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Ten Hours or No Sawdust: A Study of Strikes in the Michigan Lumber Industry 1881-1885

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TEN HOURS OR NO SAWDUST:
A STUDY OF STRIKES IN THE MICHIGAN
LUMBER INDUSTRY
1881-1885

by
Daniel J. Yakes

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of the School of Graduate
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of the
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TEN HOURS OR NO SAWDUST: A STUDY OF
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INTRODUCTION

The economy of the state of Michigan during the latter half of the nineteenth century was based largely upon the production of lumber. From 1850 until 1900 the lumber industry was Michigan's most profitable business. The total lumber production of Michigan sawmills prior to 1897 has been calculated at 161,475,000,000 board feet, worth approximately \$2,099,175,000, a figure comparable to the total value of all of the gold mined in California during the same period.¹

Michigan was by far the leading lumber producing state in the union during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Her leading rivals were Wisconsin (70,177,358,651 board feet) and Minnesota (36,146,816,193 board feet), but Michigan lumber production exceeded all of her competitors combined.²

The Michigan lumber industry did not begin to develop on a large scale until shortly after the completion of the Civil War. Within the next two decades, however, it expanded quite rapidly. By 1890 there were more than 2,200 sawmills in the state.³ These sawmills, which

¹ George Woodward Hotchkiss, History of the Lumber and Forest Industry of the Northwest, (Chicago: George W. Hotchkiss and Co., 1898), p. 372. A board foot of lumber is a piece of wood one foot long, one foot wide, and one inch thick. The figure 161,475,000,000 board feet was estimated by George W. Hotchkiss, editor of The Lumberman's Gazette, the leading lumber journal of the day. Hotchkiss arrived at the figure \$2,099,175,000 by multiplying 161,470,000 thousand board feet by thirteen dollars, a relatively conservative price for one thousand board feet of lumber.

² Ibid., p. 638.

³ Vernon H. Jensen, Lumber and Labor, (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1945), p. 49.

were usually located near the mouths of rivers in order to facilitate the sorting of logs and transshipment of lumber, were responsible for the origin and development of dozens of Michigan cities and towns which grew to prominence as suppliers of lumber products. Saginaw, Bay City, Port Huron, St. Clair, Alpena, Oscoda, Muskegon, Manistee, Ludington, Traverse City, and Menominee are only a few of the many Michigan communities which obtained their initial development in this manner.

Michigan's leading lumber producer was the Saginaw River area, including mills in Bay City and Saginaw. This area accounted for a total lumber production of over thirty billion board feet during the nineteenth century.⁴ Not far behind in total lumber production was the Muskegon area, whose mills produced approximately twenty-nine billion board feet of lumber.⁵ Other Michigan sawmill centers trailed far behind these two lumber giants which were not only the largest in Michigan but in the entire nation as well.

Pine was definitely an important industry in Michigan during the last several decades of the nineteenth century, but during the 1880's pine was king. Michigan lumber production during the 1880's reached unparalleled heights. Production peaked in 1887 when the state produced 4,162,317,778 board feet of lumber.⁶

⁴Hotchkiss, op. cit., p. 642.

⁵Ibid.

⁶John W. Fitzmaurice, The Shanty Boy, (Cheyboygan, Michigan: Democrat Steam Print, 1889), p. 89.

Although lumber production was booming in Michigan during the 1880's, that decade also witnessed a series of labor disorders comparable to no other period in the history of the lumber industry. During the period from 1881 to 1886 the Michigan lumber industry experienced more strikes than all other industries in the state combined.⁷ During those years Michigan accounted for nearly half of all the lumber industry strikes in the nation. The Michigan strikes were longer, costlier and involved more men than all other strikes elsewhere in the industry.⁸

What caused these strikes? What were the underlying factors which prompted workers to quite work in an age when the word "strike" suggested something ugly and repulsive even to the majority of the laborers themselves? How did the activities of sawmill employers and labor leaders influence the strikes? Why did most of the strikes fail? Was there any formula for success which might have been followed? How was the Michigan situation related to the national scene? These and other questions will be answered in the following pages as we investigate the great mill strikes of the 1880's.

⁷U.S., Commissioner of Labor (Carroll D. Wright), Third Annual Report: 1887. Strikes and Lockouts. (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1888), p. 750. Between 1881 and 1886 strikes occurred against 182 Michigan lumbering establishments compared to only 177 establishments of other industries in the state.

⁸ibid., pp. 798-800. Between 1881 and 1886 Michigan sawmills employing 16,783 laborers were closed for a total of 5279 days by labor disorders. See Appendix A for further information.

I. LUMBERMEN AND LABOR

It should be pointed out, to begin with, that the labor situation in the Michigan lumber industry was largely a reflection of the economic conditions prevalent in the United States at the time. The early 1880's were years of unparalleled economic growth as the United States entered the age of heavy industry and machines. The 1880's were also years which witnessed the growth of monopoly and the rapid advancement of entrepreneurs and middlemen who eventually succeeded in controlling, by combination, competition and other means, most of the nation's major industries.

The nation's labor force, as a class, benefited least from this growth of capitalism. The economic changes of the 1880's unquestionably had the effect of improving production and increasing the size of the labor force, but at the same time lowering real wages and increasing the cost of living. The economic situation of the 1880's is described below by the competent labor historian, Selig Perlman:

The eighties were years of marvelous industrial expansion. For instance Bradstreet's estimates that one-tenth more wage earners were employed in 1882 than during the census year of 1880. The dominant feature was the introduction of machinery upon an unprecedented scale. Indeed, the factory system of production, for the first time, became general during the eighties. . . .

The factory system led to a large increase in the class of unskilled and semi-skilled labour, with inferior bargaining power. Accompanying this was the shifting of population from country to city. But there was yet another change which added to the downward pressure on wages.

The wide areas over which manufactured products were now to be distributed called, more than ever before, for the services of the wholesaler. As the market extended, he sent out his traveling men, established business connections, and advertised the articles which bore his special trademark. His control of

the market opened up credit with the banks, while the manufacturer, who with the exception of patents, possessed only physical capital and no market opportunities, found it difficult to obtain credit. Moreover, the rapid introduction of machinery tied up all of his available capital and forced him to turn his products into money as rapidly as possible with the inevitable result that the merchant had an enormous bargaining advantage over him. Had the extension of the market and introduction of machinery proceeded at a less rapid pace, the manufacturer probably would have been able to obtain greater control over market opportunities. Also, the larger credit which this would have given him, combined with the accumulation of his own capital, might have been sufficient to meet his needs. However, as the situation really developed, the jobber obtained a much superior bargaining power, and by playing off the competing manufacturers one against another, produced cut throat competition, low prices, low markets, and consequently a steady and insistent pressure upon wages.

Other factors aggravating the situation were an unusually large immigration and the exhaustion of the public domain. The eighties were the banner decade of the entire century for immigration.¹

The Michigan lumber industry was affected by many of the same forces which affected the nation's economy. During the late 1870's and early 1880's, the mills in Michigan generally increased production as they became more mechanized with the widespread adoption of gang saws, endless belt saws, more powerful engines and other devices meant to increase production and reduce labor. The logging of lumber became a year around proposition and the distribution of finished lumber was much improved with the development of a railroad network throughout the state.

Michigan mills increased in size and number as a result of the introduction of such innovations. By 1885 nearly one-half of the two thousand lumber mills in the state produced over ten million

¹Selig Perlman, Upheaval and Reorganization, II: History of Labour in the United States, ed. John R. Commons, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1918), pp. 358-60.

board feet annually and employed a minimum of 75 men each.² These figures could not have been approached by ninety per cent of the mills in Michigan a decade previously. The 1880's were the peak years of lumber production in Michigan. During that period lumber production in the state averaged nearly four billion board feet annually as the producers stripped the forests of every harvestable pine tree larger than eight inches in diameter.³

Although the volume of lumber production increased dramatically during the 1880's and mills increased in size and number, the profits from those mills, per unit of lumber, declined significantly during the decade. One major reason for the decline in profitability was the rising cost of production. Production costs included such items as stumpage, logging, booming, driving, sawing, depreciation, and taxes. Such costs increased rapidly during the late 1870's and early 1880's. In 1877, for example, the cost of production in Saginaw was computed as follows:

Cost of Lumbering, 1877 (per M Foot)

Stumpage.....	\$2.00
Logging.....	\$2.50
Booming and Driving.....	\$.92
Sawing.....	\$1.60
Wear, taxes, insurance, and depreciation.....	\$1.00 ₄
	<u>\$8.02₄</u>

²Roland H. Maybee, "Michigan's White Pine Era" Michigan History, XLIII (December, 1959), p. 425.

³Harry H. Steer, Lumber Production in the United States, 1799-1946. U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Miscellaneous Publication No. 669, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948) p. 215.

⁴The Lumberman's Gazette (Bay City), IX, No. 15.

By 1882 the cost of producing lumber had increased tremendously as the following statement by J. A. Whittier, president of the Saginaw Board of Trade indicates:

Cost Breakdown, Saginaw Valley, 1882
From Tree to Sawed Product
(per M foot)

<u>Function</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Stumpage.....	\$4.50
Cutting and Banking.....	\$3.75
Driving.....	\$.75
Booming.....	\$1.00
Sawing.....	\$2.50
Inspecting, loss, insurance, and incidentals.....	\$.50
	<u>\$13.50⁵</u>

The rising costs were primarily the result of the decline in the availability of quality pine trees. By the 1880's most of the readily accessible pine in the lower peninsula had been exhausted. That which remained was either poor in quality, high in price, and/or located in areas that were not served by bulk transportation facilities such as railroads and rivers.

Although the price of lumber increased somewhat between 1875 and 1885, it did not significantly counteract the decline in quality and the increase in production costs over the same period. As a result profits,

⁵William Gerald Rector, Log Transportation in the Lake States Lumber Industry, 1840-1914. (Glendale, Cal.: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1953) p. 22 citing the testimony of J. A. Whittier in "Report of the Tariff Commission" U.S., Congress House, Miscellaneous Documents No. 6, Part 1, 47 Cong., 2 Sess., p. 956.

per unit of lumber produced, declined during the 1880's throughout most of the state, but particularly in southern and eastern Michigan.

The following statement by the Bay City lumberman named Thomas McCraw testifies to the severity of the situation as it had developed by the mid-eighties:

There is much less profit in lumber now than formerly. . . . [One reason for this situation is] the variation in quality of lumber within the different grades. Now, along from 1875 to 1878 the grades of lumber would not vary in price from \$5, \$10, and \$30 to \$6, \$12, and \$35. The best lumber has been cut and although we now have good lumber it varies much more in prices. It now runs from \$6, \$12, and \$36, to \$10, \$20, and \$40. Most of it is nearer the former than the latter figures.⁶

Profits in Michigan lumber industry were also declining because the price structure was controlled to a large degree at the national level by a powerful lumber cartel composed of leading producers and dealers. Most Michigan sawmills sold their lumber in bulk quantities, by the cargo, or by the million board feet, to large lumber dealers and wholesalers located in the major cities along the Great Lakes, such as Buffalo, New York, Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, and, of course, Chicago, which was the largest wholesale lumber center in the nation at that time. By the 1880's these dealers and wholesalers, along with a few major producers, essentially controlled the lumber industry, maintaining price levels, influencing the production, and limiting competition at the wholesale level. The following article from the North American Review provides an indication of how the

⁶Bay City Evening Press, July 21, 1885. The three prices given indicate the three grade of lumber respectively: coarse, common, and good.

Chicago dealers controlled the largest lumber market in the nation.

