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THE UNITED MINE WORKERS JOURNAL: A CASE STUDY OF COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN UMW LEADERS AND MEMBERS, 1950-1990

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Science
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Cynthia J. Tanner
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother,
Mona Bradfield Samuels,
the ever-present beacon in my search for scholarship.

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ABSTRACT

Using the United Mine Workers Journal as its primary source, this thesis compares how the UMW from 1972 to 1991 differed from that of the previous two decades in terms of encouraging member participation in union policy-making. To place changes within the union in a broader context, the study explores the influence of four major leaders--John L. Lewis, W. A. "Tony" Boyle, Arnold Miller, and Richard Trumka--on union structure and examines fluctuations in the bituminous-coal industry over a 40-year period, beginning in 1950.

Issues of the Journal from 1951 through 1971 are compared with those from 1972 through 1991. Under the early direction of Miller and the Miners for Democracy, the number of Journal pages reserved for members to voice their union concerns increased and the ratio of covers featuring miners and their families to those featuring union officials increased. That trend was somewhat reversed during the Miller administration's later years. By the 1980s and early 1990s, the Journal under Trumka's leadership had reinstated the earlier changes. It had also added some of its own--most significantly, how-to articles on dealing with management, union organizing, and recruiting new activists within the local--to encourage rank-and-file participation.

The study concludes that the labor press serves a vital function in advocating for and educating union members. But it asserts that because unions like the UMW are business, not revolutionary, unions, the extent to which the rank and file can expect to play a part in determining union policy is limited.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 1973, coal mining was the most dangerous industrial occupation in the country. On November 20, 1968, in a single mining accident in Farmington, West Virginia, 78 men died. During the previous decade, 2,662 work-related fatalities, not including miners who died of pneumoconiosis, or black lung, were reported. The U.S. surgeon general announced at the end of that decade that an estimated 125,000 active or retired bituminous coal miners suffered from black lung alone. (Fox, 462-64)

Considering the hazardous nature of their occupation, one might expect that coal miners would have a significant voice in the decisions that affect their jobs. Historically, that has not been the case. On the contrary, miners have been among the most controlled workers, not only by the companies who hire them but also by the United Mine Workers of America (UMW), the union created to represent them. Research conducted in the early 1950s concluded that "acquiescence to authoritarian control and diminished membership participation in union activities had 'perhaps' developed further in the Mine Workers than in any of the other unions whose members were interviewed." (Lester, 102) Not until the mid-1960s, after John L. Lewis had retired as president of the UMW and W. A. "Tony" Boyle had taken the top position, did the miners begin to seek a more active role in their union. By the 1970s, they were demanding it.

The beginning of that decade brought with it a new style of leadership in the UMW. With the election of Arnold Miller in 1972 and the elevation to power of the Miners for Democracy came a rise to power of the miners themselves. Changes to facilitate increased member participation were initiated by the leadership. They included amending the constitution to allow for internal debate and formally encouraging the members to voice their opinions.

There were lapses in democratic process over the next 20 years--most visibly in the second half of the 1970s. But the UMW of the early 1990s, under the leadership of Richard Trumka, was said overall to continue in the early Miners for Democracy practice of providing the UMW membership an opportunity to play a more active role in union policy. The United Mine Workers Journal, the printed voice of the UMW, was a vehicle for fulfilling that task.

In The House of Labor, editors J.B.S. Hardman and Maurice Neufeld wrote that the purpose and importance of the labor press lay in counterbalancing the often inadequate and biased reporting of labor issues by the commercial press. (Hardman and Neufeld, 176-77) "Hostile criticism," Elmer Beck agreed in his 1970 paper on the Milwaukee Leader, "has been directed at the daily press from its beginnings by a variety of elements in American society, including labor. Dissatisfaction with the press has led to the founding of newspapers, including labor papers, to publish news and comment nearer to the heart's desire of the critics." (Beck, v) The question of which critics the labor press ultimately pleases has been addressed by a number of communications researchers, and several have written of the United Mine Workers Journal before 1975.

The UMW Journal, a national monthly distributed to all members, has been around almost as long as the organization it represents. The UMW began in 1890; the Journal, the following year. The Journal acted as a unifying force for miners. The publication, said Maier Fox in United We Stand, linked the "men of the pick" from Appalachia to Colorado. (Fox, 25-31) Certainly, the Journal connected mine workers in ways the mainstream press could not and, in some circumstances, would not. In the beginning, it provided a forum for the exchange of information, complaints, and ideas for miners across North America.

But like the union it represented, the UMW Journal changed when Lewis became president in 1920 and continued to change throughout the Boyle administration. Brit Hume, in Death in the Mines, described the editorial content under the leadership of Boyle as "usually the text of any statement or speech by Boyle, frequently published in full whether it dealt with a subject of interest to coal miners or not." (Hume, 1971)

When Arnold Miller took over as president, he brought with him a crew of professional activists, including a new director of publications, Don Stillman. Stillman began immediately to convert the Journal into a vehicle for implementing democratic reforms. "Most union newspapers are long on flattery for the incumbent officers and short on comment from the rank and file," he wrote in early 1973. "Until last December's international election, this was true of the UMW Journal as well. It was a paper that was closed to dissent, but open to attacks on dissenters. And, too often, it failed to deal openly and completely with the issues facing our union. The mandate for change so forcefully expressed in the election must carry over to the Journal, as it will to virtually every aspect of the UMWA." (Stillman, "Journal," 18) And so began the change toward a more democratic style for the UMW Journal.

Purpose and Significance of Study

One of the main goals of this research is to explore the power relationship between the UMW leadership and the rank and file and to determine the part that communications played in that relationship over a four-decade span. Specifically, this study examines how control of internal and external communication vehicles by the leadership affected the level of influence on union policy available to the rank and file.

Another goal of this thesis is to gauge whether the Miller administration did, indeed, introduce democracy to the union through the pages of the Journal. The study also seeks to determine whether the trend toward member participation continued after Trumka became president.

Democracy is "a system of government which enables individuals in a society to achieve freedom and provides the mechanism to safeguard that freedom." (Allen, 5-6) Using contract negotiations as an example, Richard Lester explained in As Unions Mature why democracy in the union is important:

> Collective bargaining loses its educational value if [the active rank and file] does not genuinely participate in the processes that lead to the bargaining outcome. If the local leaders and rank-and-file do not understand and accept the terms that are negotiated for collective bargaining has failed, just as the two-party system of politics fails when campaigns are so one-sided that criticism and debate on the issues are absent. (Lester, 18)

Hardman and others have discussed the importance of disseminating information in the labor press within the context of all printed media. But what about the labor press and its relationship to the audience that receives and, presumably, reads it? In the case of the United Mine Workers Journal, the publication is delivered into the hands of every payer of dues. In 1950, the number of members was 506,500; in 1989, it stood at fewer than 117,000 (see Figure 1). Historically, the publication has been more a vehicle for boosting the image of the officers than for educating and enlightening the union membership; only in the early 1970s was the paper said to have shifted its emphasis.

In analyzing the democratization of the UMW, this thesis compares issues of the Journal published over the past decade with those of the previous three decades. It considers a 40-year time span in the United Mine Workers, from 1950 to the early 1990s, covering three distinct eras in union politics and economics: the last 10 years of Lewis's reign (1950-1960) and the presidency of Boyle (1963-1971), the administration of the Miners for Democracy's Miller (1971-1979), and the leadership of Trumka (1981-). It does not examine the brief presidential terms of Thomas Kennedy or Sam Church. To accomplish its goal, this study looks at the frequency with which the Journal makes reference to each president. It compares the number of appearances of rank and file to officials on the covers of the publication for selected years. It looks at the content in terms of its educational value to the membership. And it explores other changes in content and format that have occurred since Lewis and Boyle were in power.

More generally, this paper seeks to answer such questions as these: What is the function of the labor press? Why do union members belong to a union, and what do they seek to get from the union publication? What is democratic control? For those who want to participate in union policy, can they expect the labor press to be a tool for involvement?

Charles Perry wrote in 1984, "The history of labor relations in coal mining prior to 1950 has been the subject of extensive scholarly research. Until very recently there had been little scholarly interest in the history of labor relations in coal mining after 1950." (Perry, 2) Indeed, much has been written of the UMW of Lewis, the paternal ruler of the organization for 40 years. Less has been done on the administrations of Boyle and Miller, and next to nothing has made it into the history books on the UMW over the 10 years beginning in 1980. Consequently, this study relies primarily on the Journal itself for insights into the 1981-1990 period.

A reader cannot fully understand the role of the communications within the United Mine Workers without first knowing something about the history of the union. This thesis reviews pertinent UMW history during the past 40 years, and looks at the health of the industry as a whole during that period.

Several justifications exist for carrying out this study. First, an exploration of the UMW Journal helps to fill a void in newspaper research. "Those who write about the history of the press," wrote Virginia Berridge in a 1986 essay, "generally lament the lack of fellow workers. Newspapers are doubly neglected. There is a dearth of histories of the press; and newspapers are still underutilized as a source for other areas of historical research." (Berridge, 201) This thesis explores the history of the UMW Journal and looks at the history of the UMW and the labor movement through the pages of the Journal.

Second, an exploration of this area also helps to close a gap in labor press research, an area of specialization in which, as Jon Bekken said in a 1988 study of working-class newspapers, few historians have pursued an interest: "Journalism historians have [focused] instead upon commercial newspapers (particularly English-language dailies) and their founders." (Bekken, 104-19) The labor press is important because it is an essential ingredient for a strong democracy. Edgar Queeny, chairman of the board of Monsanto Chemical Company in the 1940s, wrote, "There are no businesses, other than public utilities, that approach as close to monopoly [as newspaper publishing], and as the market is public opinion, monopoly of the enveloping medium carries grave potential threats to free minds, at least to a well-informed public." (Hardman and Neufeld, 177) The labor press has worked to break the monopoly on public opinion.

Third, an analysis of the UMW Journal offers some insights into the post-1950 UMW and, specifically, its place in Southern history. "If historians are just beginning to produce scholarly books and articles on the early 20th century," wrote Dewey Grantham in the 1960s, "they have scarcely ventured at all into the period after 1920...." That discrepancy may have changed somewhat over the past 30 years, but the picture is still far from complete.

Likewise, little has been done on the history of labor in the recent South. Because a substantial portion of coal production in the United States takes place in Appalachia, a history of the UMW must certainly be a part of a broader regional history. "The historian of the South," said Grantham, "should think of himself as an American historian, for however small his subject, he can, if he will, contribute to the ongoing historical quest for an understanding of the interaction of time and place in the evolution of American society." (Grantham, 424-44)

Last, from a sociological viewpoint, this thesis is important in that it contributes to a better understanding of power relations within an organization. It provides insight into how control of the channels of communication serves to stifle dissent and perpetuate the status quo, how dissent can emerge and changes can occur in spite of that control, and what role freer access to the communication channels may play in organizational participation.

CHAPTER II

THE UNION AND THE INDUSTRY

> Communication history is the pursuit of a certain dimension of the past. Historians interested in this variety of history must inform themselves about "historical time"; they have to acquire a sense of the particular time in the past associated with their inquiry. They must acquire knowledge of the personalities, events, and forces that influenced not only the object of their investigation but also those that influenced the particular time in which it existed. (Startt and Sloan, 15)

So wrote James Startt and William Sloan in Historical Methods in Mass Communication in 1989. Using Startt and Sloan for guidance, the researcher devotes this chapter to placing the changes that have occurred in the UMW and the UMW Journal within the historical context of the bituminous-coal industry and the national political and economic spheres.

1950-1959

By the late 1940s, the coal-mining industry hit its first serious slump in a decade. (Fox, 417) The demand for coal was falling, replaced by such alternative fuels as crude oil, petroleum, and natural gas, whose uses ranged from home heating to locomotion. "From 1940 to 1964," wrote Joseph Finley in The Corrupt Kingdom, "the industrial market for coal dropped from 30.3 percent of the fuel energy consumed in the United States down to 23.1 percent, retail sales of coal dropped from 19.6 percent to 4.6 percent, and railroad purchases dropped from 9.8 percent to almost nothing in 1964." (Finley, 170) In terms of tonnage, bituminous production dropped by 160 million tons between 1945 and 1960, down to 416 million. (Fox, 423) Besides a reduction in demand, the period also brought cutbacks in labor. One factor in the need for fewer workers was the growth in mechanization fueled by union gains in the mid-1940s and into the 1950s.

Beginning in 1945, Lewis had fought for the Welfare and Retirement Fund on behalf of the UMW. After two years of struggle for operator agreement, the fund was finally set in motion. Its purpose: to provide medical assistance, disability benefits, and a pension plan for coal miners. The fund was supported through a royalty on each ton of coal mined. In 1946, the royalty was five cents; by the 1950s, it was 40 cents. (Brooks, 140-41) The first payments from the fund came in response to a mine explosion in Centralia, Illinois, that killed 111. (Finley, 180) The fund was run by three trustees--one from the union, one from the operators, and a third from a neutral party. The union trustee was, of course, Lewis himself. He remained in that position until his death in 1969.

In its first few years of existence, the fund, and the services it provided, was hailed as a godsend. Finley described the medical benefits:

> Fund doctors went into hillside cabins to look at torn and broken remains of disabled miners. Some were so twisted that their bodies were in an S-shape, unabled to fit on a stretcher. Neighbors had to come in to pick up their beds and carry them down miles of mountain trails to highways where they could be evacuated. Many of them were placed on the first airplanes they had ever viewed on the ground, and flown to faraway hospitals for treatment.... By mid-1949, the fund was able to report that 431 men had been taken for hospitalization and care. Almost half of them were able to leave their beds and walk again. The healers had touched human lives. (185)

But, starting in 1953, major reductions began to occur in benefits. They centered on how long union miners had been in continuous employment. The following year cash benefits were cut off to approximately 30,000 disabled miners and 34,000 widows and children of dead miners. (189)

In addition to providing revenue for the Welfare and Retirement Fund, the inclusion of a royalty in union contracts had also supplied an incentive to produce more coal. (352) To increase coal production, mining began to rely on more mechanization, making use of such machines as mechanical conveyors, shuttle cars, and continuous miners, which tore the coal from its seam, scooped it up, loaded it, and moved it out of the mine. The rise in mechanization is reflected in these figures: In 1925, 72.9 percent of the 520 million tons of bituminous coal was cut by machine, 1.2 percent was loaded by machine, and 3.2 percent was surface mined. Only 20 years later, the percentages had jumped to 90.8, 56.1, and 18.9, respectively. (Brooks, 141)

The royalty did reward the workers for their productivity, but the resulting increase in mechanization had a disastrous effect on the number of mining jobs. "The modernization of the mines," wrote Thomas Brooks in a 1968 book on labor history, "enabled miners to work more efficiently and more safely. But it did so at the cost of high unemployment in the region of Appalachia. Mechanized mines need fewer mine workers and greater seams of coal. Small and marginal mines cannot compete with the larger and more efficient ones." By 1954, automatic loaders alone had cut in half the number of underground miners. The number of mechanical conveyors and shuttle cars quadrupled between 1945 and 1959. Between 1945 and 1965, the bituminous-coal workforce was reduced to 137,000, a 227,000 drop (see Figure 2). (Fox, 423-24)

While the demand for coal decreased, productivity increased. In 1945, per hour bituminous production for each miner was 0.7 tons per hour; by 1965, that figure had jumped to 2.2 tons per hour--thanks in large part to industry mechanization. As a result of the industry slump, total coal production had dropped by 11 percent by 1965; more notable, employment had fallen in excess of five times that amount. (Finley, 136) Consequently, union membership also suffered. (146) Between 1955 and 1965, membership fell by almost 50 percent to 167,400 (see Figure 1).

The growing number of nonunion mines also hurt union membership. "Throughout Kentucky and Tennessee," wrote Finley, "were scores of nonunion mines, many of them small, many run by local operators, many of them in the aggregate turning out enormous tonnage for the market. There was also a major new customer--the Tennessee Valley Authority. The TVA too was in an era of postwar expansion, with a heavy demand for coal, all based upon competitive bidding as befitting a government operation." (136) By the second half of the 1950s, TVA was using more than three-fourths of all coal mined in Tennessee. By 1960, usage grew to 20 million tons, 20 times that of a decade earlier. (Bloom and Northrup, 374)

But the small, nonunion operators, because they paid lower wages and no royalties, repeatedly underbid the larger, union operations. "There were enough hungry mountain men," wrote Finley, "to work below the union wage scale to make pay-cutting the sharpest money game in the area." In Economics of Labor Relations, Gordon Bloom and Herbert Northrup reached a similar conclusion. Every time the UMW gave a large pay raise, they wrote in 1954, it also sharpened the competitive edge of nonunion operations. Nonunion mines could pay miners UMW wages and still come out ahead, because they didn't have to pay the 40-cent-per-ton royalty for support of the welfare fund. (372)

Not surprisingly, the UMW did all that it could to thwart the power and economics of the nonunion mine operations. It first attempted to organize the mines, and when that failed, which it often did, the union resorted to closing them down. The tactics used at Meadow Creek Coal Company, about 20 miles from Sparta, Tennessee, were a typical example. Dynamite, psychological and physical coercion, as well as support for miners who wouldn't return to work, were all employed by the UMW in achieving its goal of organizing the mine. Ultimately, wrote Finley, though the mine was unionized, the sacrifice was greater than the gain. Bids made by Meadow Creek for TVA contracts were undercut by nonunion mines, and the company closed down.

