More frequently, these various disputes were fought around a single issue--unionization. Through unionization, miners sought to achieve the leverage necessary to force changes in the specific areas discussed so far. For instance, unionization usually meant, among other things, 1) the establishment of a more effective grievance procedure, 2) a checkweighman, 3) a widely publicized wage policy, 4) standard methods of payment for dead work, 5)abolition of yellow-dog work contracts, and 6) periodic strike rights. During the pre-1930 period, there were three major strikes fought around the issue of unionization.[82] While all three did not achieve the ends anticipated by labor, they are instructive in that an examination of them will aid in better understanding the nature of class relations in the coal industry during this period (see chapter six).

Conclusions

An important aspect of class analysis involves trying to unravel issues of class along not only economic but also political and cultural lines. "It must be emphasized," Nicos Poulantzas remarked, "that ideological and political relations... are themselves a part of the structural determination of class... From the start, structural class determination involves economic, political and cultural struggle."[83] An important term used by Marxists in the analysis of culture, and one frequently used in this chapter, is the notion of 'hegemony.' Implied in this notion is the assumption that in a single mode of production there exists conflicting class interests and points of view. The term hegemony also implies the ability of one class, wrapped in its own set of ideological beliefs, to contain antagonisms in its daily exercise of dominance over the interests of subordinate classes. Understanding this cultural dimension of class is crucial for two reasons: first, it is only through ideology that dominant classes are able to justify repressive actions against subordinate classes and maintain the legitimacy necessary for social stability. Second, through an analysis of the antagonistic cultural and political perspectives of social actors representing classes, one can gain a better understanding of the human consequences of capitalist development and the importance of workers' resistence in the shaping of society.

Coal operators in Central Appalachia and Southeastern Kentucky in particular understood class relations in terms of two central themes. The first theme involved operators' belief that the quality of working and living conditions in company controlled communities was good, indeed, superior to those in comparable circumstances. Given the opportunity to work free from outside restrictions, American miners, so the argument went, would contentedly carry out their task in a productive and workmanlike manner. Superior housing, public auditoriums, reading rooms, bath houses, swimming pools, tennis courts, resorts and a list of other corporate funded benefits were often cited as evidence that the source of miners' discontent necessarily was located outside the confines of the company towns.

The second theme involved what I have referred to as the combined problem of Americanism and the Great Union Conspiracy. Miners' discontent, from this view, resulted from the entry of outside social agents, usually union agitators, into the coal districts. These people were viewed to be motivated by undemocratic, un-American, alien ideologies which threatened the basic principles of American life including the open shop. Until these persons were removed from the situation, many operators felt, the threat of instability, violence and tyranny was very real. Again, it is important to note that upon elimination of these un-American individuals and organizations, the ordinary working-person would return to his/her appointed task with little or no resistence.

Equipped with these views of the miner and the miners' union, operators were furnished with the ideological means to justify repressive actions against miners. Company towns, company paid sheriff departments, ownership of land, business and even roads became possible mechanism to exert appropriate mechanism of social control over miners. Operators could argue, with a clear conscious and much public support, that certain repressive tactics were needed to eliminate alien elements and un-American sentiments <u>for the miners own good</u>. In addition, critical attention was shifted away from the structure of the industry and social control onto a 'safe' target.

Equally important was the adoption of pro-business attitudes by politicians. Kentucky politicians generated policies and laws that supported, complemented and frequently extended the repressive apparatus and practices of businesspersons. The use of state militia to put down strikes, the use of the Kentucky Sedition Law of 1920 to weaken union leadership, the impanneling of Grand Juries and the adoption of a pro-business posture in confrontations were factors that contributed to the support of social class relations in the coal districts of Eastern Kentucky during this period. To be aware of the ideological and political supports which permitted real men and women to reproduce class in the manner in which they did in Southeastern Kentucky has been a prime concern of this chapter.

From the standpoint of miners, the discussion focused upon various specific grievances concerning both work and community relations. One central concern of miners was the systematic violation of their civil rights. Work contracts with clauses forbidding union activity, or even sympathy, housing leases packed full of restrictive provisions, the arbitrary deduction of wages for supposed disciplinary infractions, and various other practices were perceived as acts which severely restricted miners' rights as citizens. Other issues such as script, irregularity of work and non-payment for 'dead work' were also examined. The point, however, is that miners saw the social reality of coal town living from a substantially different perspective than did operators. Understanding these antagonistic attitudes and world views aids in understanding how class was shaped in Eastern Kentucky through a complex interaction between capital and labor.

Notes

1. Harlan County Folder, WPA Materials, State Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.

2. J.W. Wood, in Harlan County Folder, WPA Materials, State Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.

3. "Coal Mining Towns in Eastern Kentucky," pamphlet put out by the Jenkins (Harlan) Coal Operators Association, n.d., approximately 1917-1925, Special Collections, University of Kentucky.

4. Ibid., 5.

5. Ibid., 6.

6. Ibid., 9.

7. Ibid., 10.

8. The sources include various local papers, weeklies, and business periodicals among others. For the purpose of this study, I have relied heavily on the Manufacturers' Record, an influential weekly on southern business, financial and railroad affairs. Hereafter the Manufacturers' Record will be referred to as MR. Coal interests were well represented in this particular publication, and if some big land deal was in negotiation or some new developments could be found in the coal industry, MR covered it. In fact, this is one of the very few periodicals to consistently make reference to Kentucky developments in terms of specific places and interests.

9. Albert Phenis, "Prosperity and Comfort of West Virginia Miners," MR, August 10, 1922, 56-63.

10. Ibid., 56.

11. Ibid., 57.

12. Ibid., 58.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., 59.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. *Ibid.*

18. "The Mistake of the Coal Miners," *MR*, November 13, 1919, 88.

19. *Ibid.*

20. "The Whole Coal Situation Broadly Analyzed," *MR*, August 3, 1922.

21. *Ibid.*; A similar argument can be found in "What the Miners' Demands Really Mean in Increased Cost should be Clearly Understood," *MR*, November 27, 1919.

22. "The Whole Coal Situation Broadly Analyzed," 77.

23. Coal operators frequently portrayed the strike situation as a conflict between miners and consumers rather than miners and operators. By doing this, miners were characterized as wreckers of the industrial machinery an therefore enemies of the public good. To allow public sympathy to accure to the miners would, for operators, be foolish if it could be avoided.

24. See, "Report of West Virginia Coal Operators to the U.S. Coal Commission," Special Collections, University of Kentucky; also, "Without Capitalism Civilization Cannot Exist," *MR*, September 28, 1922.

25. Thelma King, "Labor Disputes," Bell County Folder, WPA Materials, State Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.

26. *MR*, July 20, 1922, 53.

27. Nelle Shumate, "Labor Disputes," Bell County Folder, WPA Materials, State Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky.

28. *MR*, November 13, 1919, 92. More on the 1919 strike can be found in the next chapter.

29. *MR*, July 20, 1922, 53.

30. "Meaning of Democracy," *MR*, October 30, 1919, 101.

31. *Ibid.*

32. *MR*, November 6, 1919, 139.

33. *Ibid.*

34. MR, November 13, 1919, 87.

35. MR, November 6, 1919, 139.

36. "Immigration," Monthly Labor Review, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1920), 812.

37. Ibid., 813.

38. Kentucky House Journal.

39. see Harry Caudill, My Land is Dying, 88.

40. Acts of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, 1920, 520.

41. Ibid.

42. See Harlan Miners Speak, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1931).

43. This practice was common and will be examined in greater detail in the next chapter.

44. Acts, 523-4.

45. Acts, 524.

46. Ibid.

47. As among capitalists, however, there were some important disagreements among politicians as to how labor discipline might best be enforced. After the passage of the Kentucky Sedition Bill, for instance, Governor Morrow (Kentucky) stated that he believed the Bill went too far. "Many provisions of that law," he stated, "are unconstitutional and... constitute a serious menace to free speech... The only character of law upon such a subject necessary in Kentucky is that one which shall make it a crime by speech or publication to advocate the overthrow of the state of Kentucky or resistence of its laws by force or violence." Morrow's disagreements, in other words, were not that the law itself or its intent was undesirable but rather that it was worded badly and could be interpreted as a Bill to promote totalitarianism. Morrow's comments can be found in the "Governor's Message," Kentucky House Journal, 1922, Volume I, 23.