Four years ago [1880] the Chicago Lumberman's Exchange adopted a resolution declaring it to be "dishonorable" for any dealer to make lower prices than those published by it for the control of prices in one of the greatest lumber markets of the world. Monthly reports are required by this exchange from dealers, so that accurate accounts may be kept of stock on hand in order to regulate prices. The price lists of the Exchange are revised and made "honest" at monthly banquets. In February, 1883, it was found that members who ostensibly adhered to the price lists dipped into the dishonorable practice of competition on the sly by giving buyers greater than the usual discounts. This was then forbidden and another pathway to competition closed. . . . A secret meeting of lumbermen from all parts of the west was held in Chicago, March 8, 1883, to discuss means for advancing prices, restricting production at least thirty-five per cent, and in general, . . . putting themselves in a position like that of the coal producers of Pennsylvania, who by combination, dictated the prices of coal throughout the whole country.⁷

The lumber producers, particularly the small sawmill owners, were often caught in the middle. They could produce only the amount of lumber demanded by the dealers and at a price determined largely by the major producers and wholesalers. As such, they were plagued by cut throat competition with other producers.

This situation was seriously aggravated by the depression which gripped the nation in 1884, strangling markets and slashing the wage and price structure. According to the United States Bureau of Labor, during the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1884, five per cent of the business establishments in the nation were completely idled and another five per cent were partially idled as a result of this depression.⁸

⁷The North American Review, June 1884, p. 258, citing a speech by Franklin B. Gowen, President of the Reading Railroad, to a committee of the Pennsylvania legislature.

⁸U.S. Commissioner of Labor (Carroll D. Wright), First Annual Report: 1885. Industrial Depressions. (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1886), P. 65.

During the same period, nearly one million workers were layed off.⁹ Wages were reduced an average of fifteen per cent throughout the nation and dropped as much as forty per cent in some industries.¹⁰ Business activity slowed appreciably as the markets dropped out of most industries.

The Michigan lumber industry was among those adversely affected by the business slowdown. Lumber prices, which had increased somewhat during the previous years, fell precipitously in 1884. For example, the price of lower grade 4X4's on the Buffalo, New York market had increased from nine dollars per thousand to thirteen dollars per thousand between July, 1879 and January, 1882.¹¹ The market broke sharply downward in 1884 and by January, 1885 the price had dropped eight per cent from the high of 1882. By the end of 1885 the price had dropped several points lower. Lumber markets elsewhere showed declines up to twenty-five per cent between 1884 and 1885.¹²

The declining markets left hundreds of thousands of board feet of lumber stranded on Michigan docks as orders were canceled and new orders could not be found. In an effort to combat the depression, a number of leading Michigan lumber producers called a convention in Bay City to discuss organization for the purpose of limiting production and thus driving up prices. This effort failed

⁹ibid.

¹⁰Perlman, op. cit., p. 361.

¹¹Rector, op. cit., p. 215.

¹²ibid., p. 216.

miserably, however, because of the stubbornness and individuality of most of the mill owners involved. The nationally distributed trade journal The Lumberman's Gazette [Bay City] described the convention in the following terms:

A concert of action in shutting down the mills is impracticable and should the convention [of lumbermen] decide upon something, most of the mill men would go home and do as they please.¹³

Most of the Michigan mills continued to operate, with reduced crews, even though markets were limited. Many mills had contracts for lumber which had to be fulfilled regardless of the depression. Many of the smaller firms were operating on borrowed capital and had to sell their lumber, even at a loss, in order to stay in business. The larger mills were in a better position. They could continue in business while storing their finished lumber and waiting until prices improved. Even they encountered problems, however, since storage space near the mills was usually quite limited, and the mill owners were not about to expend large amounts of cash for freight charges to take their lumber elsewhere. This was particularly the case in Michigan, since much of the lumber being produced there during the mid-eighties was coarse or low quality lumber whose value lay in cheapness which would be lost in freight and storage costs. Nevertheless, the large producers could not cease production during the depression because the smaller producers would take advantage of the situation and produce more lumber. Therefore, most of the large producers saw no advantage in deliberately holding back their stocks of lumber from the market and they, like the small

¹³The Lumberman's Gazette, XXV, No. 7, 1884.

producers, continued to operate and sell their lumber for whatever it would bring.

The economic conditions of the 1880's in the Michigan lumber industry contributed greatly to the labor difficulties of the area. Michigan lumbermen were faced with rising costs, diminishing quality of lumber, and a declining market, but they were unable to solve their problems by raising prices or restricting output. Therefore, they turned to their costs of production hoping to find a profitable alternative. Most production costs were fixed, but one was not: the cost of labor.

Most millowners believed in the maxim that "the compensation of labor must be regulated by the conditions of the trade, and the ratios of profit. . . ."¹⁴ Since profits were poor throughout most of the Michigan lumber industry during the 1880's, wages generally followed suit. When the depression struck the industry in 1884, wages tumbled. Some firms laid off men and expected those who remained to work harder and longer. The economic situation in the 1880's, aggravated by the depression, constituted a major cause of labor disorders in the Michigan lumber industry during that period.

Although the economic conditions contributed to many of the strikes and riots of the 1880's, they were not the only factors involved, nor were they necessarily the most important. Another primary source of labor discontent may be found in the deplorable living and working conditions of the laborers involved. Indeed, the typical sawmill laborer of the day led an extremely harsh existence, the victim of an

¹⁴The Lumberman's Gazette, VII, No. 20.

industry and a local society dominated by a relatively few wealthy lumber barons.

One problem facing the typical Michigan sawmill laborer was that employment in the lumber industry was highly unstable and seasonal by its very nature. Even as late as the 1880's most logging was done in the winter and the logs floated to the mill sites with the spring floods. At the mill sites, logs could be sorted, floated to the proper mills, and sawed into lumber only during warmer weather, when the mill ponds and boom areas were unfrozen. Therefore, sawing could usually be carried out only during the late Spring, Summer, and early Fall months. Even after the introduction of the logging railroads, Michigan logging remained highly seasonal in character. The seasonality of the industry had a telling effect upon employment:

In logging employment opportunities increased a little in late August or early September and picked up rapidly through October and November reaching a peak in January. Employment was maintained through February, but in March a reduction of 25 per cent was not uncommon. In April or May the low point was reached and logging employment was less than a third of the January peak. The number of employees then remained roughly the same through the summer months.

In sawmilling the seasonal peak was in the summer during June, July, and August, and the low point was in December and January. The fluctuation was not so great in sawmilling, however, the number of employees at the low point of employment was only one-third below the top number. While the peaks of employment in both branches of the industry were about the same, the trough in the employment level in logging was twice as deep as in sawmilling. This meant that there existed a possibility of some dovetailing of employment, because as employment declined in logging, during the early part of the year, it increased in the sawmilling industry.¹⁵

Because of the seasonality of the lumber industry, Michigan sawmill employees often found themselves in difficult straits.

¹⁵Jensen, op. cit., pp. 49-50.

Those who were layed off in late Fall often attempted to find Winter employment in the logging industry. Competition for those jobs was fierce, however, since the sawmill laborers were bidding against farmers, miners, and railroad workers all of whom were also out of work in the winter.¹⁶ Hiring for the winter jobs began in earnest in October, at which time the farmers were in the best position to acquire the jobs since their harvest time was essentially over. Mill employees found it difficult to compete for logging jobs since they were expected, by their employers, to finish the sawing season which usually lasted until late November. Many mill owners ensured that their men would stay by withholding wages until the end of the season. Also, any mill worker who quit work early usually found it impossible to reclaim his job at the mill for the following season. Thus, sawmill employees were often forced to accept a long payless layoff period during the winter months.¹⁷

Michigan sawmill employees were generally better off than most of their colleagues in other states. Michigan mill workers generally worked a longer sawing season than similar workers elsewhere. This situation was due to the benefits of more favorable weather conditions and more improved methods of transporting logs and lumber in Michigan. The average term of sawmill employment for Michigan

¹⁶George B. Engberg, "Who were the Lumberjacks?", Michigan History Magazine, XXXII (Winter, 1948), p. 245.

¹⁷Anita Shafer Goodstein, "Labor Relations in the Saginaw Valley Lumber Industry, 1865-1885", Bulletin of the Business Historical Society, XXVII, No. 4, (December, 1953), p. 202.

workers in 1890, for example, was 7.11 months per year.¹⁸ The comparable figures for Wisconsin and Minnesota were 6.43 months and 5.92 months respectively.¹⁹

Despite the advantage of a longer working year than most, Michigan sawmill laborers could hardly be considered well off. They worked between eleven and twelve hours per day, six days per week, in poorly ventilated, improperly constructed and vermin infested buildings. They worked near saws, engines, and other equipment which were only occasionally equipped with safety devices. Sawmill accidents were common and there was seldom any insurance to cover the injured man or his family, since the injured party was usually considered guilty of carelessness.

Labor in the lumber industry was also quite subject to the laws of supply and demand. If the supply of lumber dwindled, as was the case in southern and eastern Michigan during the 1880's, unemployment began to develop. The same situation occurred if demand was limited, such as during the depression of 1884.

The same laws of supply and demand also affected the wages of labor. As was indicated above, wages were considered as part of production and profit. Per capita wages in the lumber industry were never very high. They were usually determined by common agreement among the mill owners of a particular area. This means of wage determination was flexible enough, however, to permit individual mill owners to settle the price of labor with certain individual laborers.

¹⁸Alvah L. Sawyer, A History of the Northern Peninsula of Michigan, Vol. 1 (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1911), p. 579.

¹⁹Ibid.

Census information covering the Lake States lumber industry for the year 1890 shows that the average annual wage for all branches of the industry was only approximately \$250. But this figure is a simple average without any consideration of overlapping in jobs. Woods workers averaged approximately \$185 for the season, with some variations between the states being explained largely on the basis of the length of seasons. Sawmill workers fared somewhat better, the average annual wage being \$100 greater.

Taking all things into consideration, the average annual income should have approximated \$375 to \$400 for workers who were more or less continuously employed in the industry. Unskilled workers with year round work probably earned no more than \$300. Those who worked only in logging or sawmilling earned proportionately less.²⁰

The average wage for laborers continuously employed in the Michigan lumber industry compared not unfavorably with average wages in other industries and in other parts of the country.²¹ Nevertheless, a large number of Michigan sawmill employees were not fully employed and most were unskilled laborers who, therefore, earned considerably less than the average workman. In addition to sub-standard pay, many sawmill employees were not always paid on time and were seldom paid entirely in cash, since specie and currency were scarce commodities in the mill towns during the sawing season.

²⁰Jensen, op. cit., p. 57. Jensen's computations were based upon the Eleventh Census of the United States, 1890: Reports on Manufacturing Industries, Part 3, pp. 624-5, and the Tenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics for Michigan, 1893, pp. 907-8.

²¹The Bay City Evening Press, July 1, 1885. The newspaper compiled statistics from the Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, that indicated that the average annual wage of employees in Michigan in 1880 was \$356.05; in Wisconsin, \$329.45; in Minnesota, \$406.05; in Illinois, \$396.80; in Indiana, \$315.95; and in Ohio, \$338.23. The average annual wages for laborers in manufacturing industries ranged all the way from \$800.35 in Nevada to \$128.18 in South Carolina.