> Afterwards a damage suit was brought against the United Mine Workers for the 1948 campaign. It was not until November 4, 1957, that the first verdict was rendered--a judgment for the company for $400,000--and eventually paid out of the UMW treasury. Meadow Creek may have been won once upon a time, but the permanent record reveals that it was irrevocably and ignominiously lost. (Finley, 140)

The same tactics were nonetheless repeated during the next 10 years at other mines in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia. Finley blamed none other than the union leadership in Washington for the "systematic prolonged program of violence and terror." (154)

The UMW may have been threatened from several directions, but its power was still riding strong when it entered the 1950s. Fox explained:

> The militance and disciplined unity of minerstransformed their status between 1933 and 1950. At the beginning of that period, miners' wages and benefits were near the bottom when compared to workers in other industries. Less than two decades later, they were at or near the top in virtually every respect. The transformation was achieved through a successful organizing campaign, hard-nosed and creative collective bargaining, UMWA-devised legislative initiatives, and a readiness to defy the government. (Fox, 422)

The position of coal miners in relation to other industry is reflected in these wages: For bituminous miners in 1953, they averaged $2.48 per hour. That compared to $1.75 in average hourly wage for all factory workers. (Troy and Sheflin, B-10) Though the peak year for membership had come and gone in the early 1940s at 595,000, the strength of numbers in the UMW also remained into the early 1950s. In 1953 the number of members was 420,000. That same year 86 percent of all coal was dug by UMW miners. (Fox, 427)

The beginning of the 1950s also found the coal-mine operators cooperating with the union. Operators realized coal was being replaced by alternative fuels. Too many breaks in the flow of supply to customers would drive them to convert to noncoal operations. The mine owners chose to forestall striking miners by meeting their demands, figuring that customers would rather pay a small increase in cost of production than a hefty forfeiture on conversion equipment. The relationship seems to have been symbiotic: the UMW occasionally helped friendly operators with loans--to the tune of more than a million dollars--in "emergency situations involving the stability of contracts and of employment." (Dubofsky and Van Tine, 352)

One way that cooperation between the union and the company manifested itself was through the formation of the Bituminous Coal Operators' Association (BCOA) in 1950.

The BCOA represented a united front of national coal operators to bargain with the UMW. The purpose was to convince the coal operators that labor and management--without interference from the government or the public--should work together to solve problems in a businesslike way, for the mutual benefit of the industry. (Fox, 432)

Even after the UMW began dealing with the BCOA, not all miners were satisfied with the operators' behavior of the 1950s. Periodic unauthorized work stoppages took place, threatening the appearance of solidarity within the UMW. The union's International Executive Board imposed penalties on offending locals to curb the violations of UMW policy. Toward the end of the 1950s, however, the board was fining less and admitting more that the coal operators were provoking the stoppages by breaking contract agreements. In fact, the year before announcing his retirement in 1959, Lewis pointed out that almost three-quarters of nonunion coal was marketed through operators signed on to UMW agreements.

On his retirement, Lewis also described how far the miners had come under his leadership. "The miner who 55 years ago lived in poverty," he said, "now lives like an ordinary citizen.... He lives in a modern house, with carpets and rugs. He has a bathroom, TV, and every electrical gadget to make household work easier for his wife.... It's true there aren't as many miners. But those young men who have been absorbed in other industries are better off...." (Finley, 172) But many of the miners he left were irreparably ill or injured. No retraining existed for workers replaced by machines. And, at the same time, the Welfare and Retirement Fund was becoming more restricted, which made obtaining benefits harder for ex-miners. (Troy and Sheflin, B-10) By the end of the decade, the internal and external problems had begun to be reflected in the membership numbers: by 1959, the figure had dropped to 185,000, a decrease of 321,000 since 1950. (Fox, 423)

1960-1969

Demand for bituminous coal by public utilities revived the coal industry in the 1960s. At the beginning of the decade, bituminous production was 416 million tons; the figure had risen to 513 million tons five years later.

Employment in the bituminous industry, though it continued to drop in the first five years of the 1960s, did not fall as rapidly as during the same period in the 1950s. Between 1950 and 1955, employment had declined by 183,000; from 1960 and 1965, it dropped by 33,000 (see Figure 2).

Even though employment had stabilized somewhat from the previous decade, the 1960s nevertheless brought conflict between the miners and their leaders. As much as one-quarter of all coal produced at the beginning of the 1960s was mined by nonunion workers. Yet, upon entering into the Boyle era, the UMW continued its policy of cooperation with the coal operators. But the contracts negotiated by Boyle in both 1964 and 1966 angered the rank and file, and the number of work stoppages increased. Both contracts revolved around job security and seniority. The 1966 contract tried to make up for the shortcomings of the agreement of two years earlier, but the number and duration of unauthorized work stoppages rose even more than two years earlier. Boyle and the coal operators went back to the negotiating table and came away with more satisfactory terms. "The miners returned to work," wrote Fox, "but they had sent their message: cooperation that did not protect jobs, seniority, and safety was unacceptable." (Fox, 431-35) Under Boyle, however, the UMW as an entity continued its policy of cooperation.

Dissatisfaction ultimately led to action against the UMW leadership in the 1960s, in part because of the generally turbulent climate of the times. By the late 1960s, coal employment had begun to rebound. The miners coming into the industry were young and, having witnessed the success of militant activism, brought with them a belief that demonstrations and strikes were valid forms of expressing dissatisfaction. Their passion for action revived the older miners, who had achieved their own gains through similar methods in the 1930s and 1940s. Although they found other reasons for dissatisfaction, older miners saw health and welfare issues cause for greatest concern. Particular emphasis was placed on benefits associated with black lung disease. Longtime miners were most likely to suffer from black lung, but little was achieved by the UMW in legislating compensation for the illness, and the miners blamed the union on which they depended. At the 1968 international convention, black lung was perhaps the most talked about issue, said Fox. That year, membership stood at 168,000, down 36,000 from the beginning of the decade. (464)

By the late 1960s, old and young had reached their limit of discontent and the two joined forces in rebelling against the administration of Boyle. One of the actions that came out of the coalition was formation of the Association of Disabled Miners and Widows and the West Virginia Black Lung Association. Another was a lawsuit in the summer of 1969, Blankenship v. Boyle.

Cuts in the Welfare and Retirement Fund continued from the 1950s on into the new decade, not because there was a lack of money in the coffers--by the end of 1961, the accounts held almost $100 million--but because of mismanagement. Blankenship v. Boyle pitted the miners against their leadership on the issue of accountability. One of the miners' claims was that money from the fund had been allowed to accumulate by the union and its financial institution, the National Bank of Washington (NBW), instead of being used for its rightful purpose, the medical care and pensions of the miners who had paid into it.

Under Lewis, the Welfare and Retirement Fund trustees had been empowered to make all decisions about the fund--how it was to be spent, who was to receive benefits. "They would meet and make their own rules," explains Finley. "They were the legislators, they were the executives, and they were the Supreme Court on any appeals from the rules they made. Coal miners were to receive only what the trustees were prepared to give them.

Theoretically, the membership could make its demands known through its own trustee, who was Lewis, and who told them almost nothing." (Finley, 189-91)

When money had begun to build up in the Welfare and Retirement Fund, Lewis had started searching for a place to invest the surplus. In 1948 or 1949, the UMW bought a controlling interest in the National Bank of Washington. (Lester, 100) Much of the investment was put into non-interest-bearing checking accounts to allow for ready money in the event of a prolonged strike. "But," said Fox, "this was an overly cautious approach that cost the Fund many millions of dollars in interest." Further, money in the bank was invested in mining companies and coal-burning utilities, which raised the question of conflict of interest. (Fox, 456) During the next 30 years, the union's "investments" pulled away vast resources from the workers who contributed, and little by little, the benefits that the fund was meant to provide were withdrawn.

Such had been the union leadership's style since Lewis had taken over as president in 1919. At that time, the organization's power lay more at the district level than at international headquarters. (Clark, 5) Three decades later, Lewis had beaten down any threat to his leadership position, using whatever tactics--redbaiting, falsifying documents, altering the constitution-- necessary to get the job done. At the 1930 UMW convention, for example, he gained the authority to revoke district, subdistrict, and local charters and to take over administration of their affairs. As Paul Clark said in his book on the Miners for Democracy, "With the passage of a constitutional amendment granting him this power, Lewis received the weapon with which he would deliver the deathblow to democracy in the UMW." (11) By appointing who would serve on conventional committees, Lewis was able to retain control over virtually all decision-making.

It was Lewis himself who replaced block by block the decentralized structure with one over which he had complete control, but it was the union membership that bestowed on him the confidence necessary to hold onto that control. According to virtually all sources, he was widely revered. Through sheer force of will, Lewis had won tremendous gains for those he was elected to represent, particularly during the 1930s and 1940s. When the 1930s ushered in a long period of economic growth in the country, Lewis had seized the opportunity to corral benefits for the miners through collective bargaining. Wrote Clark,

> During these years, Lewis did not make proposals at the bargaining table, he made demands. He did not argue or plead with the coal operators, he attacked them, scorned them, and assaulted them with his finest rhetoric--nor did he do this behind closed doors. Rather he made his case in headlines where all the world and all the miners could see it. (13)

1970-1979

Blankenship v. Boyle, the lawsuit of miners versus union, was decided in 1971. The judge presiding upheld the majority of the miners' complaints, saying that Lewis had "allowed his dedication to the union's future and penchant for financial manipulation to lead him and, through him, the union into conduct that denied the beneficiaries the maximum benefits of the fund." (Fox, 480) The judge commanded that the UMW and the NBW pay $11.5 million into the fund. He also ordered Boyle to resign as trustee, a position he had taken over at Lewis's death.

Disillusionment with Boyle that culminated with his conviction in the murder of opposition candidate Joseph Yablonski led to the election of a new union president in 1972. When Arnold Miller took over leadership of the UMW, he did not, as some had expected, fix all the problems within the union. "Union finances," wrote Fox, "were a nearly constant cause of conflict, as assets dwindled in the 1970s--more than $19 million was given to the districts as loans or subsidies, approximately $16.5 million in legal costs were incurred, and more than $14.5 million had been paid in strike support during the decade, while inflation ate away at receipts." Debate lay in what programs would be cut, and dissatisfaction grew concerning Miller's leadership.

UMW membership fluctuated throughout the 1970s, reaching its highest point of the decade--180,000--in 1976 and its lowest point--124,000--two years later. ("Power Struggle," 31) The total nonunion coal production continued to grow. In 1974, union coal production was at 70 percent; (Fox, 514) by the second half of the decade, it had fallen to below two-thirds. (Department of Commerce, 567)

Overall coal demand made a resurgence in the early 1970s as a result of the Middle East oil embargo. The country's average annual change in coal consumption rose 7.4 percent from 1970 to 1973. (Clark, 157) Clark said that the gains and militancy of any labor union's dealings with employers is directly related to the economic environment. That seemed to apply to the UMW in 1974. Realizing its strong bargaining position in that year's contract negotiations, the UMW presented a list of 200 demands; more than 40 of them were safety-related. "The companies," said Fox, "agreed to pay for safety training, allow quarterly UMWA safety inspections, add helpers on more machinery, and liberalize the right to leave the mines for safety reasons." (Fox, 493) In addition, the 1974 National Bituminous Coal Wage Agreement, wrote Fox, increased daily wages from an average of $45.40 to $54.39 over three years, not including inflationary adjustments. Workers received more paid time off, including a week's sick leave per year and weekly sickness-and-accident benefits for miners temporarily unable to work. A new grievance procedure was also initiated, and seniority protection was strengthened.

The following years, however, seemed to bring a breakdown of cooperation between the BCOA and the UMW. In 1975, the BCOA sued the union to suspend district and local autonomy for those who took part in frequent wildcat strikes. The UMW, on the other hand, demanded that BCOA companies stick to the 1974 wage agreement. The UMW also charged operators with various illegal activities, including faking dust tests. In 1978, President Jimmy Carter entered the picture to help resolve differences after contract agreements disintegrated. But even with the government's intervention, a 111-day strike over negotiations ensued, the longest national UMW strike in modern times. When a new contract was ratified, most benefits--health, vacation, pension, and life insurance--increased. Even so, the vote was only 58,802 to 44,457 to approve the BCOA-UMW contract. (498)

At the end of the decade, the UMW's strength seemed to be dwindling. Miller was ailing, both in health and in miner confidence. Relations between the UMW and BCOA continued to disintegrate. And a $2 million organizing attempt by the union failed in Stearns, Kentucky. Read an article in a 1979 issue of U.S. News & World Report,

> The Stearns case carries a symbolism far greater than the 100 workers involved, because it typifies the union's inability to stem the growth of nonunion coal production.... Up against so many difficulties, the once-mighty United Mine Workers appears unprepared to keep pace with the coal industry as the companies set out on a massive expansion designed to supplement the nation's oil supplies in the decades ahead. With only half of today's coal production coming from unionized mines, the union seems to be shrinking into a weak, regional organization with little influence outside of Appalachia. ("Fading Power," 64)

1980-1990

The pressures on the UMW lingered into the 1980s. Externally, the union's strength was still threatened, not only by competition from non-UMW unions but also from antiunion multinational energy corporations, such as Exxon and Gulf. Under those conglomerates, workers could make $100 or more a day, substantially more than the average UMW member. (Clark, 158) By 1981, the UMW's portion of the country's coal production had dropped to 44 percent.

An article in Business Week attributed the continuing decline, at least in part, to poor communications under the administration of Sam Church. Church had taken over the UMW presidency when Miller became too ill in late 1979. One of the changes Miller had implemented after winning the presidency in the early 1970s was encouragement of miner participation in decision-making. A holdover policy from the Lewis regime had allowed

Boyle to appoint 19 of the 23 district officers, many of them considered "yes men" who ignored rank-and-file complaints. Under the reform, miners gathered at district conferences to suggest contract priorities. Once the priorities were established, the two top officers from each district--making up a bargaining council--would relate them as demands to be negotiated by the UMW president. Once the contract was drawn up and approved by the council, the rank and file would meet locally to vote on it. Apparently, though, the system was good on paper and frought with problems in reality, primarily stemming from a breakdown in communication along the chain of power.

"The reformers of the 1970s," said Business Week in 1981, "realized that problems would develop [under more democratic rule], but they counted on time and the workers' common sense to solve them. They also believed that this was a small price to pay for giving miners control over their union. Church has made small improvements, such as increasing communications with his bargaining council. But until he does more, worries one management insider, 'rank-and-file ratification will never work in the UMW.'" ("Why Coal Peace," 104) Consequently, the UMW of the early 1980s had developed a reputation for being unstable.

Further problems arose during the 1981 contract negotiations with the BCOA, whose relations with the UMW had improved once again. Union demands--higher wages, unlimited cost-of-living adjustments, supplemental unemployment benefits, more paid time off, and grievance improvements--did not match those of the coal operators, which included individual company pension plans, elimination of royalties on coal bought from nonunion producers, and the right to stagger work hours and initiate mandatory overtime for Sunday coal production. By the end of March 1981, the miners went out on strike, rejecting a tentative agreement made at the last hour. Said Fox:

> The key elements in their rejection of the pact were those that threatened job security. Union negotiators accepted the removal of two clauses designed to

> protect UMWA work jurisdiction--the royalty on purchased coal and the requirement that "work on leased, subleased, or licensed lands" go to union members. The Church administration held that court and National Labor Relations Board rulings made it necessary to forego those protections, but the miners thought that their officers should have found a way to circumvent the adverse decisions.

The membership ratified a contract 72 days after the strike had begun. Among other gains, wages increased $3.60 an hour over a 40-month period. The coal operators continued to pay royalties on nonunion coal, and no major changes were made in protecting jobs at leased mines. Further, they withdrew their demands for individual company pension plans, mandatory overtime, a changing workweek, and production on Sunday. However, the miners received no cost-of-living adjustments.

"On the whole," said Fox, "the final agreements were good contracts, and they looked even better when workers in other mass production industries had to settle for much smaller advances--and often made concessions--during the years that followed." (Fox, 516-17) Even so, the miners withheld praise for the contracts from the Church administration, crediting instead their own militant response to the tentative agreement of March.

Poor confidence in Church's leadership opened the doors for Trumka to unseat the incumbent in 1981. Trumka entered the UMW leadership at a rough time for unions. It was the Reagan administration that squelched the air traffic controllers and stacked the National Labor Relations Board against protections for labor. During that period, Congress was generally unsympathetic to labor, and was as well unable to counteract the president's clout. Explained Fox:

> With government openly antagonistic to labor unions, the economy suffering from recession, and the unemployment rate growing, employers seized the opportunity to drive down wage and benefit levels. During the three years that followed ratification of the 1981 wage agreement, employers in a host of industries wrung concessions from their workers. They also increased opposition to unionism, and the proportion of organized workers began to fall substantially. Some public utilities contributed to the attack on unions, and particularly on the UMW. (520-21)

TVA was one of those utilities. It disregarded the normal government practice of working with companies that paid the prevailing wage, instead buying coal from the lowest bidders.

Another factor affecting UMW strength in the 1980s was the slowdown in industrial coal use. Increasingly severe controls on pollution resulted in heavily decreasing demand for the high-sulfur coal mined in Ohio and northern West Virginia, and, consequently, increasing shutdowns and layoffs. By mid-1980, at least 22,000 miners had been laid off. (Clark, 157) Further, coal had been used to produce steel for automobiles. But between the switch to more plastic, improvements in steel manufacture that reduced the amount of coal needed, and the general decline in the auto industry, coal consumption in that area was also in a major slump.

Internally, the union also had problems. In 1980, the National Bank of Washington was investigated by the government, which discovered that the bank was deteriorating financially. In March of 1985 the UMW agreed to sell its 76 percent interest in the institution, Washington's oldest and third-largest bank, for $70 million. Trumka was quoted in a 1985 Washington Post article as saying, "The dividend income that the union received from its investment in NBW has been 'significantly less,' on a percentage basis, than members of the union receive on their personal savings accounts. By freeing the union's holdings in the bank for other investments, 'we will be able to earn at least seven times our current return.'" (Pyatt, E2)

Meanwhile, mechanization kept increasing productivity and decreasing the number of jobs for miners. From 1973 to 1980, the industry spent more than $24 billion modernizing and expanding operations. In 1950, it took 18,000 miners to produce 18 million tons of coal from Virginia's mines. In 1988, 11,000 miners produced 46 million tons. (Priest, "Below," D1) That was the situation in 1989 at the Pittston Company's McClure No. 1 mine in Virginia. By that time, about a third of underground coal mining in the U.S. was being carried out by the longwall machine, with most of the remainder of the work being done by the continuous miner. The longwall machine supports the roof of the mine while shaving off coal and loading it into shuttle cars.

