

# Denouncing the Hooded Order: Radicalism, Identity, and Dissent in the UMWA

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Those one hundred per cent men told us we'd be glad to turn over the books before they got through with us. They have threatened me repeatedly, so that my house is guarded all the time. They sent notice they would shoot me or drive me away. They can shoot me all right, but they'll not drive me away.<sup>1</sup>

This excerpt from the September 9, 1924 edition of the *Alton Evening Telegraph* relayed a statement made by a United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) member during the Forty-Second Annual Convention of the Illinois Federation of Labor. During his time at the convention, Henry Corbishley, president of UMWA Local 992 of Zeigler, Illinois, passionately advocated for the embattled miners of southern Illinois and hoped to enlist greater support for their resistance to the “one hundred percent men” of the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>2</sup>

Located in the southwest corner of Franklin County, roughly 300 miles southwest of Chicago and 100 miles east of St. Louis, Zeigler accounted for one of the most vibrant immigrant communities in the region during the 1920s.<sup>3</sup> By 1920, Franklin County boasted a population of 8,851 foreign-born, 7,035 native-born citizens with foreign-born parents, and 1,720 native-born citizens with mixed parentage out of a total population of 57,293. This meant that first- and second-generation immigrants made up nearly a third of the population of Franklin County during this period. Among these 17,606 men and women

were a large percentage of “new immigrants,” or immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. Of the foreign-born residents, Italians (1,787), Poles (1,054), and Yugoslavs (914) all outnumbered the British-born population (825), while Russians (810), Lithuanians (631), and Austrians (550) also composed a large percentage of the population.<sup>4</sup>

A substantial number of these new immigrants resided within Zeigler, which also represented Franklin County’s economic lifeblood—the coal industry. The Bell and Zoller Coal Company served as the main employer in the city, and Zeigler miners helped Franklin County lead Illinois in coal production from 1913 to 1930.<sup>5</sup> Zeigler’s prominence within the industry was such that at least one of the city’s two mine shafts ranked among the top four in the state in terms of both miners employed and coal produced throughout the entirety of the 1920s. In fact, from June of 1924 to June of 1925, the men of Local 992 hauled 1,473,701 tons of coal out of Bell and Zoller Mine No. 1. At the time, this was the largest one-year output by a single shaft in the state’s history.<sup>6</sup>

However, Franklin County differed from other southern Illinois mining counties because of the level of radical attitudes among its immigrant miners. This radical sentiment stood in defiance of the reactionary and repressive political climate of the decade, which frequently vilified both immigrants and leftist radicals. Through the Palmer Raids and the Immigration Act of 1924, the federal government voiced a clear disdain of both political dissent and immigrant status in the years following World War I.<sup>7</sup> These policies designated both immigrants and labor activists as “others,” and it was within this context that immigrant miners in Franklin County became frequent targets of violence at the hands of the newly revived KKK.

The Klan focused on new immigrant miners because of their status as both racialized others and as union laborers. For new immigrant workers, Klan attacks represented one of many volatile encounters with southern Illinoisans. These interactions shaped new immigrant understandings of their own racial and ethnic identity in relation to both Black and White workers. Many Franklin County miners mounted consistent resistance to the terror of the KKK through grassroots organizing strategies and affiliations with left-wing radicals. The clearest example of this was seen in Zeigler, when Local 992 elected Henry Corbishley president of their ethnically diverse UMWA Local. Corbishley himself was native born, but he constituted a different type of “other” in American society: he was a Communist and affiliate of the Workers Party of America.

Corbishley brought his radical labor convictions with him to the Illinois Federation of Labor convention in 1924 and articulated the dire situation the Klan presented to organized labor in southern Illinois. Corbishley and his allies introduced a number of anti-Klan resolutions and hoped for a statewide endorsement of their interethnic solidarity.<sup>8</sup> However, their efforts met heavy opposition from the entrenched hierarchy within the Illinois Federation of Labor and the UMWA. Their reaction to the Klan dilemma proved so temperate that it bordered on collusion and deviated sharply from the national stances of these

organizations in regard to the KKK. The battle over the anti-Klan resolutions spoke to a growing division between UMWA miners at the local level and the UMWA officialdom. For Zeigler miners especially, the failure of Corbishley's anti-Klan resolution served as a forecast of their coming decade-long battle against an alliance of the UMWA officialdom, coal operators, the KKK, and the Illinois court system.

The rhetorical conflict at the 1924 convention highlights the need for labor historians to distinguish between the stated position of an organization and the reality of their activism. In this way, this article draws influence from critiques of aspects of the new labor history, most notably Herbert Hill's criticism of Herbert Gutman's work on the racial egalitarianism of the UMWA. Hill argued that Gutman rooted his contentions regarding the UMWA, particularly that it served as the "advanced model of interracial working class solidarity," not in the historical record, but rather in "myth-making." Hill also contended that in doing so, Gutman presented an idealized UMWA that influenced a "romanticized 'popular front' leftism" within new labor history more broadly.<sup>9</sup> The history of Zeigler forces one to reexamine this romanticized view. The unionization of the Zeigler mines by the UMWA brought no racial harmony to the area, but rather it coincided with the removal of nearly the entirety of the working Black population from Franklin County. This piece follows the line of thinking advanced by some scholars of race struggles in the United States, particularly the works of the Black radical activist Harry Haywood and historian Mark Solomon. As they argue, Far Left organizers, not established trade unions, advanced the most strident and consistent resistance to racism during the 1920s. While class-first doctrines often led to intense disagreements between White and Black Communists, the fact remains that Communist support for antiracist, antilynching, and anti-Klan campaigns played a central role in building the Workers Party and the Communist Party USA in their earliest incarnations.<sup>10</sup>

The story of the 992 adds to the scholarship on radicalized trade unions in a time period and region often neglected by labor historians. Much of the scholarship devoted to Communist organizing focuses on its international aspect and the relationship between American organizers and the Kremlin. Stemming from the influential midcentury works of Theodore Draper, numerous historians embraced the "tragic" view of the American Communist movement and his conclusion that the movement was "transformed from a new expression of American radicalism to the American appendage of a Russian revolutionary power."<sup>11</sup> These accounts vary in their severity of course. James Barrett, in his biography of William Z. Foster, for example, acknowledges the potential of American radicalism in its early stages but argues that the shifting international party line disrupted the legitimacy and agency of the movement. Others, such as Jennifer Luff and Jennifer Delton, prove more critical of radical activists as both scholars argue that the labor movement benefited from the expulsion of Left-leaning unions. Hardline anticommunist historians, most notably John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, not only discount the agency of American Com-

munist activists but also charge revisionist historians with romanticizing and outright falsifying the contributions of these radicals.<sup>12</sup>

The works that discuss the actual contributions of Communists to trade unionism largely focus on the years after 1935 and the advent of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). This temporal distinction is due to the very real gains made by Communist activists during the popular front era, the perceived lack of success during the 1920s and early 1930s, and the lingering presumption that an incorrect party line ensured failure before 1935. Because of these issues, organizing pre-1935 is frequently categorized as trial and error. However, historians such as Robin D.G. Kelly, Mark Solomon, Randi Storch, and Rosemary Feurer pay closer attention to grassroots activism before the CIO and reveal much about the localized efforts of Communist organizers. My work follows this grassroots paradigm, but shifts the focus back further into the first decade of the Workers Party of America and into the understudied coal country of rural southern Illinois. Lastly, the residents of Zeigler during this period represent an important addition to studies of racialization and ethnic identity among rural laborers, such as the subjects in Kelley's pioneering work on Communist activism in Alabama.<sup>13</sup>