48. Report of the U.S. Coal Commission, Volume III, 1925, 1331.

49. Pineville Sun, 11/28/19

50. Report of the U.S. Coal Commission, 1331.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid. 1429.

53. Proceedings, UMW Re-Convened Session, 1920, 83-4.

54. Ibid.

55. Report of the U.S. Coal Commission, 1925, 1389.

56. Ibid., 1390-1396.

57. Ibid., 1397.

58. Ibid., 1429-1430.

59. Ibid., 1319-1320.

60. Miners were frequently compelled to buy from company stores or risk loss of their jobs. Harry Caudill put it vividly. The bosses "took note of the number of people in each miner's household and observed the size of his monthly account at the company store. If he fell into the habit of economizing at the commissary and drawing a few dollars in money to spend at a chain store or others outside the camp he courted immediate discharge. He was likely to be informed brusquely that if he could not afford to spend all his earning in the company store the company could not afford to employ him. And woe to the miner who was suspected of buying oil or gasoline at any place except the company service station." Night Comes to the Cumberlands, 190; also see Harlan Miners Speak.

61. Middlesboro Daily News 4/8/22.

62. Report of the U.S. Coal Commission, 1925, 1325.

63. Ibid., 1319.

64. Harlan Miners Speak contains various examples of how severe the problem of wage deductions became.

65. "Report on Harlan County Mining Conditions," Labor Union Papers, Special Collections, University of Kentucky.

66. Report of the U.S. Coal Commission, 1925, 1118.

67. See Proceedings, UMW Convention, 1919 & 1920.

68. Report of the U.S. Coal Commission, 1925, 1111-1120.

69. "Report on Harlan County Mining Conditions," Labor Union Papers, Special Collections, University of Kentucky.

70. Report of the U.S. Coal Commission, 1925, 1312.

71. Ibid., 1315.

72. Ibid., 1314.

73. Except for the few years during and after WWI, Eastern Kentucky mines were predominately non-union. During the war, the UMW made significant headway into the region as a result of negotiations with the Fuel Administration in Washington, D.C..

74. See Chapter Six.

75. Ibid.

76. Calculated from county data contained in the Report of the U.S. Coal Commission, 1925, 2359-2369.

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid., 1316.

79. Ibid., 1317.

80. Ibid., 1318.

81. These issues included civil rights, physical coercion, the use of state militia, local law enforcement & harrassment, work contracts, housing leases, script, wage deductions, irregularity of work, dead work, wage inequities, and weighing and measuring of coal.

82. There was a series of minor strikes in 1916-17. In these confrontations, the operators resisted the union very little as war time prices and profit guarantees granted under the Fuel Administration made the disruption of the flow of coal unlucrative.

83. Nicos Poulantzas, Classes in Contemporary Capitalism, (London: New Left Books, 1975) 16.

Chapter Six: UNIONIZATION STRUGGLES IN SOUTHEASTERN KENTUCKY, 1917-1922

In the last chapter, it was noted that conflict at the workplace and attitudes of antagonism were a more or less permanent feature of class relations in the coal field communities of Southeastern Kentucky in the formative years of this century.[1] To be certain, there were good times when wages were relatively high and it appeared that labor and management had developed a mutuality of interests. Even during these prosperous times, however, the underlying basis for antagonism remained: that is, 1) even though economic conditions reduced the immediacy of wage cuts, there was always a desire to reduce labor costs and thereby increase the rate of surplus-value; 2) there was the loudly proclaimed insistence by operators to remain open shop and thereby retain the paternalistic pattern of social control which miners so frequently protested; and, 3) there was an underlying fear by operators that their freedoms would be severely curtailed by a militant labor movement.

The incidence of strikes represents an important indicator of social class conflict on economic, political, and cultural levels. During strikes, the main points of contention between management and labor become visible through newspaper accounts and other publications. This chapter employs mainly newspaper accounts of various strike situations in some Southeastern Kentucky counties from 1917-1922. Business periodicals, government reports, and UMWA sources are used to a lesser extent. The chapter is primarily descriptive and does not attempt a comprehensive, analytical account of each strike. Rather, the issues and strategies as they were perceived and developed by representatives of capital and labor are the main focus. A central theme is that any attempt to understand class structuralization in these counties requires that careful attention be given to the role of the state in the mediation of contradictions between working and capitalist classes. Approaching these strikes in this manner facilitates an understanding of the shaping of class relations, a problematic shaping resulting from interactions between agents of the state, capital and labor, and consequently the shaping of commmunity life in coal communites. The strikes of 1917-1922 were important in that they helped establish the general pattern of capital-labor relations that would predominate for the remainder of the decade. These patterns of relationships would strongly influence working and living conditions until the unionization struggles of the 1930's when miners again tried to redress many of their longstanding grievances.[2]

1915-1917

Prior to 1917, there was little in the way of systematic strike activity in the area. Many company towns still retained their newness and wages, in many cases, were respectable by local standards. Throughout the area, labor shortages were common and therefore pressures to cut back on labor cost were, for the time being, minimal. In addition, coal prices were rising during this early period. Some operators were obliged to increase wages and many imported large numbers of laborers to meet production demands and hold down wages. One example involved the Consolidated and Elkhorn Coal Companies which, late in 1915, imported several hundred foreign hands just to meet their demands in the mines around Whitesburg in Letcher county.[3] Some relatively minor labor disputes, however, did develop in Bell County and then spread to surrounding counties. During March, the management of the Continental Coal Corporation cut miners' wages ten percent on account of 'slack business.' Four months later, in mid July, over eight hundred dissatisfied miners walked off the job.[4] In addition to the ten percent wage issue, the miners now demanded fairer treatment in the company commissaries and recognition of the UMWA as their bargaining agent.[5]

After two short weeks, the management of the Continental Coal Corporation met with the miners to achieve some sort of settlement. As a result, the company agreed to reinstate the ten percent wage cut by October "if business conditions warranted" and to sell goods to the miners out of the commissaries at a net profit of only sixteen percent.[6] Of more importance, however, was the company's recognition of the UMWA. The significance of this latter decision was duely noted by many observers and journalists. One, for instance, remarked that the "union is now strongly entrenched in the Straight Creek Field... and it is intimated that every mine in the Bell and Harlan Fields will be organized by the first of the year."[7] Another observer described the union success on Straight Creek as an "entering wedge" for the general organization "of the miners in this territory."[8]

While operators had initially been relieved by the early settlement of the strike, many had serious second doubts within a couple of weeks after the settlement. Fears concerning a possible unionization drive were frequently discussed by operators during the following months. In fact, during the following July, forty local coal representatives gathered in Middlesboro to publically present their case against the union.[9] In their report, operators warned that "UMWA men have been in the field" and that these agitators plans "which have been secretly underway... will cumulate soon in the organization of the miners in Bell County."[10]

Although the 1915 union success in Bell County was isolated to only a few firms, the fears of operators, journalists, and others were justified. The union had gained a foothold in this staunchly open shop district and were, therefore, in a position to co-ordinate their unionization activities. For the time being, however, union representatives confined their activities to quietly establishing contacts and supports.
The 1915-1917 period in Southeastern Kentucky was characterized by industrial expansion in the coal industry, labor shortages, and therefore, pressures to cut back on wages were not immediate although the desire was there. Union activities, for this and other reasons, were limited. Operators openly boasted that they could employ every man that they could get their hands on and this claim was not so much of an exaggeration as it might first seem. In early 1917, for instance, operators in Perry and Letcher counties were "bringing in new laborers as fast as they could be secured."[11] According to one report, coal mine managements were highly gratified that old contracts, "which were made at a low rate, were about to expire." The new rates were negotiated at over a third increase. In Harlan County, the demand for labor was also felt as operators sought to hold onto their present labor supply and draw new recruits. In May of 1917, the Harlan Coal Operators Association met to authorize an increase of "forty cents per ton for loading machine coal and

fifty cents for pick and solid work... Day laborers inside and out get an advance of thirty percent."[12]

Under conditions characterized by business expansion and labor stability, the UMWA gradually made significant headway. Initial progress was made in some of the mines which had not advanced their wage rates in proportion to other mines in the area. Wage inequities coupled with rapid inflation, for instance, were cited as two principle reasons why the miners of the Moss Coal Company in Bell County struck in March of 1917.[13] While orderly and brief, this strike was only one of the many scattered disputes in the spring of the year. By June, operators were warning of an impending confrontation. In a report out of Barbourville in Knox County, it was reported that the Eastern Kentucky coal mining industry "is threatened with serious trouble as a result of a fight between capital and labor."[14] Union rallies were held throughout the Knox, Bell and Harlan county area; non-union operators repeatedly re-affirmed their determination to continue under present arrangements. In fact, some of the larger operators jointly issued a statement that they would "suspend mining rather than recognize the union."[15]

Thomas Gann, secretary-treasurer of UMW district 19, sent out calls to miners notifying them of a wage-scale meeting on July 16 in Pineville. Nearly every mine was represented with at least one delegate and many others were also present.[16] The stage, then, was set for a major district wide strike for wage increments and union recognition. Operators would be invited to a wage scale meeting and a strike date would be set if they refused to participate.