That year the UMW and the BCOA signed a contract that included a $1.05 per hour wage hike over three years and an increase in retirees' and widows' pensions, among other benefits. But Pittston, which had a history of bad dealings with its workers, withdrew from the BCOA, announcing that it would bargain independently. (Fox, 528)

In April 1989, miners went out on strike when Pittston wanted to phase out jobs and replace UMW workers with nonunion labor for certain tasks. "The company provided the opening [to strike]," said Dana Priest in the Washington Post in 1990, "when it decided to use a deadlock in negotiations as an excuse to cancel its contributions to the industry health plan. That plan was supposed to 'guarantee' health benefits for retirees, as well as active workers. Pittston's action left 1,500 disabled and retired miners and their families out in the cold." (Priest, "Contract," B3) That action brought the wrath of more than just the UMW down on Pittston.

Lane Kirkland, president of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), was arrested for the first time, when he picketed on behalf of the striking miners. [The UMW and the AFL-CIO had re-merged during the strike, after a 42-year separation. (Fox, 482-83)] Kirkland was joined by Trumka and 18 top officials of other international unions. An additional 3,700 arrests were made overall, and the strike was supported by religious groups and labor unions from across the country. "As many as 44,000 miners, one-third of all the miners in the country," said Priest, "joined wildcat protests in support of the strikers last summer."

In the end, the strike cost both sides dearly: Pittston lost at least $3.6 million in coal sales, and the UMW was fined more than $65 million for strike-related activities. But out of the strike came an agreement that opened up the opportunities of miners for future jobs at Pittston's nonunion operations. Further, the company agreed to pay miners $1,000 a year to cover their $1,000 health-care deductible; the contract also allowed the miners to keep what they didn't spend. The miners made concessions, too. They could be required to work on Sundays and to show up for seven-day workweeks or four 10-hour workdays. The contract demand, the company said, stemmed from a need for more flexibility to meet international demands and to maximize use of the longwall miner. (Priest, "Contract," B3)

During the 11-month strike, the union used every tool available to fuel the fight--from hymn singing to ads aimed at Wall Street investors--and the marketing effort paid off. Maybe more important than gaining benefits, the miners came out of the Pittston strike with a new sense of strength. "Three years ago," Trumka was quoted by David Broder in a 1990 Washington Post article as saying, "you'd go to a union meeting and the people you'd see had had all the hope shot out of their eyes. They'd lost faith in their ability to shape their own lives. But now it's starting to come back; you can see it. And that's what's always preceded real social and political change." (Broder, B7)

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

At the onset of the previous chapter, Startt and Sloan discussed the media's role in contributing to historical events. The Charleston (South Carolina) Courier and Mercury, they said, gave meaning and brought life to the Civil War. This thesis uses the UMW Journal as the primary tool in its historical examination of the UMW. Like the Charleston paper during the Civil War, the Journal offers unique insights into the changes that occurred within the UMW, the coal industry, and the nation from the 1950s to the 1990s.

This study enlists a number of research methods to achieve its goals. It employs a limited amount of content analysis to evaluate the claims made by other historians of democratization within the UMW since the early 1970s and to gain more insight into the little-explored 1980s and early 1990s. To allow a common understanding of "whatever phenomenon is being studied," (Williams, Rice, and Rogers, 113-14) every content analysis must define a unit of analysis. In this thesis, the unit analyzed is the United Mine Workers of America.

The UMW is defined here as including both rank-and-file membership and union officials. This study considers UMW officials as those who hold district offices and above, including those who serve on the IEB (international executive board) or any other official board of the UMW. The reasoning behind this is that once elected, district officers, unlike some local officers, no longer work in the mines. Further, particularly during the Boyle era, district officers represented the interests of the upper-echelon UMW to ensure their own job security. The researcher does not attempt to classify the editorial staff of the UMW Journal, since, during some periods, the publication has been operated by staff made up of former coalfield workers; during others, professional journalists; and, during still others, the ranks of "professional activists."

As Startt and Sloan noted, "The point for the historian is this: Content analysis can do nothing more than describe content, which is, after all, only one very small aspect of historical material. It cannot go beyond the material itself; and--this point is particularly important for the communication historian--it can never answer the question of 'Why?'" (60) To broaden the scope of the research, this thesis, therefore, relies most heavily on the case study.

The case study can "describe complex relationships, personal interpretations, and historical narratives of the phenomenon." (Williams, Rice, and Rogers, 38) Case studies are valuable for studying community or organizational behaviors. Organizational behaviors include those involved in the relationship between the leadership and the rank and file of the UMW. "All such applications," said H. J. Hsia in his book on mass communications research methods, "are most relevant to communication media studies where we are interested in the adoption of an innovation, regulatory policy, or administrative issues." (108) Administrative issues, again, include the relationship between officials and the rank and file.

"Case studies," said Rebecca Rubin and her co-authors in their book on communication research, "should include testimony from participants and the examination of available records and any materials related to the case." (Rubin, Rubin, and Piele, 63) As an acknowledgment of the importance of "testimony from participants," the researcher interviewed key eyewitnesses to the changes explored. This thesis contains firsthand accounts from three former editors of the UMW Journal: Don Stillman held the position of director of publications at the UMW from 1972 through 1975, Matt Witt served as editor from 1975 through 1977, and John Duray acted in that capacity, then as director over all communications, from 1983 through 1990.

As stated, the primary "available record" of this study is the UMW Journal itself. The researcher examined issues of the Journal from 1951 through 1990. An almost complete set of issues beginning in 1951 and running through 1978 is shelved at the University of Tennessee main library in Knoxville. The archives of Highlander Center in New Market contain a partial library of the Journal from 1985 through 1991. Because little outside data could be found to offer insight into communications within the union since 1982, the study focused particular attention on the Journal of the last decade.

In reviewing the literature, the researcher began with a general exploration into the history of the American labor movement, referring to such books as David Brody's American Labor Movement and Robert Zieger's American Workers, American Unions, 1920-1985. Calling upon Saul Alinsky's unauthorized biography of Lewis, Joseph Finley's Corrupt Kingdom, Sam Pizzigati and Fred Solowey's New Labor Press, and other published and unpublished materials, the researcher then homed in on the history of the mine workers.

The researcher looked to Robert Michels's Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy and Richard Lester's As Unions Mature for a better understanding of communications in bureaucracies, in general, and labor unions, in particular. The study also made use of scholarly periodicals and commercial news publications to place union activities into context.

Frederick Williams, Ronald Rice, and Everett Rogers suggest in Research Methods and the New Media pursuing a research problem by defining specific questions that need to be answered. (Williams, Rice, and Rogers, 113) Some of the questions addressed in this study are as follow:

1. In United We Stand, Fox observes in a footnote, "Boyle always used the Journal to advertise himself. His name was on virtually every page of every issue, and his picture appeared with monotonous regularity." (Fox, 483) Did the emphasis shift away from the

leadership once Miller, then Trumka, came into power? Did the Journal cover feature more rank and file and fewer officials? In looking at the covers of the UMW Journals, the researcher classifies rank-and-file pictures as those in which miners are identified as such, those containing images of workers in mining attire, and those of miners' families. Photographs or illustrations deemed "officials" include officers of the district level and above who are identified as such and unidentified images of men in business suits. Covers that picture one official with a number of rank and file are counted in the "officer" category.

Did the publication cut down on references to the union president, and has it continued to do so? To determine frequency of mention, the researcher counts references made in bold text, headlines, decks, or cutlines in the first five pages of text. Because of the small amount of text to be observed, neither the cover page, the inside cover, nor the table of contents is counted as text.

2. When did "Rank and File Speaks," a regular department containing interviews with UMW miners on topical issues, first appear in the Journal, and has it continued since Trumka came into office? How were interviewees chosen initially? Has that changed?

3. When did the "Letters to the Editor" section begin publication, and how were letters selected? Is the letters page still intact?

4. What other modifications occurred with the advent of Miller, and has the Journal changed further since Trumka took office?

CHAPTER IV

THE UNITED MINE WORKERS JOURNAL, 1950-1969

The following two chapters place the UMW Journal into a historical and sociological context. Chapter IV turns to the early leadership of Lewis for a better understanding of how restrictions in the lines of communication within the UMW evolved. It then looks at what part Boyle served in perpetuating those restrictions. Chapter IV explores how control of the communications organs influence an organization's power structure and speculates on the expectations of the membership toward the union. The latter part of the chapter examines the function of communications in the downfall of the Boyle administration.

Chapter V picks up with the movement to overthrow Boyle. It studies the role the Journal played in democratizing the UMW, presenting the opinions of the advocates and critics of that role. Chapter V looks at the influence of the editor and the union president on the publication. It explores the specific changes made from 1950 to 1990, focusing special attention on a comparison of modifications carried out under Miller and Trumka.

The UMW Journal: the Lewis Era

In As Unions Mature, Lester wrote that unions are more active, more militant, and more factionalized in their early years. When they are first formed, he said, involvement is usually great and the leadership is likely to be made up of "the agitator and the table-pounder." (Lester, 21)

> As unions age, they are prone to experience internal adjustments similar to those that took place in other institutions which in their formative years had to struggle for existence and acceptance. In the case of labor unions, the

> gradual alterations that occur through the processes of internal change can be classified under three headings: (1) a decline in the rate of expansion and missionary zeal, (2) a shift of power and control toward the national headquarters, and (3) an alteration in the union's leadership. (106)

Though his projections seemed to have held true for the UMW, the UMW Journal continued in its earlier capacity as a vehicle for miner information, if not for complaints and ideas, throughout Lewis's presidency. In the mid-1940s, the publication allotted considerable space to safety and health issues, particularly respiratory problems associated with mining below ground. (Fox, 445) And on into the 1950s, numerous articles appeared on mine safety. The April 1, 1951, Journal filled three-quarters of a page with a story on improvements in state safety laws. (UMW Journal, 1 April 1951) The July 1 issue that same year contained a full-page article blaming roof falls--the number-one killer in both bituminous mines--on neglect by management. (1 July 1951, 5) The April 15, 1955, issue of the Journal carried a three-quarter-page article on the graduation of 100,000 miners from the Bureau of Mines safety education program. (15 April 1955, 7) Virtually every issue included stories on mine fatality statistics, rulings on company safety negligence, and individual mine injuries and deaths. As Fox pointed out, complaints about rising unemployment also abounded in the Journal of the mid-1950s. (Fox, 424)

Nothing, however, was found to indicate that the rank and file had an opportunity to air "complaints and ideas," and a number of the articles--many of them written by Justin McCarthy, Journal editor during the 1950s--served to boost the image of the UMW. The deck of a February 1, 1955, article is a typical example. It read, UMWA FIGHTS FOR MORE FOOD FOR JOBLESS. (Journal, 1 February 1955, 3) Maybe more important than boosting a strong union image, the Journal articles perpetuated an "us-and-them" mentality among the UMW membership. In 1951, almost half of the Journal covers emphasized the adversarial relationship between the UMW and coal industry and business and the government. In 1960 and 1970, about one-third carried the same emphasis (see Figure 3).

Internalization of the us-and-them attitude by the rank and file, wrote John Gaventa in Power and Powerlessness, contributed to preserving the union's autocratic leadership structure. (Gaventa, 195-97)

Various researchers have stated that Lewis orchestrated what the paper disseminated. According to Hardman, neither Lewis nor McCarthy were alone in setting boundaries on rank-and-file involvement in expressing opinion. In 1951, he said that while most labor press editors surveyed believed in allowing members access to dissent, editors put limitations on free discussion, and so did their leaders.

> Most union presidents have come up the hard way. They made sacrifices, perhaps suffered maltreatment. They learned to accept and to later demand "discipline." Even after they have got themselves entrenched in their positions, they remain fearful of "disruption" and "betrayal." They cannot see themselves engaged in the free intellectual give-and-take of discussion without calling upon the shibboleths and myths of authority, and the faith and sacred cows of the rights of leadership. (Hardman and Neufeld, 215-16)

Such was the case with Lewis and the UMW Journal. Even as early as the late 1920s, said Melvyn Dubofsky and Warren Van Tine in their biography on Lewis, John L. Lewis had "perfected the instruments of his union power: press, purse, and patronage." (Dubofsky and Van Tine, 99) "Prior to the Lewis regime," said Lester, "the Mine Workers was a highly democratic union with a robust political life. It was almost a federation of autonomous districts, which were principally statewide. The district presidents exercised considerable power, and strongly favored decentralized procedures. In the 1920s, Lewis changed all that, largely by suspending and expelling officials and locals daring to challenge his leadership. By building up a machine of loyal lieutenants, he obtained complete and unquestioned authority over the whole organization." (Lester, 100)

When, at the convention of 1942, 108 local unions submitted resolutions on the issue of autonomy, Lewis shut down discussion on the issue by pointing to the popular election of national union officers. That, he said, was proof that the UMW was democratic, particularly considering that many unions did not give members that right. (Fox, 442) One might assume that an issue receiving support from 108 locals would generate broad internal debate. But as Morroe Berger and his co-authors said in Freedom and Control in Modern Society, even if the members are not convinced that the leadership knows best and experience widespread discontent, in order to organize in opposition, they must have a way of communicating. "The reduction of 'collective ignorance,'" they said, "is impossible without widespread contact and information.... One major source of administrative power which is exclusively available to the incumbent bureaucratic hierarchy is control over the formal means of communications within the organization." In other words, control by the leadership of virtually all information disseminated to the union membership and the media serves the purpose of "obstructing the possibility of crystallization and organization of opposition." (Berger, Abel, and Page, 87-8)

The point was made even earlier, by Robert Michels in 1915. Translating from a German article published in 1907, he said,

> The press constitutes a potent instrument for the conquest, the preservation, and the consolidation of power on the part of the leaders. The press is the most suitable means of diffusing the fame of the individual leaders among the masses, for popularizing their names. The labour press, and this applies equally to the trade union journals and to those which devote themselves predominantly to political ends, is full of panegyrics concerning the personalities of the leaders, of references to their "disinterestedness and self-sacrificingness," to their "ardent idealism, conjoined with a vigorous force of conviction and with invincible tenacity," qualities which, we are told, have alone made it possible for them to create the great working class organizations. (Michels, 130)

Though the press lacked the powerful presence of an orator, its range extended far beyond any public meeting or debate.

The UMW Journal was no exception. As early as 1917, when Lewis became business manager of the Journal, the publication was already established more as a medium for the union's leaders to air their views than as an opportunity to enlighten the miners. Lewis followed the lead of his predecessors, said Dubofsky and Van Tine, by using the publication to highlight "the accomplishments of the incumbent officers and his own 'prominent' role in bringing them about." (Dubofsky and Van Tine, 30) Clark reiterated that the publication was used both by Lewis and Tony Boyle as an "instrument of leadership." He stated that the Journal pre-Miller was laden with articles meant to boost the image of the UMW leadership, reams of government regulations, and fluff material such as comics and recipes. (Clark, 38) This researcher found that virtually every issue of the Journal pre-dating the Miller administration carried a standing department for recipes, witticisms, and anecdotes (see Figure 4).

One method Lewis used was to control what information the rank and file did receive. He restricted the flow of information in a variety of union concerns, among them, labor negotiations, organizational finances, and election coverage. Before 1950, the UMW membership could glean at least a semblance of insight into collective bargaining in the UMW because Lewis carried negotiations out with great "fanfare and publicity." After 1950, however, Lewis changed his tactics and contract agreements came to be known as mystery bargaining. "The talks consisted of two-man sessions, Lewis and an operators' representative, conducted in strict privacy," explained Clark. Post-1950 agreements had no expiration date, and since negotiators prohibited outsiders from sitting in on bargaining, no one else was privy to new contracts being formulated. "When Lewis and the operators' representative reached a new agreement," said Clark, "the wage policy committee quietly assembled to give it their seal of approval. Not until the pact was final and binding did Lewis inform the membership of its provisions." (Clark, 20) Lester corroborated Clark's account, adding that during the 1956 convention, a handful of delegates "suggested" that the agreement for that year might have included some modifications but that no one voted against it. (Lester, 102)

Another area through which communications could be filtered was in the financial domain, and, in this, the UMW Journal played its part in disinformation. One example was in coverage--or lack of it--on the UMW's purchase of the National Bank of Washington.

“Without access to official UMW records,” stated Finley, “the timing and circumstance of the bank purchase are cloudy. One of the obscurities of the purchase is that the United Mine Workers Journal said nothing about it.” (Finley, 160) As Allen pointed out, “The control of political power in a state lies to a large extent in the hands of those who control economic power, and it follows that where state power is controlled by a minority, whether or not they operate it in the favour of the majority, there can be no democracy.” (Allen, 7) Such could also be said of the United Mine Workers.