### **Race, Radicalism, and the Roots of Zeigler**

Zeigler's radical history began nearly immediately after the town's inception in 1902, when Chicago millionaire Joseph Leiter purchased 8,000 acres of land in Franklin County.<sup>14</sup> Much like other famous company towns, the wealthy founder exerted an almost autonomous level of control. Leiter even embedded his family's lineage into the very foundation of the community when he named it Zeigler after the middle name of his father Levi Zeigler Leiter.<sup>15</sup> In another display of his control over the town, the younger Leiter went to great lengths to keep unions out of Zeigler. He surrounded the mine with a stockade and lined the walls with machine gunners who guarded the mine twenty-four hours a day.<sup>16</sup> Leiter once told the *Chicago Tribune*, "These union men are mistaken if they think they can put me out of business. I am prepared to fight for eighteen years if necessary. I will close down before I will give in to them."<sup>17</sup>

Bullets were not the only tactic Leiter used in his fight with organized labor, as the wealthy industrialist soon introduced a variation of what David Roediger and Elizabeth Esch refer to as race management to the county as well. Roediger and Esch show that the methods of managing slaves in the antebellum period influenced future management strategies in the industrializing United States. In particular, an obsession with viewing racialized groups as workers to be managed in different manners gave rise to race management strategies that pitted White, Black, Mexican, Asian, and racially "inbetween" Europeans against one another in the competition for industrial jobs.<sup>18</sup> In the first decade of the twentieth century, many new immigrants encountered American conceptions of race and racialization for the first time. Eastern and southern Europeans

quickly understood their designation on the racial hierarchy of the United States as what Roediger and Barrett refer to as “inbetween peoples.” As these scholars argue, “differences between the racialized status of African Americans and the racial inbetween-ness of these immigrants meant that the latter eventually ‘became ethnic’ and that their trajectory was predictable. But their history was sloppier than their trajectory.”<sup>19</sup> The racialized union battles in Zeigler serve as ideal examples of this “sloppiness” as both Black and new immigrant workers occupied precarious positions as scabs and racialized others.

Leiter used new immigrant and African American laborers to weaken the resolve of the native-born White miners. In July of 1904, shortly after the first strike began, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that Leiter planned to bring Black workers from Alabama in by train. This strategy proved difficult as striking miners watched the train routes so closely that the Black laborers had to commute the final two miles on foot.<sup>20</sup> The following month, Leiter bussed seventy-five Italian miners into Zeigler. The native-born strikers attempted to board the cars, but they failed in this instance to inflict any physical violence on their immigrant targets.<sup>21</sup>

Leiter’s correspondence during this period made it clear that his use of ethnic strikebreakers was no mere coincidence, and thus these incidents were largely the result of his decisions. Leiter and his managers, A.M. Abriola and Hugh Crabbe, frequently referred to the ethnicity of incoming miners in their communications. In a telegram sent on August 10, Crabbe inquired whether Leiter wanted specifically “to continue to secure Italian miners.”<sup>22</sup> Not surprisingly, Leiter’s tactics exacerbated the situation even further, and only four months after Leiter’s use of Italian scab laborers began, strikers fired upon a train of immigrant strikebreakers and killed one Italian miner.<sup>23</sup> These incidents started a long and complex history for immigrant workers in Zeigler in which they formed an understanding of their racial and ethnic identity in relation to both native-born White and African American workers.

While new immigrants and African Americans in Zeigler shared common identities as strikebreakers and as targets of native-born violence, this rarely manifested into any real interracial solidarity. Instead, animosity developed between various European ethnicities and Black workers, thoroughly reinforcing new immigrants’ understandings of themselves as “inbetween.” One such instance occurred in the spring of 1906 when a brawl broke out between Black and Hungarian workers over “labor differences.” Both the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Washington Post* reported on what was referred to as a “race riot.” Both papers also emphasized that “ill feeling . . . has been brewing between the two classes” for a long period. At no point do the articles refer to the Hungarians as members of the White race, but instead imply that the fight was between two separate nonwhite racial “classes.”<sup>24</sup>

Violent strikes persisted for the next five years. Paul M. Angle likened Zeigler to a battlefield in his writings, explaining that in “one camp were seventy state militiamen, forty deputy U.S. marshals (whose salaries Leiter paid), and

a varying number of private mine-guards and deputy sheriffs,” and in the other “were several hundred striking miners, armed with everything from revolvers to shotguns.”<sup>25</sup> The *Chicago Tribune* claimed that at night Zeigler “resembles a fortified town,” because “two machine guns are mounted in a tower and on a parapet, a great searchlight is turned on.”<sup>26</sup> Neither unionization nor machine guns proved the most deadly force in Zeigler during this period however. That dubious distinction belonged to mine explosions. Two separate explosions, one in 1905 and one in 1909, claimed the lives of forty-nine and twenty-six miners, respectively.<sup>27</sup> However, the 1905 explosion remains a source of contention among historians, and debates over the cause of this explosion speak to the divided nature of the working class in the region.

In a 1910 report to the Department of Commerce and Labor, Frederick L. Hoffman confirmed that the initial coroner’s jury claimed that the disaster emanated from a powder explosion, “indicating a criminal purpose to blow up the mine.” However, the Bureau of Labor disputed these claims and argued that the explosion occurred due to poor ventilation and gas buildup. They also contended that the coroner’s findings “invited the suspicion that the men conducting the inquest had been selected for the purpose of shielding the company.” Hoffman presented compelling evidence of negligence by the company, but he placed considerable weight on the unlikelihood of sabotage by the strikers. He contended that to “support such a theory it would be necessary for the jury to suppose that certain men were willing, in their desire to destroy the property of the company, to sacrifice their own lives. This imposes too heavy a tax on human credibility.”<sup>28</sup> Although Hoffman’s claims about the mismanagement of the mineshafts were sound, his findings grossly underestimated the volatility of the strike.

Both newspaper and historical accounts, such as those of Angle and Philip A. Kalisch, also concluded that gas buildup in the unventilated shafts caused the explosion, although Angle found that many years after the fact, company officials still contended it was an act of sabotage.<sup>29</sup> However, James Loewen revives this historical debate in his book *Sundown Towns*, addressing racial components ignored by previous historians. During interviews with Zeigler residents in 2002, Loewen found that many of the White residents traced their roots as an all-White community, or sundown town, to the aforementioned mine explosions. Oral tradition in the region claims that racial hatred toward the strikebreakers led to acts of sabotage that claimed the lives of dozens of African American miners.<sup>30</sup> Loewen builds much of his discussion of Zeigler as a racially restrictive town on this oral tradition as well as on the 1953 memoir of actress and activist Ruby Berkley Goodwin.

In *It’s Good To Be Black*, Goodwin, a long-time supporter of the UMWA, recalled her childhood growing up in the mining community of Du Quoin, located in neighboring Perry County. Goodwin spent much of her memoir praising the UMWA as an interracial union, but she also recalled stories she overheard as a child regarding the early days of the nonunionized Zeigler mines.

