Steel's Indictment: The Strike That Changed the Mahoning Valley

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Abstract

Despite a depth of research focused on labor history and the working class in the Mahoning Valley, Ohio, the 1916 strike and riot at East Youngstown lacks a comprehensive and collective research examination. Perhaps that is because the incident left a deep scar on the conscious of the community, so penetrating that the residents chose to rename the town Campbell in 1926 to avoid the national reputation their town had earned. But from the strike came an improved quality of life for working people, made possible through: (1) collective wage increases; (2) better buildings and improvements to the local infrastructure; (3) and a new relationship between labor and management, wherein corporations began to focus on quality-of-life issues. While the 1916 strike left East Youngstown with such an irreversibly poor national impression that citizens petitioned for its renaming a decade later, the incident led to economic and social reforms that improved the quality of life for those living and working in the Mahoning Valley.

Keywords: Strike, Union, Welfare, Capitalism, Youngstown

Indicador de Acero: La Huelga Que Cambió el Valle de Mahoning

Resumen

A pesar de una profunda investigación centrada en la historia laboral y la clase trabajadora en el valle de Mahoning, Ohio, la huelga y disturbios de 1916 en East Youngstown carece de un examen de investigación exhaustivo y colectivo. Tal vez sea porque el incidente dejó una profunda cicatriz en la conciencia de la comunidad, tan

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penetrante que los residentes optaron por cambiar el nombre de la ciudad a Campbell en 1926 para evitar la reputación nacional que su ciudad se había ganado. Pero a partir de la huelga surgió una mejor calidad de vida para los trabajadores, que fue posible gracias a: 1) aumentos salariales colectivos; 2) mejores edificios y mejoras a la infraestructura local; 3) y una nueva relación entre el trabajo y la administración, en donde las corporaciones comenzaron a enfocarse en los problemas de calidad de vida. Si bien la huelga de 1916 dejó a East Youngstown con una impresión nacional tan irreversiblemente pobre que los ciudadanos solicitaron su cambio de nombre una década más tarde, el incidente llevó a reformas económicas y sociales que mejoraron la calidad de vida de quienes viven y trabajan en el valle de Mahoning.

Palabras clave: Huelga, Unión, Capitalismo del bienestar, Youngstown.

钢铁的控告：一场改变马霍宁谷的罢工

摘要

尽管诸多研究聚焦于俄亥俄州马霍宁谷的劳工历史和工人阶级，但1916年在扬斯敦东部发生的罢工和暴动却缺少全面共同的学术研究。也许这是因为，这次事件给该社区留下了惨痛的烙印，以至于居民在1926年请愿将小镇更名为坎贝尔，以避免回忆起曾经因罢工而获得的全国名声。然而，罢工之后却迎来了工人阶级生活质量的改善，这可能归因于：1）工资集体增长；2）当地基础设施有所改善；3）劳工和管理层之间的新关系，即企业开始关注员工生活质量。尽管1916年罢工事件使得扬斯敦东部在全国获得了无法改变的坏名声，以至于当地居民在十年后请愿给小镇更名，但这次事件引起了一系列经济改革和社会改革，这些改革提高了马霍宁谷本地劳工的生活质量。

关键词：罢工，工会，福利资本主义，扬斯敦

Gathering at the foot of the North Bridge entrance of the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company just before five o'clock in the evening on January 7, 1916, striking workers in East Youngstown, Ohio, found themselves face-to-face with armed company guards. The strike had begun just 11 days earlier at the nearby Republic Iron and Steel Company when demands for higher wages and overtime pay went unmet, and days later, workers at the Sheet & Tube Company set down their tools in unorganized solidarity.[1] Most of the men working at the two mills were recently arrived unskilled immigrants, living in crowded boarding houses in the village of East Youngstown. The village was a hastily built boom-town, with mud streets and no running water, sewers, or adequate housing. Their working conditions at the mills were equally untenable, and in many cases, they labored for more than 12 hours a day, earning less than nine dollars per week.[2]

Conditions for a violent labor uprising were widespread, and that evening, armed guards and strikers clashed for six hours before armed citizens organized to bring down the insurrection. In its aftermath, the fire had consumed the entire business district, hundreds received injuries, and three men were dead. In the days that followed, rumors of foreign influence and a Wall Street plot filled the newspapers, but a three-month investigation sought out the truth. The investigation brought the indictment of hundreds of strikers by the Mahoning County Grand Jury, and in an unprecedented move, the steel executives themselves for allegedly fixing wages. Although the judge dismissed the grand jury charges brought against the steel companies for their role in the 1916 East Youngstown Strike, the indictments signified a positive shift in the perception of labor rights and the relationship between workers and management in the Mahoning Valley.

West of the Allegheny Mountains on the edge of Appalachia lies Ohio's Mahoning Valley. In the Mahoning Valley, the steel mills were the most prominent feature of the landscape, forming a 25-mile chain of massive structures along the narrow banks of the Mahoning River. The colossal clusters of mill buildings crowded the river's edge, intersected by rail lines busy with activity. Smokestacks, rising high above the rolling and finishing mills released thick, dark soot which hung over the valley like storm clouds. "On a clear night," the *Youngstown Vindicator* claimed in 1915, someone standing outside of Akron, "looking to the east, may behold a horizon that reflects the glare of Youngstown's furnaces."[3]

Iron and steel production began in the Mahoning Valley in 1803, when James and Daniel Heaton began operating the area's first blast furnace. Located six miles southeast of downtown Youngstown on Yellow Creek, the "Hopewell Furnace" was the first of its kind west of the Allegheny Mountains. The discovery of black coal in the brier-covered hills northwest of downtown during the mid-1840s would revolutionize the Valley's iron and steel industry, replacing the traditional coking process.