Communication researchers Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton have written that the mass media fulfill certain social functions. One of those functions is status conferral, that is, the mass media give credibility to the issues, people, and organizations they cover. “The mass media,” they pointed out, “bestow prestige and enhance the authority of individuals and groups by *legitimizing their status*.” (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 101) When the UMW Journal carries a headline advertising the name of the union leadership, the publication is, then, reinforcing the leadership’s strength and validity. The reverse should also hold true: by failing to cover a candidate running opposite the incumbent, for example, the media are withholding an opportunity for the candidate to establish credibility. Those who control the media, including the leaders of the UMW, had and have at their disposal a vehicle for enhancing their authority. “The editorial ‘we,’” said Michels, “uttered in the name of a huge party, has a much greater effect than even the most distinguished name....” (Michels, 133)

Further, control of the UMW Journal under the oversight of Lewis was, according to the definition of Lazarsfeld and Merton, a virtual monopoly, a situation in which “access to the media of communication is wholly closed to those who oppose the official ideology.” Monopolization of the mass media takes place in a setting where counterpropaganda fails to exist. Using performer Kate Smith as an example, Lazarsfeld and Merton pointed out that monopolization of the media occurred not only in Nazi Germany but also on American radio. "Linked with the cardinal American virtues," they said, "the public images of Kate Smith are at no point subject to a counterpropaganda." (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 113-14)

Formalized restrictions on communication perpetuated the absence of overt dissent. According to the UMW constitution, for example, "Any member guilty of slandering or circulating ... any statement wrongfully condemning any decision rendered by any officer of the organization shall, upon conviction, be suspended from membership for a period of six months and shall not be eligible to hold office in any branch of the organization for two years thereafter. The above shall be construed as applying to any local union officer or member reading such circulars to the members of a local union, or who in any way gives publicity to such." In response, a delegate to the 1944 convention pointed out the obvious when he said, "How are you going to know in the rank and file whether or not there has been enough requests sent in for the restoration of autonomy? We never know because we are not allowed to circularize one another's locals. There is no way for us to get together." (Karsh and London, 418)

Even if the rank and file had been allowed by constitution to express opposition without repercussion, other obstacles might have made it impossible. Hardman stated that the national union press of the mid-century was much less likely than its local counterpart to take on controversial issues. One reason may be that local unions published more frequently and, consequently, were able to tackle more immediate concerns. Further, local union journals or papers were directly in touch with their readers' concerns and were therefore more able to influence mobilization on an issue. Local union publications, said Hardman, may also have been in a better position to restrict the space given to "presidential 'statements' and 'addresses' and other products of ghosted loquacity, and thus enliven and diversify contents." (Hardman and Neufeld, 214) The last speculation was and is undoubtedly true for some publications but certainly not for all. The regional AFL-CIO publication the East Tennessee Labor News, which operated from 1932 to 1971, filled 60 percent of its newshole with wire stories from its parent organization. The reason was simply that the resources of the newspaper--time, money, and personnel--were too limited to generate enough copy for the entire publication on a weekly basis. (Thornburgh)

Of course, it cannot automatically be taken for granted that members based their decisions exclusively on what they read in the UMW Journal. "Students of mass movements," stated Lazarsfeld and Merton, "have come to repudiate the view that mass propaganda in and of itself creates or maintains the movement." Face-to-face contact, whether by the top leaders or their local liaisons, can also be used to reinforce the message of the administration. "Such mutual confirmation produces a 'clinching effect.'" On the national level, a union offical appearing on network television or in the New York Times gives status to both the national and the local movement. On the local level, propagandists for the administration can serve to pull workers together for discussion or watching a special broadcast, or can simply disseminate the literature provided by the central media at a union meeting, a plant entrance, or picket line. "In this interlocking arrangement," said Lazarsfeld and Merton, "the local organizer ensures an audience for the national speaker and the national speaker validates the status of the local organizer." (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 115-17)

In deriding the content of the UMW Journal of the 1940s and 1950s, Paul Clark made two assumptions: first, that the readership cared about the content and, second, that the members would have preferred a different content. But would miners necessarily prefer that the union publication provide an open forum of discussion rather than a mechanism for relating anecdotes, recipes, and official documents? Various researchers have attempted to answer the question. "Judging by appearances," said Hardman in 1951, "the national union press has either not been faced with the problem [of dissent] at all, or it merely has not encouraged the practice of publishing discussion matter on issues concerning internal union matters of a possible divisive character. To assume the former is rather a strain upon credulity." (Hardman and Neufeld, 215)

Hardman referred to his own experience with encouraging participation in internal discussion by union members. He recalled that at one point he had undertaken the task of editing a weekly newspaper for a national union. He was given total freedom in steering the publication. "In turn," he remarked, "the editor spared no effort in inviting and encouraging two-way discussion of matters that members had been heatedly talking about in private gatherings and at union meetings." By the end of the six-month experiment, only a handful of members had taken advantage to voice their opinions. "The project died," he lamented, "of malnutrition after having been kept alive for a while by injection of synthetic discussion material." (218) He did not specify how he "spared no effort" in encouraging member participation.

While Hardman stopped short of pointing a finger at workers, Allen did not hesitate to speculate that lack of interest by the rank and file lay at the core of the failure to participate. Lack of interest connotes an inherent laziness among the workers. Considering the hard physical requirements of mining, laziness seems an unlikely factor in their failure to participate. Allen added that an underlying reason for the lack of engagement in written dialogue was that the majority of workers were conservative, accepting change reluctantly. (Allen, 27) It's very possible that UMW members were conservative and accepted change reluctantly. Most miners were, after all, poorly educated and, at least in Appalachia, limited in their exposure to other cultures and lifestyles.

More critical, however, is the assertion by Gaventa that "enforced quiescence over a period of time tended to develop internalized acceptance of the appropriate relationship of the led to their leaders." (Gaventa, 193-98) Internalized relegation to a voiceless position in the organization could result in a lack of participation in organizational policy-making even if the opportunity arose. Add to that equation the fear of reprisal gained from years of experience in the UMW and the generally low level of literacy of the mine workers and their families (how many were able to read the publication, let alone to write a response to what they read?), and it isn't surprising that once offered the chance to participate in union policy, the miners were slow to respond.

In examining the reasons behind the lack of interest, Hardman said this: Most workers join a union not as a "discussion club" but simply as a way to gain job security, a decent wage, and fair benefits. Certain circumstances may generate dissatisfaction among the rank and file and cause them to "raise hell." Among them are failure to gain more benefits in contract negotiations or to protect current benefits, mistreatment of workers by local officers, and existing grievances that are heightened by political contenders. "Significant facts and developments," he wrote in 1951, "have tended in recent years to dull the edge of such appeals to mutiny or civil war, to undercut the sprouting of the seeds of rebellion--and to obviate its first manifestation, the call for open two-way discussion." Specifically, he referred to the high cost of opposing the incumbent leadership, and the plethora of new positions available to pacify "rebel leaders" as a result of the growth in union membership, and the gains made by unions. (Hardman and Neufeld, 218-20) Lester indicated that the UMW had achieved so many wage and benefit increases for its membership that workers interviewed in the early 1950s verbalized little criticism of "one-man rule and the suppression of democratic rights." (Lester, 101)

Interviews by Bernard Karsh and Jack London with UMW rank-and-file miners and their local union officers were published in the Quarterly Journal of Economics in 1954. Several of those interviewed did have complaints about the structure of union control, particularly the sweeping authority of Lewis. However, only a small percentage wanted Lewis to leave office, and even they admired his achievements. In many of the examples used by Karsh and London, praise was tempered with recognition of Lewis as authoritarian. "I even called him a dictator during the dual union fight," one man said. "But

I don't think that is too important because John L. Lewis has done a wonderful job in improving conditions and wages. I don't think we could have done as good a job without John L. even if we had so-called democracy." Specifically, interviewees pointed to the welfare fund when speaking of improvements their union had made on their behalf. Another reply gave insight into just what made Lewis the unquestionable authority:

> He's the greatest labor leader of all time. He's sincere. He can sway the biggest industrial leaders and he lives up to the contracts..... I used to think that he was a dictator, and some guys still say what's the use of going to conventions.... Lewis always explains the autonomy question--he explains how the international is safeguarding the local and the money. After he explains it you can't contradict him; he's such a wonderful speaker. But you have the right to talk if you want to. (Karsh and London, 421)

Therein seemed to lie the crux of the issue. From all accounts, Lewis was such a forceful orator, debate was ultimately fruitless in providing the rank and file with any decision-making capability. Besides the use of his "deep, bass voice," Lewis used whatever means necessary to communicate his message. "It is a question," he said on the issue of autonomy, "of whether you desire your organization to be the most effective instrumentality within the realm of possibility for a labor organization or whether you prefer to sacrifice the efficiency of your organization in some respects for a little more academic freedom." (419) He reduced the choices to maximum effectiveness versus "a little more academic freedom."

The UMW Journal: the Boyle Era

Yet, it was not Lewis's personal charisma alone that preserved the powerhold on the leadership of the UMW. It remained relatively unchanged for some time after he relinquished his position as president of the organization. Several reasons may have contributed to the status quo's remaining intact. Fox offered these:

> Lewis had often ignored constitutional provisions that he found inconvenient. Men whom he wanted as delegates to international conventions, for example, received credentials even if they didn't win election at the local union they

> were sent to represent. Lewis also did not rush to disband local unions when mines closed, though the constitution called for their charters to be rescinded. Boyle took such actions to extreme lengths. Boyle kept so many 'dead' locals on the union's books that they may have outnumbered active locals by the time of the 1964 convention. (Fox, 444)

Boyle opponents at one point alleged that as many as 600 locals were "bogus." His purpose: to keep the delegates of those unions "beholden" to the UMW administration. "As a result," added Fox, "Boyle effectively packed the convention and his loyalists intimidated those who opposed his policies, Reportedly, they prevented some dissidents from gaining access to the microphones used by delegates and otherwise threw their weight around."

The strong perception of the union by its membership as protector of miners' rights may also have played a part. "Despite its internal repressiveness," explained Gaventa, "the union offered a sense of security for the miners and their families within the broader field of power relations--i.e., within the even more hostile and exploitative political economy of the [outside world]." (Gaventa, 191)

Boyle used many of the same strategies--restricting communications, bending the constitution--to achieve much of the same outcome as Lewis: complete control over UMW policy. Throughout Boyle's administration, it is said that the editorial content of the Journal served as the mouthpiece of the UMW leadership. Particularly during that period, the journal was a vehicle for the "glorification" of the union's president (see Figure 3). (194) More harmful than simply acting as a passive advocate for Boyle, the Journal during the elections of the late 1960s shut its doors to campaigning by his opposition. (Fox, 483) "Five editions of the Journal following Yablonski's announcement," said Gaventa, "carried 166 references to and 16 pictures of Boyle, with no references to or pictures of Yablonski. Similarly, Boyle refused to allow the union to mail any Yablonski literature to the membership, though such was required by the union constitution." (Gaventa, 189)

Allen pointed out that British labor union members criticized elections, saying they knew too little about the candidates they were voting for and, hence, were unable to make informed choices. "This does not mean," he stated, "that unions do not make any attempt to publicize the qualifications of candidates--they do--but that the members are unable, in many cases, to assess the candidates adequately on the information provided." (Allen, 306) He pointed out that "unrestricted and indiscriminate" publicity, if funded by the union, would be considered poor use of member contributions and that campaigning paid for by individual candidates would provide unequal opportunities to those with stronger resources. The UMW Journal of the 1960s could certainly not have been accused of unrestricted and indiscriminate publicity, and the situation was perpetuated by its editor.

Justin McCarthy was appointed editor of the UMW Journal during the last third of the Lewis era; he continued in that position when Boyle became the union's president. McCarthy's background was as a well-thought-of labor reporter with the Chicago Daily News. Before his hiring by the UMW, he had won the Nieman Fellowship at Harvard University, but once with the union, his reputation changed. "His salary," said Hume, "had risen to $20,000, a lot for a newspaperman, and he was not inclined to rock the boat when asked to publish material that his news judgment told him had little interest for his readers." (Hume, 60) Instead, he filled the pages of the publication with speeches by Boyle, canned features, boosterism cartoons, and full-page obituaries of UMW officials. A full-page story about Josephine Roche, trustee of the Welfare and Retirement Fund, ran in the June 15, 1965, issue of the Journal, (Journal, 15 June 1965, 15) and a photograph of Lewis filled page 2 of the August 15 issue the same year. (15 August 1965, 2)

Internal changes, as predicted by Lester on the nature of unions, were also taking place by the 1960s that added to the power equation. One of the changes was that decision-making had shifted from the local to the national level. That shift resulted in decreased member participation and concern over local affairs. While recognizing that a rise in one results in a fall in the other, Seymour Lipset and his co-authors, in Union Democracy, nonetheless wrote that the rank and file benefit from increased bureaucratization because it normalizes relations with management. (Lipset, Trow, and Coleman, 8)

And, as Lester asserted, the larger the national union--as in the case of the UMW--the more likely communications are to be controlled by the top. "The need for specialists," he said, "becomes more pressing, a hierarchy and bureaucracy tend to develop, and the relationship of top officials to the rank and file grows more impersonal. Some functions and decisions shift from the local to higher levels in the organization. And, as the top positions come to require more administrative and manipulative talents, the oratorical agitators are superseded by skillful managers." (Berger, Abel, and Page, 86)

In his dissertation on the Miners for Democracy, Paul John Nyden concurred with Lester that democratic structure results in a stronger union. Yet he conceded that providing democracy for the sake of democracy is not the purpose of the union. Rather, the union's raison d'être is to act as go-between with the company on behalf of the worker. "The activities of any union," he said, "must be measured according to these standards: How effectively does the union fight for the interests of the rank-and-file members? Does the union protect its members on their jobs day to day? Does the union defend workers who are fired by the employer? Does the union win the best possible contracts?" (Lester, 22-3)

When Boyle took over the UMW presidency from Lewis, there were serious questions on how well the union was meeting its obligations. From 1950 to 1960, the number of jobs in bituminous coal had been cut by more than half. (Nyden, 401) Even as early as the mid-1950s, employment had dropped dramatically (see Figure 2). But Lewis's oratorical ability seemed temporarily to have muted any vocal opposition. "When the issue came before the IEB late in 1954," said Fox, "Lewis was adamant--and falsely optimistic. 'I think with our expanding power requirements and technological changes,' Lewis predicted, 'we can look forward after the lapse of some time ... to increasing demand for coal from the modern low-cost mines, with probably a greater number of men employed, and higher productivity than is even now the case.'"

By the 1960s, the UMW had also begun suffering legal problems associated with a conspiracy by union officials to force small-mine operators out of business. Further, the UMW was making loans to coal companies. Both the pocketbook and the image of the organization were severely damaged in battles over these UMW missteps. Though the Journal did not report on the courtroom defeats, the miners were aware of the union's image and membership problems. "This heartened anti-union forces," said Fox, "and as the volume of nonunion coal production began increasing, more miners began wondering about Boyle's leadership ability." (Fox, 424)

Further skepticism surrounded the union's handling of safety issues. True, there had been a substantial increase in coverage of safety and health issues by the Journal since Boyle's election. And, said Fox, more exposure had been given to those issues by the UMW officers at the conventions and IEB meetings. But Boyle's personal communication ability got in the way of soothing ruffled feathers.

On November 20, 1968, an explosion took place at the Consolidation Coal Company's No. 9 mine at Farmington, West Virginia. The blast killed 78 men. Boyle flew by helicopter to oversee rescue attempts at the disaster site. But though he used the opportunity publicly to call for stronger safety laws, in his personal statement to apprehensive families and friends, he pointed to Consolidation's cooperative attitude toward safe mining operations. Boyle's insensitive response to the Farmington disaster caused miners and their supporters to question his stand on safety. "On December 12, 1968," said Fox, "Boyle testified in favor of a stronger safety law, specifying the need to control dust, but he again said that Consol was cooperative. Business Week reported that the operators expected the Farmington disaster to lead to more stringent legislation because Boyle was 'a nut on safety,' and no union was geared to react to accidents more quickly and decisively than the UMW. Some miners weren't so sure and formed the West Virginia Black Lung Association (BLA)." (462-66)

CHAPTER V

THE UNITED MINE WORKERS JOURNAL, 1970-1990

The UMW Journal: the Miller Era

Out of the movement forming to oppose the Boyle administration sprung at least three publications of resistance: Coal Patrol, the Miner's Voice, and the Bulletin, distributed by the Black Lung Association. (Fox, 485) The Miner's Voice gave a voice to the rebellion forces, calling for the UMW to turn its energy to fighting the coal operators, not the union membership. Further, its staff organized its own media campaign in support of the Miners for Democracy. "They developed a line of uncompromising rebel campaign literature," said George Hopkins in his dissertation on the Miners for Democracy. "Mass mailings and radio and television spots also spread the rebel message." (Hopkins, 184)

The Black Lung Association, said Finley, provided the main impetus for improving safety and health. It succeeded in convincing West Virginia's legislators to change the state's laws on workmen's compensation, inspired the formation of more Black Lung chapters and provided a vehicle for disseminating information and airing concerns. The Black Lung Association mailed out the Bulletin from Charleston, West Virginia, every month. "Roughly drawn cartoons from unlettered men began to appear," he said, "carrying a message of sincerity and concern." (Finley, 234-35) The publication carried reports on the miners' struggles, such as reports on the number of claims approved, and fanned the flames of autonomy and democracy within the union. It offered help in filing claims, as well as demands for more liberal benefits, and reports on black lung amendments. The publication attacked the Boyle administration for being too weak in supporting miners' rights. (Fox, 474-75) "For instance," said Gaventa, "though there had been no major safety legislation in the United States since 1952, the Boyle regime did little or nothing to promote further legislation. In fact, the passage of the relatively progressive Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969 was in spite of the union leadership." (Gaventa, 175) The Bulletin also offered tangible opportunities, such as listing a collect hotline to the BOM for reporting company violations, for workers to speak out.

"[The miners] were no longer willing to ignore the welfare of their bodies and their persons down in coal mines," said Finley. "They were a new movement inside the old institution, seeking to revitalize it, seeking to make it responsive to the needs of the men who paid the bills." (Finley, 234-35) Understandably, Boyle and his entourage did not relinquish power without a fight, and they used whatever weapons they had to enter battle. The UMW Journal was still one of those weapons.

"Although Boyle seldom made trips to the coalfields and was a rather obscure figure in Washington," said Hume, "a great deal of effort and money was spent trying to make him and the other officers appear to the members as ubiquitous and influential champions of labor. The chief instrument of this image-making was the United Mine Workers Journal." (Hume, 59-60) Boyle and his administration used most of the editorial pages to publish the text of his speeches--whether or not they were relevant to the miners. In 17 of 22 issues of the Journal printed in 1970, for example, Boyle either addressed the UMW membership directly or was mentioned in bold type at least once in the first three pages of text (see Figure 4). The speeches of fellow union officials also received expansive coverage.

Worst of all, two of the men convicted ultimately in the murder of Yablonski, Albert Pass and Silous Huddleston, used of the Journal in planning the assassination, reported Finley. "Pass," he said, "gave Huddleston a back issue of the Mine Workers Journal that carried the picture of Jock Yablonski before he became the enemy. Pass drew an arrow pointing to the head of the man they wanted destroyed." (Finley, 276)

At the same time that the Journal was being used to discredit and downplay the strength of the opposition movement, the mainstream media had begun working in its favor. "Miners who previously received most of their news about the union through the United Mine Workers Journal," said Hopkins, "read and saw critical comments on the UMWA in wire service reports in their local newspapers and on television. Coverage of the murder investigation and the election suit increased the flow of information in the coalfields and helped legitimize the rebels' efforts." (Nyden, 119)

With the murder of Yablonski, however, much of the resistance movement was understandably shaken. Fear, combined with little or no experience in the art of persuasion, threatened to defeat the opposition. But leaders did come forward, motivated by the conviction of what they believed was right. Three figured prominently in the opposition: Chip Yablonski, one of two surviving sons of Jock, and Mike Trbovich, named president of the rank-and-file "rebel group" Miners for Democracy, and Louis Antal, who would run for District 5 president against Boyle's man. Miller, who was to become the president of the UMW, was another. "Like Trbovich and Antal," said Finley, "he had not been exposed to the polish of higher education or the opportunities for past union leadership, but his courage and willingness were so apparent that men readily follow his directions." (Finley, 284-85) Lester said that as a union matures, its "oratorical agitators" are replaced by "skillful managers." That supposition was refuted in the early 1970s, when oratorical agitators with little skill in management emerged--this time to lead the UMW into a new era.