The wage scale meeting between operators and the union was set for August 7. As expected, the meeting was not attended by company officials except for a few of the smaller concerns.[17] As a result, ten thousand miners commenced the district strike of 1917. Within a short time, the number of striking miners would reach twenty thousand. In addition to wage increments, miners demanded recognition of the UMWA as their rightful bargaining agent. The operators, claiming they would not recognize the union under any circumstances, argued that the "miners are now receiving the highest wage in the history of the field."[18] Moreover, they pointed out that "the importance of a sufficient supply of coal at this time (WW I)" meant that the government would not permit an extended strike by miners.[19] All things considered, then, the position of the operators seemed secure, but one more point needs emphasis: holding back coal during this period of high prices would prove to be a costly proposition if the strike was extended for a very long period of time; holding back coal would also negatively impact the government's desire to win the war with coal.

Nevertheless, the determination of labor was strong. To show its support and determination to unionize Southeastern Kentucky, the UMWA sent Frank B. Hayes, vice-president of the international, to speak at the Straight Creek Ball Park, among other places. Talking to a crowd of over a thousand strikers, Hayes pledged that the international was solidly behind the miners of district 19 and that "no effort would be left untried to gain all their present demands."[20] For their part, operators displayed increasing determination to remain on an open shop basis.[21] Given the government established price for coal, operators claimed that they would rather shut down than recognize the union and pay increased labor costs. One report even states that "coal operators of the Kentucky-Jellico district are practically a unit in favor of permitting government take-over and operation of the mines."[22] This rather casual statement, however, was merely a statement of opposition to the union. As G.P. Morrison, general manager of the Clear Fork Company and "one of the most influential operators in the strike-ridden district," pointed out, the end of the strike was not far off. Morrison remarked that "the striking miners are gradually becoming dissatisfied with the long seige and starvation is forcing a number of them to return to work"[23] A show of determination not to unionize coupled with free market forces, Morrison felt, would achieve desired ends better than outright government intervention.

Even with the strong sentiment on both sides, the number of reported acts of violence was small. In one instance, eight employees of the Wilson-Bergy Coal Company in Harlan County were fired upon on their way to work. The shots, which were "fired from bushes beside the road," injured one man named Ewell Tapire who was shot through the shoulder. While the situation was examined by local officials, no arrests were made. And without any further information, it is impossible to know with any certainty why and by whom the incident was staged.[24]

This is not to say, however, that local officials were idle. In Harlan, a special Grand Jury was impannelled "for the exclusive purpose of probing law violations growing out of the strike."[25] Sixty miners were charged with the offense of "banning together for unlawful purposes." The charges, in a word, were so vague as to be a useful tool of social control in the coal camps. Based upon evidence largely supplied by the operators, militant miners and others sympathetic to the union could be taken out of action and used as an example for other would-be strikers.[26]

Even though the determination on the part of both capital and labor was formidable, the strike came to a quiet conclusion in early October of 1917. A report out of Middlesboro stated that practically "all of the 20,000 miners who have been on strike (in this district) returned to work yesterday under an agreement reached in Washington and ratified in Knoxville."[27] So complete was the settlement that mining was almost universally resumed. According to another report, "every mine in the Eastern Kentucky and Northeastern Tennessee district resumed work this morning except one in the Middlesboro area. The Capito mine is still idle because of personal differences between miners."[28]

Looking back on the 1917 labor troubles in Southeastern Kentucky, UMWA representatives issued various self-congratulatory statements in recognition of the effectiveness of this organizing activity. One delegate at the 1919 convention remarked that:

> almost without parallel in the annals of our organization is the story of the organization of district 19... Mr. Van Bittner was placed in charge and... marvelous success was obtained in organizing the isolated mountain communities... This is a most important territory and its resources of rich coal make it one of the greatest of our producing districts. (29)

What this particular report and others like it failed to clarify was the fact that the settlement of the dispute in the area was not so much a product of union success as it was a result of government intervention at the national level. Because of war-time conditions, the United States Fuel Administration was created to co-ordinate energy production and distribution to prevent serious shortages. The agreement reached in Washington was one arranged between H.A. Garfield, head of the Fuel Administration, coal operators, and UMWA officials. As such, the agreement was a success for labor. However, in addition to significant coal prices increases for operators and wage increments for miners, the Southeastern Kentucky agreement, which was not a standard agreement,[30] strongly urged operators to allow unions to remain in the mining regions _but only as a means to maintain labor stability_. That is, the union was allowed to exist but only under conditions specified by the Fuel Administration. These conditions included the outlawing of all strikes and automatic penalty clauses for violations. Under the agreement, disputes were to be taken up first with the mine forman; then, if this failed, complaints would go to a mine committee composed of both company and labor representatives. The final forum for appeals was a special board which was to consist of three company and three union representatives and one "disinterested" umpire who would cast a deciding vote in the event of a stalemate. Interestingly, the person named to act as the umpire was Rembrant Peale, a coal operator from Pennsylvania.[31]

The significance of the 1917 strike settlement was not, as the UMWA seemed to suggest, that the organizers had "achieved splendid accomplishments" in their campaign in district

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19. Rather, two other factors seem to be of greater importance. First, it should be pointed out that the settlement was a government imposed settlement. The role of the state in the arbitration of labor disputes in the coal industry would increase in importance with coming future strikes. Second, the settlement, for operators, represented a temporary recognition of the union, under specified conditions, in the interest of the nation and, more importantly, in the pursuit of war time profits which were guaranteed by the Fuel Administration. Actual labor conditions changed very little; in fact, they may have improved from the standpoint of operators and investors. Wages and prices were established and hence not an issue for the time being; strikes were outlawed, managerial perogatives were left intact and, now, labor discipline could be imposed with the aid of government if workers stepped out of line. The recognition of the union, then, might best be perceived as a minor, indeed, self-serving concession on the part of operators. The self-congratulatory remarks made by UMWA representatives may have been premature. The 1917 settlement was a temporary settlement made by operators in the interest of increased capital accumulation. The real struggle for unionization had just begun.

1919 Strike[33]

The next development of importance in the struggle to unionize Southeastern Kentucky coal counties took place during the latter part of 1919. The UMWA had developed, at its 1919 convention, certain demands including pay increases and a shorter work week. The strike date was set for November first. In Middlesboro, frenzied newpaper accounts began to appear in early October. One front page headline, in very bold type, stated ANTI-STRIKE LAWS THREATENED. In the accompanying article, the threat of a coal strike was characterized as a mass "attack on the government of the United States" and a statement was issued in support of a resolution introduced by Senator Thomas in Washington.[34] The resolution declared that a coal strike would "provoke violence, bloodshed and insurrection" and pledged "unqualified support" to the national "administration and others in authority in meeting the great emergency confronting us."[35] Shortly after the resolution was popularized and the administration expressed a willingness to support it, another front page headline appeared which joyfully announced MINERS ENJOINED FROM STRIKING.[36] In this report, it was reasonably explained, so that any man or woman could understand, that "while labor naturally opposed government by injunction, in this case, the government was moving for the public welfare."[37] The conflicting parties in this strike, then, were not just representatives of capital and labor. The government, with its appeal for legitimacy based upon a belief in its neutrality and an ideal of public good, became a significant participant. This was crucial. In taking a stand to strike, the miners were, in many eyes, taking a stand against the government and hence the public well being. Miners were soon characterized in the media as selfish and unpatriotic;[38] John L. Lewis was pictured as if he were public enemy number one;[39] and miners in Bell County were blamed for curtailments of a variety of public services including a disruption in passenger train service.[40]

Several factors worked to exacerbate work relations in the coal industry in general and in Eastern Kentucky in particular. The establishment of November first as a strike date did not happen simply because miners or union representatives were capricious.

On a national level, one significant factor involved the rapid rate of inflation which had accompanied the war-time industrial expansion. Foodstuffs were dear, and even conservative government estimates of inflation fell into double digit categories. According to a UMWA study, there was over an eighty-five percent increase in the retail price of food products between 1913-1918.[41] Using conservative calculations, the study found that many of the food items central to mountain, working-class diets had increased at an even more alarming rate. Lard, for instance, flour, potatoes, ham, and cornmeal all increased by over one hundred percent in price. The items which increased the least were items not central to mountain diets such as sirloin steak and rib roast among others.[42] During the same period, government statistical estimates revealed a startling advance of over one hundred percent for essential articles of clothing.[43] Inflation, then, was high on the list of crucial factors contributing to the 1919 strike. Under the 1917 agreement, miners' wages were fixed unless the Fuel Administration, under its agreement, gave the miners a wage hearing to present their case.