During a discussion of scabs, Goodwin once heard her Aunt Dea tell her father, a union miner, that the strikebreakers “got what was coming to ‘em at Zeigler.” Like Dea, most of the Du Quoin community believed that the mine explosion in Zeigler was no accident. Aunt Dea’s declaration was one that stressed her belief in worker solidarity, even to the point where she blamed Black strikebreakers for their own grisly fate. Goodwin expanded on the incident and explained that

[o]ne hundred Negroes from Kentucky had been slipped into the mines the previous evening. The next day another Negro walked boldly up to the office and asked for a job. Late that afternoon a series of explosions shook the mine. . . . The miners knew that the explosion was not untimely. It was timed to perfection. The lone miner who had walked boldly up to the office and applied for a job was an expert shot firer from upstate. If anyone had been watching they would have seen him climb up the ladder and get into a waiting surrey just a few minutes before the explosion.<sup>31</sup>

Goodwin, more so than her aunt, emphasized the importance that race and racial difference played in the mine explosion. For Goodwin, it was clear that the mine was sabotaged not simply because of Leiter’s use of scabs, but also because Leiter used Black scabs. Even if we may never truly know what or who caused the explosion in 1905, the fact is that those in the area believed that it was a racially motivated act of sabotage. The persistence of this belief speaks to the importance of racial difference in the development of Zeigler regardless of the series of events.<sup>32</sup>

In 1910, after eight long years of gunfights, strikes, and mine explosions, the union miners of Franklin County defeated the Chicago millionaire Joseph Leiter. Leiter sold the mine to the Bell and Zoller Coal Company, which quickly accepted unionization under the auspices of the UMWA. Unionization finally arrived in Zeigler, and it was due to a form of radical labor activism. Yet, the unionization that arrived in Zeigler bore little resemblance to the interracial UMWA described by Gutman. The arrival of the UMWA did little to heal the racial and ethnic divides constructed over the first decade of Zeigler’s existence. In the same year as the sale of the mine, a Greek man killed a deputy sheriff. Instead of simply charging the guilty party for his crime, the native-born population of Zeigler ran all the Greek residents out of town, displaying mob mentality over interethnic solidarity.<sup>33</sup> While no doubt shaken by the events, Greek residents returned to Zeigler two days later. Black residents, on the other hand, had a far harsher experience with the new unionized Zeigler. With Leiter no longer in charge of the Zeigler mines, the use of African Americans as miners effectively ceased, and Zeigler began a near ninety-year history as one of Loewen’s sundown towns.<sup>34</sup> The existence of Black laborers within the boundaries of Franklin County ended in the early 1910s, but their experiences lingered in the

consciousness of the county through new immigrants. Unlike African Americans, eastern and southern European immigrants remained in Franklin County and Zeigler following unionization. This was due largely to their sizeable numbers, but this should also be viewed as a very early example of the “whitening” of racialized immigrants.

### **Commies and Klansmen Battle for Zeigler**

Franklin County immigrants were clearly on the road to whiteness. The endpoint, however, remained ahead, and coal industry hiring practices reflected this continued inequality. The decade following World War I brought considerable hardship to the industry. This was mostly due to a combination of overproduction from 1913 to 1923 (in which coal output increased by 336 million tons) and a sharp decline in demand brought on by the increasing importance of oil. By 1921, unemployment among Illinois coal miners reached 28 percent.<sup>35</sup>

In Franklin County, the issues of unemployment disproportionately impacted foreign-born miners even within mines worked by UMWA locals. According to Franklin County birth records, county mines employed 352 native-born workers and 362 foreign-born workers in 1916. By 1926, however, the mines employed 692 native-born workers and 259 foreign-born workers.<sup>36</sup> The overproduction in this period actually increased the number of coalminers in the county by 235, but the number of immigrant coalminers decreased by 103. Of course, these numbers account for only those coal miners who had children and obtained birth certificates during this period. More men were employed in Franklin County mines than these numbers suggest, but the rate of job loss for new immigrants stands in stark contrast to the job growth for native-born coalminers. While the UMWA had no hand in firing its members, the union apparently made little effort to stand beside its immigrant members against Illinois coal producers. The situation in Franklin County represents another disconnect between the often-egalitarian rhetoric of the UMWA at the state and national level and the realities for ethnic laborers at the local level.

Beyond discriminatory hiring practices, the continued racialization of new immigrant miners was also evidenced by the frequent attacks on them by members of the KKK during the late 1910s and early 1920s. A number of prominent historical works over the last few decades expanded our understanding of the Second Klan. The works of Nancy MacLean, Thomas Pegram, and Kathleen Blee, among others, reveal that the Klan built a nationwide revival on an expanded framework of hate. The Klan of the 1920s built on its previously expressly Southern message and embraced a nationalistic perspective of “one hundred percent Americanism.” The KKK retained its decades-long hatred of African Americans, but now despised new immigrants, non-Protestant religious denominations, supposed immoral or nontraditional behavior, and Far Left political affiliation, as well. Local accounts of the Klan, exemplified by the works of MacLean, Masatomo Ayabe, and Craig Fox, also show that the



Klan's proliferation was relatively mainstream. In many communities, the Klan operated not in the shadows, but out in the open. Additionally, its member rolls were not filled with seedy, disreputable people, but rather with large numbers of respected, active members of the middle class.<sup>37</sup>

As the influence of the KKK grew in southern Illinois, some UMWA miners—whom the Trade Union Educational League (TUEL) publication *The Labor Defender* referred to as “irresponsible members”—joined the Klan. Klan influence in nearby Williamson County was particularly strong, as the hooded order essentially took control of the county in 1922. The KKK, led by former Federal Prohibition Agent S. Glen Young, illegally enforced the Volstead Act throughout the county by raiding establishments and homes. The houses targeted by the Klan raids showed clear anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic motivation as the majority of the homes belonged to Italian Catholics. The Klan persecuted Italians in Herrin to such a severe degree that the “Italian consular agent at Springfield protested to the U.S. State Department.” Although this action pressured the KKK, the boisterous Young claimed that “in two hours I can get seven thousand [Klansmen] from Williamson and Franklin counties” to participate in these raids.<sup>38</sup> Targeted use of the Volstead Act also affected immigrant miners in Franklin County, but in Zeigler, actual officers, not Klan members, conducted the raids. The authorities blamed groups of foreigners for “robberies and killings . . . especially on pay nights.” In response to this, officers “attempted to close up illegal saloons and rid the town of its troublemakers, and in one evening ten saloons were nailed up.”<sup>39</sup>

While the Klan never took control of Franklin County as it did in Williamson, the KKK remained a regular presence throughout the county. Reports of Klan rallies appeared regularly in *The Zeigler Item*, one of the town's two newspapers, and the paper often promoted upcoming events that would be hosted by the Klan. According to the newspaper, Franklin County towns such as Zeigler, Christopher, and Sesser were home to numerous Klan rallies in 1923 and 1924. At one point during the summer of 1924, the KKK burned two crosses in Zeigler in a one-week span.<sup>40</sup> Although the masked order drew large crowds in Franklin County, clear and consistent opposition also existed, especially in Zeigler. The mayoral elections of 1925 serve as a particularly clear example of this sentiment as Charles Murphy Smith won the election almost solely due to his anti-Klan platform. In a campaign advertisement, Smith stated, “I am proud of the stand I am taking as everyone looks alike to me, regardless of where they come from, as I am old enough to realize that we cannot run this town successfully with an organization comprised of the Knights of the Korn-Kob-Klan.” The *Item*, which supported Smith's opponent Fred D. Hall, even claimed that Smith only won because he “trotted out the Ku Klux bugaboo” throughout the campaign.<sup>41</sup>

Smith's mayoral victory in 1925 showed that considerable opposition to the KKK existed in Zeigler, but it did not explain where this sentiment originated. The anti-Klan movement in Zeigler gained traction initially because a

particularly progressive branch of the UMWA, Local 992, made the town its home. The mostly immigrant members of Local 992 elected the “staunch progressive” Henry Corbishley president of the Local on three separate occasions between 1923 and 1925.<sup>42</sup> While Klan incursions occurred frequently, the consistent resistance of Corbishley and the radical laborers within the 992 limited their influence, especially in comparison to surrounding counties in southern Illinois.