Among the key factors leading to Boyle's downfall was a push by Yablonski's family and friends for investigation by the Senate and Department of Labor of election wrongdoings, particularly misuse of funds. Both investigations found that, among other illegal actions, the incumbent administration had misappropriated union funds to boost Boyle's campaign by using the Journal for "biased coverage." (Clark, 38) The investigations resulted in rulings for a new election and equal space in the Journal for opposition voices.

The first issue of the Journal published under court decree appeared in mid-1972 and was mailed to all the union's 190,000 members. "The formerly staid UMW organ," said Hopkins, "exhibited a schizophrenic personality." The issue began by reprinting the court order mandating inclusion of insurgent material. The "old guard," in turn, showed their distaste by including "A Memorial" to freedom of the press. "The rest of the issue must have jolted some union members. Not since the early days of the UMWA had the journal run articles critical of the incumbent leadership," said Hopkins.

The opening up of the Journal to opposition forces was a godsend to the Miners for Democracy. It offered an opportunity to reach close to four times the audience of the Miner's Voice. "[The court's] ruling," said Hopkins, "had provided the only vehicle which could unite disparate reformers throughout the coalfields. Within days, the Charleston MFD office began receiving letters from miners all over the nation who had read about the reform movement for the first time and wanted to join." (Hopkins, 391-93)

Change had indeed been initiated. When a new election was scheduled in late 1972, the Department of Labor acted as watchdog. Both sides were given equal access to the Journal, but though both had solid platforms to work from, both resorted primarily to mudslinging for their campaign tactics. The Miners for Democracy attacked Boyle's honesty and integrity, while the Boyle campaign turned to red-baiting, renaming the opposition the "Moscow Fire Department" and "Malcontents for Destruction." (Fox, 486)

Once Miller did come to power, operations within the union began to change rapidly. The officer's report to the 1973 UMW convention, reporting on the Miller administration's first year in office, was appropriately titled The Year of the Rank and File, 1973. The UMW Journal also began to focus more on the miners' interests. Said Clark,

In many of the remote towns and rural areas of the coal-fields, the

> UMW Journal, received by all union members, had often been the only national publication of any kind read by miners and their families. Used as an instrument of leadership under Lewis and Boyle, the reform administration opened the publication to the membership. The Journal had a new function and purpose. It was to act as "an important source of information and expression for the rank and file." (Clark, 32-8)

The new Journal staff replaced flattering stories about the officers, comics, and recipes with letters to the editor, "Rank and File Speaks," and what Clark called relevant articles on safety, health, energy, politics, and union history.

Not that the miners did not already hold an allegiance to the publication that represented their union. "The allegiance was always there to the union," said Don Stillman, who took over as editor at the onset of Miller's presidency. "The Journal was a tangible symbol of the union, something you could hold in your hand. The Journal had a status among the membership that I don't think other labor publications at the time had--it was a visible symbol of a union that had such a loyal membership." Because the UMW was essentially a single-industry union, unlike such labor organizations as the United Auto Workers that represent more than one trade, it had a solidarity of purpose, said Stillman, and that contributed to the loyalty.

Though no polls were done when he became editor, his sense was that while the miners did take pride in their publication, they did not generally read it. Stillman entered the position of publications director with three goals in mind: (1) to make the journal something rank-and-file miners would read; (2) to give voice to what rank-and-file miners, retirees, and miners' widows were concerned about; and (3) to provide an opportunity for the publication to serve as a crusader, carrying investigative and interpretive reporting.

As a journalism professor at West Virginia University, Don Stillman had been supervisor of the student newspaper. When the Farmington mine disaster occurred, the paper covered the event, and he attended the speech Boyle gave to the anxious families and friends of the miners caught in the explosion. Incredulous at Boyle's lack of sympathy for the workers he was paid to represent, Stillman joined forces in the campaign to oppose Boyle in the presidential elections. His participation in union politics, he said, resulted in adverse pressure from university peers and administrators. "When Jock Yablonski was murdered," he recalled, "I took a leave of absence to work full-time organizing."

One of the ways Stillman had played a part in the early reform movement was to cofound the opposition publication Miner's Voice. The paper was operated by rank-and-file workers, and he acted as a technical consultant. When Miller won, Stillman left academics permanently and joined the UMW as editor of the Journal. He brought with him the vision of the Miners for Democracy. "Overall, the mood was that it's time to make the union work again," he said, "and the publication was one element of that." (Stillman interview)

Stillman started by encouraging the rank-and-file miners to use the publication to express their opinions. Beginning in mid-February 1973, a full page, and occasionally two, was reserved for "Journal Letters." Further, the Journal reserved a department for members to speak out on critical issues. It was called "Rank and File Speaks." As Stillman said in a 1973 written plea for involvement, "Arnold Miller has said the Journal should be open to the membership, and this is another way we hope to achieve that goal. Miners, their families, pensioners, widows--all are encouraged to send articles, suggestions for articles, photos, and other items for consideration." (Stillman, "Journal," 18)

Other changes were also made toward democratizing the Journal. In 1974, Harry Patrick, secretary-treasurer of the UMW, set a precedent by writing an open letter through the Journal to the union membership announcing, "On the following pages, you will find the first full and complete accounting of UMWA finances ever provided to the entire membership." (Journal, 16-21 July 1974, 13) In addition, the January 1974 issue of the Journal ran the entire text of the newly revised UMW constitution. The cover of the special edition cited the preamble of the constitution and the UMW seal. On the inside cover, the officers of the union ran a brief explanation of the issue. In that explanation, the officers wrote, "The membership was informed in detail of the new constitution in previous issues of the Journal, but it was our feeling that every UMWA member should have a personal copy of the revised constitution. We believe that a careful reading of this issue will reveal that the new constitution significantly strengthens the democratic rights of both working and retired miners." (January 1974, 2)

Stillman also announced his hope that the Journal would cover subjects outside the immediate realm of the miners' interest, reasoning,

> The quality of a worker's life 24 hours a day instead of just the eight spent on the job is a valid concern of the union and the Journal. The kinds of roads miners drive on, the quality of education their children get, the type of housing available in the coalfields, the access to proper medical care--all are subjects we'll do our best to make some sense out of. But we can't do it without the constant help of our readers. (1 February 1973, 18)

Not everyone agreed with the change of direction in the Journal. "Some officials with roots in Miners for Democracy raised legitimate concerns," wrote Matt Witt, Stillman's successor, in The New Labor Press. "A few organizers, for example, complained that employers were using the member criticism the Journal published against the union during organizing campaigns." (Witt, "Mobilizing," 45) Others complained that the union was a tool for organizing against the coal companies, not a forum for internal debate. Generally, said Stillman, Miller did not respond to calls to de-democratize the Journal. And he did not see the publication until after printing. But there were a few issues, such as strip mining, on which he forbade the membership to openly debate in the pages of the Journal. (Stillman interview)

As managing editor from 1973 to 1975, then editor from 1975 to 1977, Matt Witt had a somewhat different recollection. ""Every edition had to be signed off by Arnold Miller," he recalled. "That's not unusual in my view. We had to take into account what he might say about the articles. For many years he didn't censor letters to the editors." Witt said he always kept in mind that he worked for a publication of an institution representing many different kinds of people with many different opinions. "It's not a personal newsletter," he explained. "Ultimately the president is responsible for what's in there." (Witt interview)

Whether or not the president has direct control over the content of the union publication, his presence inevitably influences what is printed. According to Alinsky, for example, it was not Lewis who steered the helm of the UMW Journal in the 1940s but rather K. C. Adams, its editor at the time. The writer recalled that when he expressed criticism of certain editorials appearing in the Journal during a biographical interview with Lewis, the labor leader replied, 'Well, I can't comment on that because I don't get around to read much of what goes in that paper.'" (Alinsky, 314) Lewis may not have been in close contact with the Journal's content and operation, but, according to Dubofsky and Van Tine, he had invited Adams to become its editor. (255) "Speaking broadly," said Michels, "it may be said that it is the paid leaders who decide all the political questions which have to do with the press. In all cases the press remains in the hands of the leaders and is never controlled by the rank and file." (Michels, 135)

Besides the opinions of Miller, the biases of the Journal staff also influenced what went into the publication. In 1976, for instance, the staff devoted space to Miller over his opponents more than five to one on how to allocate the budget. Reminiscent of Lester, Witt pointed out that most of the UMW's "democratic forces" felt that an open discussion builds union strength. "The coal companies," he said, "would know about divisions within the union in any case, they argued. The union would be stronger if it tried to resolve those divisions rather than pretend they didn't exist." Yet, the Journal staff itself sometimes used the publication to bolster officials they deemed "friendly." (Witt, "Mobilizing," 46-7)

J.B.S. Hardman recalled that as editor of a union paper, he was unable to generate enough input from the membership. But, according to both Stillman and Witt, the Journal of the 1970s never suffered from a shortage of mail. "[After Miller came to power] it was of the 1970s never suffered from a shortage of mail. "[After Miller came to power] it was being read again," said Stillman. "The volume of mail grew tremendously over time." (Stillman interview) Neither editor could offer statistics on the quantity of letters, though Witt wrote in 1978 that a research department poll two years earlier had revealed that more than 70 percent of the local union leaders said they used the Journal's educational material directly. (Witt, "Mobilizing," 45) "We always had a steady stream of letters," said Witt. (Witt interview) The editorial staff would choose the "most interesting" cross-section of letters to print. He did not detail how the staff determined which were most interesting.

Both men said, however, that the majority of members did not take an interest in letter-writing. "You're talking about the more activist people, certainly," said Stillman. (Stillman interview) Though Witt did not recall that the letters the Journal received always came from the same handful of writers, he also pointed out that only in a few instances was there a great outpouring of mail. The issue of women working in the mines brought responses from all fronts: women in the mines, men in the mines, and the wives of the men in the mines, who generally opposed their husbands working with women "in the dark." The number of letters also soared during a feud between old-line Boyle supporters and the reformists regarding how the union budget would be divvied up.

Stillman recalled that not only the quantity but also the quality of letters rose. "The main way you generate letters," said Witt, "is by printing articles of interest. Write about dry subjects, bureaucrats, and no one will read it. Write about whether or not to have rotating shifts, women in the mines, and it will be read." (Witt interview) Stillman added that he noticed a trend in the subject of the letters. Early on, many were by longtime miners thanking the union for being a presence. Of the six letters printed in the first issue, two spent the first paragraph praising the union's new president; one of them, the first letter, filled its entire space singing Miller's praises. (Journal, 1 February 1973, 20-1)

The department continued throughout Miller's administration, though not in every issue. Later, seemingly as interest grew in the publication's content, the letters became more reactive. "I am a full-blooded American citizen," wrote a member of an Illinois local in 1976, "and think that no person should be dictated to how he or she should vote.... To endorse a candidate would be proper; however, the [last] two Journals have been so completely political as to dictate to us, depriving us of being able to vote according to our own conscience." (1-15 December 1976, 15)

Stillman said that the mail could be used somewhat as a gauge of readership. Even so, he said, it's likely that at least some of the readers didn't read every story, particularly the longer ones. Aside from the increase in internal readership, the commercial media began to pick up stories from the Journal, so its audience increased in that direction.

For the regular department "Rank and Files Speaks," the editorial staff went into the field and chose workers to interview. The staff spent the majority of every other week on the road. Staff photographer Earl Dotter would take pictures of the rank and file, and Stillman and Witt, then staff reporter, would look for people to interview. The editorial team would locate possibilities for interviewing through the field union or local union staff, or they would call upon workers whose photographs had been stockpiled for future use. They would find out who had something to say about a particular issue, who felt strongly. They would choose areas where a particular issue--health and safety, for example--was a hot topic. When Alabama industry was importing coal from South Africa, the staff under Stillman traveled to that state and sought out miners for their view of the issue. The editors would first gather a group of miners for some informal discussion of an issue. A day or two later, they would approach individuals who seemed to have a strong opinion for more formal interviewing. Stillman recalls that occasionally one of the interviewees was a mine safety committee member or a local officer but that representatives were chosen for what they had to say, not who they were. (Stillman interview)

"There was a big increase in readership at that time [from 1973-77]," said Witt. (Witt interview) No data have been found for this study to corroborate or dispute the claim. However, readers' attitudes had probably changed dramatically from the tightly controlled Boyle era, when reaction to the Journal might well have been similar to the one by a dissident Steelworker quoted by the Columbia Journalism Review in 1983: "I can't speak for the entire union, but in basic steel most of us just throw [Steelabor, the national monthly of the United Steelworkers of America] in the trash can because there's nothing in it." (Hoyt, "Is the Labor Press," 35) "It takes a little bit of time in the beginning to win people back," said Witt. (Witt interview)

When they first came on board, the new journal staff also took the opportunity to improve the publication's appearance. No budget was assigned specifically to the publication; rather, the staff turned in expenses as they were incurred. No one questioned the cost, said Stillman, when a 32-page edition, such as the June 1-15 issue in 1975, or a four-color journal, such as the April 16-30 issue the same year, came off the press. (An average issue during that time ran around 22 pages and was printed in black and white.) The price was worth the payoff: internally, the staff got positive feedback, and, externally, the publication made the union appear vital. To attract more readers, Stillman, Witt, and Dotter began adding cartoons, photographs, and illustrations. The threesome was left to its own initiative to make changes; they received no input from either Miller or other officials, according to Stillman. (Stillman interview) The changes paid off. In 1976, the United Mine Workers Journal achieved a first for the labor press: under the direction of Matt Witt, it won the National Magazine Award for top U.S. publication in the field of specialized journalism. (Witt, "Mobilizing," 38)

When Miller entered office, the UMW Journal is said to have converted from a device for propagandizing and bolstering the leadership to a mechanism for informing and involving the rank and file. Later into the Miller administration, however, the tide turned somewhat against democratic reform and the publication reflected the change. "I don't know if the readers saw the change coming," said Witt. (Witt interview) Internal dissent began to take hold, breaking down the leadership's power base on a number of fronts. Miller supporters were defeated in district elections, (Stillman interview) and resistance to the 1974 contract agreement by the international executive board made the New York Times in January 1975. (Clark, 59) In-fighting escalated throughout that year, and Stillman was among the casualties. Witt, who had served as managing editor, took over as director of publications--a position synonymous with chief editor--when Stillman resigned. Witt continued to use the Journal as a vehicle of democratization. Offering an example, he said that the Journal avoided any mention of either Miller's or his opponents' election campaign during 1977. Rather, each candidate was allotted 30-plus pages over four issues to "use as he saw fit." (Witt, "Venture," 50)

"Don Stillman and Matt Witt," said Clark, "were largely responsible for transforming the paper from a sycophantic house organ to a democratic publication used to inform the members and to serve as a forum for the rank and file." (Clark, 132) But Witt remained editor only until 1977, when he too resigned. That year, Miller's position was severely jeopardized by an opposition candidate and the decision was made for the Journal to revert to a more traditional union publication. Among the changes enacted were censorship of the letters to the editor and a "puff piece" on a Miller supporter up for reelection. Witt reported that when Miller was "asked if he weren't afraid of rank-and-file reaction to such blatant political use of the Journal, Miller said, 'I haven't used it that way in the past, and where has it gotten me?'" (Witt interview) Witt was followed by three editors, all of whom remained for only a short time before resigning, and by the beginning of the new decade, the Journal was on its sixth editor in eight years.

The UMW Journal: the Trumka Era

John Duray became Journal editor in November 1982, when Trumka was elected president of the UMW. Duray took over as director of communications in 1990, he said in an interview, then moved into the job of education director, working with local officers to keep volunteers interested. Duray had worked as a coal miner beginning in 1971 and as a local union officer at the Consolidation Coal Company in Western Pennsylvania (Consolidation was the company that operated the Farmington, West Virginia, mine that exploded in 1968 and added to Boyle's communication woes). After taking time away to earn an English degree, he reentered the mines in 1977 but was laid off in September 1982. As a volunteer for the Trumka campaign, Duray wrote campaign literature and created fliers and radio spots. The campaign was grassroots-based from the onset, and when Trumka moved into the presidency, he offered Duray the position of editor for the UMW Journal. Although Duray recognized his skill in writing, he was dubious about his ability to oversee the entire publication. He recalled Trumka's response: "I want a rank-and-file miner, and if you accept we'll train you." Subsequently, Matt Witt was hired as a consultant to train the new staff.

Duray brought with him his own ideas about the purpose of the organ. "A union publication," he said, "is a hybrid between an institutional and a popular publication." Because of the difference in their personalities, Duray observed, he and Witt placed emphasis on different components of the hybrid: Duray saw the Journal equally as an institutional and an independent vehicle, whereas Witt saw it less as an institutional and more as an independent publication.

In keeping with those emphases, the 1970s had been a period of learning how to get the rank and file involved; the 1980s seemed a period for pulling together to apply what had been learned. "A lot of the difference," said Duray, "was in the times. During the Miners for Democracy, there were major political fights that played themselves out for five, six, seven years. It was a win-lose dynamic, almost." The factionalism rested with the old-line autocrats and the new-line democrats. Because the 1970s was a booming period for the industry, the union could afford to spend time on internal politics. "Times have changed," Duray asserted. "There's too much competition, too many lost jobs. I don't think the '70s are going to happen again," he said, because coal mining now is much more labor intensive.