Workers, for many years, were not paid in cash, or at least not entirely in cash. As a rule, cash was scarce and the workers received due bills, payable in the fall or spring at the close of the logging or sawmilling season. In many places, also, the sawmill workers were given store orders or took part of their pay in kind from the company store. The method of wage payment was the source of considerable discontent in early times. In many cases sawmill workers were forced to trade at the company stores and, in this practice, were often exploited. There were cases in which, as a condition of employment, employees were required to sign written agreements that they would buy everything they needed at the company store. Frequently, liberal credit was extended in order to capture future earnings. If due bills were not used, workers had to wait until the end of the season to collect their wages. Those employers who paid with due bills often used the season as a source of profit. When workers had to have some cash, employers stood ready to discount the due bills for 10 per cent or more.²²

Wages could be maintained at low levels because the sawmills used unskilled labor for the most part. Therefore, the mills employed many boys and young men, as well as the drifters, the inexperienced and the ignorant. The mills also attracted a disproportionate share of the newly arrived foreign immigrants. Although many of the foreigners were intelligent, hardworking men, they were usually poor, unskilled, and ignorant of the American way of life and thus were willing to accept jobs for lower wages and longer hours than would most native laborers. Thousands of foreigners flocked to Michigan during the 1870's and 1880's and many of them found regular employment in the sawmills of the state.

Although the United States Census of 1880 does not provide adequate information regarding the national origins of laborers, it is obvious that more than one-half of the laborers in the Michigan

²²Jensen, op. cit., p. 58.

lumber industry at that time were foreign born.²³ A survey taken by the Michigan Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1885 which investigated 191 of the state's lumber and shingle mills, indicated that nearly sixty per cent of the employees reporting were of foreign origin.²⁴ The largest single group consisted of the Canadians, but there were also large contingents of Germans, Poles, Irish, and Scandinavians working in Michigan sawmills.²⁵ The foreigners, mostly Canadians and Poles, who swarmed into the Michigan sawmill towns during the 1880's caused a good deal of unemployment, kept wages low, and created considerable discontent among the native laborers with whom they were competing for jobs.

Laborers in the Michigan lumber industry were almost totally at the mercy of their employers. The individual worker had no bargaining position and employers would deal with workers only on an individual basis. Large scale labor organization at that time was essentially restricted to skilled workmen who bargained with employers for better wages and working conditions only for themselves. Collective bargaining was restricted to trademen and was practically non-existent for the unskilled and semi-skilled laborers in fields such as the lumber industry.

Organization of common laborers into unions so that they could

²³U.S. Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States: 1880. Population, I, 480-83.

²⁴Third Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics: Michigan, Vol. III (Lansing, Michigan: Thorp and Godfrey, State Printers and Binders, 1886), Table No. 29, p. 264.

²⁵Jensen, op. cit., p. 51.

bargain collectively was thwarted by the pronounced individualism of the period. Unionism was a new and strange idea to most common workmen and many native born laborers also shunned the idea because it would entail co-operation with foreigners. Unionism was also somewhat stifled by the irregularities of the lumber industry. The labor turnover was extremely high, the sawing season short, and the laborers were employed by individual mill owners who could easily combine their efforts to prevent labor disorders.

One organization did, however, have moderate success in organizing the sawmill laborers of Michigan. That organization was the Fraternal Order of the Knights of Labor. The Order was founded in 1873 by a Philadelphia tailor named Uriah A. Stephens. The Knights of Labor was designed to organize the large mass of unskilled and semi-skilled laborers throughout the nation. According to the by-laws of the organization, three-fourths of all members were to be wage earners or farmers, but membership was open to everyone except lawyers, bankers, politicians, and saloon keepers.²⁶ Even employers who were in sympathy with organized labor were permitted to join.

The Knights invaded Michigan in 1879 when Charles Litchman and Joseph Labadie organized the Detroit shoemakers as a local assembly of the Order.²⁷ Although the Order grew rapidly within the state, it remained relatively weak and disorganized. The Order never represented

²⁶First Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics: Michigan, Vol. 1 (Lansing, Michigan: Thorp and Godfrey, State Printers and Binders, 1884), p. 68.

²⁷Sidney Glazer, "The Michigan Labor Movement", Michigan History Magazine, XXIX, (Winter, 1945), p. 75.

more than a small percentage of Michigan's labor force.

Within a short period of time . . . many Knights could be found in scattered localities. By April, 1882, Detroit alone, had six assemblies. Six months later there were twelve. The rest of the state did not lag. The Saginaw Valley was the home of many assemblies in July, 1882. A flourishing branch existed in Port Huron in September, 1882 while Bay City had four locals in March of the following year.²⁸

By 1886 the numerical strength of the Knights of Labor in Michigan was as follows:

Detroit District	4,679
East Saginaw District	554
Grand Rapids District	771
Manistee District	452
Bay City District	1,425
Big Rapids District	361
	<u>8,242</u> ²⁹

Several other smaller districts also existed in the state, but the total number of Knights in the state probably never exceeded ten thousand. Most of the members of the Order were employed in industries other than lumbering. Thus, despite the rapid growth of the Knights of Labor, the vast majority of Michigan's sawmill laborers remained untouched by union activities.³⁰

The Knights did, however, breathe new life into the Michigan

²⁸Sidney Glazer, "Labor and Agrarian Movements in Michigan, 1876-1896," (Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Dept. of History, University of Michigan, 1932), p. 42, citing articles from the Unionist (Detroit) April 21, 1882, July 24, 1882, Sept. 18, 1882, Jan. 8, 1883, and March 5, 1883.

²⁹ibid., p. 42, citing the Knights of Labor National Proceedings, 1886. pp. 326-28.

³⁰ibid., p. 42. In 1885 the Knights of Labor had local chapters in only four Michigan sawmill towns: Manistee, Menominee, Bay City and Saginaw.

labor movement. Their contributions to the cause of labor were numerous and significant.

The educational program of the Order, especially the emphasis upon social and economic questions, filled a necessary want. The labor press received its foundations from the various journals of the Order. The organization served as a training school for constructive labor efforts. Of importance also was the widespread distribution of local assemblies in towns too small to be reached by trade unions. Much of the state labor legislation should also be credited to the efforts of the organization. The establishment of the Michigan Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics [forerunner of the State Labor Department] was especially significant.³¹

Eighteen members of the Knights of Labor, including Francis W. Cook, an attorney from Muskegon, and Thomas Barry, a member of the National Executive Board of the Order, from Saginaw, were members of the Michigan state legislature which met in 1885.³² This hard core of laborites was responsible for bringing to the attention of the state's leaders the conditions suffered by the laboring class. In 1885 the Knights forced through the legislature a law legalizing the formation of unions.³³ Later in the same session they convinced the legislature to pass a law making the ten hours a legal day's work in most of the state's industries.³⁴ Unfortunately, both laws were often violated.

These laws and the other activities of the Knights of Labor

³¹Sidney Glazer, "The Michigan Labor Movement," Michigan History Magazine, XXIX (Winter, 1945), p. 76.

³²Glazer, "Labor and Agrarian Movements in Michigan, 1876-1896", p. 65, citing the Detroit Evening News, Sept. 5, 1887, and the Detroit Labor Leaf, Nov. 8, 1884.

³³See Appendix B for the significant sections of that law.

³⁴See Appendix C for the complete text of the law.

did not appreciably alter the status of the state's laborers. Michigan sawmill workers continued to suffer from low and irregularly paid wages, poor working conditions, seasonal employment, and large scale unemployment during slack seasons.

The only real weapons at the disposal of labor were strikes and boycotts. Unfortunately, both were generally opposed by the national leadership of the Knights of Labor. The Grand Master Workman of the Knights, Terrance V. Powderly, felt that strikes injured rather than helped the cause of labor. He advocated strikes only as a last resort to win the recognition of the union.

Strikes were also quite unpopular with the general public. Rioting or striking workers were subject to considerable verbal and social abuse from the "decent" elements in the community who blamed the strikers for the damage which the strike inevitably caused to the town's economy.

Although strikes and boycotts were labor's best weapons, they were weak weapons indeed. Most strikes and boycotts were local affairs, completely lacking organization, planning, and funding. Strikes against individual mills were completely ineffective because the mill owners could usually find a gang of strikebreakers rather easily. Strikes were effective only when all or most of the workers in a community agreed or were coerced into striking, thereby closing down all or most of the mills and preventing them from re-opening. Such strikes required planning, leadership, and funds to maintain the strike until the mill owners were ready to concede to the laborer's demands. Such strikes were rare indeed.

In spite of the hazards and low probability of success, numerous strikes were attempted. Between 1881 and 1886 every major lumber

producing center in the state was affected by at least one major strike or boycott. Nearly all of these strikes were aimed at rectifying one or both of the following grievances: a shorter work day and/or higher wages.

Laborers throughout the state had long sought a reduction in the length of the workday. They had achieved a significant victory in 1885 when the Michigan Ten Hour Law was passed. Nevertheless, the length of the working day remained a problem, because some Michigan millowners continued to operate in excess of ten hours per day, even after the law went into effect.

The matter of wages was also a long standing complaint. Labor leaders insisted that laborers should be permitted to bargain collectively for wages. The mill owners insisted that they should determine wages, since labor was an important factor in the cost of production and that therefore labor rates should be determined by the price of lumber. The wage issue was most commonly heard whenever a decline in the price of lumber had forced the mill owners to reduce wages.

Although the entire state was troubled by labor disorders during the 1880's, four lumber producing areas were especially affected by strikes. These areas, Muskegon (1881-2), AuSable-Oscoda (1884), Saginaw-Bay City (1885), and Menominee (1885) accounted for nearly ninety per cent of the strike activity in the state's lumber industry during the period under consideration. The remainder of this paper will deal with each of these areas in detail, in search of specific causes, important events, common features, and significant effects.

II. MUSKEGON

The Muskegon area, in the days when pine was king, consisted of a series of small communities including the cities and villages of: Muskegon (the largest community), North Muskegon, Lakeside, Bluffton, and Port Sherman, all of which were located on the shores of Muskegon Lake, a small lake about six miles long and one to two miles wide, located on the West coast of Lower Michigan.

The lake constituted the reservoir for the Muskegon River, a stream which flowed through three hundred miles of the best pine forests in Michigan. The lake itself was connected to Lake Michigan by a short channel, but was protected from the Big Lake by a series of sand dunes, making Muskegon Lake an excellent harbor and shipping point.

Every spring hundreds of millions of board feet of pine logs were floated down the river and emptied into the lake which at one time or another was surrounded by between thirty and forty sawmills. The logs were brought downstream by the Muskegon Booming Company, a co-operative enterprize in which most of the larger mill owners had interests. Once in the lake the logs were confined in a large log and chain enclosure called the boom. Throughout the sawing season, logs within the boom were continually sorted as to their proper owners and regularly rafted to the sawmills to which they belonged. Thus, throughout the year, the various sawmills were constantly kept well supplied with logs.

Lumber production was easily Muskegon's leading industry until

the turn of the century. The mills were particularly booming between the years 1881 and 1888 during which period the mills produced more than 630,000,000 board feet annually.¹ In addition to the lumber production, during the same period the mills produced an average of 170,000,000 lath while six shingle mills in the area produced an average of 300,000,000 shingles annually.²

Lumber was definitely big business in the Muskegon area as is indicated by the following Muskegon newspaper article published in 1882, a year in which thirty-five Muskegon mills employed a total of 3,300 men.³

The manufacture of lumber is Muskegon's chief interest. Between \$2,500,000 and \$3,000,000 are invested in sawmills and machiner [sic] here, and at the present value of of [sic] pine lands the owners of the mills have at least five times as much invested in the forests. The mills on the lake are thirty-five in number and their average capital is fully \$200,000 each. The big stretch of country to the north and tributary to the Muskegon River, with its inexhaustible, as it were, supply of timber and the convenience for bringing it down the river from above the sawmills: the facilities for manufacturing and shipping it to market by water and rail communication, make this point as [sic far as] lumbering manufacture [sic is concerned], one of the largest in the world.⁴

The lumber situation in Muskegon was extremely bright when

¹George Woodward Hotchkiss, History of the Lumber and Forest Industry of the Northwest (Chicago: George W. Hotchkiss and Co., 1898), p. 223. The annual pine lumber production, in board feet, for Muskegon mills during the period in question were:

1880	591,201,649	1884	639,952,568	1888	626,588,166
1881	661,845,423	1885	543,409,637	1889	490,912,236
1882	643,780,512	1886	620,334,164	1890	433,960,553
1883	646,263,886	1887	665,449,921		

²Edward B. Dana, "Muskegon Fifty Years Ago," Michigan History Magazine, XVI, (Spring 1932), p. 414.