Within a quarter-century, the Valley built 21 blast furnaces, mostly along the mighty Mahoning River.[4] The growth of industry brought a flood of immigrants, generally of Welsh, Irish, and German descent to the hillside, transforming it into Youngstown's first working-class neighborhood, known as Brier Hill.[5] By the turn of the century, one-third of Youngstown's population was foreign-born, crowding into ethnic-based neighborhoods throughout the city.[6]

Southeast of downtown, where the Mahoning River flows southeast after meandering through the business district, once lay open, grassy fields. It is there that investors from the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company chose to build their mill shortly after incorporating in November 1900. The stockholders included some of Youngstown's most prominent citizens: George, Henry and Charles Wick; John and Henry Stambaugh; and Paul Powers. Within five years, local businessman James A. Campbell became the president and chairman of the board, and the namesake of the plant. The Campbell Works stretched for five miles, including four sheet mills, 14 puddling furnaces, three tube mills, a skelp mill, and a Bessemer converter.[7]

In just a decade, the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company would lead a complete transformation of the wooded hillside, turning it into a booming industrial town known as East Youngstown.[8] Like Brier Hill before it, the demands for labor in the mills led to a flood of immigrants. By 1915, East Youngstown was home to 10,000 residents, nearly all of which were foreign-born. They came from Lithuania, Poland, Serbia, and Italy as unskilled laborers, easily finding work at the local Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company and the nearby Republic Iron and Steel Company.[9]

The development of East Youngstown was starkly different than the growth of the area's oldest working-class neighborhood, Brier Hill. The village lacked an adequate housing stock, forcing many new arrivals, mostly unmarried men, to stay with family members in crowded shacks and boarding houses.[10] The rapid boom of East Youngstown left it underbuilt and underdeveloped. The town lacked running water and sewers, bringing with it sickness and disease. Thick mud sat on the unpaved streets, clinging to the boots of men as they traveled back and forth from their homes to the steel mills. The conditions inside the mills were poor as well. Many of the men worked 12–14-hour days, earning less than eight dollars and 50 cents per week.[11] The conditions of labor during this period led the *American Labor Year Book* to describe East Youngstown as having "one of the most complete economic backgrounds for a tremendous upheaval of labor that has ever been found in any industry."[12]

The Mahoning Valley's iron and steel industry began to decline by 1913 and 1914.[13] The price of finished product plummeted to the level of production costs, the mills functioned at one-third capacity, and frequent temporary plant shutdowns were commonplace. Still, manufacturing cost-cutting measures taken by the Republic Iron and Steel Company allowed it to boast a small profit to its shareholders in its

1914 annual report. By early March 1915, the industry began to rally, fueled by the demand of foreign governments like Great Britain and France for American steel. Within weeks, the mills returned to full capacity, including Republic Iron and Steel and Youngstown Sheet and Tube. Steel manufacturers promised that by summer, the mills would have "work for every able-bodied man in Youngstown."[14]

As the price of finished iron and steel products continued to rise in late March, the Republic Iron and Steel Company made a startling announcement. Despite their successful navigation of the earlier economic downturn, pipe cutters would receive a 17 cent wage reduction per 100 pieces of the finished product. The cuts were massive, sparking an embittered wage dispute that carried on for nine months. During that period, general laborers throughout the mill demanded a wage increase as well, calling for an advance from 19 ½ cents per hour to 25 cents. Just before Christmas, management reinstated the wages of the pipe cutters; however, they denied a pay increase for the general laborers. The denied increase enraged the already resentful laborers inside the mill, and two days after Christmas, both unskilled and skilled workers set down their tools in a massive demonstration.[15]

The strike at the Youngstown Works of the Republic Iron and Steel Company began on a Monday afternoon, December 27, 1915, when the company refused to grant wage increases to unskilled workers. Management claimed that the rate of 19 ½ cents per hour for unskilled labor was already high and that an increase to 25 cents would exceed the rate paid by competitors. Management was equally unwilling to hear the striker's other demands which included longer lunch breaks, a shorter workday on Saturdays, and time-and-a-half overtime pay for extra work, specifically on Sundays. While the strike remained unadjusted, it was growing in numbers by the day. As workers set down their tools to join the strike, they began to interrupt production at the mill. Fearing that the plant would shut down entirely, company officials and mill police summoned local law enforcement to help quell the strike.[16]

For the next two evenings, striking workers from Republic Iron and Steel crowded into the Krakusy Hall on Franklin Avenue to hear speeches in all languages by strike leaders. At the first meeting, the attendees learned of the company's plan to bring in 150 replacement workers. Though they pleaded urgently with skilled laborers to support them, the threat of unemployment made by replacement workers weighed heavily on the men who refused to join in solidarity. Undeterred, more than 600 people attended the meeting on the second day including organizers from the American Federation of Labor (AFL). One organizer, the AFL's John J. Graney spoke passionately toward trade unionism and the meaning of solidarity. His message resonated with those in attendance, and by the end of the night, the first steps of a new union local at Republic Iron and Steel became certain. The following night,

at the urging of Graney, both unskilled and skilled men met for a peaceful protest. Graney warned the men to stay away from company property and to refrain from violence, especially as replacement workers entered and exited mill property.[17] Both the AFL and the striking workers remained hopeful that the demonstration could win over the holdouts at Republic Iron and Steel and spread the strike to other area mills.