Acutely aware of the industry changes, both he and Trumka worked consciously to pull everyone together. "My major, my 'vision thing,'" recalled Duray, "was to more accurately reflect the diversity of membership, the kinds of issues that were important to the members and to build a bridge between that and the union's programs." Duray defined "diversity of membership" in terms of gender, race, and culture. Though the average worker in the industry was a "30-year-old white guy with a beard," the union wanted to encourage and lead the trend in changing the stereotype. "One of the things we very consciously tried to do," he said, "was to take people from different areas, cultures, and blend them in." The July 1990 issue of the Journal, for example, ran a story entitled "Women Miners Celebrate Solidarity." (Duray) Duray's underlying purpose was to make the union something the membership would want to belong to.

Trumka's administration began to rebuild coalitions that had disintegrated over the years. (Fox, 540) An example of the Trumka style was conveyed in the notice the UMW leader sent to AFL-CIO president Lane Kirkland in 1989. It was reminiscent of the terse note that Lewis had submitted to William Green, president of the AFL, in 1947 that said simply, GREEN-A.F. OF L. WE DISAFFILIATE! 12-12-47. LEWIS. Trumka's message read, 10-4-89. LANE. WE AFFILIATE. RICH. (482)

"When labor editors praise the Journal," said Hoyt, "they generally praise its past, from about 1973 to 1977, when it reflected the virtues of the Miners for Democracy movement." (Hoyt, "Is the Labor Press," 38) When Trumka took over, however, an audience poll by the UMW revealed that readership of the union journal was below 40 percent. Trumka, whom Duray described as a "big-picture kind of guy," attributed the low figure to the publication's lack of relevance for its audience. (Solowey, 22) After Trumka came on board, the UMW Journal staff made efforts to increase reader interest. Into the mid-1980s, the union membership was asked, "Where do you get your information about the union?" According to Duray, 70 to 80 percent listed the Journal as their main source. (Duray) The question does not account for members who fail to get information about their union.

The underlying purpose for increasing reader interest was to increase rank-and-file responsibility in the internal operation of the union. (Fox, 540) "Our magazine," asserted Trumka, "does a lot of how-tos: how to build local support, how to deal with the press. We also feature articles on topics of interest." (Solowey, 22) The February 1986 issue, for example, published a four-page do-it-yourself guide for increasing attendance at local union meetings. ("Do-It-Yourself," 20-3)

In his first years of office, Trumka also used the Journal to prepare miners to go out on strike when a new contract could not be agreed upon. "And in the 1984 western negotiations that preceded talks with the BCOA," said Fox, "Vice-President [Cecil] Roberts proved that the union leadership was not posturing. Other unions might have been making concessions, but the UMWA rejected demands that miners assume more of the costs of health care and accept a two-tier wage scale. After a month-long strike at a few mines, miners emerged with higher wages, higher pensions, and improvements in a wide range of benefits." (Fox, 522)

In a 1991 interview, Trumka said he did not sign off on the UMW Journal before it went to press. "I don't exert any editorship over the Journal," he said. (Solowey, 22) Duray, however, said that as editor, he sent regular memos to Trumka, asking for comments on the Journal content. "We had a back-and-forth discussion about what we wanted this thing to look like," he recalled. (Duray) Eventually, said Duray, an ad hoc editorial advisory board made up of senior staff people and high-level officers formed to oversee the publication. By not signing off, Trumka differed from Miller in his later years, as well as from at least one of Trumka's peers, Gerald McEntee, president of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees union. The reasoning behind McEntee's involvement was this: "I have the best political feel for this union. If I didn't, I shouldn't be here." Trumka, on the other hand, said he strived to let the editors--"who know the issues and what we're dealing with"--handle editorial problems. McEntee said that he looked for balance, such as the ratio of blacks to white in the photographs, in the union's publication. "There also is, once in a while," he said, "an article on gun control or something like that, and I know we're having a representation election for a group of correctional officers soon. Something like that is a red flag and a big whistle. We can run it next month, but you don't have to run it now."

Trumka said that he tried to look at the Journal as if it were an outside publication. As of the early 1990s, he also held down appearances in the Journal. One vehicle that Trumka said he forewent for publicizing or for expressing himself was the president's column. "We thought about it when I first came into office," he explained, "and I was faced with a choice at the time. I had a magazine that had very little credibility with the rank and file because it was considered just an internal tool. Of course, if you publish something and it costs you a lot of money and nobody reads it, it's essentially a waste of money. So I opted to say, 'No, we won't have a president's column.'" (Solowey, 29-35)

An examination of the Journal from 1951 through 1991 did not turn up a department specifically reserved for the "President's Column." However, it did reveal that Journal appearances by Lewis and Boyle during their administrations far exceeded those of Miller and Trumka during theirs (see Figure 4). Trumka did, when he deemed an issue important enough, include his opinions by way of a column. He said that his logic in doing so was that when his words did appear, readers would know he had something to say.

In addition to infrequent columns from the president in the early 1990s, Trumka also used other methods to take advantage of the Journal as a communication device. Of the 29 issues studied between January 1985 and November 1991, the UMW president was interviewed by the journal staff twice, in July 1990 and February 1991. The first interview was part of a series of interviews conducted with international officers. The focus was the issues rank and file faced and was held in conjunction with the 100th anniversary convention. In February 1991, the journal carried an interview with the president on the union's fight to save the health benefits of retired coal miners, their widows, and disabled pensioners. The two-page article served at least three major purposes: 1) It informed. Trumka let readers know where contract negotiations stand, for instance. 2) It boosted the union image. "To my knowledge," he pointed out, "we are the only union in the United States and Canada that allows pensioners to be full-fledged voting members. I think that says something about the kind of union we are." 3) And it reinforced the importance of solidarity. "We are all in this together," he reminded, "and just as our unity and strength has pulled us through some very rough times over the years, the solidarity we demonstrate now will be the key to protecting our pensioners and solving this dilemma once and for all." Trumka fairly described the problem as "a result of the realities of coal-industry economics," yet he also drew the lines between "us" and "them," pointing the finger at "the large number of irresponsible operators who just dumped their retirees." ("We Won't Stand," 18-9)

The number of interviews with Trumka reflects only a small percentage of the total references to the president in the publication. However, it is significant in that it reveals that the Trumka of the 1980s and early 1990s was sensitive to the effect frequent appearances might have on the membership. In addition to the two interviews with Trumka, the Journal carried out three with the UMW vice-president--in November 1985, April 1986, and June 1990--and one with the treasurer, in April-May 1990.

The covers of the UMW Journals reinforce what might be interpreted from the small number of official interviews. In 1985, four out of five covers pictured miners or their families, while none pictured officers. In 1990, five out of nine carried photographs or illustrations of miners and one sported an officer's picture (see Figure 3).

In 1983, the United Mine Workers had a total membership of almost 100,000. (Troy and Sheflin, B-11) Yet when Duray took over as editor, he recalled that the publication received almost no letters to the editor. Through advertisements on the back page of the Journal, the staff--four writers, a design director, and a research assistant, all of them full time--solicited letters that would keep to issues, not personalities, politics, and personal problems. "Initially," Duray recalled, "the members didn't look at the Journal as theirs. It's somewhat still like that--those who aren't involved in the programs have no sense of commitment. I don't know that you can, in a labor union, ever get 100 percent involvement 100 percent of the time."

In lining up interviews for "Rank and File Speaks," Duray appeared to have followed in the method of his predecessors. The staff would pick a topic--dust in the mines, other safety issues--then would approach, say, mine safety inspectors, who would then point them toward safety committee members.

To garner the interest of more than just retirees, who, Duray said, already read the publication cover to cover, the staff initiated changes in format of the Journal, starting in 1983. The journal began to place more emphasis on visual elements. It increased the number and size of pictures, enlarged headlines, and experimented with different typefaces and styles (see Appendix B). Up through the mid-1980s, the UMW Journal was printed on newsprint. Sometime between summer and fall 1985, however, the publication converted to a slick cover, though it continued to use newsprint on the inside pages. By the new decade, the journal had upgraded to two-color and the inside to higher-quality white paper. As of the mid-'80s, printing and postage tallied about $40,000 per issue. No figures have been found to compare other time periods. Distribution at that time was around 200,000; in 1992, it ran about 170,000.

In addition to "democratizing" the Journal, Trumka pushed for union locals to elect their own committees and get involved in organizing. As a result, said Duray, there was much more involvement by the rank and file under the leadership of Trumka in the first decade than under the previous administrations. (Duray) Though no statistics are available, Fox corroborated the value of the push:

> Political action campaigns stressed the role of local union members in endorsing candidates, and miners were encouraged to run for office in their communities. Many were successful, and they brought new attention to the concerns of miners. There was also increased emphasis on people-to-people organizing, using local rank-and-file miners to explain the value of the UMWA to neighbors who worked at nonunion operations. (Fox, 540)

The UMW Journal is one of the vehicles used to encourage a hands-on approach by the union's membership. The July 1990 issue, for example, carried a five-page story on a group of miners who became involved in working with management on running their operations. ("Dictatorship," 5-9) And the February 1990 issue ran a three-page article detailing how UMW members voted their own write-in candidate into the Virginia legislature. ("Working People," 5-7)

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

An examination of the UMW Journal combined with a review of the literature written on labor history and communications indicates that the internal structure of the United Mine Workers of America indeed became more democratic in 1971. In that year, Arnold Miller was elected UMW president. The democratizing trend--the move to increase member participation in union activities by encouraging open communications and by educating the miners on how to get involved--continued throughout the 1980s and early 1990s under the administration of Richard Trumka. Concomitant changes occurred in the UMW Journal, and those changes were manifestations of the process of democratization. Alterations in the publication's content corroborate the findings.

Has the Journal cover featured more workers and fewer union officials since Miller and Trumka came to power? Beginning with the victory by the Miners for Democracy, the percentage of covers that pictured the rank and file increased dramatically, while the percentage picturing union officials decreased substantially. The highest number of covers illustrating workers or their families from 1951 to 1970 was 14 percent for one year, with 1965 carrying no pictures of rank and file. From 1975 to 1991, the lowest rank-and-file representation in any one year was 50 percent, while the highest was 89 percent. The year in which the number of rank-and-file covers increased most dramatically, around 1971 or 1972, a similar decrease occurred in official covers.

Also noteworthy: the covers that were not counted as pictures of workers or officials. In three of the five years observed from 1951 to 1970, at least 32 percent of all covers represented the adversarial relationship between the UMW/coal industry and business/government. In comparison, the highest percentage of covers between 1975 and 1991 that depicted the conflict between miners and outsiders was 10 percent. One interpretation of that change is that Lewis and Boyle, unlike Miller and Trumka, perpetuated an us-and-them mentality to preserve union unity.

Has the publication made fewer references to the union president than in the Lewis-Boyle period? While the Journals observed have refrained from reserving a regular column for the union president, the publications of the past two decades have carried considerably fewer references to the chief administrator in the first few pages of text. In 12 out of 24 issues of the Journal printed in 1951, Lewis either addressed the membership directly or was mentioned in bold type at least once in the first three pages of text. In 1955, Lewis suffered what the Journal called a mild heart attack. That factor may have contributed to the relatively small number of references that year, 14 out of 24 journals. Vice-president Thomas Kennedy, however, was mentioned frequently that year, though a count was not conducted. In 1960, Lewis had just retired. Therefore, Lewis; new president Kennedy (who served only three years); and his successor, Boyle, were all included in the count. That year, their names appeared up front in 19 of 24 issues. Five years later, Boyle was highlighted in 20 of 24 journals. In 1970, when Boyle was struggling to retain his position as UMW president, he was referred to early on in 17 of 22 issues. In 1975, four years after Miller came to power, Miller's name appeared up front in seven of 24 issues of the publication. In 1986, Trumka showed up in two out of 10 issues, and in 1990, he appeared in two out of nine.

In addition to downward shifts in the number of appearances by union officials, other changes came about with Miller and have continued with Trumka. Such departments as "Recipes" and "Screenings" have been replaced by "Rank and File Speaks" and "Journal Letters." "Rank and File Speaks" began in February 1973, soon after Miller was elected president. Under the direction of Stillman, Witt, and Duray, interviews were conducted with mine workers on topics of special interest to the membership; they included dust control, coal imports, and training in arbitration and union finances. "Rank and File Speaks" occupies two or more pages in virtually every issue of the Journal from 1973 to 1991.

Stillman encouraged letters to the editor by writing a column asking for submissions. Both he and Witt asserted that the primary catalyst for letter-writing was articles of interest to the membership. Duray spelled out what kinds of letters the editorial staff hoped to receive through a back-page solicitation, while Stillman and Witt selected the letters chosen for publication according to what they defined to be their interest value. The first letters appeared in early 1973, running on the last pages of the publication. This researcher was unable to pinpoint the year the move occurred, but by 1985, the letters held a prominent place on the inside cover of the Journal.

Other changes have occurred since the UMW was democratized in the early 1970s. Through May 1, 1970, page 2 of the Journal ran an "Official Roster" listing all UMW representatives; beginning on June 1, it was moved to the end of the publication. The roster appeared in fewer than one-third of the issues in 1975, 1986, and 1990.

Beginning in 1973, the Journal started a department called "District Reports." How-to articles on dealing with management and recruiting new activists within the local have replaced folksy anecdotes and down-home humor. The difference between the former and the latter is the difference between placing emphasis on home-centered activities and on involvement of the membership in union affairs.

While the research indicates that the Journal has shifted toward educating the membership, the practice of using the Journal to promote pride in the union has remained. (Education of the membership and boosterism of the union need not serve mutually exclusive purposes, of course; they can work hand in hand to make the union strong.) In 1955, five of the 24 Journal covers were photographs or illustrations advertising the 17th

National First Aid and Mine Rescue Contest held in Knoxville, Tennessee, and five of the 24 covers in 1960 encouraged miners to vote. Ten of the 24 images in 1965 symbolized the UMW as an entity. One such cover sported an illustrated UMW hardhat, the words "Season's Greetings," and the signatures of Tony Boyle and the union's international secretary-treasurer. A typical "Other" cover since the early 1970s is one printed in 1986 that showed a dollar bill imprinted with the words "In Union We Trust."

Improvements in the appearance of the Journal have been ongoing during the past two decades. Stillman and Witt introduced color to the cover for the first time in almost 80 years. Duray took it one step further by adding color to the inside pages, and the journal of the 1990s, unlike its predecessor, uses color on a regular basis. Since the days of Stillman and Witt, the publication has also switched from newsprint to slick white paper. Under the sensitive eye of Earl Dotter, the journal of the 1970s began running photospreads that concentrated on the miners themselves, and the trend has continued into the 1990s. Cartoons, type, white space, and other elements are also used to increase the visual appeal of the publication.

Conclusions

If the Journal can be used as an indicator, the union before Miller offered little opportunity for anyone other than Lewis and Boyle supporters to get involved in union affairs. Under the banner of the Miners for Democracy, Miller pushed for grassroots involvement in union decision-making from the beginning of his presidential campaign. But that did not mean that the rank and file would immediately understand or accept its new role as active participant in union affairs. Lewis had built a 40-year empire, where he alone was decision-maker. He had put in place numerous safeguards to preserving the status quo, among them, constitutional contraints on communication, closed labor negotiations, and an official publication to boost his own image.

But even before Lewis relinquished power, the stage had been set for reform. Beginning as early as the mid-1950s, a downward industrial trend had already begun to take place. Mechanization was on the increase, and the union offered no retraining to the workers displaced by machines. And Lewis's mishandling of the Welfare and Retirement Fund resulted in a decrease in benefits to the miners who had contributed money to the fund. When Boyle took over, the welfare fund was in financial turmoil, nonunion coal mining was on the rise, and bituminous-coal employment was falling.

If what Hardman said is true, that workers join a union to improve their job security, wages, and benefits, then why would workers not already have taken action against the union whose purpose it was to represent their interests? At least a partial answer may be that the membership had, as Gaventa said, internalized its part in the power structure. Having acted for so many years as passive receivers of whatever the union leadership doled out, the membership was virtually incapable of voicing dissatisfaction. Add to that the "fear factor": Workers had suffered severe repercussions, both physical and political, for opposing the union leadership during the Lewis era. That would help explain why a typical response to Lewis by the rank and file in the 1950s was that while acknowledging his dictatorial style, they did not question his leadership role.

It was Lewis's very style of dealing with business and government that had brought successes about. Yet, by not allowing the rank and file to play an active part in decision-making, Lewis set the stage for the union to collapse when a less adept negotiator took charge. Such was the case when Boyle took the helm. Because they had been restricted in their access to the channels of communication, because they had so long been powerless in the political realm, and because they had spent years in fear of reprisal for speaking out, most workers were unequipped or unwilling to take part in improving their circumstances when the leadership failed to do so. Even after the Miller administration came to power and began to encourage participation, the membership continued to lack the tools and the trust to function democratically. Hence, their early failure to voice dissatisfaction through the letters column.

Changes in the Journal over the past 20 years have been introduced under the assumption that workers and their families would prefer more participation in union decision-making; it is likely, however, that at least some of the rank and file would prefer to concentrate on enhancing their home life. Yet, it cannot be denied that the driving force behind democratic reform has been from within the union itself. During the Boyle administration, both Boyle and his officers took a proactive position in preserving the status quo. They used the Journal, for example, to promote their good deeds, and they withheld its use from their opponents. A case could be made that without pressure from within the organization, the union would have continued under the leadership of Boyle or another autocratic leader.

Several external factors gave impetus to the movement for more grassroots participation as well. One was the political climate of the times. In the 1960s, the direct-action challenges--distributing leaflets, demonstrating, occupying buildings--to the Vietnam War and to the institutionalized inequality of civil rights for African-Americans reflected the emergence of a broader participatory movement. Having observed the widespread use of militancy to achieve social justice, young miners who came into the union brought with them a more activist method for dealing with their own organization's inequities.

Further, unaccustomed to the union hierarchy, they were less likely than older workers to respect or tolerate the whims of the leadership. Veteran miners, on the other hand, recalled the successes resulting from the labor militancy of the 1930s and 1940s and, perhaps in search of "the good old days," joined the young in building an opposition movement.

Although the passion existed for bringing about change, such outside sympathizers as Don Stillman assisted the cause by bringing in professional skills to offer the insurgents.

The reformers could undoubtedly have produced and distributed opposition literature without support, but Stillman's journalistic knowledge contributed to projecting an appearance of professionalism that would have instilled confidence among the rank and file in the move toward democratization.