In addition to inflation, representatives of the UMWA were particularly vocal about what they perceived as gross insensitivity on the part of the Fuel Administration toward their problems. A letter, for instance, was sent to H.A. Garfield in 1918 which sought a hearing concerning the wages of bituminous miners and the rise of the cost-of-living. Garfield's reply was to the point and negative. The letter, addressed to then UMWA President Frank Hayes, commenced with the remark "that a request that wages be raised" was "contrary to the spirit and understanding of the 1917 agreement."[44] While Garfield did agree to closely follow the Labor Department's investigation into the recent cost-of-living increases and to authorize an investigation of wage inequities between anthracite and bituminous miners, he absolutely refused to arrange any wage discussions. The matter was, he suggested, beyond his control. "While I fully recognize the justice of fixing wage scales to... cover the cost of living," he wrote, "I am unwilling, even were I free to do so, to add to the discontent which has been created by dealing with each industry separately."[45] The letter concluded with an appeal to President Hayes to "exert your fullest with the mine workers."

Dissatisfied with Garfield's decision to "monitor" the problem but not to hold any further discussions, UMWA officials made a second appeal. Garfield's reply to this plea clearly demonstrated that he had no intention of arranging a wage hearing immediately or in the near future. "I have carefully considered the whole question of bituminous wages," he wrote, "and am convinced that an increase of wages... is not called for."[46]

For miners and their representatives, the refusal of Garfield and the Fuel Administration to even arrange a hearing on the question of wages generated many questions concerning the legitimacy of the government's intentions. Why, for instance, were significant wage inequities between coal districts allowed to exist and even widen? Why were union representatives not allowed to enter discussions about the relations between wages and inflation? Was the aim of government merely to bolster the profit margins of coal corporations through regulation? If so, who would pay; that is, who's purchasing power would decrease? At any rate, these and other questions were raised by UMWA President Hayes, Vice-President Lewis and Secretary-Treasurer Green in response to Garfield's no bargaining policy.[47]

Convinced of Garfield's unwillingness to hold a hearing, the union turned to Woodrow Wilson, then President of the United States. "We ask," the letter remarked, "only that the same treatment be accorded bituminous miners as that given the anthracite mine workers and employees of the ship-building industry. We ask for the privilege of presenting the claim... for an increase.... in wages... Surely, such an important body of our citizenship cannot be denied the right to present their case to the proper authority."[48] The letter concluded with a note that wages needed to be advanced in the neighborhood of twenty percent merely to cover the cost-of-living increases during the war.

President Wilson, however, would not sympathize with the mine workers' request. In his reply, dated November 18,1918, he told Frank Hayes that the miners would have to hold to their end of the 1917 agreement until the war came to a peaceful conclusion. Then, "I am hopeful that we can accomplish a transition of the nation's industries from war to peace with the least possible disturbances, suffering and loss."[49] Wilson also noted that

"I have examined with care the matter involved in your request and believe that the course pursued by Mr. Garfield not only deals justly with the bituminous mine workers today, but that this course, together with the firm adherence of the UMW to the arrangements made with me last year, constitute a long step in the direction of stabilizing wages."[50] Again, the mine workers' union failed to even arrange a meeting on the subject of wages. And what did Wilson mean by "stabilizing wages?" The whole point, from the miners' standpoint, was that their real wages were not stabilized--that inflation was decreasing their real earnings.

It was within this context of rapid inflation and governmental refusal to hold even a single wage hearing that UMWA delegates voted to issue a strike order for November first. As the strike date approached, Secretary of Labor Wilson pleaded with union and company representatives in an attempt to head off a disruption of the flow of coal. In one instance, Mr. Wilson intervened when both sides were on the verge of parting. In the midst of heated debate, he promised to give some wage increment to the miners if they would drop their shorter week demand and if they would call off the strike.[51] If miners accepted, they would be bound to a no-strike pledge and forced to accept increases calculated with the very conservative cost-of-living indices used by the

Labor Department. The shorter week demand, which workers saw as a way to correct the irregularity of work problem in the coal industry, would have to be sacrificed, Wilson argued, in the interest of industrial stability and public welfare. Miners', without much hesitation, rejected the proposal. During the whole discussion, the repeated emphasis on war-time needs only served to anger union representatives. The Central Powers had sued for peace one full year prior to the 1919 convention.[52] The war, workers believed, was for all practical purposes over. President Wilson's insistence that until the papers were signed war time conditions existed only served to foster miners' suspicions about the legitimacy of the government's role in the whole affair.

The next day Secretary of Labor Wilson introduced a second proposal to prevent a coal strike.[53] In the middle of a flurry of heated accusations hurled between capital and labor representatives, Mr. Wilson offered a dramatic appeal to end the stalemate. In his proposal, a call was made which, among other things, asked both sides to start fresh as if no demands had been made or rejected. This proposal led to some rather comical exchanges which demonstrated the firmness of the stalemate. As Secretary of Labor Wilson recalled the conversation between John L. Lewis and Thomas T. Brewster of the Coal Operators' Association: "the miners were willing to do just that and the operators were willing provided the strike order was withdrawn. To the latter demand, John L. Lewis retorted 'the strike order stands.' And Thomas Brewster replied that 'we are just where we started...."[54]

In a final, futile attempt to bring the opposing sides together, President Wilson sent a proposal through Secretary of Labor Wilson which called for compulsory arbitration and a no strike provision.[55] "With tears in his eyes," Secretary Wilson told reporters that "the talks had fallen down. The operators agreed to accept the proposals of the President in its entirety... and agreed to negotiate whenever the Secretary of Labor or the Miners' Wage Scale Committee called on them, and with that statement withdrew."[56] Union representatives, firmly opposed to the notion of compulsorary arbitration and no-strike pledges, were unconvinced of either the viability of the President's proposal or of his sincerity to help labor achieve a fair settlement. The talks, in a word, had come to a conclusion.

As over five hundred thousand miners walked off the job nation-wide, the government took a more active position, or at least a position that more closely was aligned with business, in the dispute. President Wilson pointed out once again that the strike "breaks the contract of the miners to continue work until peace is declared" and promised that troops would be used to prevent disorder.[57] "President Wilson and members of the cabinet," one report stated, "have agreed that the time has come to take a firm stand against the disposition to disregard the material interests of the great majority of people."[58] Furthermore, it was enthusiastically stated that the Wilson Administration had taken the determined position that there would be no "triffling in dealing with disorderly and selfish interests." One administration official put it this way: the government had taken a stand which committed the use of federal troops "to prevent radical elements" from gaining the upper hand "in the coal dispute and, thereby, to protect the rights of law abiding people."[59]

One reporter insisted that the government had taken "no sides in the present controversy between capital and labor except in the cabinet's condemnation of the bituminous coal miners."[60] Government actions, however, question such glib statements. Orders were issued, for instance, to seize coal trains in transit to assure the operation of the rail lines.[61] To guarantee the public interests, federal troops were ordered on alert to "protect those miners who work."[62] And all those who "curtailed production in any way," one official stated, "would be prosecuted without favor."[63] On November first, federal troops were ready to move and on November second "coal riot troops" were on their way to Kentucky.[64]

In addition to the Wilson Administration's opposition to the coal strike, there were some significant sources of anti-strike sentiment at the local level. Eastern Kentucky miners were rarely given sympathetic treatment in local newspapers. One report, which summarizes much of the sentiment expressed during the months of November and December, questioned the wisdom of the coal strike and the intentions of miners. "Every man in every walk of life is up against the same proposition... the burden, which hits all alike, must be borne by all until the conditions resulting from the war can right themselves and all things become normal."[65] There is also a question of the level of support offered by UMW leadership at the district 19 level. S.A. Keller, president of the district and future negotiator of open shop agreements in the area, expressed opposition to the strike and believed that a strike at the district level was not necessary. Accordingly, just a few days prior to the strike date, Mr. Keller left for Indianapolis to meet with operators and arrange to keep the mines open.[66] Left with little leadership and opposition from the press, miners were forced to respond more or less spontaneously to the strike call.