Corbishley’s status as a radical was well known in the area, and *The Daily Independent* of Murphysboro, Illinois, even referred to Corbishley as the “leader” of the “communist movement in Southern Illinois.”<sup>43</sup> In reality, Corbishley was only one leader of a movement that had many prominent members in the region, but it was certainly true that Corbishley was a well-connected labor radical. In particular, Corbishley’s relationship with William Z. Foster and the TUEL proved quite important to the Zeigler radicals’ organizing strategies. Foster recalled in his autobiography *From Bryan to Stalin* that Corbishley worked tirelessly with TUEL organizers to “mobilize great mass meetings of miners” during the coal strikes in 1922.<sup>44</sup> Due to Corbishley’s background and connections, the endorsement of these efforts suggested that many 992 members, both immigrant and native born, supported a radical ideology.

However, these miners found other ways of expressing their own radical agency as well. In the very first daily edition of *The Daily Worker*, published on January 13, 1924, a large number of workers sent donations and “birthday greetings” to the newspaper. As a show of gratitude, the paper published the names of workers from forty locations that donated. As one might expect, industrial centers such as New York City, Chicago, Detroit, Gary, and Cleveland were well represented, but the Franklin County towns of Zeigler, Orient, and West Frankfort appeared right alongside these major metropolitan areas. All told, eighteen residents of Franklin County proudly donated to *The Daily Worker* and allowed their names to be published in the main organ of the Workers Party of America. This was a bold declaration of radical sentiment, as many of these donations came from immigrants, such as Lithuanian 992 member William Bartash, who had not yet obtained United States citizenship as of 1924. Most of the individual donations came from Zeigler and West Frankfort, but the Slavic miners of Orient paid for an advertisement on page five of the paper in which they greeted *The Daily Worker* into the world. “Jugo-Slav Branch No. 7,” based out of the mining town, pledged the “Full Support of Its Members to Make the Militant Labor Press Grow and increase in Power and Influence.”<sup>45</sup>

Corbishley made his militant stance abundantly clear in two separate articles in the August 26, 1924, edition of *The Daily Worker*. In the first of these articles, Corbishley voiced his opposition to the recent push among coal operators for the “open shop” in southern Illinois coalmines. The article also claimed that the miners of Zeigler placed little faith in UMWA President John L. Lewis and other officials within the Illinois UMWA. Instead, they resisted the coal operators at the grassroots level and pushed for better pay and a six-hour workday.



Figure 1: O.R. Zimmerman's cartoon depicted the "United Front" opposing southern Illinois radicals during the decade. In it, the Klansman, armed with both gun and rope, serves as the protector of the exploitative forces of capital, which for Zimmerman included UMWA District 12 President Frank Farrington. O.R. Zimmerman, "The United Front Against the Illinois Miners," *The Daily Worker*, August 29, 1925, 1, <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/pubs/daily-worker/1925/index.htm>.

Beyond their demands, Corbishley relayed the bleak situation facing the miners in Zeigler and stressed the hegemony of Bell and Zoller in the company town. Corbishley stated that “Zeigler is a town that has the coal mine at one end and the company store at the other. When the miner gets up in the morning to go to work, all streets in town lead to the Bell and Zoller mine. When he comes out of the shaft and starts home, all streets lead past the company store.”<sup>46</sup> Corbishley elaborated further on the conditions in Zeigler in the second article and added that the KKK present in Franklin County frequently harassed Zeigler miners and worked in conjunction with the “non-union ‘open shop’ business men” and A.C. Carr, the mayor of Zeigler in 1923 and 1924.<sup>47</sup>

Considering the often-volatile history of race and ethnicity in Zeigler, the interethnic solidarity shown by the laborers of the 992 proves all the more impressive. While one might be tempted to view this solely as another example of the whitening of immigrants, the persistent attacks of the KKK on these miners suggest that they remained racialized in the eyes of many native-born whites. A potential explanation for this unity that allows for the continued existence of racialization in the region is that of the importance of radicalism to the union local. Corbishley’s radical affiliations gave this diverse group of miners the means to resist not just the Klan but also the forces of capital more broadly.

Local 992’s radical sentiment clearly formed in large part because of these developments at the local level, but it was also indicative of emerging divisions within UMWA District 12 as a whole. Much of this tension revolved around a growing disconnect between large numbers of Illinois miners and District 12 President Frank Farrington. Farrington presided over the entirety of the UMWA in Illinois and represented nearly 100,000 miners by the dawn of the 1920s. Farrington presented himself as a democratic leader, but his public image never fully reflected his views on immigrant miners.<sup>48</sup> During his days as a member of the UMWA Executive Board, he showed great trepidation in allowing new immigrants membership in the union. He believed they were too quick to strike and that they frequently broke agreements between the UMWA and coal operators. New immigrant miners in Franklin County reciprocated this distrust. In August of 1920, during a particularly bloody strike in the Franklin County town of West Frankfort, immigrant UMWA members openly defied Farrington’s instructions to call off the strike. The strike ended in carnage when the native population viciously attacked the Italian miners. Due to the violence perpetrated around West Frankfort, hundreds of foreign-born men and women fled the county.<sup>49</sup>

Despite this tension between Franklin County miners and Frank Farrington, the radical organizers of southern Illinois had some reason to be optimistic about their ability to combat the KKK menace with the help of organized labor. The American Federation of Labor (AFL) issued a statement of condemnation toward the Klan in 1923. The AFL viewed the Klan as a menace to the workingmen of the United States and decried them as an un-American and discriminatory organization. In a 1921 correspondence with Ralph E. Slaugh-

ter, the chairman of the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks, AFL President Samuel Gompers made it clear that he saw the Klan as an affront to organized labor and that he wished to see no overlap in membership between the AFL and the swelling ranks of the KKK. He wrote that there were “too many self-constituted persecutors of labor to permit the opportunity to pass in condemning an invisible empire whose work is at night and behind masks and whose victims may sometimes be members of trade unions.”<sup>50</sup> This was a bold stance by Gompers and the AFL, but it was not one that developed overnight, nor was it met with universal approval.