The new year brought new orders for steel manufacturers across the country, especially in the Mahoning Valley where orders for billets and blooms from France and Italy booked production through June. The work orders at many of the area mills grew so large that management began to refuse orders. Meanwhile, steel executives continued to ignore the demands of the striking workers, utilizing replacement workers instead. As the strike continued, unrest among the Valley's iron and steel workers grew. On Saturday, New Year's Day, unskilled workers at the unaffiliated Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company left their post. Later in the day, unskilled laborers in the smelting department at the Haselton Bessemer branch of the Republic Iron and Steel Company walked off the job as well. Soon, engineers, riggers, boilermakers, and boilermaker helpers walked out, and before long, the slaggers joined them too.[18]

Through the weekend, the number of strikers at the demonstrations on Poland Avenue and the Center Street Bridge appeared to grow. On Monday, police began to take up lookout posts near the entrance of the striking mills, anticipating violence among the restless workers. Throughout the night, police responded to nearly a dozen reported disturbances in the area of Republic Iron and Steel, resulting in a half-dozen arrests. Though the arrests were mostly related to the harassment of replacement workers entering and exiting the mill, two men were found to be in possession of weapons. When police attempted to apprehend one of the suspects, another striker attacked the arresting officer.[19]

The arrests outside of Republic only contributed to the growing unrest among its employees. Later on Tuesday, January 4, 400 sympathetic laborers walked out of the Lansingville and Brown-Bonnell branches of the Republic Iron and Steel Company and marched toward Youngstown for a massive demonstration. Thirty miles away in the Shenango Valley, laborers at the Standard Steel Company in New Castle, Pennsylvania, set out on strike. Part of a sympathy strike organized by the AFL, more than 100 laborers walked out demanding a nine-cent per hour pay increase. The increase would put wages at the Standard Steel Company at 25 cents per hour, a wage scale that the AFL hoped to make uniform throughout the region.[20]

Early on Wednesday, January 5, the strike at the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company grew. The ignored demands for higher wages made by employees on the threading floor led 20–30 of the employees to walk out. That evening, AFL organizers met with the frustrated Sheet and Tube Workers and were confident that they fully realized the advantages of collective bargaining

as a means of gaining wage increases. Laborers met with organizers from the International Machinists Union as well. AFL organizers estimated that more than 600 employees from Youngstown Sheet and Tube were on strike or would be on strike in the coming days, though the company denied the claims. At noon the next day, at least 250–300 men had laid down their tools or failed to report for work.[21]

Recognizing the growing seriousness of the strike and the waning possibility that his small police force could protect the mills, East Youngstown Chief of Police Harry Hartenstein met with officials from Republic and the Sheet and Tube. Hartenstein found that, for steel executives making record profits, closure of their mills was not a viable option. Hartenstein suggested that the mills add special police to protect their property and the workers whom the strikers had harassed as they entered and exited the mills. Another sought to house replacement workers in bunkhouses on mill property. The decision remained unclear and unresolved, and like the nights before, strikers picketed along the Center Street Bridge and Poland Avenue throughout the night, urging workers arriving for their shifts to keep out of the mill, and threatening those who did.[22]

For Republic Iron and Steel Company Police Chief Sam Butler, the situation quickly grew out of control that Wednesday night. Understaffed and ill-prepared, Butler phoned Sheriff J.C. Umstead asking for assistance. According to Butler, the crowd on Center Street and Poland Avenue had turned violent, threatening arriving workers and even discharging weapons at them. By the time Umstead and his deputy came, no evidence of such an incident existed. Later calls made by Butler and Republic supporting the swearing-in of special deputies went unanswered by the tired Sheriff. By his account, his forces were fully capable of handling the magnitude of the situation.[23]

On Thursday, January 6, the number of strikers between Republic Iron and Steel and Youngstown Sheet and Tube seized production, forcing Republic to call a meeting with strike leaders in an attempt to adjust the strike. At 10 o'clock that morning, strike leaders, steel executives, and their legal counsel met to discuss the matters which caused the strike. One man from each of the three departments of the mill represented the striking workers, while James H. Nutt represented the steel company. Nutt was an experienced arbitrator and successful one at that. In his entire 25-year career adjusting strikes, he had never failed. The company executives held steadfast to its position that the company had the highest wage scale among its competitors and that they could not possibly raise the wages in fear of paying a higher amount than its competitors. Still, by the end of the meeting, leaders of Republic were confident that the strike was in its final days. Meanwhile, fearing acts of violence, East Youngstown Mayor William H. Cunningham urged officials at the Youngstown Sheet and Tube to withhold from operating the mill with such a small police force available.[24]

The Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company ignored Cunningham's wishes, and that evening as replacement workers arrived and left the plant, the strikers turned violent. Throughout the evening, 1,000 men amassed outside the North Bridge, the East Youngstown entrance to the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company. Strikers grabbed and threatened the workers, dragging men from their cars and brutally beating them. During the night, small fires burned in the streets while drunken men gave impromptu speeches. Finally, convinced that the local police could no longer handle the situation, Sheriff Umstead swore in additional deputies and notified Governor Frank Bartlett Willis of the escalating situation.[25]

In the morning, Friday, January 7, some 900 picketers gathered near the North Bridge. Near eight o'clock, the violence from the night before continued, when strikers savagely beat a timekeeper for the railroad, believing him to be a replacement worker. Elsewhere, strikers threatened engineers from the Mahoning Valley Railroad when they refused to allow them to harass replacement workers arriving at the Sheet and Tube aboard their trains. The strikers instead harassed the train operators themselves, tossing bricks through their windows and damaging a half-dozen train cars before the railroad abandoned service in East Youngstown.[26] When the saloons opened, men drank freely throughout the day.

Witness to the influence that alcohol played in the previous week of growing violence, Sheriff Umstead pleaded with Mayor Cunningham to order local saloons closed. Cunningham refused, believing it to be outside his legal authority. Instead, the mayor would recommend to saloon owners to close their businesses, but he refused to force them to do so. According to the Liquor License Commission, the authority to close the saloons rested only with Umstead. Though Umstead opposed the Commission's opinion, at four o'clock that afternoon, he ordered the saloons closed.[27] Throughout East Youngstown, drunken idled workers emptied from the saloons onto the village streets.