Under pressure from Yablonski's family and friends, labor and judicial arbitrators also joined the battle after Yablonski's murder in late 1969. The commercial media followed, reporting on the murder, the investigations by the Senate and Labor Department, and the court proceedings. It's possible that without the involvement of outside institutional forces, the reform movement would have had to resort to violence to bring about internal change or that change would not have come about at all. A more tangible benefit was that out of the court rulings came equal access to the Journal by the Boyle opposition. The movement gained broader visibility from both the Journal articles on the reformers and the commercial media's coverage of the elections and murder investigation.

Ultimately, most union members themselves did not take advantage of the Journal as a medium for discussion. Using that as an indicator, it might be surmised that only a handful of the membership wanted a part in determining union policy. But to anyone possessing the desire to participate, at least in the first half of the Miller administration, the pages of the UMW Journal were open for discussion.

That opportunity resumed when Trumka came to power (or perhaps even earlier, when his predecessor, Sam Church, became president), and it continued throughout the early 1990s. Yet even Trumka aimed toward a specific type of participation. The UMW is not a revolutionary union, after all. It is a large business organization whose ultimate aim is not to promote worker control but to survive.

Likewise, the UMW Journal is the printed voice of an institution, albeit an institution whose primary concerns include the interests of mine workers. Many articles are geared toward how individual members can make the union stronger: Articles that train union locals to become involved in management decisions are meant to build the strength of the UMW. Interviews with Trumka reinforce a feeling of solidarity within the union. Member participation in union organizing drives results in a feeling of ownership by the rank and file.

The UMW under Trumka is operating within a different context than the union of Miller. Such factors as the Reagan administration's handling of the air traffic controllers and the move by U.S. business to other countries have created a negative culture for the labor movement of the 1990s. What the union needs to survive the 1990s and beyond is solidarity of purpose and action. Consequently, the primary purpose of a publication like the UMW Journal must be as a force for unifying the membership within the UMW and strengthening the bond between the UMW and other labor unions. Making union members feel that they are an integral part of the power structure--with the Journal playing a role in carrying out that mission--may well be the path to accomplishing those goals.

Suggestions for Future Research

Much research has been done to place the changes in internal union structure between 1950 and 1970 within the larger context of social and political changes. Less has been done to explain the historical events that shaped the UMW of the 1970s, and little research has focused on the union since Trumka came to power. The research for this thesis adds to the limited information available after 1980, but much more could be done to increase understanding of the UMW of the early 1990s.

Specifically, much could be gleaned from members of the rank and file. Researchers might conduct interviews with the UMW rank and file to determine their opinions on such topics as why they joined the union, how they perceive the lines of communication to run between the leadership and the members, how much they wish to participate in union decision-making, what they want to read in the UMW Journal, and how well the Journal meets their needs. Former union members might also be approached to explore how they have been affected by changes in the industry and the union, their perceptions of the strength and future of the union, and their reasons for leaving.

Research might also include analyzing the content of the journal according to gender, ethnicity, non-UMW union, and international content. The Journal might increase solidarity within the labor movement by broadening its coverage of those areas, where necessary.

Additionally, a thorough analysis of the "Journal Letters" department during the past 20 years should be done to determine the content of the letters. Doing so would offer insight into how honestly the membership feels it can express itself in the UMW publication. Research might reveal that the letters column is filled with complaints about the operation of the union. Having done a cursory exploration, this researcher suspects that further examination would, instead, indicate that the letters contain criticisms of fellow workers but continue to heap praise on the UMW.

A comparison between the content of "Rank and File Speaks" and interviews with the miners themselves would help determine how well the journal has covered issues of importance to the union membership during the past 20 years. A comparison might also be made between the early Miller and the Trumka administrations, using a content analysis of the articles themselves: Has there been a change in how the Journal articles go about educating the membership? Do articles of the 1990s, for example, encourage more independent thinking by the workers, or do they encourage members to espouse the "party line"? Do the articles of the earlier period encourage activities aimed toward workers' rights with the company management? Do they in either period encourage workers to explore their rights within the union? Do they carry the union policies on internal grievances?

Answers to these questions will more clearly reveal the aims and goals of the leadership in encouraging member participation in union activities. In turn, they will provide an indication to the rank and file of what level of ownership they can realistically expect to achieve by being a union member.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

FIGURES

1897	17.4	1945	502.1
1900	143.0	1950	506.5
1905	253.6	1955	316.3
1910	239.7	1960	204.7
1915	313.7	1965	167.4
1920	404.3	1970	152.6
1925	410.1	1975	152.2
1930	248.2	1980	151.7
1935	566.7	1989	117.0
1940	528.3		

Sources: U.S. Union Sourcebook: Membership, Finances, Structure, Directory (West Orange, New Jersey: IRDIS, 1985), B-10. Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1991 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1991), 425.

Note: Beginning in 1965, all figures except 1989 include Canada. Canadian membership has not exceeded 8,600 since 1965. The 1989 figure includes all mining in the United States.

Figure 1. United Mine Workers of America Membership, Selected Years, 1897-1990 (Thousands)

Year	Employment
1945	364,997
1950	408,623
1955	225,539
1960	170,628
1965	137,602
1970	138,900
1976	210,000
1980	--
1985	185,000
1990	137,500

Sources: Maier B. Fox, United We Stand: The United Mine Workers of America, 1890-1990 (United Mine Workers of America, 1990), 423. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Note: Figures from 1970 through 1990 include lignite-coal employment.

Figure 2. Level of Employment in Bituminous-Coal Industry, 1945-1990

Year	Rank and File (%)	Officers (%)	Other (%)	Adversarial (%)	Total (%)
1951	5 (21)	5 (21)	4 (17)	10 (42)	24 (100)
1955	2 (8)	6 (25)	8 (33)	8 (33)	24 (100)
1960	3 (13)	6 (25)	8 (33)	7 (29)	24 (100)
1965	--	7 (29)	13 (54)	4 (17)	24 (100)
1970	3 (14)	8 (36)	4 (18)	7 (32)	22 (100)
1975	18 (86)	--	1 (5)	2 (10)	21 (100)
1985	4 (80)	--	1 (20)	--	5 (100)
1986	5 (50)	2 (20)	2 (20)	1 (10)	10 (100)
1990	5 (56)	1 (11)	3 (33)	--	9 (100)
1991	8 (89)	--	1 (11)	--	9 (100)

Sum of percentages does not always equal 100 because of rounding.

Note: "Other" refers to covers that do not specifically represent workers or officers. "Adversarial" refers to "Other" covers that focus on conflict between the UMW/coal industry and business/government.

Figure 3. Breakdown of UMW Journal Cover Content,
Selected Years, 1951-1991

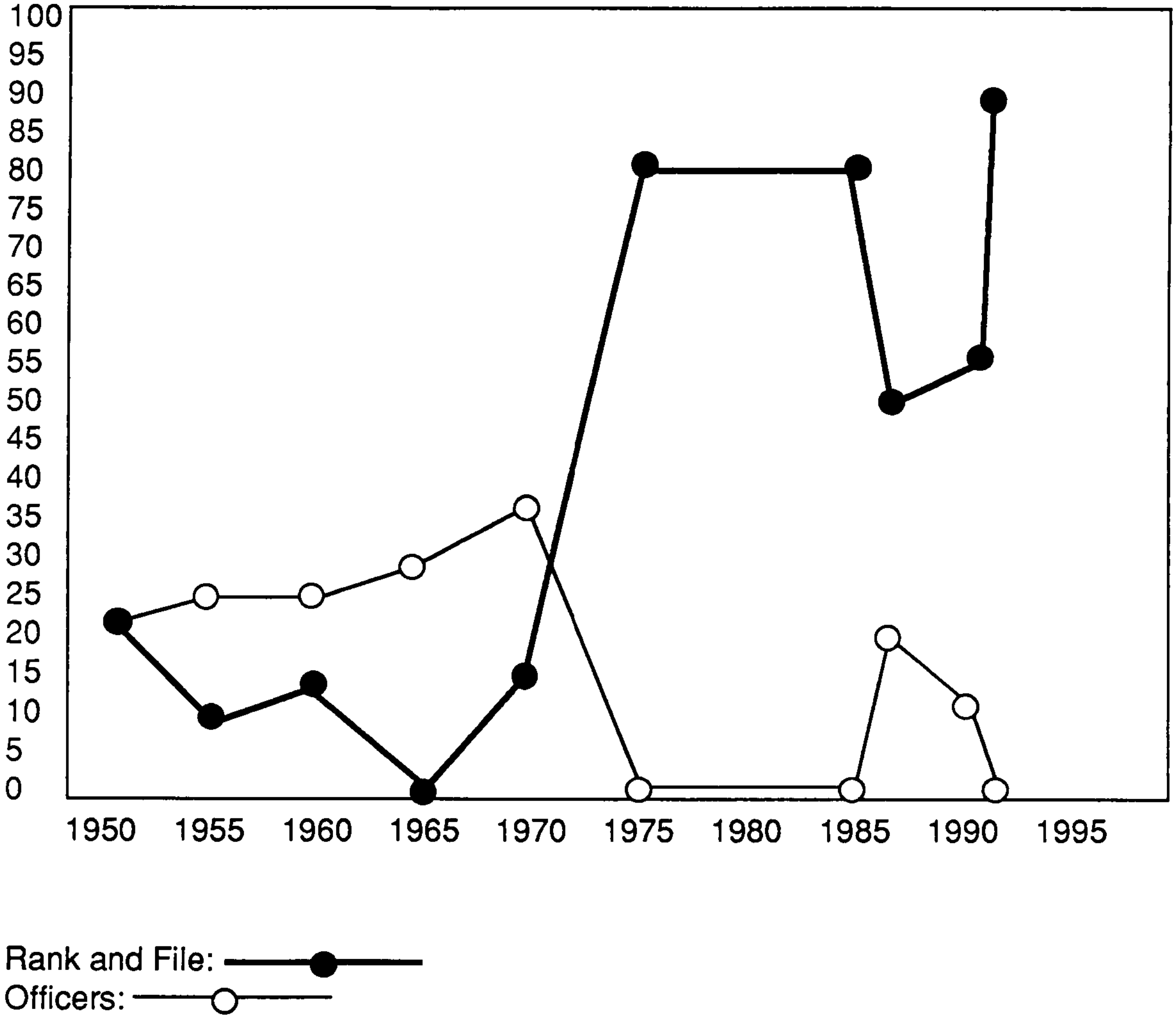
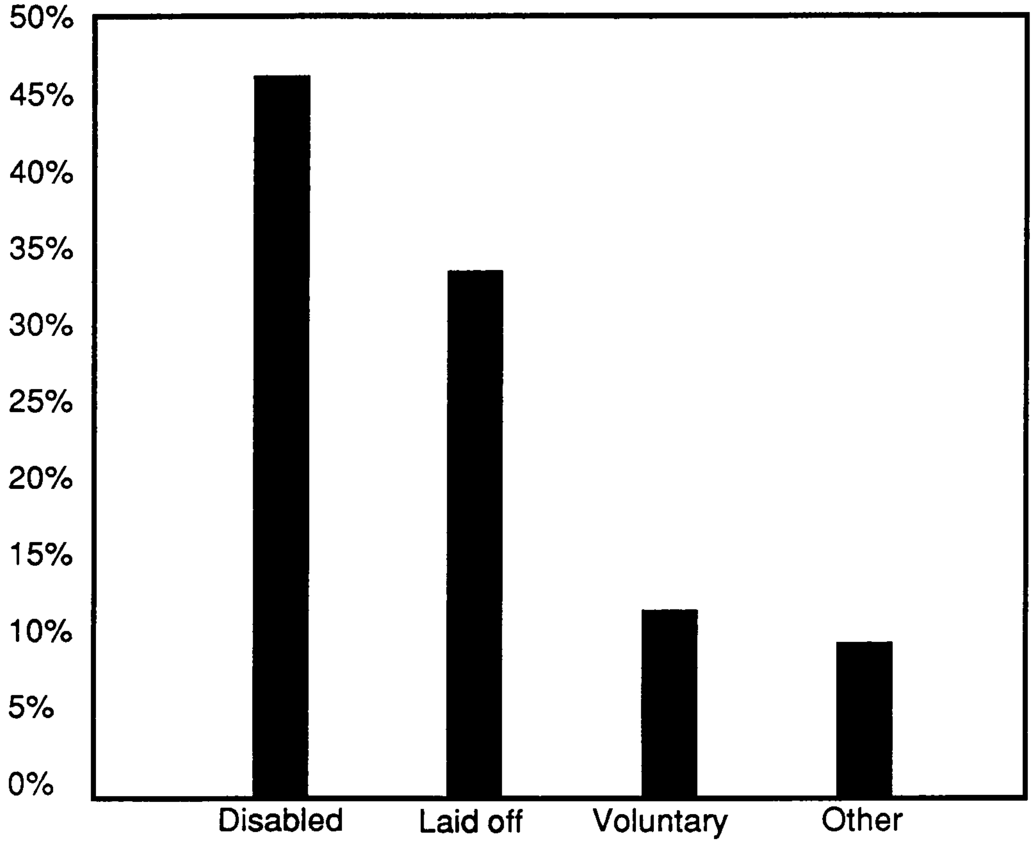


Figure 4. Breakdown of UMW Journal Cover Content: Rank and File to Officers Selected Years, 1951-1991 (Percentage per Year)

Year	Rank and File Speaks	Letters to The Editor	Official Roster	District Reports	Recipes/ Screenings	Presidential Mention
1951	--	--	X	--	X	X
1955	--	--	X	--	X	X
1960	--	--	X	--	X	X
1965	--	--	X	--	X	X
1970	--	--	X	--	X	X
1975	X	X	--	X	--	--
1986	X	X	--	X	--	--
1990	X	X	--	X	--	--

Figure 5. Changes in UMW Journal Content, Selected Years, 1950-1990

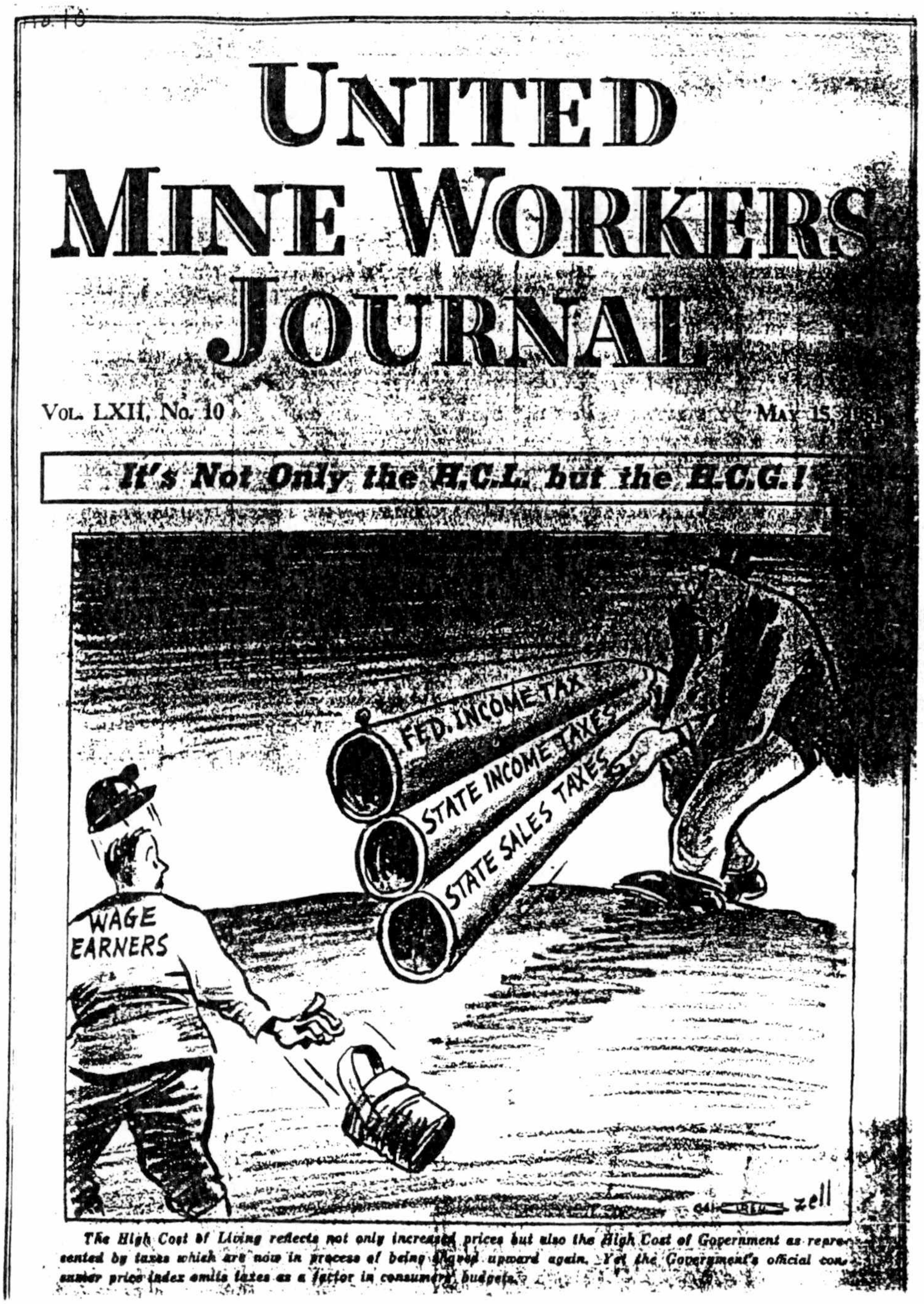


Source: United Mine Workers Journal (15 October 1951), 13.