Despite the formidable opposition from government, press, and union leadership, Eastern Kentucky miners shut down almost every mine in Eastern Kentucky by the middle of November. A few mines remained in operation well into the month. For instance, R.A. Hord, secretary of the Hazard Coal Operators' Exchange, told reporters that many mines in the Hazard area were producing at normal capacities. And while such statements must be taken skeptically, officials at the C.L. Ryley Coal Company in the Hazard district corroborated Hord's statement by commenting that their miners "had not been affected by the strike."[67] Another report out of Middlesboro stated that two mines were operating in Bell County during the middle of November.[68] On the whole though, these operations were small and accounted for only a minor portion of the local coal production. With little organizational support, nearly fifty thousand Eastern Kentucky miners had, for all practical purposes, stopped the flow of coal.

A few weeks after the commencement of the strike, orders were sent to district 19 headquarters to call off the strike. S.A. Keller, it seemed, had succeeded in making a pact with local coal operators' associations while in Indianapolis. Miners, however, were unconvinced of the legitimacy of the orders. According to C.J. Norwood, chief inspector of mines for Kentucky, the "whole situation is in a state of flux... when some of the miners will return to work, others go out, while still others hesitate to return because the orders calling off the strike are said... not to bear the official seal of the UMW."[69] Operators, on the other hand, argued that the orders were valid and that arrangements had been obtained through special agreement with local labor representatives. Whether the orders were official or not, the strike remained, in large measure, unbroken.

Coal operators in the region were greatly distressed by the miners' belief that the Keller agreement was "a hoax gotten by the operators." One operator in the Middlesboro area reckoned that there must be outside agitators in the area stirring up resistence to duely constituted authority. In fact, he suggested that "agitators have gone among the men" to stir up anti-company sentiment; they are "riding trains advising men to stay away from the mines" and this was clearly in violation of the injunctions outlawing the strike.[70] In their efforts to combat the influence of the union men, operators encouraged various police type actions to run the "so-called reds" out of the area.[71] One important action taken was to employ various means to collect information on suspected organizers and then present the case to specially convened Grand Juries. One report, dated December 5, announced that a number of agitators would be arrested in connection with the strike. The report went on to comment that "evidence had been collected by the operators and placed before U.S. Attorney Palmer."[72] Evidence of this type constituted the basis for the prosecution of many miners in 1919 and the arrest of many more.

In their attempt to end the strike in Bell and Harlan counties, operators agreed on an increase in wages for all men employed in the mines.[73] The operators' proposal included a provision which declared that the mines would continue to operate on an open shop basis.[74] Therefore, when the miners of the Federal Coal Company offered to accept the agreement if the union was recognized, the company notified the men "that the mines would remain open shop."[75]

The important issue in the 1919 strike was increasingly that of unionization. Wages and other demands were placed in a position of secondary importance. "The policy of a closed shop," according to a statement issued by a number of coal operators in the Middlesboro area, "is un-American... Every man should be permitted to work at his own chosen occupation wherever he may be able to secure employment... A man's ability to perform work for which he seeks employment is sufficient for his employment regardless of whether or not he is a member of any labor organization."[76] So firm were operators in their determination to operate on a non-union basis that many even claimed to favor government take-over instead of going closed shop. Kenneth Mequire, president of the Harlan Coal Mining Company, remarked to reporters that "Uncle Sam can have my mine and welcome to it if he can do better with it than I can."[77] "Of course," he continued, "property owners always will look with nervousness on any seizure of their property... but this is a case where the public is to be considered first... I think 99 percent of Kentucky owners feel the way I feel about it."[78]

The issue of unionization in the Eastern Kentucky coalfield was not decisively resolved in the 1919 dispute. By mid-December, many miners had begun to return to work under increased wage agreements of about twenty-three percent.[79] Little by little, normal production levels were re-established. In many cases, workers still considered themselves to be union miners even though companies refused to go along with the check-off system which involved pay deductions for union dues and constituted virtual recognition of the union.[80] Indeed, when labor disputes arose again in 1922, operators claimed to never have signed a union contract but rather to have signed with a group of men, including S.A. Keller, who represented the men, not the union as such. The settlement reached in 1919, then, was a temporary one, a truce. Several factors including dubious union leadership, lack of public support, and strong governmental and operator resistence among other things combined to force miners back into an uneasy agreement. Besides the miners had been out of work for nearly two months and a decisive victory was not yet in sight. So Eastern Kentucky miners returned to work with somewhere between twenty and thirty percent increases in pay and with some hopes still alive for making the area strongly union--even though the national agreement, when it was completed, left Kentucky miners out of standard wage agreements.

1922 Strike

There are several reasons why miner and operator positions toward the issue of unionization were so strongly antagonistic in the formative years of coal mining in Eastern Kentucky. Among other things, it is important to point out that the coal industry during this period was characterized by labor intensive work processes. Confronted by an unstable industry, investors were understandably reluctant to risk huge sums on mechanization. It was far easier, and less risky, to simply hire and discard labor power "as the market demanded." In addition, there was the problem of differential freight rates and competition from other coal fields which served to intensify the operators' resistence to unionization. From the standpoint of operators and miners, this type of production strategy had far-reaching ramifications. For operators, it meant that increases in profit margins and the rate of surplus-value could not be derived from technologically induced increases in the productivity of labor. Because what Marxian economists call the organic composition of capital remained constant, relative increases in the rate of surplus-value were not forthcoming. Instead, operators had to rely upon more direct, or absolute, strategies to increase the rate of surplus-value. Richard Simon develops this line of reasoning in a lucid paper on the labor process and uneven development.[81] Essentially, Simon points out that coal operators, because they were technically limited, necessarily resorted to various direct attempts to improve the surplus-value extraction process. Wage cuts, excessive charges at the commissaries, wage deductions, short weighing, and script, he argues, might usefully be analyzed in terms of their impact on capital accumulation. Given this line of reasoning, it is easy to understand operator insistence upon an open shop and strongly paternalistic company controlled communities. Similarly, it is easy to understand labor support of unions. For miners, unions represented the single most important means of resisting these absolute increases in the rate of surplus-value and this strongly paternalistic system of social control. Unions offered a promise of weakened hegemony of capital interests and the transfer of some control over the workplace and community to laboring people.

It should also be pointed out that union recognition by operators in 1917 was not forthcoming until the government devised a political means of maintaining the surplus-value extraction process. Government price supports coupled with assistance in the enforcement of labor discipline lured even the most reluctant operators into temporary acceptance of the UMWA. Indeed, it is highly unlikely that union success would have been forthcoming had not these political pre-conditions existed.

As the end of the 1919 wage agreement neared, it became increasingly clear that conditions differed greatly from those in the previous strikes. As early as January of 1922, reports out of Southeastern Kentucky indicated that the position of labor was far from strong. From Williamsburg came news that "many large coal operators in Harlan and Bell counties were running at thirty percent capacity."[82] "Many large operations," according to one journalist, "were completely shut down while others operated only one or two days a week." An estimated five thousand miners were idle during January. In Middlesboro, the under-employment problem of miners was particularly serious and many operators were hiring older and other marginal miners at below union rates. At one such operation, the Yellow Creek Mine, several of these non-union men were fired upon by "thirty or forty undisclosed persons." According to Major E.S. Helburn, manager of the Yellow Creek Mine, "we are trying to get the mines back in order by going to work on a small scale and paying workers what we can afford to pay. These men were out of employment for months. They needed the money to keep their families and they went to work. The shooting occurred of course because the men had gone to work for less than union wages."[83] No one was injured in this particular incident but similar confrontations were common during the early weeks of 1922.

An additional indication of the importance of irregularity of work in the months prior to the 1922 strike can be found in government statistics. For Eastern Kentucky as a whole, the average number of days worked per year fell from 196 in 1919 to 182 in 1920 and then to 160 in 1921. In several counties, however, the figures fell to even lower levels. In Bell County, for instance, the average number of days worked by miners fell from 185 in 1920 to 135 in 1921. In Letcher County, coal miners worked an average of 211 days in 1919 but only 140 in 1921.[84] Such a reduction in employment would be translated into more than a twenty-five percent reduction in annual income.

The crisis in the coal industry in the 1921-22 period was primarily a market, or realization crisis. That is, the inability of operators to transform coal into surplus capital was not the result of decreased productivity as many business periodicals pointed out. In fact, there was an increase of about thirteen percent in average daily output of Kentucky (Eastern) miners between 1919 and 1920 which was followed by an additional increment in 1921.[86] Other factors such as over-expansion and poor planning, among others, can probably better account for the late 1921, early 1922, coal glut.

For their part, coal operators responded to this realization crisis with cost cutting efforts in general and labor cost cutting efforts in particular. And in their effort to reduce labor costs, employers' resistence to unionization inevitably intensified.