³Muskegon Weekly Chronicle, January 6, 1882.

⁴Ibid., April 14, 1882.

the season of 1881 began. By April, approximately 725,000,000 board feet of logs floated in the boom, after the largest spring drive in the history of the Muskegon River up to that time.⁵ Several new mills had been constructed since the past season and a number of other mills had recently enlarged their capacity in anticipation of the best lumbering season in the history of Muskegon.

This prosperous situation, however, was not entirely what it appeared. While the Muskegon mill owners were already counting their anticipated profits, the mill employees were in a far less jubilant mood. There was, indeed, a good deal of grumbling, especially among the unskilled laborers, regarding wages, working conditions, and other assorted problems.

The bulk of work in and about the mills required little training. It was rough, hard toil, demanding muscle, bone, and sinew. Wages for common labor ranged from \$1.50 to \$1.75 per day. Skilled workmen, as sawyers, filers, engineers, received more--some filers as high as \$4.50 per day. Pay days came monthly, on the tenth for the previous month's earnings. With forty mills, the booming company and every other branch of the industry observing this monthly pay day, no wonder money flowed freely about town right after distribution of the pay envelopes. Then the long wait for the next pay day sometimes proved to be too bad.⁶

The mills were dirty and foul, wages were poor for unskilled laborers, and the work was hard, long, and dangerous. Even more dangerous was the work on the boom. The "boom" men and "pen" men were the individuals who sorted the logs in the lake boom, rafted

⁵History of Muskegon County, Michigan (Chicago: H. R. Page and Co., 1882), p. 23.

⁶Dana, op. cit., p. 416.

them, and poled them to the individual mill ponds or pens. Almost all of these men were unskilled; their jobs required little intelligence or training; their wages were among the lowest in the industry, and they could individually be replaced easily. On the other hand, they had strength in numbers since there were nearly three hundred of them, and together they controlled the production of the lumber industry, since the various mills could not operate if the logs in the boom were not sorted and delivered properly.

In September of 1881 the "boom" and "pen" men precipitated a minor disorder when they petitioned the Muskegon Booming Company officials for an increase in wages from \$1.75 per day to \$2.00. To this the Booming Company replied affirmatively, since the demand seemed just and there was a huge stock of logs in the boom awaiting rafting to the mills.

At the bottom of the men's petition, below the signatures and apparently added as an afterthought, the boom and pen men asked that they be paid for full time. This meant that they wanted to be paid for all the time they were on the booming grounds, even when they could not work because of foul weather, which had been a severe problem lately. The Booming Company had not considered this addition to be an important aspect of the laborers original proposal and thus had rejected it.⁷

When the men went back to work, they quickly realized that they were not being paid full time for bad weather and walked off the job accusing the Booming Company of bargaining in bad faith.

⁷News and Reporter (Muskegon), October 1, 1881.

The men were not in a good mood. They had not been paid for three weeks; they had been plagued recently by poor weather and a subsequent lack of income; and now blamed the Booming Company for duping them on the full time issue.

When the Booming Company refused to acquiesce to this new request of the laborers, some 260 boom and pen men demanded their past wages and refused to work until their requests were met. The date was September 27, 1881.⁸

The strike of the boom and pen men essentially brought lumber production in the Muskegon area to a halt since the mills could not be supplied with logs and no strikebreakers could be found.

The strike of the boom and pen men could have done serious damage to the Muskegon lumber industry. Booming Company receipts to Charles H. Hackley and Company, one of Muskegon's largest mills, indicate a serious reduction of logs for the week ending October 1, 1881. The Booming Company ordinarily delivered between 400,000 and 500,000 board feet of lumber to that mill during a week and sometimes as much as one million board feet. During the week ending October 1, 1881--only 198,620 board feet were delivered.⁹

Surprisingly, only three days after the strike began, the President of the Muskegon Booming Company, Newcomb McGraft, who was himself among the most influential mill owners in the community, sent the following message to the strikers, essentially acquiescing to their every demand.

⁸News and Reporter (Muskegon), October 1, 1881.

⁹Muskegon Booming Company Receipts to C. H. Hackley and Company for 1881.

To men on Boom:----From the time you go to work I will allow you full time for the hours you are actually on the grounds ready for work, whether you can work or not on account of wind or rain; but if any one goes home for any cause, or is late in the morning or noon, we will pay him for the time he puts in on the ground, and if we "knock-off" the men on account of wind or rain, we will pay full time. All can go to work who wish, until we have men enough.

Muskegon Booming Company
N. McGraft, Pres't.
J. D. Fillmer, Sec. and Supt.¹⁰

Even the workers' demand that they be paid for the time during which they had been on strike was agreed to by the Booming Company. McGraft and the other millowners, who were hardly generous men, apparently realized full well that there was still a large stock of logs in the lake, and only a full time effort for the remainder of the season could clear the boom in preparation for the next year's log crop which was also expected to reach record proportions.

The Booming Company lost nothing from these negotiations. It merely increased its charges for booming and rafting logs by fifty per cent.¹¹

The boom and pen men went back to work on the afternoon of October 1, but the strike was not over. It had, in fact, just begun. The boom strike was only the spark that ignited the real strike. It brought to the surface the other widely held complaints of labor,

¹⁰Muskegon Daily Chronicle, September 30, 1881.

¹¹Muskegon Booming Company Receipts to C. H. Hackley and Company for 1881 and 1882. Cost of booming and rafting logs to Hackley and Hume and Charles H. Hackley and Company increased from 40¢ per thousand board feet in 1881 to 60¢ per thousand board feet in 1882.

particularly regarding the hours of labor per day.¹²

The major issue in this lumber strike, which was to last intermittently until the end of May, 1882, was not wages, or working conditions, but rather the ten hour day--a goal which was only a dream for most American workingmen at that time.

Working conditions were not the best--but new labor saving devices had been recently introduced in most mills.

Employees in the Muskegon lumber industry were generally well paid for that time, considering that most of their jobs were unskilled. Employees of the Booming Company averaged \$2.00 per day, while workers in various mills averaged \$1.50 per day, both figures somewhat above the average for comparable work elsewhere.¹³

Why was the ten hour day such an important issue? The following quotation from the Chicago Tribune should answer that question!

The lumbermen of this city Muskegon are now affected with a series of labor troubles which are growing in magnitude every day. For some months past laborers have been scarce and some of the mill men were compelled to import some German immigrants from Castle Garden to work in the mills. When these men came, as has already been given in the Tribune, they did not like their jobs, and would not work the hours required of them. All of the mills here work their men eleven and a half hours, and these German citizens would work only ten. They quit work, were arrested, law suits followed, but the mill men got no satisfaction.¹⁴

¹²Muskegon Daily Chronicle, October 1, 1881.

¹³"Strikes and Lockouts", op. cit., pp. 260-263; Muskegon Daily Chronicle, April 14, 1884.

¹⁴Muskegon Daily Chronicle, citation from Chicago Tribune, unknown date, October 7, 1881.

With this foreign impetus, strike fever began spreading among the unskilled mill workers in town. On October 1, a group of mill employees, apparently noting the rapid victory of the boom and pen men issued a call for joint labor action throughout the Muskegon area against alleged management wrongs. Circulars such as the following were widely distributed throughout the community.

You are invited to meet your fellow workmen at the liberty pole on Western Avenue, at 2 o'clock p.m. October second, 1881 to take measures to adopt the legal hours of labor in this vicinity. Good speakers in attendance. By order of Committee.¹⁵

The desire for a reduction in the number of hours per work day must have been a widespread grievance, because an estimated 3,000 people met at the appointed place (Western Avenue at First Street).

The meeting was called to order by Col. Nelson DeLong, Prosecuting Attorney for the County of Muskegon, a leading citizen of the community who had labor sympathies and political aspirations.¹⁶

¹⁵Muskegon Daily Chronicle, October 1, 1881.

¹⁶Portrait and Biographical Record of Muskegon and Ottawa Counties, Michigan, (Chicago: Biographical Publishing Company, 1893), pp. 141-2. DeLong was an excellent orator, and generally accepted as the "ablest jury lawyer in Central and Western Michigan". During his career he reportedly won a larger number of cases than any other attorney in that part of the state. DeLong was often referred to by the press and others as Col. DeLong, a title which was hardly genuine. He acquired the title in the following manner, according to the Muskegon Observer, February 19, 1928, p. 67.

"He was a good speaker and in 1876, 1878, and 1880 stumped Muskegon County and parts of Western Michigan for the Republican Party. It was when he addressed a Newago County audience during this period that he won the title of "Colonel" which stuck with him during life. DeLong was a large, fine appearing man, and when an enthusiastic chairman introduced him as 'that distinguished Civil War soldier, Colonel Nelson DeLong of Muskegon', the audience readily accepted him as a genuine colonel." This does not say a great deal for the voters of Newago County, since DeLong was only 17 years old when the Civil War ended.

He and his legal colleague, F. W. Cook, dominated the day's activities and played major roles throughout the duration of the strike.¹⁷

Because of their connection with the strike, it was suggested, by millowners and others, that DeLong and Cook had instigated and directed the strike from the beginning, charges which were never proven. The charges were probably false, since most such strikes in the lumber industry were sporadic, disorganized affairs, begun by accident, rather than planned. DeLong and Cook supported the strike from the beginning, but publicly protested that they supported it only in philosophy. Eventually, however, both of them became extremely active in the labor movement, guiding its ultimate destiny. Whether or not they actually

¹⁷Michigan Historical Commission, Michigan Biographies, Vol. I (Lansing, 1924), p. 34. Morning News (Muskegon), Souvenir Edition, 1892, p. 11. Portrait and Biographical Record of Muskegon and Ottawa Counties, Michigan, op. cit., pp. 141-2.

Nelson DeLong and Francis Cook were both able young lawyers.

Cook was born October 30, 1848 in Chemung, New York. He came to Michigan in 1855 and studied law in the office of John Q. Patterson, an attorney in Ovid, Michigan. (A small town in Clinton County.)

In 1870, shortly after being admitted to the bar, he came to Muskegon to practice his profession, and shortly thereafter entered politics. Politically, he was a Greenback Democrat. In 1872 he was elected Justice of the Peace. Later he ran for the positions of Circuit Court Commissioner and Prosecuting Attorney, but lost. In 1877 he was appointed city attorney, a post he had resigned by 1881.

A native of Michigan Nelson DeLong was born in Essex, Clinton County, in November of 1848, studied his law at the University of Michigan from which he graduated in 1871. He began practice in Maple Rapids, Michigan, where he was elected Justice of the Peace and Circuit Court Commissioner. He came to Muskegon in 1873, where he soon entered into a law partnership with Joab Baker, which lasted until 1875.