The sun had already set in Northeast Ohio by four o'clock on Friday, January 7, 1916, when the forced closure of the saloons led a crowd of men to gather at the North Bridge on Wilson Avenue.[28] As the strikers began to move across the bridge toward the mill, they encountered 35 armed company guards, crouched in a defensive position at the end of the bridge. Without warning, a single gunshot rang out, forcing both sides into a retreat under a torrent of gunfire. The guards dropped to their bellies and raised their Springfield rifles in preparation for a charge.[29] Instead, the retreating strikers set fire to the nearby employment office. Witnessing the incipient stages of the fire from across the street, the massive crowd of strikers grew in their ferocity, transforming them into a violent mob.[30]

First, the mob broke into a nearby clothing store, looted it and set it on fire. Next, they moved to the hardware store, smashing through the windows, and gathering up more than two-dozen

rifles stored inside. Others broke into and looted the saloons, just hours after the county sheriff ordered them closed.[31] The mob smashed open liquor barrels, consuming the alcohol with buckets and scooped hands. "The streets of the village were literally deluged with liquor," witnesses claimed, while others carried bottles home for future consumption. Looters cleared the entire contents of jewelry stores and clothing shops. Men with "eyes inflamed and bloodshot, bulging from their sockets," struggled with armfuls of stolen goods.[32]

Responding to a disturbance near the south entrance of the mill on Poland Avenue, rioters surrounded Sheriff Umstead and his deputies in their vehicle. A rioter threw pepper into Umstead's eyes, while another struck a deputy over the head with a club. Deputies quickly drew their weapons, holding off the violent men long enough to escape. Shortly after, rioters surrounded a responding ambulance, but as the rioters descended upon the vehicle, an ambulance attendant raised his revolver and fired into the crowd. The shot struck one man in the neck and head, and in the chaos, the ambulance narrowly escaped.[33]

The size of the rowdy crowd on Wilson Avenue instantly exceeded the capabilities of the local police force. Fearing that the mob would target them, the East Youngstown policemen took up refuge in stores outside the immediate area of danger as the mob looted and burned the business district. As the fires grew, bystanders alerted the local fire department. The East Youngstown Fire Department responded promptly to the alarm, though as they stretched their hose lines, an armed mob descended upon them. The angry crowd threatened the firemen and slashed their hoses, rendering them useless. The firemen abandoned their equipment, while local officials pleaded with them and other bystanders to operate the abandoned fire apparatus, offering $1,000 to any man brave enough, but no one accepted. Helpless, the town begged for help from the Youngstown Fire Department, but they refused to respond without adequate protection.[34] In desperation, Umstead alerted Governor Willis, "Please send the National Guards to the village of East Youngstown at once. Lives have been taken, and many portions of the town are being burned. We are helpless in trying to cope with the situation."[35]

Word of the disorder in East Youngstown reached Governor Frank Bartlett Willis in Columbus just before midnight. Willis was an untested young governor aged only 44. However, his 30,000-vote upset of incumbent James M. Cox in the 1914 general election had thrust him into the national political spotlight.[36] Willis was a "party man and partisan at heart," who began his political career in the Ohio General Assembly in 1900 before going to Congress in 1911.[37] Though he believed himself to be a friend of the working man and others considered him a progressive, he never played a significant role in passing labor legislation. During the 1914 campaign, Cox criticized Willis heavily for his lack of support for workman's compensation and for voting against the Clayton Antitrust Act.[38] With no delay, Willis ordered three regiments of the Ohio

National Guard to East Youngstown; however, it would be hours before they arrived. Meanwhile, the crowd of several thousand looted and burned more than 100 businesses until citizens armed themselves and organized.

Dressed in long dark trench coats, their faces hidden by cocked hats, the vigilantes moved down Wilson Avenue with authority. Organized by East Youngstown Solicitor and Ohio State Senator Oscar E. Diser and led by East Youngstown Police Captain Frank Cunningham, the men marched with revolvers in hand, firing into crowds of unruly men during the height of the disorder. Later dividing into smaller squads, the men searched anyone they encountered, arresting scores of foreigners. Finally, after six hours of chaos, the vigilantes finally brought things under control. With fires still raging around them, four companies from the Youngstown Fire Department arrived to combat the flames. Within a few hours, the fires were mostly under control.[39] At nearly two o'clock in the morning, peace had returned to East Youngstown, though not before the destruction of the entire business district, dozens receiving gunshot wounds, hundreds more injured, and as many as 30 presumed dead.

The vigilantes patrolled the streets into the night until 309 troops from the Fifth Regiment of the Ohio National Guard arrived by special train from Cleveland after 4:30 in the morning. The men of the Fifth Regiment were the first of more than 2,000 soldiers ordered into East Youngstown. Armed with repeating rifles and revolvers and supplemented by a machine gun company, the men stationed in and around the Sheet and Tube Company, holding off further violence. As the sun began to rise that morning, the full extent of the damage became clear. Windows left smashed, stores left empty of their inventory, and smoke rising from the smoldering ruins, the night of disorder had left the village in ruins, images more reminiscent of the war in Europe.[40]

Village police, volunteer militia, and soldiers patrolling all areas of the town throughout the night apprehended 70 men, charging most with carrying concealed weapons. When the jail at East Youngstown overflowed, the Mahoning County jail arranged to take them in. Village police then set out to recover stolen goods, forcing their way into nearly every home in East Youngstown. The police searched under beds and between mattresses, piling wagons full of recovered property and arresting guilty parties. Over the next several days, the raids produced more than 300 arrests and 152 prisoners forcing the council chambers, basement, and fire apparatus bay at the village hall to become makeshift holding cells.[41]