The AFL passed an anti-Klan resolution at its 1923 convention, but its membership had openly refused to pass such a resolution at two previous AFL conventions. In 1921, the convention blocked the introduction of the lone resolution regarding the KKK. The following year, a Central Labor Union delegate from New Hampshire named James A. Legassie managed to introduce a resolution that openly condemned the Klan as “detrimental to the best interests of the working people of this country and directly opposed to the Constitution.” However, the Resolution Committee substituted a different version that concluded that the AFL should not “endorse or condemn any organization . . . unless the purpose of such organization is . . . interfering with the rights, opportunities and liberties of wage earners.” This resolution never once mentioned the KKK by name and clearly served as a means to defer the issue further. The resolution passed in 1923 was far more specific in its condemnation and mentioned the Klan by name, but it was also a statement regarding the AFL as a nationwide organization.<sup>51</sup> The enforcement of this national resolution at the regional, state, and local level remained difficult, and it fell on those locals most affected by Klan violence to call for more stringent anti-Klan measures within the state affiliates of the AFL.

Gaining support from the UMWA against the Klan at the state and local level also seemed to have potential. Farrington’s response to the Klan issue in southern Illinois proved slow, but UMWA District 12 had expressed anti-Klan sentiments in the past. In his work on the Klan in Williamson County, Masatomo Ayabe emphasizes that the Illinois UMWA constitution labeled membership in the Klan as grounds for expulsion. Ayabe is quick to qualify this, finding that many rank and file union miners remained white supremacists and that many “decided to wear the white robe even at the risk of losing their union membership.” Ayabe is right to make this distinction, as many of the union strongholds he analyzed remained segregated communities. However, placing too much emphasis on statements made by the union officialdom proves problematic. Ayabe’s own work shows that suspected Klansmen and Klan supporters remained employed in large numbers in Williamson County despite the UMWA’s proclamations.<sup>52</sup> Because of this, greater attention needs to be paid not only to the members’ failure to embrace racial egalitarianism, but also to the failures of the UMWA and AFL hierarchies to truly enforce these stances. Drawing once again on Hill’s critique of Gutman, the supposed egalitarianism of these unions

is often thrown into question when their implementation is examined in specific instances. At points, the AFL and the UMWA voiced their opposition to the racism, xenophobia, and religious bigotry of the Klan, but when it came time to truly stand behind those fighting the Klan, such as the new immigrant miners of Zeigler 992, they left many union locals to fend for themselves.

In September of 1924, Corbishley and other southern Illinois TUEL representatives attended the Forty-Second Convention of the Illinois State Federation of Labor. The central Illinois city of Peoria was the site of the convention, but the majority of the representatives, 282 out of 474, came to the convention from Chicago. The 120 miners in attendance made up a sizeable portion of the delegates, but because these numbers were split among the three different coal regions of the state, the southern Illinois representatives faced an uphill battle to gain support for their regional grievances.<sup>53</sup> *The Labor Herald* reported on the conference and relayed two of the major goals of the radicals in attendance. The first was the promotion of William Z. Foster as the only true working class candidate in the presidential election of 1924. The second was to introduce multiple resolutions that “condemned the Ku Klux Klan for its disruption of miners’ union locals in southern Illinois.”<sup>54</sup>

Two anti-Klan resolutions came to the floor on the fourth day of the convention and were debated concurrently, but the southern Illinois miners had already made their presence known at the convention by this point. Corbishley introduced another resolution earlier in the convention, calling for the Illinois Federation of Labor to voice opposition to the upcoming National Defense Day. His resolution stated

WHEREAS, September 12th has been proclaimed as National Defense Day, to be observed thruout [sic] the country as a means of testing the Nation’s preparedness for war, and WHEREAS, this preparedness test is an avowed part of the efforts of the capitalist war mongers to build constantly greater armaments, to build a military machine ready to extend American imperialistic investments and exploitation of workers of colonial countries, and other oppressed nations, as well as to be held in readiness to be turned against the workers at home in any conflict between capital and labor, therefore be it RESOLVED that the Illinois State Federation of Labor in regular convention go on record opposing these efforts of the American war mongers including the National Defense Day exercises and condemning militarism in general.

The *Chicago Tribune* reported on the conference and published articles on September 10 and 12 that highlighted Corbishley and the multiple resolutions he brought to the floor. According to the paper, another delegate shouted that

Corbishley was a “pay roll patriot of the Russian Government” and that his resolution was “tinged deeply with un-Americanism.”<sup>55</sup>

Illinois State Federation of Labor Secretary Victor Olander’s comments on this resolution were particularly interesting as he revealed a general approval of its contents but distaste for its author. Olander stated that the “introducers of resolutions reading as did the original proposition . . . also frequently present other resolutions dealing with proposals to recognize in some way or another what is nothing more than Communistic propaganda.” After denigrating Corbishley, Olander and Illinois State Federation of Labor President John Walker stressed the patriotism of Illinois labor and the contributions of Illinois workers to the war effort. In the end, however, they changed very little about the resolution. Although these statements opened Corbishley up to red baiting, his anti-National Defense Day resolution created a dialogue in the convention for controversial topics, such as his later anti-Klan resolution.

Later that day, Corbishley and two members of the Dowell, Illinois, UMWA Local No. 3703 introduced two separate, largely identical resolutions to the Committee on Resolutions regarding the Klan issue. Corbishley’s bill stated:

WHEREAS We see plainly that there are different kinds of illegal organizations thruout [sic] the world appearing under different kinds of masks and names; and WHEREAS, we see all through experience that every one of these organizations has the same aim,—to destroy labor organizations; and WHEREAS, we see one of those bosses organizations—the Ku Klux Klan existing in this country and daily torturing the people, especially organized labor, as for instance at Herrin, Zeigler, Christopher and Dowell, and brutal murder right in the courthouse of West Frankfort and etc., therefore be it RESOLVED that we condemning the illegal K. K. K. organization, also call on our brother delegates to the Forty-Second Annual Convention of the Illinois State Federation of Labor to adopt this resolution and demand that the Illinois State Federation of Labor promote a series of anti-Klan mass meetings and demonstrations in Illinois, especially in the southern part.<sup>56</sup>

The resolution was blunt, direct, and firmly rooted in the experience of miners in the various southern Illinois mining counties. Most importantly it offered a concrete recommendation for how the Illinois Federation of Labor could show its opposition to the racial terrorism of the Klan in southern Illinois. By nearly any measure, this resolution represented a logical, regionalized extension of the national AFL and UMWA resolutions that would affirm the Illinois Federation of Labor’s support for its immigrant and Black members. However, a number of representatives at the convention offered varying levels of disapproval.

After hearing the anti-Klan bills, the resolutions committee introduced a substitute resolution that condemned the Klan, but with some noticeable differences. First, the new resolution was considerably longer and filled with the same type of patriotic rhetoric espoused by Walker and Olander in response to Corbishley's National Defense Day resolution. It featured frequent references to the importance of democratic institutions, and the condemnation of the KKK mostly emphasized the Klan's violations of American democracy, not its attacks on union members. Secondly, the resolution briefly discussed both religious and racial intolerance, but it did so in a nonlocalized way that failed to speak to the very real situation present in the state. At no point in the resolution was a specific city, county, or even state mentioned, nor was any particular incident of Klan terrorism ever addressed. Lastly, the resolution ignored Corbishley's calls for "anti-Klan mass meetings and demonstrations" in southern Illinois and never offered any procedures or recommendations for how to combat or expel this menace from labor union locals.<sup>57</sup> In his report on the conference, *Daily Worker* correspondent Karl Reeve addressed some of these oversights and noted that the resolution was nearly identical to the resolution adopted by the AFL a year earlier.<sup>58</sup> In other words, the resolutions committee simply regurgitated the previous statements of the national AFL instead of passing a bill that dealt directly with Klan violence in southern Illinois.