In 1876 he was elected Prosecuting Attorney. He was re-elected to that position in 1880. In 1881, while still Prosecuting Attorney he formed a partnership, DeLong, Fellows & Fellows, with William and Eugene Fellows. In his early political days he was a Republican, but after involvement in the labor troubles of Muskegon aligned himself with the Democratic Party.

did help precipitate the strike, DeLong and Cook certainly did know what they were doing in supporting the strike, and they similarly knew how to take advantage of a politically charged situation.

DeLong's and Cook's motives in supporting the laborers are unclear. Some, including the millowners, the Booming Company Officials and the local newspapers, contended that they merely wanted to win labor support to advance their own political careers.¹⁸ There may be truth to this since both ran for office later with the support of the workingmen's union. DeLong later became mayor and Cook state representative. A particularly vehement proponent of this theory, the [Muskegon] News and Reporter, printed the following.

"The Cook-DeLong-Bill Jones Ticket: It is the greatest farce of the season to see this trio endeavoring to marshal the boys under their banner on the pretense that it is a laboring man's battle when it in reality is a selfish combination of Greenback Demagogues and other sore heads who have been hooted out of every other organization and are trying to make tools of the workingmen.¹⁹

Another charge, with no foundation at all, was that Cook and DeLong were being financially supported by lumber producers elsewhere in the state, with the intention of halting production in Muskegon so as to increase the price of lumber in Chicago.

The . . . leaders, . . . are charged with making money out of the strike furnished by emissaries of the eleven hour mills running on this shore and in the Saginaws. What foundation there is for these rumors cannot be fully established at this time. Millowners elsewhere are profiting by the strike, and misfortunes of Muskegon and receiving from two to four dollars more per thousand for lumber in consequence.²⁰

¹⁸News and Reporter (Muskegon), March 20, 1882.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰News and Reporter (Muskegon), May 17, 1882.

DeLong and Cook contended that they were true friends of labor, deeply desirous of improving the working conditions and wages of labor. There is probably much truth to this. After the strike both men remained popular public figures and continued to work for the betterment of the laboring classes. One of their literary supporters wrote of them in the following light:

"Many businessmen backed DeLong and the movement that he and Cook now typified had the sympathy of many saw mill men who were tied up in alliance with their business associates who so largely believed in the old fashioned work day idea as a matter of course as well as a source of profit.

While the DeLong and Cook administrations were criticized severely and good folks of the conforming mentality readily accepted the theory that they were dangerous demagogues, as a fact viewed as a whole and measuring their achievements, Muskegon has reason to be grateful to them for their sincerity in supporting the workingmen's movement at that time cannot be disputed. There was no big reward in sight for them. The fact that at the polls, notwithstanding heroic efforts on the part of the conservatives, their platform was so overwhelmingly endorsed, even after it was known that the opposition candidate was sympathetic toward the² ten-hour movement shows that they expressed public opinion in their campaign utterances. . . ." "Cook and DeLong were not demagogic radicals. They never preached anarchy or even socialism in any phase. In fact they were moderate men politically."²¹

At the October first meeting, DeLong and Cook proposed that the gathering adopt a petition already prepared by a committee of workmen that demanded a ten hour workday for all employees in the lumber industry. The petition stated the following and was accepted by the entire crowd with only one dissenting voice.

We, the laboring men of the city of Muskegon and vicinity, respectfully represent that the men employed in the several saw and shingle mills in the vicinity are compelled to labor eleven and one-half hours each day and that, in consequence thereof, they have no time for recreation or mental development.

²¹Muskegon Observer, op. cit., p. 67.

And, believing that a well ordered society and stable government demand that the laboring classes have sufficient time per day, exempted from toil for recreation and mental improvement, therefore:

We the laboring men of this vicinity, in mass meeting assembled, on Sunday the 2nd day of October, 1881, petition the mill owners of this vicinity, in view of the foregoing facts, to reduce the number of hours of labor in such mills, so that the employees will not be compelled to labor more than ten hours each day, believing that the men laboring in such mills can perform as much labor in ten hours each day as they can by laboring eleven and one-half hours.

We further petition you to cause such change to commence on the 10th day of October, instant.²²

Although the mill employees went back to work the next day, strike fever was increasing rapidly.

The mill owners were far from united on the issue of hours. Several of the mill owners had for some time favored the ten hour plan, but the vast majority would have sooner suspended operation for the rest of the season rather than submit to the demands of labor.²³ Since a few mills could not operate when all other operations were shut down, the majority will prevailed and labor's demands were rejected. Most of the mill owners had contracts which had to be filled before the end of the season, so from their point of view, a reduction in the work day would result in breach of contract.²⁴ Also, most of the

²²Muskegon Daily Chronicle, October 3, 1881. The petition was signed by James Griffen (Chairman of the committee on drafting the petition), John Fitzgerald, Henry Whitesal, Donald McRea, and Albert Dellabon. Both Griffen and Fitzgerald apparently worked for Hackley and Hume as of payday, September 9, 1881 but were not working there by the next payday, October 8, 1881. Hackley and Hume Record Book, pp. 559, 567.

²³Muskegon Daily Chronicle, October 4, 1881.

²⁴Dana, op. cit., p. 415.

employers felt that an important labor-management principle was at stake. If they were to agree to the ten hour demands, this might encourage the laborers to demand more concessions in the future, such as better wages, improved working conditions, and the right to join a national union.

The workmen, on the other hand, felt that eleven and one-half hours per day was entirely too much to expect from men, especially under the harsh and dangerous conditions present in the mills. They felt that they could turn out as much lumber in ten hours as they had previously been able to accomplish in eleven or twelve. (This was a minor blunder on the part of labor, since this was a virtual admission that they were not working to capacity under the old system.)

When the laborer's demands were rejected, their leaders called another mass meeting for Sunday, October 9, at the liberty pole on Western Avenue. So great was the crowd, approximately 4000 persons were present, that the assembly had to adjourn to nearby Mason's Park where there was more room.

The crowd was in a good mood for action. It was the day after payday, which meant that many in the crowd were financially lubricated and over confident. They felt able to sustain at least a short strike. The past week, too, had been filled with charges, and counter charges, name calling, and ugly threats flying between leaders of the two camps. At the meeting, both DeLong and Cook were in a bitter mood. The two exhorted and encouraged the men to organize a union and demand their rights as working men.²⁵ Officers for the union were elected, but they

²⁵Muskegon Daily Chronicle, October 10, 1881.

were mere puppets; the real leaders of the strike were undoubtedly DeLong and Cook.²⁶

DeLong's union was essentially a non-skilled laborer's union. By October 12, 1200 dues-paying members had been enrolled.²⁷ A second smaller union for skilled men, sawyers, edgers, and filers was also organized. This union, called the Sawyers Union, was headed by John Hannaway as Secretary and had an initial enrollment of seventy-five men. Their prime objective was to prevent scabs from taking the jobs of striking sawyers.²⁸

DeLong's speech that day was particularly bitter. Apparently he had recently been accused of fomenting strike talk by a mill owner from North Muskegon, because his speech was most antagonistic. He said to the workers assembled:

If you insist, you will receive ten hours--and the mill men will receive saw dust and be able to fill their contracts. A little fellow across the lake, who has accumulated about \$3,000 says that Brother Cook and I ought to be arrested. If we are arrested, he will find that we will stay right with him. They say we are, "pretty fellows" to talk about reducing labor. We have just as much right to talk about it as they. We know that 10 hours a day is enough. A man who works 11½ hours is not half a man. When men talk about not being able to fill contracts, they state that which is not true. Why must mills run longer than any other manufactories? Let them shut their mills down, they will become tired of that in two or three days. A certain mill owner says "I will make one hundred and fifty thousand dollars clear this year." Do you think he will shut down his mill? (Cries "No, no.") At 10 hours a day he will still be able to make \$600 per

²⁶ ibid. The following officers were elected. President: Isaac R. Hinds; Secretary: James Griffen; Committee on Permanent Organization: Cornelius Quinlan, Michael Hogan, and George Johnston.

²⁷ Muskegon Daily Chronicle, October 11, 1881.

²⁸ Muskegon Daily Chronicle, October 12, 1881.

day clear. He would rather have \$600 than nothing. I did say I would not be among you if this was a strike--but I don't care now whether it is a strike or not.²⁹

F. W. Cook also commanded the stage that day and among other things, proposed the following resolutions which were heartily accepted by the crowd.

Whereas, We, the laboring men of Muskegon and vicinity, hold the justice and truth of principle in a Republican government that merit makes the man, and we firmly believe that industry, sobriety, and proper regard for the welfare of our fellow men form the basis upon which that principle rests; we, therefore, recognize no rule of action or principle that would elevate wealth or position above the working man. And, while we are willing to accord to wealth all its rights, we believe that material and social happiness--is equally entitled to protection in its rights.

We believe that the hours of labor should be so regulated either by law or custom as to permit [sic] the laboring man to enjoy a reasonable time each day for rest, social enjoyment with his family or friends, and mental improvement and that any system of hiring which deprives men of these privileges is dangerous to the well-being of society, and injurious to the man, rendering him little better than a slave to the dictates of capital.

We believe that ten hours per day is all that any man should labor.

Resolved. By the laboring men here this day assembled that we will not for any compensations or under any circumstances, labor in our respective vocations more than ten hours per day, and that number of hours will henceforth constitute a day's work.

Resolved. That our respective employers be at once respectively, but firmly, notified accordingly.³⁰

A strike vote was subsequently taken and was overwhelmingly approved by the assembly. The largest strike in the history of Muskegon County, prior to that time, had begun. The majority of mill employees in the area seemed to be wholeheartedly behind the strike movement. The United States Bureau of Labor reported that 1,200 out

²⁹ibid., October 10, 1881.

³⁰ibid.

of 2,140 sawmill employees in the Muskegon area actually struck, but both of these figures seem to be gross under-estimates.³¹ The Muskegon Daily Chronicle, for example, estimated that the strike put about 6,000 men out of work, including sawmill employees, boom and pen men, and workers in other industries dependent upon the mills.³² The Chronicle similarly estimated the number of strikers at "several thousands."³³

The strikers were generally unskilled laborers, who were at the bottom of the salary ladder. The United States Bureau of Labor estimated that the average wages of strikers amounted to only about \$1.50 per day, while the average daily wages of all sawmill employees in the Muskegon area at that time was approximately \$1.75 per day.³⁴

A large share of the strikers were foreigners. This group was generally among the lowest paid in any industry, because they were newcomers, had no skills, and could generally neither read nor write. They could also be easily manipulated by labor leaders. The largest foreign element in the Muskegon mills at that time were the French Canadians, who constituted such a significant group that strike meetings were generally held in both English and French for their benefit.³⁵

³¹"Strikes and Lockouts", op. cit., pp. 256-259.

³²Muskegon Daily Chronicle, October 10, 1881. This figure is probably somewhat high.

³³ibid., October 13, 1881.

³⁴"Strikes and Lockouts", op. cit., pp. 256-259.

³⁵Muskegon Daily Chronicle, October 12, 1881.

Although a large minority of the laborers were not actively engaged in the strike, they generally respected the strikers' right to organize and refused to go back to work until a settlement was reached. Although a few employees disregarded the strike entirely and continued to work, most of these were employed in mills in Lakeside and North Muskegon, on the West and North shores, respectively, of Muskegon Lake, far enough away to be less affected by actions in the city of Muskegon.

On Monday, October 10, the Lakeside mills were forced to halt by a large number of strikers, led by DeLong and Cook, which visited the area.