Later that morning, the village attempted to assess the totality of the event. Despite rumors of as many as 30 deaths, only one person died while trying to force entry into a store. Twelve injuries came from the initial engagement at the North Bridge, the first of more than 125 reported. Local hospitals treated 21 of those injured persons, a dozen of which received gunshot wounds. The most staggering figures came from the more than 50 buildings that received

damage, including restaurants, movie theaters, and the post office. In total, the first damage estimates to the structures exceeded $1 million, with another $500,000 in goods and property looted or destroyed.[42]

In the immediate aftermath of the riotous night in East Youngstown, interested parties tried to direct blame for the intensity of the incident. Sheriff Umstead placed blame on Mayor Cunningham for refusing to order the closure of local saloons, though officials from the Liquor License Commission had argued that only the sheriff held that power. The mayor's failure, Umstead suggested, kept the saloons open until four o'clock, allowing the idled to drink freely throughout the day. The drunkenness of the workers had unquestionably escalated the volatility of the incident, but Umstead himself had neglected to close the saloons until the late afternoon, disputing the legal interpretation of the commissioners. Given the opportunity to refute Umstead's claims, Mayor Cunningham argued that closing the saloons at four o'clock gave strikers nothing better to do than to loot and set fire to the town.[43]

Mayor Cunningham directed blame towards the officials at the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company for attempting to operate the mills without adequate police protection. Cunningham stated that he warned the officials two days before the incident that his small police force would be incapable of stopping even a minor uprising. AFL General Organizer Thomas H. Flynn placed blame on steel officials as well, but for their use of "paid sluggers." He also blamed Sheriff Umstead for swearing in "professional gunmen" at the request of Sheet and Tube officials. Flynn made sure to distance his organization from involvement in the riot, claiming that when the AFL failed to bring the two sides together, he lost any influence over the striking workers. Monday also brought calls for the resignation of village authorities for their inaction during the early stages of the uprising and the police force for their warrantless search of village homes and seizure of property, not to mention the improper arrest of scores of residents.[44]

Management from both the Republic Iron and Steel and Youngstown Sheet and Tube kept silent throughout the next day about the events of the night before, other than to lament the fact that they had not avoided such destruction. At the same time, both Republic and Sheet and Tube appeared to concede to Mayor Cunningham's blame. For the time being, both companies would agree to withhold from efforts to resume operation. Privately, Republic conceded to its striking employees as well. The morning after the strike, Republic offered an immediate wage advance to 22 cents per hour if workers agreed to end their strike and return to work.[45]

That Monday, newspapers nationwide published two theories, or rumors, for the demonstration at East Youngstown; foreign influence and a Wall Street plot. Governor Willis' order to Prosecutor Henderson to launch an investigation into the cause of the strike and the participating parties immediately dispelled the first rumor of

foreign influence. The claim suggested that two Austrians had conspired to interfere with munitions manufacturing. Though police arrested two Austrian men during the incident, the investigation found they had only participated in the mob violence. While Henderson managed to find that claim unfounded, the second theory of Wall Street influence remained unanswered for days.[46]

The Wall Street claim, initially made by Thomas Flynn of the AFL, appeared in newspapers nationwide, including several New York newspapers. Flynn claimed that the demonstration at East Youngstown was the outcome of a plot developed by monied interests to rig stock prices as a means of blocking a rumored merger involving Youngstown Sheet and Tube. Among the companies included in the merger claims was John D. Rockefeller's Colorado Fuel and Iron. John D. Rockefeller Jr. issued the first response to Flynn's claim by telegram days later, stating that neither he nor his father ever had an interest in the Sheet and Tube, while also demanding that Flynn correct his statement.[47]

Meanwhile, Mayor Cunningham's court prosecuted 72 prisoners. Thirty pled guilty to charges of drunkenness and disturbances, while 15 more received guilty verdicts for larceny. The court held 12 more prisoners for grand larceny and arson, while the grand jury sought the testimony of five others for weapon concealment charges. Cunningham's handling of the court drew the criticism of some witnesses, who charged the mayor with "heavy-handedness," imposing heavy fines on those with money while waiving fees for others. Additionally, in the case of 27 men delivered from nearby Coitsville Township, Cunningham called no prosecuting witnesses. Village officials met any criticism against its officials with fierce resistance, and in one case, village police threatened to shoot newspapermen who published negative articles about them.[48]

On Tuesday, January 11, with peace restored, the Fourth Regiment of the Ohio National Guard returned home to Cleveland, leaving 1,000 men from the Fifth and Eighth Infantry quartered on nearby train cars. At the same time, skilled laborers from Republic Iron and Steel applied for charters under the American Federation of Labor. It began first with the electricians and cranemen, then stationary engineers and firemen. Thomas Flynn claimed that as many as 80 percent of unskilled laborers at the plant had already organized, with the remainder willing to follow suit. If Republic and Sheet and Tube met the demands of organized men at their mills, the AFL hoped that the industry would establish a competitive wage scale throughout the Mahoning Valley.[49]

With order books full at both Republic Iron and Steel and Youngstown Sheet and Tube, mill officials made their first serious efforts to reconcile the strike. That afternoon, strikers from Republic met with state mediator Fred C. Croxton to make a single request, a permanent wage increase of 10 percent for both skilled and unskilled labor. At the same time, strike leaders from the Sheet and Tube and its officials met at the bargaining table. In exchange for a wage

increase of 2 ½ cents per hour, the striking workers agreed to return to work. With a prior agreement to match wage scales between the two companies, the agreement to a new wage by workers at Sheet and Tube made an agreement at Republic imminent.[50]