At first glance, this may seem a glib or pessimistic perspective of a resolution that did in fact condemn the KKK as a racist organization, especially in comparison to University of Chicago economist Eugene Staley's writings on the conference. Staley's *History of the Illinois State Federation of Labor*, published in 1930, is the only other work that discusses the 1924 conference at any length, although it receives only a few sentences. In his account of the convention, Staley denounced what he referred to as the "guerrilla warfare tactics" of the Communist delegates. Because of this, he rarely addressed the grievances of those delegates with much objectivity. Conversely, Staley paid glowing tribute to the contributions of Walker and Olander to the successes of the Illinois Federation of Labor. He even pointed to the passing of the anti-Klan bill as one such triumph, writing that the "Federation condemned the Ku Klux Klan in 1924, adopting the exact language of an AFL report on the Klan in place of more violent resolutions which had been introduced."<sup>59</sup> The "violent resolutions" that Staley referred to were those of the southern Illinois miners, although he never acknowledged what their original statements were. It is worth mentioning that Staley's only major source on the conference itself was that of the "official printed proceedings of the Illinois State Federation of Labor annual conventions." This limited archive neglected the numerous newspaper accounts that offered further context and accounts of the events.

What Staley never addressed in his book were the reactions of delegates to the resolution itself. This fallout proved just how little support a truly forceful condemnation of the Klan had at the convention and also revealed the true motives of Walker in advocating for the new resolution. Once the bill was in-



roduced, the most vocal opposition to the altered resolution came not from Corbishley, but from pro-Klan forces that viewed these statements as discriminatory to Klansmen. A carpenter's representative named Branham argued that the "parties who drew that up are just as intolerant as those who burned people at the stake." Branham also concluded that the resolution would "split the organization wide open," because "we have a lot of members who belong to the Klan and it is an invitation to them to get out. . . . We have got to have members of the Ku Klux Klan in our organizations." It was in President Walker's response to Branham that he exposed the true intent of the altered resolution. Walker argued that the "report is in the exact language of the report adopted by the AFL by unanimous vote in the convention a year ago and it has not split the organization at all."<sup>60</sup> Walker essentially assured a pro-Klan representative that, despite the supposed condemnation present in this resolution, there would be no break between the Illinois Federation of Labor and its Klan members. In short, Walker's resolution would change nothing.

By removing the teeth from Corbishley's resolution, the hierarchy of organized labor in Illinois could "condemn" the Klan without losing members or truly provoking the powerful hooded organization. While the bill infuriated laborers on both sides of the Klan issue, so much so that ten delegates rose in opposition to its take on the Klan, it passed and became the organization's official stance on the KKK. The southern Illinois miners gained a resolution that condemned the Klan, but it did next to nothing to change their situation. The Illinois Federation of Labor left its immigrant miners exposed to continued Klan violence and avoided their responsibilities as members of the AFL to support their union brothers regardless of their racial or ethnic identity. The resolution was hardly the signifier of true racial solidarity that Staley believed it to be, nor was it emblematic of many romantic "new labor history" portrayals of organized labor. Instead, it represented a hollow and calculated maneuver made by the establishment of Illinois labor to maintain the status quo.

Incensed by the flimsiness of the anti-Klan bill that supplanted his own, Corbishley took his message straight to the numerous media outlets present at the convention. In various interviews, he conveyed both the level of influence the Klan held in southern Illinois and the methods through which they limited the power of organized labor and ethnic solidarity. In an interview with the *Alton Evening Telegraph*, Corbishley spoke of a recent Klan incursion into his union local. In June of 1924, the 992 reelected Corbishley handily over Klan-backed candidates, but following the election "fifty or sixty alleged Klansmen held another election immediately afterward and named their slate of officials."<sup>61</sup> These Klan-backed officials convinced enough UMWA International Executive Board members that their claim was legitimate. This particular instance of Klan insurgency within the 992 lasted only for a short period, but it would not be the last; these actions showed just how serious the KKK threat was to UMWA members. Corbishley also discussed these issues of Klan violence with the *Chi-*

*Chicago Tribune*, which placed the struggles of the 992 in one of the most widely circulated newspapers in the nation.<sup>62</sup>

While these articles voiced Corbishley's opposition to the Klan, only the left-wing press mentioned the controversial claims leveled by a number of miners against UMWA District 12 President Farrington. Earlier articles on the convention in *The Daily Worker* reported that Farrington and Secretary Olander pressured representative Robert Speedie and other delegates from Dowell to withdraw their condemnation of the KKK. Speedie told reporter Karl Reeve that both Farrington and Olander visited him and stressed the importance of squashing the Klan bill. He recalled that Farrington showed him a letter from the KKK, which explicitly stated, "that he [Farrington] would lose thousands of votes unless he used his influence to keep the anti-Klan resolution from coming up on the floor of the federation convention, and to fight it if it did come up."<sup>63</sup> Speedie's revelation confirmed many of the TUEL's long-held suspicions about Farrington and his true motivations as District 12 president.

On September 11, the *Chicago Tribune* published an article titled "Dark Future for Illinois Miners," which quoted Farrington and his accounts of the most important occurrences at the conference. Despite reports on the anti-Klan resolutions appearing in the paper both the day before and the day after this article's publication, Farrington never mentioned any discussion on the KKK at the conference or his opposition to the anti-Klan resolutions. Instead, Farrington focused his attention on the "interstate commerce commission," which he claimed "has 'struck the Illinois miners the most deadly blow ever dealt by any foe we were ever called on to face,'" because the commission reduced "freight rates in nonunion territory."<sup>64</sup> This statement no doubt offended radical miners like Corbishley, considering that Farrington largely ignored the Klan situation only days before this article's publication.

In one of the last resolutions of the concluding day of the conference, Secretary Olander introduced what Eugene Staley referred to as a "harmony resolution." In describing Olander's actions, Staley wrote that he "acted as a peacemaker behind the scenes, counseling tolerance in fighting intolerance, and a harmony resolution introduced by him on the last day and adopted unanimously helped to lessen the tension."<sup>65</sup> Once again, Staley showed both his unwavering support for the officialdom and his tendency to avoid the specifics of their resolutions. In reality, Olander's "harmony resolution" completely robbed the already tepid anti-Klan measure of any of Corbishley's original intent. Not only did Olander argue that "trade unionists should not permit themselves to be divided by differences of opinion regarding individual affiliations, actual or supposed, with other forms of organization," but also that "nothing which has transpired in this convention shall be used to cause divisions within local unions . . . or to discriminate against any member or members of any trade union."<sup>66</sup> In other words, the convention refused to discriminate against the most discriminatory terrorist organization in the nation despite its frequent attacks on union members. For the radical immigrant miners, this greatly dam-

aged their opinion of the Illinois Federation of Labor officialdom, and it served as a further indictment of the UMWA District 12 president. Karl Reeve most succinctly voiced the feelings of the Far Left, when he wrote that Farrington “betrayed the trust” of progressive miners “by not fighting” and reiterated that Farrington “left the convention without saying a word” in regard to the condemnation of the KKK.<sup>67</sup>

## Conclusion

The refusal of the UMWA and the Illinois Federation of Labor to fully acknowledge the problem of Klan corruption and violence left union locals in Franklin County exposed to even greater Klan incursions. In December of 1924, Klan agitators tampered with union elections throughout the county and filled the subdistrict officialdom with supporters of Farrington. Within a year, many of these subdistrict officials orchestrated the expulsion of Corbishley and a number of Local 992 members from the UMWA. Additionally, these officials conspired with Klan members, coal operators, and the courts to bring false charges against a number of 992 members.<sup>68</sup> Events like these exposed the depths of corruption present in the UMWA and the level of influence of the KKK in southern Illinois. The radicals present at the 1924 convention warned the laborers of Illinois about the severity of the situation but were largely ignored. The inaction of the UMWA in 1924 allowed for the chaos that enveloped Franklin County in the mid-1920s and created such a distrust of the UMWA in many coal communities that the later dual unions of the late 1920s (The National Miners Union) and early 1930s (The Progressive Miners of America) gained considerable traction in the region.