From the initial negotiation attempts in January, operators expressed strong sentiment against the United Mine Workers union. On the national level, union attempts to hold wage meetings were scuttled. For instance, when John L. Lewis called a meeting on January sixth, operators from the Pittsburg district and two groups from Ohio refused to meet with representatives of the miners' union.[87] Their position was unchanged as late as mid-March as coal operators appeared to dig in for the strike. One journalist commented that "notwithstanding representation made to them by the Secretary of Labor who holds that existing contracts require them to at least enter negotiations, mine operators continue to refuse to enter a conference with the UMW looking to the creation of a new wage contract."[88] The view of President Harding's administration seemed to support the views held by employers. The best course was either to remain uninvolved as conditions were not suitable for negotiations or to put pressures on labor. Secretary of Labor Davis, for instance, commented on the eve of the strike that talk between operators and the union "could do no possible good and would only develop into a 'talk feast' barren of real solution."[89] And according to President Harding, the difficulty in the coal business lies in the rise of labor and transportation (railroad workers) costs which had "put the United States out of the class of coal-exporting countries." Any action on the part of the administration, therefore, would not likely benefit labor a great deal. As Harding put it, if the government decides to intervene, it will "hold the export situation first in mind."[90]

On the local level, Eastern Kentucky operators not only refused to deal with the UMW but even went so far as to claim that they had never, in the strong legal sense, signed a union contract in 1919. According to a Southern Appalachian Coal Operators' Association spokesman, "an agreement was made between three operators in the Southern Appalachian Field and three miners relative to wages... On the behalf of the miners, it was signed by S. Keller, Frank Walters, and Van S. Bittner. This agreement will expire simultaneously with the wage agreement of the UMW... but the agreement here is unlike others in that it is not an agreement that recognizes the Union, but is signed on both sides by parties as individuals."[91]

In terms of their desire to operate outside the context of any UMW contract, operators were clearly on the offensive. Operators, however, were also on the offensive in their attempts to expand their share of the proceeds of the production process. That is, operators were in consensus upon one thing: their belief that labor was receiving too much in wages and that the high price of coal (and the low returns) were primarily the result of unreasonable labor costs. Accordingly, business interests argued that "miners should share in the general deflation that has been going on in other industries."[92] What this boiled down to, in practical terms, was an operators' demand for a substantial reduction in miners' wages. The figure commonly tossed around in Eastern Kentucky was a twenty percent wage cut. Some operators, however, went even further. Coal operators in the trans-Mississippi area, for instance, seriously considered a fifty percent reduction in wage rates.[93]

As the first of April strike date neared, various government officials expressed concern and confusion over the prospects and causes of another nation-wide coal strike. Attorney General Daughterly, for one, issued stern warnings that violence to prevent coal production would not be tolerated. According to him, coal was "an indispensible part of transportation" and therefore the government has the "same authority to... act as it would in the event of an interruption of the nation's transportation system."[94] As Daughterly put it, the government would "not wait until there was an actual shortage of coal before taking action."[95] In Washington, legislators also expressed concern over the coal strike and its causes. Among others, John Noan of California, and chairman of the House Committee on Labor, urged the creation of a Federal Commission to investigate labor conditions in the industry.[96] Chairman Gaskill of the Federal Trade Commission reinforced Noan's pleas by issuing a similar statement shortly after the strike began.[97] Another legislator, Oscar E. Bland of Indiana, made a number of stronger statements which, to some, seemed outrageous, but, to others, made good sense. According to Bland, "operators, in refusing to meet with miners, want to have an unsettled condition of affairs in order to boost the price of coal, and they are boosting it."[98] It was becoming clear that something was fundamentally amiss in the coal industry.

On April first, close to five hundred miners from three mines in the Middlesboro area walked off the job.[99] Within two days, only one major coal concern, the Southern Mining Company which had mines in Bell and Harlan counties, was operating.[100] Reports out of Harlan and other southeastern counties were confused but it was clear that operators were trying to give the impression that all was well in the area. One report, for instance, stated that the UMWA "order has not affected coal production as it remained at ninety percent capacity."[101] Note that this is a level rarely reached even during normal times. According to E.E. Clayton, secretary of the Harlan Coal Operators' Association, "the mines in Harlan County, excepting those before the strike, were operating today."[102] To help clear up this statement, Clayton explained that many mines would be closed for repairs during the next few weeks and therefore substantial reductions in output should be expected. Notwithstanding statements that all was well in the Southeastern Kentucky fields, the strike was on. Over twelve thousand miners were on strike by April third and, as one journalist put it, "the strike in district 19 is complete."[103]

Given the poor position of labor during the past year and the hostile attitudes of employers, little could be expected. The two central demands included the maintenance of existing wage scales and the recognition of the UMWA as the miners' bargaining agent. Company officials responded in mid-April by re-asserting their strong belief that a closed shop was unsuitable to the industry or to the country. Rightaway, legal attempts to hinder unionization activities were instituted. A news dispatch revealed that Eastern Kentucky operators were filing an injunction against the UMWA in Federal Court at Lexington to prevent organization activities and picketing.[104] Such actions were crucial to Kentucky operators for such an injunction would severely curtail the ability of organizers to move freely in the coal fields thus seriously crippling their unionization drive and also allow the movement of coal from mines not influenced by the strike. During the first two weeks of the strike, the price of coal rose over sixty-six percent and continued to increase. Given these price increments, it was clearly advantageous for operators to use all legal instrumentalities available to keep the coal trains moving.[105]

In an attempt to capture some of the rewards of the newly revived coal market, seven Southeastern Kentucky mines operated by the Logan-Pocahantas Fuel Company and the Federal Coal Company and fourteen mines in East Tennessee successfully reached an open-shop agreement with miners represented by S. Keller and E.L. Reed, representatives of district 19. While the objectives of Keller and Reed in making such a settlement in the midst of a major district wide strike are not entirely clear, a representative of the Kentucky-Tennessee Coal Operators' Association claimed that the aim of the agreement was to "harmonize to the fullest extent a close relationship between miners and operators, feeling that through the existence of cordial relationships the public will at all times be taken care of."[106] Keller and Reed, it seemed, pursued the agreement because it offered the miners a living wage. But it should be pointed out that the agreement rejected UMWA representation and allowed the mines to commence operation immediately despite the strike.

Management's use of the concept 'working for the public welfare' is intriguing since at the time coal prices were increasing and it is questionable as to whether such open-shop agreements were formalized for the public good or as a means to weaken the union and to take advantage of high prices. As production expanded, Governor Morrow of Kentucky studied a series of reports suggesting that the coal brokers were to blame for the high cost of coal. Whether monopolistic control over coal markets allowed open-shop operators to flourish during the strike or whether such market control was for the public good remained unanswered.

Determined operator resistence to unionization was expressed in various other ways during 1922. One seemingly harmless indication of an open shop bias can be found in a cursory examination of the Keystone Coal Catalog of 1922. A typical advertisement, for instance, boasted that "we operate our mines on a non-union basis. Our customers need not concern themselves over ever recurring strike periods that harrass unionized fields."[107] Another reflection of the anti-union position of operators can be found in the reports of the twelfth annual meeting of the Southern Appalachian Coal Operators' Association in Knoxville. Over one hundred operators adopted a series of open-shop resolutions with no opposition. One such resolution reads: "that this association have nothing to do with labor matters except to resist with all its influence and power both directly and indirectly any movement to force the mines of this district into a closed shop basis."[108] Another resolution urged the adoption of a constitutional amendment in opposition to the closed shop and the so-called check-off. And finally, members of the SACOA recommended that wages be returned to pre-war levels and that working conditions be similarly changed. Throughout the strike, these sentiments would be repeated as operators would claim that "the public should not be compelled to continue to buy coal mined at wages which were the result of war time conditions and which were the highest ever paid in the industry."[109]

Still another indication of how seriously operators resisted unionization efforts can be found in various reports concerning general evictions of those in sympathy with the union. While operators denied the charge of wholesale evictions, they did acknowledge at least sixty evictions in process in early April.[110] And one prominent operator of the Yellow Creek Mine stated that the company had provided houses with light, water, and coal to miners for several months. Evictions came about "when these miners not only refused to work in the owner's mines but refused to let anyone else work there and shot at workers who tried to.... There would be no thought of eviction," the operator continued, "if the men would pay rental or work for the company that furnished them with houses."[111]

As the strike stretched into summer and as coal prices increased by two and three hundred percent, President Harding announced a proposed strike settlement which included the maintenance of current wage scales and further arbitration over the issue of unionization. The response of coal operators was soon forthcoming. A letter of protest, formulated at a special meeting of the Non-Union Coal Operator's Association in Cincinnati, was sent to the President and released to the Press on July 14. The non-union operators totally rejected Harding's proposals on several grounds. First, the association claimed that their efforts in the current strike had led to a "reduction in the labor costs of producing coal" and that the reduction in the cost-of-living to which the public was entitled "should not be surrendered." Second, the resumption of work in the union mines at high wages would force non-union operators to raise their wages in order to hold their labor supply. Such a situation, they felt, would destroy the effects of the non-union operators' drive to reduce labor costs. Third, non-union operators felt that Harding's plan granted special privileges to union labor which were not based upon economic conditions and thereby gave labor a subsidy at the expense of the public, without the public's consent.[112] Operators, in a word, feared that government intervention in this case would give the UMWA a monopoly over the labor market and thereby obstruct the normal functioning of the laws of supply and demand. Wages should be determined on the free market. Wages should not be pushed artifically high through special, non-economic, rights granted to labor.