At nine o'clock this morning, all the laborers, numbering a good many thousands, congregated at Mason's Park and were briefly addressed by F. W. Cook, Nelson DeLong and others. The whole body then formed into a procession, headed by Hohenstein's band, and proceeded to Lakeside, where it was understood a mill was running.

.....

This forenoon a number of the mills that had not suspended operation were visited, and the laborers quietly stopped work. There as [sic] no acts of violence except in one mill where some of the boys indulged in a little pugilistic exercise, but no serious results followed.³⁶

On Wednesday, October 12, the last remaining North Muskegon mill was similarly closed, but not without a degree of violence. The county sheriff tried to control the strikers, but was roughed up instead. Although the strikers succeeded in closing the mill, they also succeeded in turning the law against them. The sheriff arrested several of the strikers and called in the state militia to

³⁶ibid., October 13, 1881.

handle any further outbursts.³⁷ DeLong and others, thereafter, cautioned the men against using force to prevent anyone from working, since such action violated Michigan statute law.³⁸ By this time of course, the mills were all closed and nothing could be lost now. (DeLong had apparently ignored the law when he led the gang that stopped the Lakeside mills from operating.)

Meanwhile, the efforts of a commission of strikers appointed

³⁷Ibid., October 14, and 17, 1881; News and Reporter (Muskegon), October 15, 1881. Secretary of the Union, John Hannaway and strikers Nathaniel Shaw, Thomas Dixon, and Thomas Hannaway were arrested on October 15 on charges of resisting an officer. Four companies of state militia, one each from Grand Haven, Kalamazoo, Lansing, and Big Rapids, totaling 200 men arrived on October 14, despite the fact that Prosecuting Attorney DeLong had countermanded the Sheriff's request for troops.

³⁸Muskegon Daily Chronicle, October 31, 1881. The text of the statute in question forbade interference with a laborer's right to labor under any circumstances. It is reproduced, in part, below:

Act 163 (1867)

Section 1. The People of the State of Michigan enact, That if any person or persons shall, by threats, intimidations, or other wise, and without authority of the law, interfere with, or in any way molest or disturb, without such authority, any mechanic or other laborer in the quiet and peaceful pursuit of his lawful avocation, such person or persons shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and, on conviction by a court of competent jurisdiction, shall be severally punished by fine of not less than ten dollars nor more than one hundred dollars, or by imprisonment in the county jail where the offense shall have been committed, not less than one month nor more than one year, or by both fine and imprisonment, in the discretion of the court; but if such punishment by fine, the offender shall be imprisoned in such jail until the same be paid, not exceeding ninety days.

Source: Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III (1885-6), (Lansing: Thorp and Godfrey, State Printers and Binders, 1886), p. 132.

by the Union to confer with the mill owners had been unsuccessful.³⁹ Neither side was willing to move from its original position.

By October 15, the brunt of the strike was broken by dissention among the strikers. Most of the strikers were peaceful, law abiding men who would not condone violence.

The great majority of those who acquiesced in the strike at first, have become thoroughly disgusted with the conduct of those who have assumed to act as leaders, and who have permitted, or at least countenanced the stopping of mills by force, the threatening and intimidating of men who want to work, the resisting of the Sheriff when in the performance of his duty, and other illegal acts which rendered it necessary to call upon the militia of the state for protection of our citizens in the rights guaranteed therein by the constitution and the laws.⁴⁰

Beyond this all of the strikers were unaccustomed to the ways of organization. They had no real unity, other than the fact that they were sawmill workers, but rather were employed by different sawmills, accustomed to competition with one another. Some of the leaders among the strikers had been jailed and Cook and DeLong were outsiders who had no great loyalty among the men.

Bank rolls were running low and the workers needed food for themselves and their families, since no provisions had been made for a strike fund. It is estimated that the strike cost the employees more than \$46,000 in lost wages,⁴¹ although some estimates ran as high as

³⁹Muskegon Daily Chronicle, October 12, 1881. Members of the committee were Thomas Keating, Fred Seamer, Fred Meyers, and Cornelius Quinlan.

⁴⁰Muskegon Daily Chronicle, October 15, 1881.

⁴¹"Strikes and Lockouts", op. cit., pp. 256-59.

\$150,000.⁴²

In addition, the strike did not hurt the mill owners as much as was desired. The season was near an end, most of the lumber had been sawed. Although the Boom was closed and most mills were not cutting, the mills continued to load lumber and transport it from Muskegon--thus fulfilling their lumber contracts.

Thus most of the mill owners were in a good position to refuse to deal with the strikers. Although a few of the mill owners were forced to concede to the strikers because they had lumber contracts to fulfill, and a few mills actually began operating under the ten hour plan, the obstinate large mill owners, who could afford to wait out any strike, refused to be moved.⁴³ They established an organization of their own to form a united front against the strikers and to prevent any of the lesser mill owners from giving in to the demands of the strikers. The following passages from the Muskegon Daily Chronicle indicate the activities of the mill owners:

A meeting of mill owners was held yesterday afternoon at the office of the Booming Company. Most of the mills on the lake were represented. Mayor Davis was appointed chairman and remarks were made by a number of representative men. . . . It was the unanimous conviction that the demands made by the strikers could not be granted. It was authoritatively stated that the great majority of the laborers were perfectly willing to work eleven hours, and that they were deterred from resuming work only by fear of causing disturbances. A resolution was adopted requesting the authorities to protect the men who were willing to work. It was claimed by some of the mill men that there had been an implied contract between themselves and the hands to

⁴²Muskegon Weekly Chronicle, May 5, 1882, quoting from the Grand Rapids Eagle.

⁴³Muskegon Daily Chronicle, October 11, 1881.

work the amount of time the hands had been working, as it was on this basis that the high wages had been fixed. The gentlemen present stated that they would keep the mills closed rather than start them at ten hours.⁴⁴

Saturday evening the mill owners met at the Boom Co. office and perfected a permanent organization with the following officers:

President	N. McGraft
Secretary	A. S. Montgomery
Treasurer	H. H. Getty

Most of the mill men stated that their mills would run 11½ hours or not at all, while others appeared content with eleven hours, and said that a sufficient force of men had promised them to work 11 hours per day to enable them to run their mills.

The Committee appointed to draft a constitution and by-laws made their report. The following preamble was annexed to the by-laws: The undersigned manufacturers and mill owners of Muskegon County, for the purpose of entering into an association, the object of which shall be the due and proper enforcement of the laws, the protection of property, and the general peace and welfare of the community in which we live, do hereby agree and adopt a series of articles to govern our association.

The constitution and by-laws were signed by all the mill owners and manufacturers present, numbering some 38 firms.⁴⁵

But the sawing season was nearing its end and hundreds, possibly thousands, of men were already heading for the woods to ensure getting logging jobs for the winter.⁴⁶ There were still approximately 200,000,000 board feet of lumber in the boom--which had to be cleaned to make way for the next year's crop of logs.⁴⁷

⁴⁴Muskegon Daily Chronicle, October 15, 1881.

⁴⁵Muskegon Daily Chronicle, October 17, 1881.

⁴⁶Muskegon Daily Chronicle, October 20, 1881.

⁴⁷History of Muskegon County, Michigan, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

With the strikers breaking up, mill owners attempted to bargain with their individual crews. Finally, one or two mills, desirous of finishing the season and realizing that labor was in short supply, agreed to operate under the ten hour system and others followed suit. One deducted ten per cent of the wages; the other paid the regular pre-strike rates.⁴⁸ Some mill owners attempted to run on the eleven hour system, but were unable to acquire the full crews and could not run efficiently.

By the twentieth of October, the strike was essentially ended, and most of the mills were buzzing again.⁴⁹ For the remainder of the season only twenty-three mills operated, sixteen on the ten hour plan, seven at eleven hours (with small crews).⁵⁰ The rest shut down for the season.

Even though the strike was settled and a late winter permitted the mills to run later than usual, the mills were unable to clear the boom of logs; only 640,089,429 board feet of logs were sawed.⁵¹ Although approximately 170,000,000 board feet of logs were left in

⁴⁸ Muskegon Daily Chronicle, October 21, 1881. The two mills running on the ten hour system were Brown, Nelson and Co. and Eldred and Co.

⁴⁹ Muskegon Daily Chronicle, October 20, 1881.

⁵⁰ Muskegon Daily Chronicle, October 25, 1881.

⁵¹ History of Muskegon County, Michigan, op. cit., p. 23.

the boom that winter,⁵² most of the larger mills were not seriously hurt by the strike, since they were already overstocked with lumber. Charles H. Hackley & Co., for example, had manufactured 14,539,390 board feet of lumber that season but still had 2,687,080 board feet crowding its docks awaiting shipment.⁵³

The winter months showed no progress and by spring the situation had not been resolved, except that the number of mills had expanded to 36, and some had been enlarged so the cutting capacity of the mills around Muskegon Lake had increased by fifteen per cent. Some of the mill owners were planning on running ten hour days, while others were determined to run eleven hours or more. There was no uniformity of operation planned.

But the winter months were not idle months for the labor organizers of Muskegon. While most of the men were working in the woods, DeLong, Cook, et al. were preparing for the spring when they hoped to make the ten hour day a reality.

Since the mill owners were strongly entrenched and usually could call upon the law to support them, the labor organizers felt that the

⁵²Muskegon Weekly Chronicle, January 6, 1882, and April 21, 1882. History of Muskegon County, Michigan, op. cit., p. 23. No estimate of the amount of logs in the boom is available. However, the Booming Company claimed that twenty-five per cent of the season's stock of logs was left in the boom. This estimate seems to have validity. Several sources estimated the amount of logs in the river and boom in the Spring of 1881 at 725,000,000 board feet. The Booming Company claimed that in 1881 it handled 550,095,020 board feet. The difference between these two figures is 174,904,970.

⁵³Hackley and Hume Record Book, citation of December 31, 1881. The owners of the firm Charles H. Hackley, Porter Hackley, and Thomas Hume earned profits of \$144,835.35.

best way to overcome these advantages was through politics.

In early March as laborers were beginning to return to Muskegon from the woods, DeLong announced his candidacy for Mayor of Muskegon.⁵⁴

He, Cook and other labor and political leaders invited the famous Detroit labor organizer Richard Travelick to Muskegon to stir up public support for their cause. The pro-management (Muskegon) News and Reporter reported Travelick's visit as follows:

Travelick, Cook, and DeLong orated to the laboring men Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday--having a large audience at each meeting. Travelick is one of the most polished and entertaining speakers on the labor question in the country. For seventeen years or more he held and advocated the same views he does now--only he became convinced that since his assistance of the eight hour movement, here, an eight hour law is not practicable and cannot be enforced and custom alone will make ten hours or less a days work. He opposed in the strongest terms possible the idea of men being obliged to work eleven or more hours. He promised to come back just before election to become the laboringmen's Moses in leading them safely across the political sea at the charter election with DeLong for Mayor and Cook chief advisor. . . .⁵⁵

Behind Cook and DeLong with the aid of Travelick, the workingmen's union became a political party whose goal was to seek the ten hour day. They combined with the local Greenback organization, headed by William Jones, and nominated a complete slate of laborers and labor sympathizers for municipal office in Muskegon from Mayor down to Constable.⁵⁶ Their intention was to use these offices to support a strike attempt.

⁵⁴News and Reporter (Muskegon), March 11, 1882.

⁵⁵News and Reporter (Muskegon), March 15, 1882.

⁵⁶News and Reporter (Muskegon), March 22, 1882.

The Democrat and Republican party organizations combined their efforts in this election in order to keep DeLong and the workingmen from winning the election. They organized a Citizen's Ticket, supported by the leading mill owners and businessmen, headed by one Loftus Keating for Mayor.