Corbishley’s stand at the convention spoke to the radical sentiments and interethnic solidarity present in many of the union locals in Franklin County. While anti-ethnic prejudices still persisted among many of the native-born miners in coal communities like Zeigler, the influence of the Far Left provided a means for many to embrace a shared radical affiliation instead of focusing on their different ethnic identities. Additionally, the southern Illinois radicals present at the convention spoke in the best interests of a significant portion of the UMWA, even if the officialdom refused to stand in solidarity with these miners.

## Notes

1. “Miners Start Fight on K.K.K. in Convention,” *Alton Evening Telegraph*, September 9, 1924, 1.

2. This article represents an expanded analysis of a few portions of my master’s thesis. For a more thorough account of the story of the Zeigler Local 992 during the second half of the 1920s, see Ben Schmack, “Rural Radicalism: Repression and Resistance in Southern Illinois Coal Country, 1924–1927,” (master’s thesis, Northern Illinois University, 2015).

3. Eugene Staley, *History of the Illinois State Federation of Labor* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1930). Staley’s is the only work, to my knowledge, that references the 1924 convention. The most notable work that mentions Zeigler is James Loewen, *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism* (New York: The New Press, 2005), although he only briefly discusses Zeigler. Aside from my own research, his discussion of Zeigler’s racial past is the deepest

analytical treatment of Zeigler. In Paul M. Angle, *Bloody Williamson: A Chapter in American Lawlessness* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), Angle devotes a chapter to Zeigler's founder Joseph Leiter and the town's formative years from 1900 to 1910. Stephane Elise Booth, "The Relationship between Radicalism and Ethnicity in Southern Illinois Coal Fields, 1870–1940" (PhD diss., Illinois State University, 1984). Booth's 1984 dissertation discusses immigrant miners in southern Illinois and briefly discusses Zeigler. Additionally, Booth's statistical indexes are a tremendous research aid. Winifred M. Hensen, "History of Franklin County, IL" (master's thesis, Colorado State College of Education, 1942). Hensen's "Franklin County" is fairly old and at points biased, but it is one of the few secondary sources that addresses the history of Zeigler.

4. Booth, "Relationship between Radicalism and Ethnicity," 245–47; U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States*, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1920.

5. David Thomas Markwell, "'The Best Organized Labor State in America': The People of District 12 and the Illinois Perspective, 1898–1932" (PhD diss., Southern Illinois University, 2010), 82, 80.

6. Department of Mines and Minerals, "Report Files," Record Series 245.002, Illinois State Archives.

7. For more on the Palmer Raids and the targeting of political dissenters during the first Red Scare, see Ann Hagedorn, *Savage Peace: Hope and Fear in America, 1919* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007); Stanley Coben, *A. Mitchell Palmer: Politician* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963); Robert W. Dunn, *The Palmer Raids* (New York: International Publishers, 1948). For more on immigration restriction and the racialization of immigrants through government policy, see Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004); Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants Since 1882* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004).

8. Thomas Wren, "Illinois F. of L. Plans Council for Unemployed," *The Chicago Tribune*, September 10, 1924.

9. Herbert Hill, "Myth-Making as Labor History: Herbert Gutman and the United Mine Workers of America," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 2, no. 2 (1988): 132–33. For other sides of the debate over Gutman and the new labor history, with both defense and critique, see David Roediger, "What Was So Great about Herbert Gutman?" *Labour/LeTravail* 23, Spring (1989); Walter Johnson, "Agency: A Ghost Story," in *Slavery's Ghost: The Problem of Freedom in the Age of Emancipation*, ed. Richard Follett, Eric Foner, and Walter Johnson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011, 23).

10. Mark Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917–1936* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 1998); Harry Haywood, *Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist* (Chicago: Liberator Press, 1978); Harry Haywood, *Negro Liberation*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Liberator Press, 1976). For more on Communist involvement in anti-racist campaigns, see Jeff Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-Communism in the South, 1948–1968* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2004); Robin D.G. Kelly, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

11. Theodore Draper, *The Roots of American Communism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2003), 395.

12. James R. Barrett, *William Z. Foster and the Tragedy of American Radicalism* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Jennifer Luff, *Commonsense Anticommunism: Labor and Civil Liberties between Wars* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Jennifer Delton, *Rethinking the 1950s: How Anticommunism and the Cold War Made America Liberal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov, *The Secret World of American Communism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995); John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, *In Denial: Historians, Communism & Espionage* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2003).

13. Robin D.G. Kelly, *Hammer and Hoe*, 1990; Rosemary Feurer, *Radical Unionism in the Midwest, 1900–1950* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Randi Storch, *Red Chicago: American Communism at Its Grassroots, 1928–1935* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

14. Hensen, "History of Franklin County," 77.

15. Angle, *Bloody Williamson*, 119. Before his death in June 1904, Levi Z. Leiter was a Chicago real estate mogul and a former business partner of Marshall Field. He was largely responsible for the wealth of his only son and at one point bailed Joseph out of a catastrophic business failure. During the late 1890s Joseph attempted to corner the wheat market, but after the market broke, he eventually sold at a loss of more than \$10 million. Levi covered Joseph's debts and remained confident enough in his son to name him head of his estate. "Crash in Leiter Deal," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 14, 1898, 1; Paul Gilbert and Charles Lee Bryson, "Joseph Leiter," *Chicago and Its Makers: A Narrative of Events from the Days of the First White Man to the Inception of the Second*