Figure 6. Why Miners Retire

APPENDIX B

UMW JOURNAL COVERS



UNITED MINE WORKERS JOURNAL

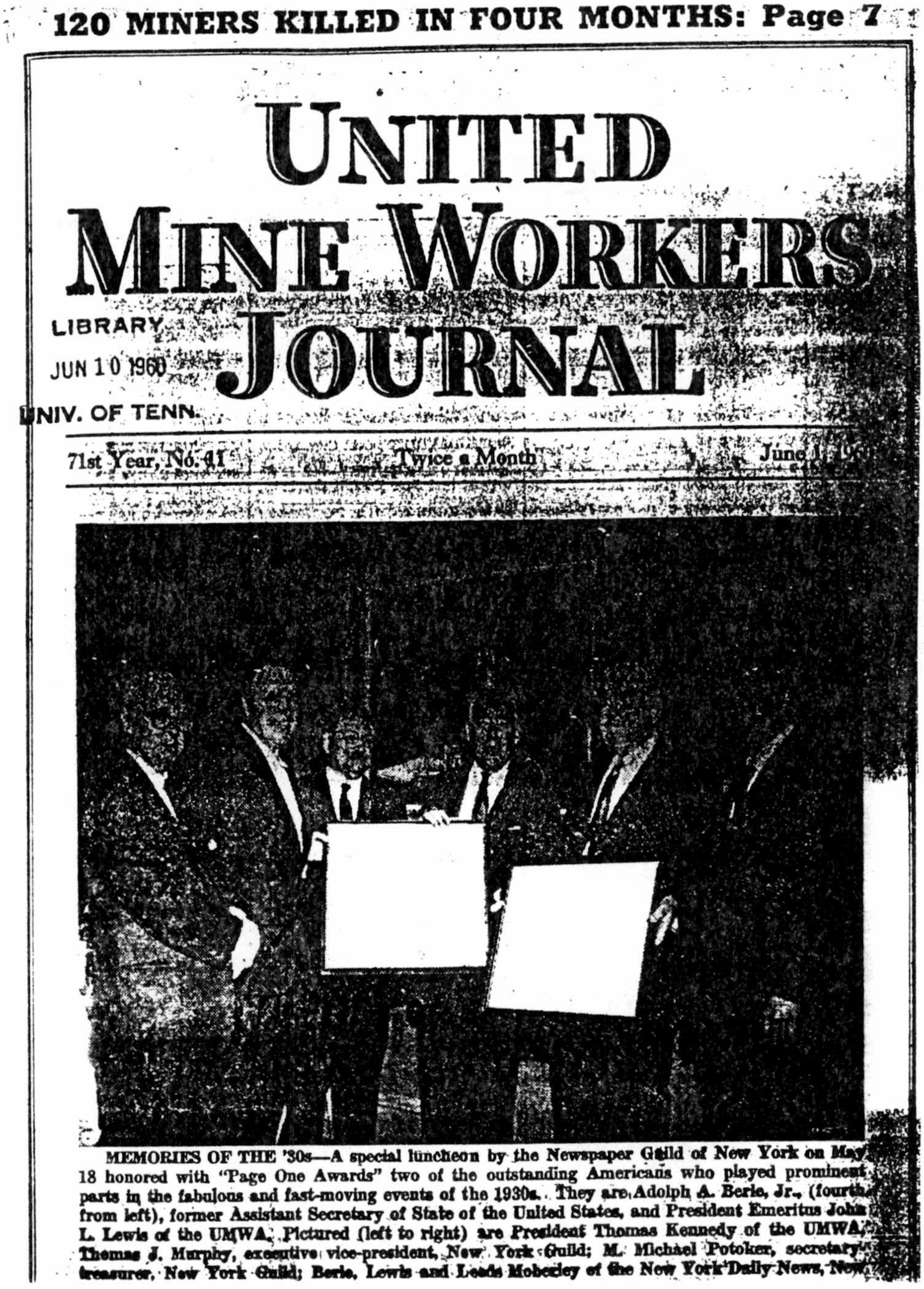
VOL. LXII, No. 10 MAY 15,

It's Not Only the H.C.L. but the H.C.G.!

FED. INCOME TAX
STATE INCOME TAXES
STATE SALES TAXES
WAGE EARNERS
zell

The High Cost of Living reflects not only increased prices but also the High Cost of Government as represented by taxes which are now in process of being shoved upward again. Yet the Government's official consumer price index omits taxes as a factor in consumers' budgets.

United Mine Workers Journal cover, 15 May 1951



120 MINERS KILLED IN FOUR MONTHS: Page 7

UNITED
MINE WORKERS
JOURNAL

71st Year, No. 11 Twice a Month June 1, 196

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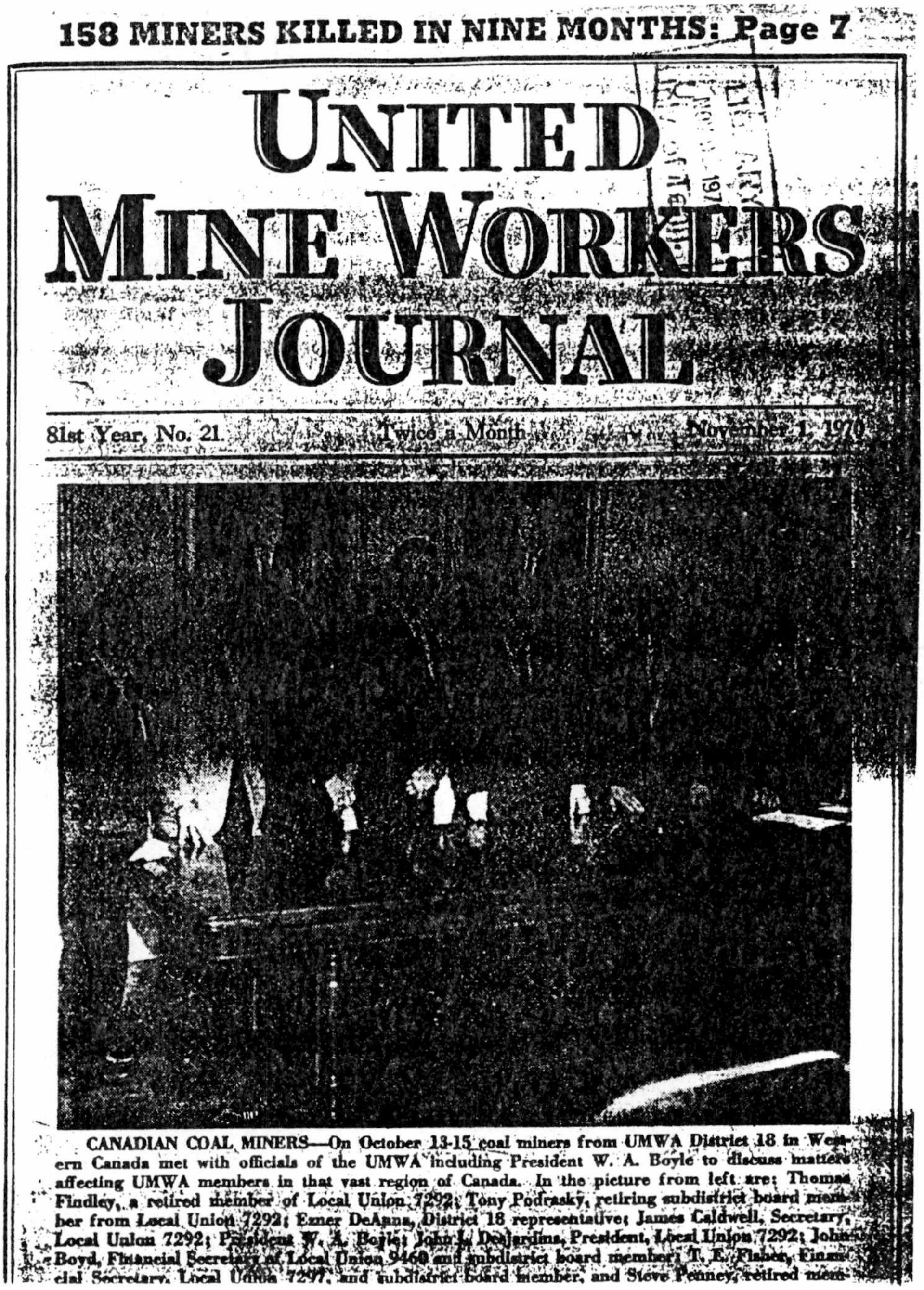
MEMORIES OF THE '30s—A special luncheon by the Newspaper Guild of New York on May 18 honored with "Page One Awards" two of the outstanding Americans who played prominent parts in the fabulous and fast-moving events of the 1930s. They are Adolph A. Berle, Jr., (fourth from left), former Assistant Secretary of State of the United States, and President Emeritus John L. Lewis of the UMWA. Pictured (left to right) are President Thomas Kennedy of the UMWA; Thomas J. Murphy, executive vice-president, New York Guild; M. Michael Potoker, secretary-treasurer, New York Guild; Berle, Lewis and Leeds Moberley of the New York Daily News, New

United Mine Workers Journal cover, 1 June 1960



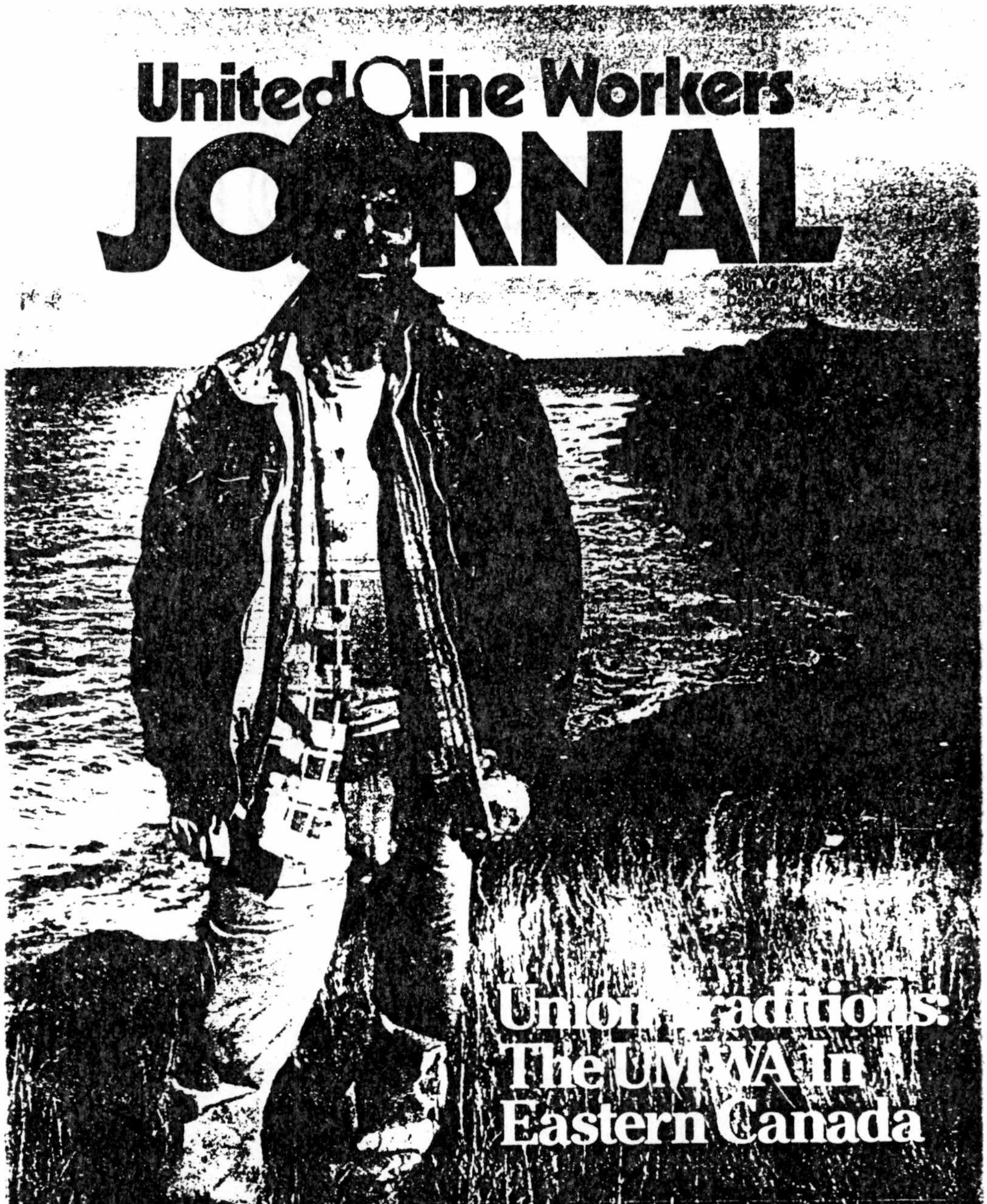
158 MINERS KILLED IN NINE MONTHS: Page 7

UNITED MINE WORKERS JOURNAL

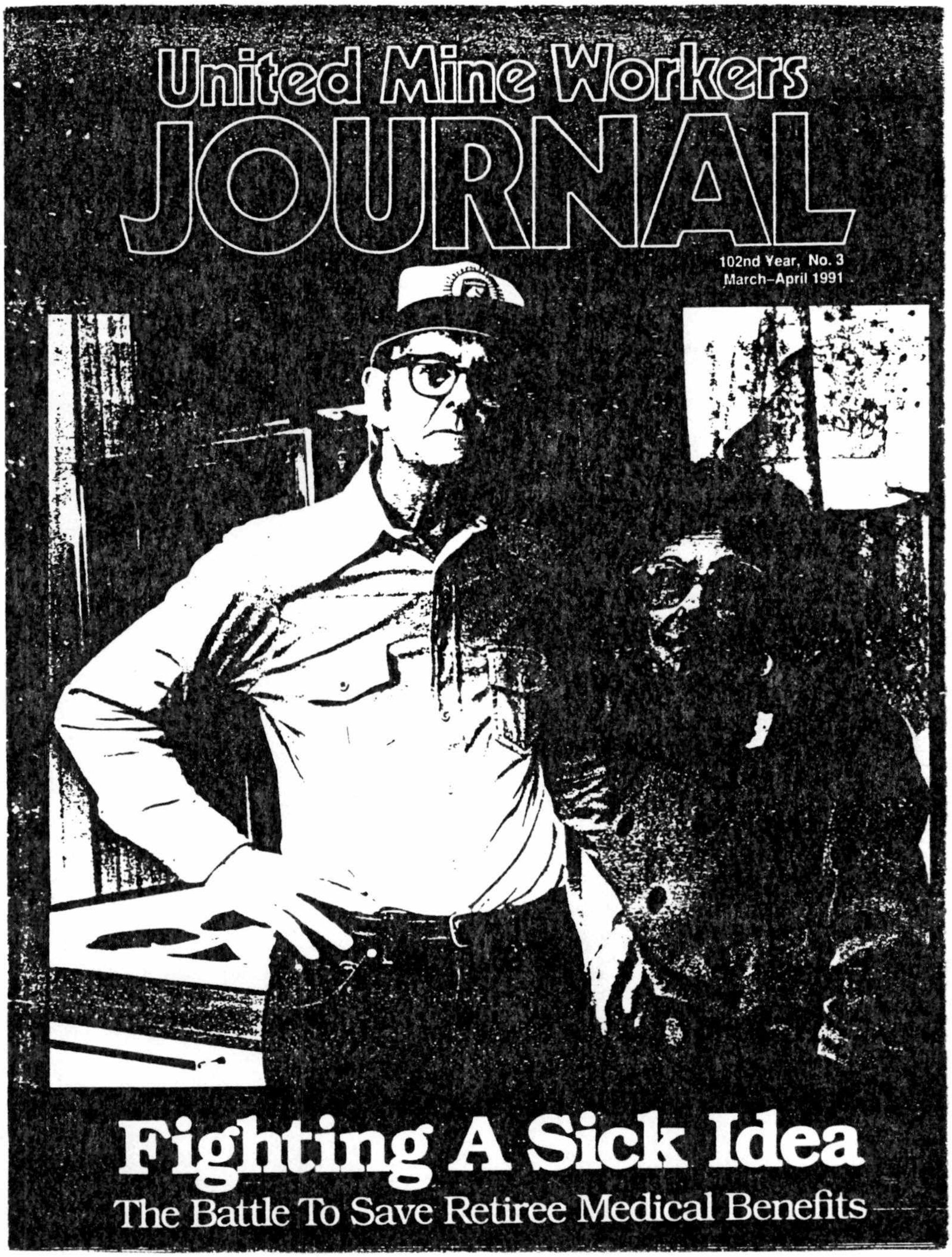
81st Year, No. 21 Twice a Month November 1, 1970

CANADIAN COAL MINERS—On October 13-15 coal miners from UMWA District 18 in Western Canada met with officials of the UMWA including President W. A. Boyle to discuss matters affecting UMWA members in that vast region of Canada. In the picture from left are: Thomas Findley, a retired member of Local Union 7292; Tony Podrasky, retiring subdistrict board member from Local Union 7292; Ezner DeAnna, District 18 representative; James Caldwell, Secretary, Local Union 7292; President W. A. Boyle; John L. Desjardins, President, Local Union 7292; John Boyd, Financial Secretary of Local Union 9460 and subdistrict board member; T. E. Fisher, Financial Secretary, Local Union 7297, and subdistrict board member, and Steve Penney, retired mem-

United Mine Workers Journal cover, 1 November 1970


United Mine Workers
JOURNAL
Union Traditions:
The UMWA In
Eastern Canada

United Mine Workers Journal cover, December 1985


United Mine Workers
JOURNAL
102nd Year, No. 3
March–April 1991
Fighting A Sick Idea
The Battle To Save Retiree Medical Benefits

United Mine Workers Journal cover, March-April 1991

VITA

Cynthia Jane Tanner was born in the small town of Olney in Southern Illinois. She grew up in Champaign-Urbana, home of the University of Illinois, and moved to East Tennessee in 1976.

Her first stint at the University of Tennessee was in 1979, initially as a part-time student in pre-veterinary medicine and later in animal science. After a two-year hiatus from college in the mid-1980s, during which she operated her own business training border collies to herd livestock, she reentered the university in journalism. She received her bachelor's degree in 1986, then worked for four years in publishing, mostly at Whittle Communications. In 1990, she returned for her master's degree to the University of Tennessee College of Communications, where her coursework emphasized visual communications.

She is currently the executive director of Solutions to Issues of Concern to Knoxvillians, a community-based social change organization that focuses on involving people in working on the issues that affect them. She owns a simple Victorian house in the inner city and considers herself a permanent resident of East Tennessee.