The cards seemed stacked against the workingmen. They lacked funds, they lacked political organization, and most of the leading citizens opposed them. Their opponents had the advantage of two political organizations, and one of the town's two leading newspapers, the News and Reporter, supported the Citizen's Party. While the Chronicle remained neutral, the News and Reporter was extremely vocal in its opposition to DeLong.

There is a very general desire on the part of the taxpayers of the city, that the men chosen as officers next Monday shall be men whose honesty and integrity are above question; men who have property interests here and wish the city prosperity. There are many men in both political parties who possess these requirements. . . .

The turning of the laboring men's organization into a political machine by Cook and DeLong for the advancement of their scheme is exceptional and a large number of prominent men of both parties favored a Citizen's ticket elected by leading Republicans and Democrats, thereby gaining the best results possible. The details have already been given, and the News-Reporter extends to the ticket from L. N. Keating down to the constables a heavy support. Taking the whole ticket, city and ward, better men never were represented to the voters. The harmonious action of the convention composed alike of Republicans and Democrats ought to insure its success. The News-Reporter stands steadfast for the principles of the Democratic party but when the best interests of the public and the party both demand the defeat of one man who has "captured" the nomination at the hands of the so-called laboringman's convention--a convention packed with men chosen by Cook, Jones, and DeLong i.e. substitutes in place of the delegates originally chosen by the caucuses of the laboring men. For this reason alone, if there were no others, every man should labor to defeat the aspirations of this law firm. In municipal affairs where the interests involved are merely local, the object to be held in view in electing officials is the fitness of the man for the work of the office, and personal honesty. If a man possesses the requisite fitness in these respects, he is the man to be chosen.⁵⁷

⁵⁷News and Reporter (Muskegon), April 1, 1882.

The election was held on Monday, the third of April. The newly elected workingman's party was nearly completely victorious. DeLong defeated Keating by a landslide margin of 1562 votes to 592.⁵⁸ In addition to the Mayor's position won by DeLong, the party won such other offices as City Treasurer, Recorder, Constable, and two Justices of the Peace. The chief plank in the party platform advocated the adoption of the ten hour laboring system by all lumber mills in town.⁵⁹ The local newspaper paid the following tribute to this victory:

The workmen were exceedingly well organized, remained in large numbers at the polls, and worked like beavers to elect every man. . . .

Never in the history of the city was there an election in which the ticket was carried by such majorities.⁶⁰

It should be pointed out that this Muskegon victory was by no means isolated. The Democratic party supported by laborers was winning local elections throughout the nation.⁶¹

The leaders of the workers, whose object was to force the concession of a uniform ten hour day by halting the production of lumber, realized that the easiest way to bring this about was to halt the operations of the Muskegon Booming Company. The Booming Company supplied all of the thirty-six mills on the Muskegon Lake and by striking it, production at all mills would grind to a halt.

⁵⁸News and Reporter (Muskegon), April 15, 1882.

⁵⁹Muskegon Weekly Chronicle, April 7, 1882.

⁶⁰Muskegon Daily Chronicle, April 6, 1882.

⁶¹News and Reporter (Muskegon), April 8, 1882. Democrats, often labor supported, won local elections in practically every city in Michigan. In Cincinnati and Milwaukee local elections, workingmen's parties, supported by the Democratic Party, won.

The Muskegon Booming Company had been operating for two weeks--on the eleven hour system.⁶² The boom men and pen men who had struck in the Fall were willing to try again. The Booming Company had given in quickly then, why not try again?

On the morning of April 6, the day of the city elections, a large force of men marched on the Booming Company, according to the Muskegon Weekly Chronicle.

This morning [April 6] a large force of men went down to the Booming Co. grounds for the purpose of beginning their season's work. They inquired as to the number of hours per day they would be required to labor, and were informed that the intention was to operate eleven hours per day as usual. To this the workmen demurred, refusing to labor any longer than ten hours per day. As their requests were not granted the men fell into line and marched up town, about 200 strong, and then quietly dispersed.⁶³

Many of these men had just returned from the woods and were probably in good financial shape since it was then the custom to pay off lumberjacks in one lump sum, at the end of the logging season. Within a few days most lumber mills in Muskegon had either been struck or forced to cease operations for lack of logs.⁶⁴

Unwilling to concede anything to the strikers, the mill owners and Booming Company officials sat back hoping to out-wait the strikers. They apparently anticipated a long strike, according to a letter from Charles H. Hackley to one of his customers: "It is very uncertain now

⁶²Muskegon Weekly Chronicle, April 7, 1882.

⁶³Muskegon Weekly Chronicle, April 7, 1882.

⁶⁴News and Reporter (Muskegon), April 12, 1882. Nine mills remained open for the next two weeks, but were eventually forced to close also.

how long we will run or how much lumber we will cut this season and we prefer not to make any contracts for green lumber until we get started, and know what we can do."⁶⁵

Although lumber production had ceased, most mills had large stockpiles of sawed lumber to be shipped.⁶⁶ Despite the fact that some of stevedores struck, loading and shipping continued throughout the course of the strike.⁶⁷ During the first week of the strike, April 2 to April 8, 15,150,000 board feet of lumber was shipped from the port of Muskegon.⁶⁸ The mills continued shipping for several reasons:

- 1) They had an oversupply of sawed lumber on their docks, that might be in danger of fire if the strike got out of hand.
- 2) The mills had contracts with firms in Chicago, Michigan City, and elsewhere which must be fulfilled if at all possible.
- 3) Most large firms owned one or more lumber schooners which they could not afford to lay up for any length of time.

By April 10, almost all activity connected with the lumber industry in Muskegon had ceased. Three thousand men were refusing to work, 675 of them employees of the Booming Company, 2300 of them

⁶⁵Charles H. Hackley & Co. to A. R. Colburn and Co., Michigan City, Ind., April 7, 1882.

⁶⁶Charles H. Hackley & Co. Record Journal, citation for December 31, 1881. Charles H. Hackley & Co. alone had 2,687,080 board feet of lumber on its docks.

⁶⁷Hackley and Hume to George G. Houghton & Co., Milwaukee, Wisconsin, April 15, May 1, and May 4, 1882.

⁶⁸Muskegon Weekly Chronicle, April 14, 1882.

employees of Muskegon's thirty-six saw mills.⁶⁹ More than two thousand of these, according to local authorities and the United States Bureau of Labor were actively involved in strike efforts.⁷⁰

The employees were in a relatively good position. Many of them had money left from their winter employment, they were organized, they had able, dedicated leaders, the political power structure of the City of Muskegon favored them, and the strike seemed to be popular in the eyes of most townspeople. In addition, the strikers received funds donated by labor unions in Chicago and Detroit.⁷¹

On the other hand the Booming Company was also in a strong position, since they were established, were supported by plenty of money, and had obtained, from various mill owners and lumber contractors in Muskegon, documents absolving the Booming Company of all liability for logs in the river and boom.⁷²

A ten hour day was simply not feasible from the viewpoint of the Booming Company officials. The Booming Company was accustomed to operating almost from sun up to sun set (from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 or 7:00 p.m.) with an hour off for lunch. Since booming and rafting could be accomplished only during daylight hours, and since some days were shortened by rain or rough water, the company officials felt that they needed full daylight hours in order to service the numerous mills with

⁶⁹"Strikes and Lockouts", op. cit., pp. 260-263.

⁷⁰ibid.

⁷¹News and Reporter (Muskegon), May 6, 1882; Muskegon Weekly Chronicle, April 14, 1882.

⁷²Muskegon Weekly Chronicle, April 14, 1882.

logs. They pointed out that in late September and October, the boom could operate only ten hours or less because of darkness, and therefore felt obliged to ask the men to work eleven hours or more when daylight permitted.

Most of the mill owners also felt that a ten hour day was out of the question, since they believed it would drastically cut down production and profits.

The position of the laborers was that eleven hours work per day was too much to expect from a man. They further contended that if the mills and the Booming Company reduced their work day to ten hours, the Booming Company would have no difficulty in supplying them.

Negotiations did not begin in earnest until Saturday, April 15, ten days after the strike had begun. On that day, the negotiating committee of the boom men sent the following formal proposal to their employers:

At the meeting held in Riffenburg's Hall this p.m., by the men heretofore engaged on the works of the Muskegon Booming Company, the undersigned were duly appointed a committee to confer with the proper authorities of said company and endeavor to bring about a solution of the present labor difficulties, and were authorized to submit the following.

First. The men belonging to the union are willing to commence work Monday next.

Second. Ten hours labor shall constitute a day's work and the wages shall be \$2.00 per day for common work and full time allowed and one hour for nooning.

Third. No man shall be refused work on account of his connection with the present strike.

We will communicate any proposition made to the union.

April 15, 1882

(Signed) David Mann, Joseph Clater, John Lutz, W. Beach, Charles Blackmer.

⁷³Muskegon Weekly Chronicle, April 21, 1882.

The Booming Company responded very rapidly, on April 17, expressing their reasons as to why they could not comply with the wishes of the workmen.

To David Mann, Joseph Clayter [sic], John Lutz, W. Beach, and Charles Blackmer, Committee of Boom men:

Your communication to the officers of Muskegon Booming Company dated 15th inst. has been duly considered by the directors, who return answer as follows: viz.

In view of the present aggregate sawing capacity of the mills on Muskegon Lake, the present capacity of this company's works, which owing to the size of the river cannot be further enlarged, the necessity of running the works of this company to their full capacity to keep the mills supplied with logs, and if possible to clean the river before the close of navigation, this company sees no reason for arbitrarily fixing any particular number of hours as a day's work.

There are many days, that men employed by the Booming Company render little or no service, but for which they receive full pay.

To insist upon controlling the operations of this company as to the working time when the company is ready and willing, now as in the past, to pay its employees in proportion to the service rendered or for time the men are required to be on hand for duty is considered to be an unreasonable demand and cannot be submitted to.

If any portion of the company's employees are willing to work without regard to hours as circumstances and the nature of the employment requires, and the company is willing to pay in proportion therefore,

No man has the moral right to say such an arrangement is unreasonable or shall not be entered into.

The operations of the Muskegon Booming Company require the services of less than ten per cent of the laborers on Muskegon Lake

Any less effort on the part of this company or less than former hours will not accomplish the necessary work. If the mills cannot be employed full time the employees therein must in consequence suffer loss and every interest in this community suffer proportionately

It is well known that for the three years last past this company has been unable, owing to the limited capacity of the river to perform the full amount of work entrusted to it to do, as is witnessed by the fact that at the close of last season, there was left in the river twenty-five per cent of the season's stock of logs, representing a large amount of money that should have found its way into the various avenues of trade in this community.

Therefore, we in justice to every business interest, including the employees of the company, the mill and log owners, also the

many other manufacturing interests represented at this point, propose in a spirit of compromise that the former employees of this company be offered:

1st. Employment as heretofore, to commence Thursday, 20th inst. at 6:30 a.m. working till 6:30 p.m., with one hour's intermission for dinner and continue daily till the end of the season, or so long as required.

2nd. That the said employees for such labor be paid at the rate of two dollars per day, for common work for good men full time allowed.

3rd. Wages named in section two be paid semi-monthly; and in consideration of faithful service to the end of this season--sickness or other unavoidable cause excepted--each and every man so employed shall, when fully discharged, be paid an additional compensation of ten per cent on all wages earned after this date.