Even if Harding was committed to this proposal, without the support of these operators, his hands were tied. Both representatives of capital and labor were deadlocked over the issue of union recognition. A simple plea for arbitration was unsatisfactory to either side.

The intensification of bitterness between operators and miners led to sporatic outbreaks of violence in the area. By late July, the militia was again called into the area to protect lives, property, order, and working miners. One detachment of twenty-three troops from Barbourville arrived at the Yellow Creek Mine on July 28.[113] Shooting in this district was especially hard to control. The coal was dug on the Tennessee side of the border and then delivered to the Kentucky side where the miners lived. There were no Tennessee troops at the sight although they were requested. Such a situation presented various social control problems for local police authorities and opportunities for striking miners to make their demands heard. Shortly after the arrival of the troops, for instance, there was a report of dissident Kentucky miners crossing the border and kidnapping the sheriff, county judge, and twenty others in Clairborne County, Tennessee.[114] The point, however, is that antagonisms sharpened. The presence of troops and extra "mine guards" hired by operators served to exacerbate relations and increase the possibility of a clash. Miners, while silent, were armed. According to one journalist, a clash "in this mining district is believed imminent... The situation is regarded as critical despite the coming of thetroops, as mine sympathizers have declared that a battle is almost certain if troops were sent... Disorderly elements are reported to have practically terrorized the district adjacent to the mine by parading with a display of arms."[115]

Looking back on the 1922 strike, it is clear that operators' refusal to deal with the union in Eastern Kentucky paid off. Weakened by a period of irregular employment resulting from poor business, miners were simply not in a positon to withstand a sustained business offensive. In mid-August, a UMW agreement was reached in Cleveland, Ohio. This agreement restored the existing wage scale of April 1 in the Central Competitive Field. Regional agreements would have to be worked out separately. Thus, without national UMWA support and with local district leaders already having completed and in the process of completing open shop pacts with operators, the chances for a successful unionization drive were destroyed.

Conclusions

The significance of the 1922 strike in Eastern Kentucky was this: the issue of unionization was decisively resolved in favor of the coal companies. It would be nearly ten years before the issue would again gain importance and even then miners suspicions about the committment of the union would resurface.[116] Throughout the twenties, the problems that most influenced the lives of Eastern Kentucky miners--problems including short-weighing, irregularity of work,[117] wage deductions, wage cuts, and housing leases--

continued to make living hard. Families were still subject to the paternalistic system of social control that has made coal camps legendary. And as soon as 1927, the industry would enter a major recession which would have a profound negative impact on the quality of life for miners and their families in the region.[118] Dubious union leadership coupled with operator resistence to unionization, legal aid to employers and other factors contributed to the formation of labor relations that would characterize Eastern Kentucky coal counties for the remainder of the decade.

Also note that from a more theoretical standpoint, these various strike situations underscore the importance of the state as a mediator of class antagonisms. The operation of various governmental agencies was consistently caught between a need to assist in the capital accumulation process on the one hand and to maintain its legitimacy on the other. The clear favoritism given to coal operators frequently led to massive resistence by miners of official edicts. And when confronted by miners' militancy, the government response was typically to side with employers to help maintain operator hegemony or to initiate investigative hearings.

Notes

1. James Rinehart, The Tyranny of Work, (Don Mills, Ontario: Longman, Canada, Ltd., 1975); Stanley Aronowitz, False Promises, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973); Harry Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Capital, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974); Jeremy Brecher, Strike, (Boston: South-End Press, 1972).

2. For the purpose of this study, I have focused upon Bell, Harlan, Letcher, and Perry counties as those which constitute the Southeastern Kentucky coalfields. Each of these counties was served by the L & N Railway system. To the north and east, another major Kentucky coalfield can be found in and around Pike and Johnson counties. This area was served by the C & O Railway system.

3. Courier-Journal 12/22/15

4. Lexington Leader 7/10/15

5. Ibid. 7/18/15

6. Courier-Journal 7/20/15; Lexington Leader 7/9/15

7. Courier-Journal 7/20/15

8. Lexington Leader 7/27/15

9. Ibid. 7/31/16

10. Ibid.

11. Courier-Journal 1/8/17

12. Ibid. 5/20/17

13. Lexington Leader 3/8/17

14. Ibid. 6/29/17

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid. 7/8/17

17. Ibid. 8/7/17; 8/6/17

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.* 9/19/17

21. *Ibid.* 9/26/17

22. *Ibid.* 9/29/17

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.* 9/28/17

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*

27. Ibid. 10/9/17

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Proceedings*, *UMW* *Convention*, *1919*, 62

30. *Ibid.* 84-6, 91

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Ibid.* 325

33. One might point out that the 1919 strike was tied to the so-called 'red scare' of this period. While there is something to such statements, I have tried to steer away from them as an explanation of insurgency and repression. To dismiss the economic and political repressive practices of the period as the product of mass paronoia or some other psychological anomaly, I believe, would lead to confusion. Such an explanation might obscure the degree to which the red scare was a logical product of social and economic conditions.

34. *Pinnacle* *News* (Middlesboro) 10/25/19

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.* 11/14/19

37. *Ibid.*

38. Pineville Sun 11/14/19

39. Pinnacle News (Middlesboro) 11/31/19

40. Ibid. 11/3/19

41. Proceedings, UMW Convention, 1919, 72-5

42. Ibid. 73

43. Ibid. 75

44. Letter from H.A. Garfield to Frank Hayes, summer 1918, reprinted in Ibid., 27.

45. Ibid.

46. Letter from Garfield to Hayes, November 1, 1918, reprinted in Ibid., 23.

47. Ibid. 27-37

48. Letter from Frank Hayes to Woodrow Wilson, reprinted in Ibid., 33-4.

49. Letter from Woodrow Wilson to Frank Hayes, reprinted in Ibid, 34 .

50. Ibid.

51. Courier-Journal 10/23/19

52. Ibid. 10/6/18

53. Ibid. 10/24/19

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid. 10/25/19

56. Ibid.

57. Lexington Leader 10/26/19

58. Ibid.

59. Courier-Journal 10/26/19

60. *Courier-Journal* 10/26/19

61. *Ibid*. 10/31/19

62. *Ibid*.

63. *Ibid*.

64. *Ibid*. 11/1/19; 11/2/19

65. *Pineville Sun* 11/14/19

66. *Pinnacle News* (Middlesboro) 10/28/19; *Middlesboro Daily News* 1/21/22

67. *Lexington Leader* 11/13/19; 11/20/19; *Pineville Sun* 11/28/19

68. *Lexington Leader* 11/15/19

69. *Ibid*. 11/20/19

70. *Ibid*. 11/15/19

71. See "Bell County Folder," WPA Materials, State Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky

72. *Pineville Sun* 12/5/19; *Lexington Leader* 12/5/19

73. *Pineville Sun* 11/10/19

74. *Ibid*.

75. *Ibid*.

76. *Ibid*.

77. *Lexington Leader* 11/30/19

78. *Ibid*.

79. *Ibid*. 12/12/19; 12/29/19; *Pineville Sun* 12/12/19

80. *Lexington Leader* 12/12/19

81. Richard Simon, "The Labor Process and Uneven Development: The Appalachian Case," Unpublished Manuscript, Urban & Environmental Systems, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University.

82. *Middlesboro Daily News* 1/20/22

83. *Ibid.*

84. *Mineral Resources of the United States*, Department of the Interior, 1919-1922 (published yearly)

85. For example, see issues of the *Manufacturers' Record*, a southern weekly on business, financial, industrial and railroad affairs.