The next morning, Wednesday, January 12, strikers from Republic along with their newly organized unions voted in favor of ending the strike and returning to work at a new 22 cents per hour rate. At the Sheet and Tube, workers agreed to return to work as well, though the 22 cents rate was a concession from their original demand of 25 cents. Nonetheless, 7,000 striking workers from the two mills agreed to the terms and would return to work in the coming days. The agreement brought celebration that week, especially among the 300 workers from Republic who gathered to celebrate at the Krakusy Hall. At noon, 100 men returned to Republic for the afternoon shift.[51]

Meanwhile, Prosecutor Henderson pressed on in his investigation into the strike. Though Henderson had immediately dispelled the rumors of foreign influence, that position changed near the end of the investigation's first week. "From what the investigation has so far developed, I am convinced that outside influences were largely responsible." Henderson also agreed to investigate the manner in which steel companies in the Mahoning Valley set the wages, a system he believed violated the Sherman Anti-Trust law." The county courts busied themselves as well, arraigning 100 men in a makeshift courtroom in the third-floor hospital.[52]

The following morning as the Fifth Regiment boarded trains bound for Cleveland, the Mahoning County grand jury called its first witness, Thomas H. Flynn. The next day, the investigation led to the first and most severe sentences of the entire investigation. Both John Anglin and John Dopin received maximum fines of $500 and 30-day jail sentences for leading the strike riot. Saturday brought the first 19 indictments issued to Judge W.S. Anderson by the grand jury. The investigation charged 26 defendants with various crimes, mostly for carrying concealed weapons, though four men received charges of aggravated murder.[53]

With dozens of strikers behind bars, Governor Willis ordered the Eighth Regiment home, the last remaining state troops in the Mahoning Valley. Despite the dismissal, East Youngstown remained in disarray. Throughout the week, dozens of reports of missing persons rolled into the police station, and with many people unaccounted for, searches among the smoldering rubble of the business district continued. A week later, political instability grew with the resignation of two village councilmen, Hugh Boyle and Peter Julius.[54] Now three weeks removed from the outbreak, Governor Willis summoned investigators to Columbus.

Prosecutor Henderson and Assistant Attorney General Henry S. Ballard left for Columbus to meet with Governor Willis on Thursday afternoon, but not before issuing another partial report of their investigation. The report included 37 indictments to the common pleas court, the majority

of which were for carrying a concealed weapon, while others were for arson and malicious destruction of property. The indictments also included serious charges; five men received charges of assault with attempt to kill for their attacks on Sheriff Umstead. Meanwhile, Federal Secret Service agents reported back to Washington, DC. They would return with orders to deport any "Youngstown Aliens" involved in the incident.[55] When the men returned to Youngstown, the grand jury investigation planned to issue its final report.

On the evening before the grand jury issued its final report, Prosecutor Henderson and County Detective Kane worked diligently to draft the final indictments. Over the last three months, the two men had interviewed more than 500 witnesses among the 250 individual cases. The next morning, the total individual indictments would reach 229, and as promised, the men were saving the best for last. The work took the men until nearly midnight. They exited the courthouse and entered their county vehicle parked in front only for its engine to sputter and die. Later revealed to be an "ingenious and dastardly" plot to kill the two men, a local mechanic found gasoline in the oil tank, a mixture he believed would have certainly killed both men in a massive explosion. Over the course of the investigation, both men recalled having received several threats on their lives, highlighting the seriousness of the investigation.[56]

The longest grand jury session in the history of Mahoning County came to an end on March 8, 1916, 37 days after tensions at the North Bridge boiled over into mass violence and destruction. The 15-member jury was decidedly working class, led by foreman Robert N. Kerr, a city grocer. The other jurors included six farmers, two blacksmiths, two carpenters, a liveryman, a tailor, and two retirees. "Tense excitement prevailed about the court house" as Prosecutor Henderson entered the courtroom at 9:30 in the morning. Judge W.S. Anderson, Henderson, and the jurors exchanged pleasantries before beginning the day's work. The jury began by emphatically thanking Sheriff Umstead for his "ready and quick service" before reading the returns, the first of which included the most severe charges. For the murder of Attorney B.O. Shulman, the jury found Lois Begale guilty of murder in the second-degree, and three of his associates guilty of attempted manslaughter.[57] The foreman Kerr went on to the most damning indictments.

For their "disregard for law and order and for their legal procedure" during the escalation and riot, the Mahoning County Grand Jury ridiculed East Youngstown Mayor Cunningham, the village council, and its police force. The jury found that Cunningham ignored countless warnings of the growing dangers in the village, refusing to accept aid from the county and state until it was too late. The jury also charged the police force with negligence for failing to intervene in the disturbance in the evening of January 6 and throughout the day on January 7. For these failures, the jury called Cunningham, his fellow village officials and the police force "unfit and unworthy of filling the hon-

orable positions which they, and each of them, then occupied as officers of the village."[58]

The jury assigned blame for the escalation of violence at the North Bridge on a local member of the Ohio National Guard. Local soldiers reported to the Guard's Youngstown armory in the early afternoon of January 7 but having received no further orders while mobs gathered on the streets, one guard took matters into his own hands. Without such authority, the guard ordered 10 of his fellow soldiers to gather ammunition and to accompany him to the Youngstown Sheet and Tube property to aid company guards in protecting the mill. The jury found that in mobilizing precipitously, the guard hampered the operations of the local sheriff and the entire Ohio National Guard. Furthermore, the disorganization among the troops and the inexperience of the company guards had led to the improper discharge of firearms at the North Bridge, which in some cases, cut down innocent passersby on Wilson Avenue.[59] Kerr then prepared to announce the final 62 indictments, which would make headlines across the country.