- World's Fair*, 1929, archived online at [chicagology.com](http://chicagology.com); Levi Z. Leiter Papers and Leiter Estate Records (Chicago History Museum), Descriptive Inventory.
16. Hensen, "History of Franklin County," 78.
  17. "Leiter Back from Mines," *The Chicago Tribune*, December 18, 1924.
  18. David Roediger and Elizabeth Esch, *The Production of Difference: Race and the Management of Labor in U.S. History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
  19. James R. Barrett and David Roediger, "Inbetween Peoples: Race, Nationality and the 'New Immigrant' Working Class," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 16, no. 1 (1997): 6.
  20. "Strike at Zeigler Grows," *The Chicago Tribune*, July 26, 1904.
  21. Angle, *Bloody Williamson*, 123.
  22. Levi Z. Leiter Papers and Leiter Estate Records (Chicago History Museum), Box 3, August, 1904.
  23. "Fire on Train, Kills Miner," *The Chicago Tribune*, November 18, 1904.
  24. "Miners in Riot at Zeigler," *The Chicago Tribune*, March 9, 1906, 4; "Negroes and Huns Clash," *The Washington Post*, March 9, 1906, A.
  25. Angle, *Bloody Williamson*, 123.
  26. "Bring Eastern Men to Zeigler," *The Chicago Tribune*, November 30, 1904.
  27. Philip A. Kalisch, "Death Down Below: Coal Mine Disasters in Three Illinois Counties, 1904–1962," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (1908–1984)* 65, no. 1 (1972), 8, 10.
  28. Frederick L. Hoffman, Department of Commerce and Labor, *Bulletin of the Bureau of Labor* no. 90 (September, 1910) Washington: Government Printing Office, 518–9.
  29. Angle (Bloody Williamson, 128–30) mostly draws his evidence on the explosion from the findings of State Mining Board investigations, which came to the same conclusions as Hoffman; Kalisch draws heavily from Hoffman's reports in "Death Down Below," 1972, 8–9.
  30. Loewen, *Sundown Towns*, 162.
  31. Ruby Berkley Goodwin, *It's Good To Be Black* (Carbondale IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1953), 174–75.
  32. Loewen, *Sundown Towns*, 162, 482–54; Angle, *Bloody Williamson*, 128–30; Kalisch, "Death Down Below," 8–9.
  33. Hensen, "History of Franklin County," 78.
  34. Loewen, *Sundown Towns*, 158, 161.
  35. Thomas Mackaman, "The Foreign Element: New Immigrants and American Industry, 1914–1924" (PhD diss., University of Illinois, 2009), 228.
  36. Booth, "The Relationship between Radicalism and Ethnicity," 262.
  37. For works on the national revival of the Klan and the development of their ideology, see Thomas R. Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American: The Rebirth and Decline of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2011); Rory McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan: Right Wing Movements and National Politics* (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Kathleen M. Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). For local accounts of Klan communities, Klan middle-class membership, and Klan rolls, see MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry*, 1994; Masatomo Ayabe, "Ku Kluxers in a Coal Mining Community: A Study of the Ku Klux Klan Movement in Williamson County, Illinois, 1923–1926," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 102, no. 1 (2009); Craig Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk: White Protestant Life and the KKK in 1920s Michigan* (Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2011).
  38. Angle, *Bloody Williamson*, 144–48.
  39. Hensen, "History of Franklin County," 79–80.
  40. "Big Klan Meeting Near Christopher," *The Zeigler Item*, September 13, 1923; "K.K.K. Meet Held at Sesser Last Saturday," *The Zeigler Item*, October 11, 1923; "Ku Klux Cross Burns in Zeigler," *The Zeigler Item*, July 31, 1924; "Klan Holds Another Meeting," *The Zeigler Item*, August 7, 1924.
  41. "Murphy Smith Responds to Prudent's Empty Attack," *The Zeigler Item*, March 5, 1925; "Murphy Smith Elected by Majority of 55 over Fred Hall," *The Zeigler Item*, April 23, 1925.
  42. Thurber Lewis, "The Frame-Up of the Zeigler Miners," *The Labor Defender* 1, no. 1 (1926), 5, <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/pubs/labordefender/1926/v01n01-jan-1926-LD.pdf>; Supreme Court of Illinois, "Case Files," Record Series 901.001, Illinois State Archives, File Number 43171, District Court Transcript, 312.
  43. "Zeigler Mine Trials Will Start Tuesday," *The Daily Independent*, February 1, 1926, 1.
  44. William Z. Foster, *From Bryan to Stalin* (New York: International Publishers, 1937), 169.
  45. The paper existed as *The Worker* prior to 1924, itself a successor to *The Toiler*, but this edition was its first as a daily newspaper, prompting the change to *The Daily Worker*. All editions of *The Daily Worker* cited in this article came from the Marxists Internet Archive and can be found at <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/pubs/dailyworker/1924/index.htm>. "Birthday Greetings to 'The Daily Worker,'" *The Daily Worker*, January 13, 1924, 4–5, 10; "Jugo-Slav Branch No. 7," *The Daily Worker*, January 13, 1924, 5; Supreme Court of Illinois, "Case Files," Record Series 901.001,

Illinois State Archives, File Number 43171, District Court Transcript, 640.

46. Karl Reeve, "Militant Miners Opposing Lewis, Murray, Green," *The Daily Worker*, August 26, 1924, 1.

47. Karl Reeve, "Defeat K.K.K. Disruption in Zeigler, Ill," *The Daily Worker*, August 26, 1924, 3.

48. Markwell, "'The Best Organized Labor State in America,'" 121.

49. Mackaman, "The Foreign Element," 88, 233–34.

50. Slaughter was also the president of Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks, Freight Handlers, Express and Station Employees No. 508 of Roanoke, Virginia, and an assistant cashier for the Norfolk and Western Railroad Co. This letter was originally published as part of the *Samuel Gompers Letter Books* series, but it has since been digitized as part of the Samuel Gompers Papers Project. TLpS, reel 270, vol. 283, p. 535, SG Letterbooks, DLC, [www.gompers.umd.edu/KKKtr.htm](http://www.gompers.umd.edu/KKKtr.htm).

51. American Federation of Labor, *Report of Proceedings of the Forty-First Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor* (Washington D.C.: Law Reporter Printing Company, 1921, 281); American Federation of Labor, *Report of Proceedings of the Forty-Second Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor* (Washington D.C.: Law Reporter Printing Company, 1922, 343–44).

52. Ayabe, "Ku Kluxers in a Coal Mining Community," 81–83.

53. Staley, *History of the Illinois State Federation of Labor*, 313.

54. Karl Reeve, "Reaction Rules Illinois Convention," *The Labor Herald* III, no. 8 (1924): 246, <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/pubs/laborherald/v3n08-oct-1924.pdf>.

55. Thomas Wren, "Illinois F. of L. Plans Council for Unemployed," 1924; Thomas Wren, "Illinois F. of L. Assails Defense on Eve of Test," *The Chicago Tribune*, September 12, 1924.

56. Illinois State Federation of Labor, *Proceedings: Forty-second Annual Convention*, 327. The September 9 edition of the *Carbondale Free Press* also printed a slightly abbreviated version of these resolutions, *Carbondale Free Press*, September 9, 1924, 1.

57. Illinois State Federation of Labor, *Proceedings: Forty-Second Annual Convention*, 327–329.

58. Karl Reeve, "Charge Labor Heads Sought to Shield Klan," *The Daily Worker*, September 13, 1924, 1.

59. Staley, *History of the Illinois State Federation of Labor*, 404, 337–38.

60. Illinois State Federation of Labor, *Proceedings: Forty-Second Annual Convention*, 329–30.

61. "Miners Start Fight on K.K.K. in Convention," *Alton Evening Telegraph*, September 9, 1924, 1.

62. Thomas Wren, "Illinois F. of L. Plans Council for Unemployed," 1924; Thomas Wren, "Illinois F. of L. Assails Defense on Eve of Test," 1924.

63. Karl Reeve, "Olander and Farrington Join Forces in Defense of the Ku Klux Klan, Coal Miners Show," *The Daily Worker*, September 15, 1924, 2.

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