86. *Mineral Resources* 1922, 597

87. *Middlesboro Daily News* 1/16/22

88. *Courier-Journal* 3/14/22; 3/18/22

89. *Ibid.* 3/25/22

90. *Ibid.*

91. *Middlesboro Daily News* 1/21/22

92. Courier-Journal 3/14/22

93. *Ibid.* 3/19/22

94. *Middlesboro Daily News* 3/23/22

95. *Ibid.*

96. *Courier-Journal* 3/26/22

97. *Middlesboro Daily News* 4/1/22; 4/3/22; 4/10/22

98. *Courier-Journal* 3/18/22

99. *Ibid.* 4/2/22

100. *Ibid.* 4/4/22

101. *Ibid.* 4/2/22; 4/4/22; *Lexington Leader* 4/3/22

102. *Lexington Leader* 4/3/22

103. *Middlesboro Daily News* 4/1/22; 4/3/22; 4/10/22

104. *Lexington Leader* 4/20/22

105. Ibid. 4/23/22

106. Ibid. 5/7/22

107. Ibid. 7/31/22

108. page 472

109. Lexington Leader 7/31/22

110. Middlesboro Daily News 4/14/22

111. Ibid.

112. Lexington Leader 7/13/22; 7/14/22

113. Ibid. 7/28/22

114. Ibid. 7/31/22

115. Ibid. 7/8/22

116. See John Hevener, Which Side Are You On? The Harlan County Coal Miners, 1931-1939, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), Chapter 1.

117. Hevener points out that while wages declined in Harlan County in the twenties, work became more regular at many of the major mines. Thus, while hourly wages were lower than union scale, many miners prospered. See Ibid., p 9.

118. See Mineral Resources of the United States, Department of the Interior, later published by the Department of Commerce, 1927-1930 for an excellent discussion of the weakening of the coal industry during this period.

Chapter Seven: CONCLUSIONS

As the preceding pages suggest, the years between 1870 and 1930 mark an important transition period in the emergence of industrial capitalism in Eastern Kentucky. As early as the late 1860's, Kentucky politicians began to formulate policies that would 1) entice industrial capital to the region, and 2) facilitate the development of an adequate labor supply to meet industrial needs. Agencies were established to distribute information to prospective investors and plans to limit access to land by labor were combined with plans to increase immigration to the state. By 1892, the formation of a land monopoly by industrial investors was clearly in evidence in several counties. In addition to land, investors spent heavily in constructing coal preparation facilities for future operations. Even before the railroad entered Harlan County, for instance, Wisconsin Steel had built coke ovens, electric generating facilities, and a water works system. From 1900 to 1930, there was a rapid period of industrialization in the coalfields which could be measured in terms of output and a dramatic increase in the size of the working-class. Pre-capitalist forms of production were either swept away or simply overwhelmed by the scale of capitalist production.

The 1870-1930 period contained concrete-historical developments which had a profound influence on the class structure of the area. The influence is still strongly felt today. Based upon data used by the Kentucky Department for Human Resources, for instance, one report recently offered an estimate of the percent of county employment directly involved in mining and quarrying In 1976 in Bell County, 19.4 percent of the workforce was dependent upon mining and quarrying for their means of subsistence. The figure was 41.3 percent for Harlan County, 44.9 percent for Perry County and 53.8 percent for Letcher County.[1] Even Carter County, a relatively minor coal producing county, had 8.3 percent of its labor force involved in mining and quarrying. Land ownership data is harder to obtain. However, Joe Childers, at the University of Kentucky, has compiled data indicating that land ownership patterns in many eastern counties is still structured in rather monopolistic ways. In Harlan County in 1977, for instance, U.S. Steel, Kentenia Corporation, Harlan Land Company, Georgia-Pacific, Duke Power, and Gulf and Western were listed as the six largest out-of-state land owners and coal mine operators.[2] Moreover, for these six coal companies, the average acre of land was assessed for tax purposes at around $ 108.00. The ramifications of such a situation, for education, for social services and for recreational facilities, are many and complex.[3]

Theoretically, the data contained in this thesis suggest several conclusions. First, the importance of transcending individual-level explanations of the 'Appalachian situation' is underscored.

While undoubtedly useful and important, the ideas and conclusions of cultural theorists need to be placed in a more structural context. The links between the structure of class and the problems of living in Central Appalachia are real and complex. Second, modernization and other theories which assume the efficacy of a free market cannot provide a realistic account of development in Eastern Kentucky because they cannot focus upon the repressive character of labor relations and because they cannot seriously examine the importance of class conflict and struggle as a force giving shape to social-economic development. Several factors were identified in the thesis which worked to restrict the operation of free market forces and create a structure of social control that favored operators and assurred their hegemony. These factors included: 1) monopolistic patterns of land ownership which limited access to resources and thereby limited alternative possibilities for development and put a fetter upon the Independent Mode of Production; 2) a single industry economy that was characterized by an over-supply of labor which worked to guarantee favorable conditions on the labor market for operators as miners competed for scarce jobs; 3) the existence of company-controlled towns which permitted operators to impose restrictive conditions on labor in many non-economic ways; and, 4) the importance of the state as an agency to sanction appropriate class relations, reinforce the surplus-value extraction process, and maintain the legitimacy of dominant classes. Each of these area requires careful analysis before one can glibly assume the 'rationality' of social development in Eastern Kentucky.

Analysis of coal company owned communities underlines the importance of studying class development from a local/regional standpoint but within a national context. The logic leading to the dramatic increases of capital invested in Eastern Kentucky between 1890 and 1915 cannot be understood outside of the national, and even international, context. Similarly, the shaping of class relations in the area can best be understood within the context of the national economy. Foreign to the region, many coal operators promoted a closed town economy and society which served to reinforce dominant interests and maintain a reliable supply of labor. A special kind of paternalism emerged in which housing, stores, recreational facilities, land ownership and police were all used to control and maintain a stable workforce. Indeed, even after these occupational communities were long established, coal operators, unlike bosses in steel and other industries, refused to relinquish absolute control over these towns.[4] Paternalistic practices helped maintain the flow of surplus-value to, among others, northern interests but it also led to increased miner militancy in their struggle to gain union representation and some measure of control over their lives. This element, miners' resistence, became an important factor determining the structure of class and patterns of development.

In a recent study, Dwight Billings argues that a radically different form of industrial paternalism and pattern of miner resistence developed in the textile mill towns of North Carolina.[5] These industrial communities were built by aristocracy classes of planters from the old South, Billings argues, and towns developed as outgrowths of more traditional social relations and forms of authority. Wages were cheaper and work days were longer than those for mill workers in New England. Social control, while often subtle, was as strong as in coal communities in Central Appalachia. Neverthless, totally different patterns of workers' resistence and development emerged. Unionization drives in the southern mill towns were notoriously unsuccessful and labor discontent was displayed in less violent ways. While Billings does not provide an explanation for all the factors which contributed to the sharply contrasting situations, his analysis points to the need to understand the structure of class in its historical context. As Marx pointed out, the development of class is highly problematic and depends upon 'numerous empirically variable circumstances.'

Finally, there is nothing 'magical' or 'unique' about the underdevelopment, the poverty, or the class structure of Central Appalachia. Nor is there any reason to study Central

Appalachia as a region that somehow developed outside Industrial America. There may be some basis for examining the region as a special case in rural industrial development as even today it is perhaps the most industrialized rural area of the country. But, Eastern Kentucky in general and the coal counties in particular emerged in the context of national capitalist developments. What appears as irrational, unique, or unjust at one level can sometimes be examined interms of what interests were served at another level. Eastern Kentucky was developed under the direction of northern capitalists among others. These men seldom saw the region in any terms other than as a source of raw materials, labor power and profits, Workers, for their purposes, existed for the expanded reproduction of capital. By 1930, a new class structure had emerged.

Notes

1. *A Baseline Assessment of Coal Industry Structure in the ORBES Region*, (Lexington: Appalachian Center, University of Kentucky, June 1979), Table 3-11.

2. *Ibid.*, "Appendix: Coal County Profiles," 58-60.

3. Low tax assessments serve the interest of coal corporations by reducing business costs and increasing the rate of profit. The surplus extraction process is thus reinforced. For the local communities, this means an inadequate tax base for financing public services most notably education. One response to these fiscal constraints has been the apply to the Federal Government for assistance. The result is that coal companies are subsidized under the guise of providing assistance to low income communities.

4. Daniel Nelson, *Managers and Workers: Orgins of the New Factory System in the United States, 1880-1920*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), especially 90-95.

5. Dwight Billings, *Planters and the Making of a 'New South:' Class, Politics, and Development in North Carolina, 1865-1900*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), especially 108-110.

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