The working-class jury understood, perhaps more than anyone, of the "dissatisfaction prevailing among the men" of East Youngstown. The "evidence [shows] a lawless condition of affairs surrounding the labor conditions in and about the steel industries of this valley ... ," Kerr recited, "... an absolute disregard on the part of certain corporations and individuals ... of the rights of, or justice to, the laboring class." The jury handed down 62 indictments against Youngstown area steel companies, charging that they had conspired to form a "trust to fix the wages of common labor," a violation of the Valentine Antitrust Law. The companies indicted included, the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company, the Republic Iron and Steel Company, the Brier Hill Steel Company, the Youngstown Iron and Steel Company, the Carnegie Steel Company, and E.H. Gary, executive chairman of the U.S. Steel Company.[60]

The steel executives were outraged, expressing themselves in the newspapers in the days that followed. James A. Campbell, President of the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company, denied any collusion between the steel companies, arguing that when the larger U.S. Steel Company granted wage increases, the smaller independent plants followed on their own. E.H. Gary called the indictments "an outrage-a travesty." "Astonished beyond measure," Republic Iron and Steel Company executive chairman John A. Topping denied any knowledge of such a conspiracy.[61] Two weeks after the jury handed down the indictments, the companies would appear before Judge W.S. Anderson to appeal the case.

A crowd gathered in Judge W.S. Anderson's courtroom on March 23, 1916, along with Prosecutor Henderson, plaintiff for the state and the law firm Hine, Kennedy & Manchester, and Squires, Saunders & Dempsy in defense of the steel companies. The law firm had filed a motion of demurrer near the legal deadline just a week before,

challenging the claim that the companies had agreed to fix prices or wages, thus violating the Valentine Antitrust Law. Attorney William Day representing the Carnegie Steel Company spoke first, arguing that the indictment was an attack on the lifestyles of the wealthy rather than a technical claim. Also, he argued that the Valentine Act was not applicable to the jury's indictment because it applied only to regulate trade, not labor. Judge Anderson consulted his counsel, who was in full agreement. Considering labor a commodity, they claimed, would deliver "a blow at labor, skilled and unskilled ... [which] would place labor in the position of slavery." The defense concurred, citing that no legal precedence existed in which labor had been considered a commodity, but rather, the Clayton Antitrust Law had definitively stated labor was not a commodity. Attorney Manchester representing the Sheet and Tube and Republic Iron and Steel companies agreed as well, adding that men meeting to fight for a living wage would be criminals if labor constituted a commodity.

The court reconvened in the afternoon, where Prosecutor Henderson delivered his opening arguments. He argued that claims of dishonesty and unclarity were faulty, they had been charged with a single offense, "combining in an unlawful trust for the purpose ... to fix the prices of steel, and to keep down the wages of common labor." "As far as I am concerned in the interest of humanity I would rather have this court held that labor is not a commodity," he argued, suggesting that the corporations had "done more than any one else to make labor a commodity." Additionally, he defended, corporations, had, in fact, filed suit against labor unions for conspiring to raise wages,

> Labor is too sacred to be oppressed. The reason of the conspiracy was to make more money on steel. If it was not so why was labor not called in to ask what price it wanted. The corporation told labor they would get 22 cents an hour and no more if the workmen did not accept that vote they could not get any work in this valley.[62]

The next day, Judge James B. Kennedy made the closing arguments, arguing that the state would not be able to provide proof that any companies entered into a private agreement, to which Prosecutor Henderson snapped back "Is that so? Give us a chance to go to trial, and we will show you whether we can prove the charges or not." Kennedy went on to argue that the court should throw out the indictments because they were improperly drawn up. The general counsel of the Republic Iron and Steel Company stressed that a conviction against the company, and especially the Carnegie Steel Company, would ruin the companies because they were both foreign corporations.[63] Still unsure of his ruling, Judge Anderson rested the case to delineate, returning after five days.

Bright eyed, with silver hair that thickened at the back as it reached the top of his color, Judge Anderson sat upon his bench, nearly hidden behind a pile of law books from which he would

soon reference. The steel companies' seven defense attorneys sat before him, as did Prosecutor Henderson and his team on behalf of the state. The crowded courtroom became silent as Anderson began to read his 17-page decision. "This case comes before me upon a motion to quash the indictment found by the grand jury, upon several grounds alleged in the motion," he uttered. Heeding the concerns of the Republic Iron and Steel Company, Anderson denied any wish to injure the companies, acknowledging that "our prosperity in this city, and in this valley, depends upon the manufacturing establishments and their success." After nearly an hour, he reached his conclusion.

Anderson concluded that the charges made by the grand jury claimed that the companies had entered into an unlawful combination involving labor as a commodity. Anderson stood firm, "the labor of a man is [not] a commodity to be hocked in the market and to be sold to the highest bidder." Treating labor as a commodity would strip it of its dignity. Furthermore, the Valentine Act did not include labor or wages. The final decision came to the conclusion that the indictments had failed to identify why the case applied to the state antitrust act, and though he offered Henderson the opportunity to appeal his decision in higher courts, Judge Anderson sustained the motion to quash the indictments.[64]

In the weeks and months after Judge Anderson dismissed the charges against the steel companies, the mills in the Mahoning Valley returned to full capacity fulfilling growing war orders. Despite the widespread destruction of property, the unlikely solidarity of unorganized workers, and the unprecedented indictments of the steel industry, the laboring men had little to show for their efforts beyond their two-and-a-half-cent wage advancement. The workers continued to spend long hours in the barbaric conditions of the steel mills only to return home to live their lives in squalor, with no hope of a better future for them or their family. What the rumors in the immediate aftermath of the strike riot, the months-long investigations and trials had failed to identify was the future of East Youngstown and an answer to its widespread inequalities.

The economic decline of the iron and steel industry in the Mahoning Valley that caused partial and complete plant shutdowns in 1913 and 1914 quickly turned to prosperity when war orders began in 1915, bringing with it profits never before seen. By 1916, the rapid economic change and the instability of wartime manufacturing pushed even the quietest laborers to declare their demands loudly.[65] When the demands of the workers went ignored, rioters filled the streets, destroyed property, and committed acts of violence against members of their community. But economic repression alone can hardly account for such widespread indifference among the rioters, rather, the reason for the violence is as much about civic neglect than anything else.[66]

There were few opportunities for residents in East Youngstown to become citizens; no attempts had been made to establish such schools since the Youngstown Y.M.C.A. abandoned

its plan in 1915, citing lack of funds. Largely for that reason, fewer than 450 of the village's 10,000 inhabitants were qualified to vote. There were no night schools either, leaving few opportunities for the many foreign-born residents to learn English. Also, there were few benevolent associations, and no churches or religious organizations, though more than a dozen saloons operated in the village.[67] The mud streets, lack of running water and sewage, and the absence of a board of health further express how devoid East Youngstown was of human value.

On the same January 12 afternoon that the first 100 men filed back into the Republic mill after ending their strike, the *Youngstown Vindicator* published a powerful editorial questioning the role that the community had played in the strike riot.

> And now when we have all had time to think it over the most insistent question is, was all right between this community and the men who in a moment of passion and excitement became outlaws? Have we as a people done all that we should have done toward these men who in such a striking manner have proved themselves to be our neighbors ... the hands of the rest of us are not clean because we have neglected to our part by these neighbors of ours.

The editorial called for patience, and a willingness to teach the men what living in a free country meant. Foremost, it called for citizenship schools following the successful model in Cleveland and equal justice for immigrants under the law.[68] Cleary, at the verge of a tipping point, the future of East Youngstown remained unclear as the United States prepared for war.

President Woodrow Wilson's declaration of war, signed on April 6, 1917, brought the United States into the global conflict later called the Great War. Earlier in the year, the relentless assault of American merchant ships by German U-Boats had made war inevitable, and while men across the country joined the war effort, the men at home in places like the Mahoning Valley continued to produce at full capacity to do their part in winning the war. After 18 months, depleted of resources and manpower, the Germans signed an armistice agreement with the Allied powers, ending the war.

Soldiers returning home to East Youngstown after November 1918 found it a much different place. Brick and steel buildings now replaced the vacant lots, scarred buildings, and dilapidated wooden structures.[69] At the urging of its citizens, the village had established a building department to oversee the reconstruction of the business district to ensure the uniformity of the new businesses and homes. The community had also reorganized its police and fire forces and completed work on a village water supply system.[70] The Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad Young Men's Christian Association building became one of the most prominent buildings in the community.

By far, the greatest legacy of the East Youngstown strike riot was the new worker–management relationship, established through "welfare capitalism," a new focus by industry on the worker's quality of life.[71] The Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company began investing heavily in the community, carving out a new role for management in the Mahoning Valley. By the end of the war, the $75,000 Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company Hospital was in full operation.[72] Additionally, a village park was built and given the name Campbell Park after the company executive president. The Sheet and Tube also built a massive structure, known as the Community Hall at East Youngstown. The building became the village's center for social activity for mill employees. Along with hosting various dances and social gatherings, the Community Hall offered free English classes during the day and evening in the more than 40 different languages spoken by its 15,000 employees.[73] The largest sign of the company's new commitment was the establishment of its housing subsidiary.

High on the hill above the town overlooking the business district and the Sheet and Tube Company, the Buckeye Land Company began constructing worker housing in 1917. Within the year, the company would construct nearly 300 homes and 400 rental properties which they built, sold, and rented to employees at cost. The company constructed four different neighborhoods, the first of which, known as the Blackburn Plat, was a rental district. The other three neighborhoods, divided along racial lines, included; the Loveland Farms Plat, home to Americans, the Highview Plat, home to the foreign-born; and a third for African-American families.[74] The Buckeye Land Company created a sense of community among the working people of the village, who otherwise would not have been able to gain adequate housing.

Three years after the strike, workers of the Sheet and Tube created a company paper with monthly distribution, known as the *Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company Bulletin*. "The new paper should at least help everyone to understand better the big organization of which they are a part of," James A. Campbell said in its first edition.[75] The Buckeye Land Company used the paper to advertise homes, and the company furnished a list of all the homeowners. Along with publishing company safety procedures, goals, and facts, it featured sections covering "society" news, gossip, and sports. The sports section specifically covered the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Employees Base Ball League, organized in early 1919. Each department of the plant organized its own team, which brought "interest and enthusiasm" to the players and workers. The baseball games were used to meet acquaintances from the company and to develop company pride.[76]

At a special meeting on April 26, 1926, East Youngstown became Campbell, Ohio, as the first step in escaping the "unfavorable national publicity ... irretrievably attached to the name East Youngstown."[77] Though the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company continued to face labor struggles, first in 1919 and again during the more

prominently known Little Steel Strike in 1937, in a large sense, it accomplished its goal of escaping the 1916 strike. At the same time, as the Mahoning Valley has learned, eliminating the symbols of the area's steel history has only deepened the pain and longing for a time foregone. Now nearly 40 years removed from September 19, 1977, the day the steel industry died in Youngstown, known to locals as "Black Monday," it is hard to believe that the Mahoning Valley is better off by forgetting its history.

Unquestionably, the 1916 strike and riot at East Youngstown improved the perception of labor rights and the relationship between workers and management in the Mahoning Valley. For the economically repressed and civically neglected unskilled foreign-born laborers living in the boom-town, deprived of adequate housing and working in barbaric conditions within the mills, it was their unrest that led a community to renew its commitment to society's most vulnerable. It was also their unrest which pushed the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company to implement measures of welfare capitalism, unquestionably improving the lives of the working-class in the village. For the workers at East Youngstown, labor was too sacred to be oppressed, but to make a change, it took steel's indictment.

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