Muskegon, April 17, 1882. Muskegon Booming Company,
George F. Peaks, Secy.⁷⁴

The Booming Company's proposal seemed legitimate enough. It offered the men a ten per cent pay increase, or \$2.20 per day if they would come back to work on the eleven hour plan. In effect, this meant the old rate of pay for a ten hour day, plus twenty cents for an hour of overtime.⁷⁵

The boom and pen men met to discuss the proposal. They refused it, continuing to demand not money, but better working conditions. They also did not like the idea of the company holding back a portion of their wages until the end of the season. The laborers responded thusly:

To the officers of the Muskegon Boom Company

Gentlemen:

Your proposition of yesterday asking the Boom men, so called, to begin work on the 20th inst. at 6:30 a.m. working until 6:30 p.m. with one hour for dinner, with full time wages to be paid semi-monthly at \$2 per day, with the addition of ten

⁷⁴Muskegon Weekly Chronicle, April 21, 1882.

⁷⁵News and Reporter (Muskegon), April 19, 1882.

per cent to those who should work the entire season, was duly received by us and at once referred to a meeting of our associates then in session. After due consideration of the terms embraced in such proposition and with full appreciation of the rights of the Muskegon Booming Company of the welfare and best interests of the people of Muskegon in general and of the rights of the men who in this instance are not so much battling for dollars and cents as for the establishment and maintenance of a principle which they hold to be right and legal in itself, just to their employers and just and sacred to themselves and their families--the members of such meeting, embracing mainly the entire force heretofore engaged and in the employ of the company, without one dissenting voice directed the committee to reply to such proposition as follows:

First:--They cannot assent to or let pass without disapproval, some of the statements set forth in the preamble of such proposition, viz: The statements of the company go upon the theory that in order to supply the mills and clear the river, the Booming Company must operate its work more than ten hours. In answer to and refutation of this statement they submit the history of the past--that no season have the companies men worked as many hours as the mills have run; that it has been the universal custom on this lake and river for years past for the saw mills to be in operation from one-half to one and one-half hours longer each day than the Booming Company; that last year a large proportion of the mills ran nights as well as days, nights when the Boom was not running at all; that this year the capacity of a large proportion of the mills has been increased to but a very small percentage, and which percentage of increase does not equal the excess time which the saw mills last year operated over that of the Booming Company; that while the men engaged as employees do not dispute the right of the company to so carry on its operations and business as to enable it to declare dividends much larger than the law of the state permits, and thereby create a large rebate fund for the log owners, they do most emphatically dispute its moral or legal right to dictate to them hours of labor longer than law and customs of the state prescribes for employees engaged in manufacturing institutions of the state besides the saw mills. And they contend that if the saw mills on this Lake controlled largely by capitalists interested in the Boom Company are run upon the humane and just system of ten hours, instead of eleven or eleven and a half and often twelve as heretofore, the Booming Company will have no trouble in supplying the wants of such mills in regard to logs. That it is apparent from the statement of such proposition itself, as well as from the well known facts of the case, that the Booming Company has so adjusted and constructed its capacity for delivering logs as will meet the demands of the saw mills. And with the view of adjusting the labor difficulties now existing, and which they are aware are causing to some extent a general stagnation in all business

circles and loss to both of the contending parties, they wish to correct an impression that has been, to some extent created by one member of the Booming Company, viz: That the Boom men are antagonistic to the interests of the city, to the interests of their employer and are not contending for principle but for other and different objects.

Second:--They respectfully submit for your consideration that they will begin work on the 20th inst. on the terms and conditions stated in your propositions, except that it must be understood that ten hours of honest work must constitute a day's work, beginning at seven o'clock a.m., and ending at six o'clock p.m. with one hour between 12 and 1 o'clock for dinner, at \$2 per day for common labor, and full time allowed. That no man shall be refused labor or discharged on account of his connections with the strike. In making this proposition of compromise, they desire to further say to the company that they have no desire to hinder the operation or antagonize its interests and that if they begin work, as above proposed, they shall feel bound to so demean themselves as will maintain their character of gentlemen, further the interests of their employer and recognize the fact considered in connection with the nature of their employment that often, some additional time of work will be almost indispensable to the success of the company. They will feel that it is but just to oblige their employer, upon the same principle that they would assist to obviate the embarrassments of any employer in any other branch of industry, but at all times on terms of extra compensation for extra services, upon a proportionate basis; but this they will consider as a favor, but not as a matter of compulsion. For a guaranty [sic] of the good faith of this part of the proposition, they can but refer to the past years of honest labor performed by them in the employ of the company.

Third:--While they do not, in any sense, seek to make the acceptance of the above proposition depend upon the following, they would respectfully suggest that in their opinion, much of the difficulty now existing might have been obviated had the company been under different management, and that by placing some other officer of the company in the position of president, like difficulties in the future will be less likely to occur.

Dated April 18, 1882

Respectfully submitted

David Mann, Joseph Clayter, John Lutz, W. Beach,
Charles Blackmer, Committee.⁷⁶

The Booming Company did not reply immediately to this communication, but instead continued to wait.

The strike was beginning to be felt by some of the unemployed. It was estimated that the strike was costing the men a total of

⁷⁶Muskegon Daily Chronicle, April 18, 1882.

\$5,000 per day in wages.⁷⁷ There were reports of hundreds of men leaving town, seeking employment elsewhere.⁷⁸ Some of the early determination and enthusiasm seemed to be lost. The strikers seemed to be weakening.⁷⁹

Then the Booming Company, realizing its commanding position, started a get-tough policy. Several of the larger mill owners signed a well publicized agreement among themselves to the effect that they would not move any logs in their mill booms for thirty days, whether or not the Big Boom was operating. This was apparently aimed at the mill workers who were supporting the boom strike, hoping that the prospect of another month of unemployment would pressure them into forcing the boom and pen men to a quicker settlement. In addition the Booming Company was building twelve boarding houses, in which it planned to house 300 imported strike breakers from Canada.⁸⁰

Apparently the issue that had provoked this change of policy on the part of the Booming Company was the last paragraph of the strikers last proclamation, which had blamed the president of the Booming Company, Newcomb McGraft for difficulties in labor management relations.

On April 22, 1882, the Booming Company's resentment to this statement came to the surface. In a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Booming Company, President McGraft offered his resignation.

⁷⁷News and Reporter (Muskegon), April 12, 1882.

⁷⁸Muskegon Daily Chronicle, April 22, 1882.

⁷⁹News and Reporter (Muskegon), April 19, 1882.

⁸⁰News and Reporter (Muskegon), April 22, 1882.

In regard to the printed charges against me, as President, made by the workingmen's committee, I would say, I am informed that said charges were introduced into their reply to your proposition through the influence and at the instigation of an outsider, who claims to be a lumberman. While I entertain no resentment against the workingmen's committee, that were thus imposed upon, I will say that at the proper time I will make due defense against the cowardly calumniator who under cover of a committee report vents his individual spite.

Yours truly
N. McGraft⁸¹

The directors refused the resignation and McGraft stayed on as President. But the Board of Directors thereafter turned with vengeance against the strikers, rescinding all offers they had previously made to the strikers. The Booming Company was determined to break the back of the strike.

The strikers, perhaps out of desperation, also changed tactics. In order to solidify the strike and show they too were still unified they attempted to induce the closing of those mills on Muskegon Lake which were still running. This action proved to be a drastic error. On the morning of April 24, they marched on McCracken, Hovey and Company mill near Lakeside which had just opened that morning on the eleven hour plan. Unfortunately, a minor brawl broke out between the strikers and mill employees--in which several mill men were injured. The mill was closed as a result. Shortly thereafter the strikers similarly closed four other mills in that vicinity which had been running on the eleven hour plan.⁸²

⁸¹Muskegon Daily Chronicle, April 22, 1882.

⁸²Muskegon Daily Chronicle, April 24, 1882. Other mills were Tillotson and Blodgett, A. V. Mann and Co., Stimson, Fay and Co., and Bigelow Bros.

The strikers, who by and large were law abiding men, had clearly let matters get out of hand. Their actions were not even condoned by their own leaders. The leader of the strikers who had visited the mills immediately apologized for their activities in print.

To the Editors of the Chronicle

The committee of the Workingmen's Union which was appointed to visit the mills at Lakeside today regret very much that anything tending to unlawfulness should have occurred. It was not their intentions to offer violence to either property or person and they strongly discountenance any such proceedings. Our object was to quietly visit the mills, ascertain if any Union men were working therein, and, if possible, to quietly induce them to hold to their obligations; but when the party from this city reached Lakeside they were joined by others (and outsiders) who harangued the boys to use forcible means to shut the mills down. The committee and Workingmen's Union regret that any such conduct should have to be apologized for, as it has been the unanimous intention of the workingmen of this city that the present strike should be considered with no unlawfulness, whatsoever.

David Mann
John Dovanon⁸³

The strikers even drew an official letter of chastisement from Mayor DeLong.

Proclamation Mayor's Office City of Muskegon, s.s.

Whereas, There is now a large body of men in the City of Muskegon remaining idle on account of the present labor difficulties and

Whereas, Application has been made to me by several of the owners of saw mills on Muskegon Lake to extend to them the protection of the law against the threatened and unlawful invasion of their property, by the aforesaid body of men.

Now, therefore, as Mayor of the City of Muskegon, I hereby command all persons engaged in the strike or otherwise, to absolutely desist and refrain from in any manner going upon the property of the mill owners in this city, or of the Muskegon Booming Company, for any riotous or unlawful purpose, and to refrain from intimidating or unlawfully meddling with

⁸³Muskegon Daily Chronicle, April 24, 1882.

any men at work for the parties aforesaid, under the penalty of law.

Nelson DeLong, Mayor

Dated April 27, 1882⁸⁴

Despite the apologies and despite the fact that the men thereafter refrained from physical force, the violence of a few men caused the strikers to lose a portion of the public support they had once enjoyed. In order to prevent further labor disorders, the Boom Company brought in a force of twenty-seven Pinkerton Detectives from Chicago. They were made deputy sheriffs and given the duty of protecting the booming grounds and any strike breaker the company hired from possible attacks of the strikers. The Pinkerton's were indeed an imposing sight.

They are a good looking lot of men, cool and determined. They have been in the employ of Pinkerton for a term of years and have seen all kinds of service. They are stationed at Chicago regularly and came from that city. They are dressed in dark blue uniforms, trimmed with large silver colored buttons bearing the word "Pinkerton's Watch". Each is armed with a revolver and cartridges, a billy and a police club. The latter is filled with lead and is the same as is used by the London Police.⁸⁵

The Booming Company seemed determined not to negotiate with the strikers or to give in to DeLong and Cook, whom they continuously referred to as demagogues and villains. Yet they realized that they must begin operations; the logs in the river were, by this time, backed up all the way to Newaygo, more than twenty-five miles upstream from Muskegon.⁸⁶

The Company had decided instead to call in workers from outside

⁸⁴Muskegon Weekly Chronicle, April 28, 1882.

⁸⁵Muskegon Daily Chronicle, May 4, 1882.

⁸⁶Muskegon Weekly Chronicle, May 19, 1882, quoting an article in the Newaygo Tribune.

Muskegon who would have no sympathy for the strikers, and who could now be protected by Pinkerton's.

The first trainload of eighty-three strikebreakers arrived on May 5. They had been hired in Toronto, at the relatively low wages of forty dollars per month, plus board, to work on the boom. They never did go to work. They were met at the depot and followed to the Booming Company grounds by some two thousand strikers. Although no force was exerted upon the strikebreakers, they quickly decided that their loyalties were with the strikers, not with the management.⁸⁷ A spokesman for the strikebreakers, Wm. Freer, stated in an interview:

When we arrived here we were not molested by the strikers in any way, and we joined them of our own free will. We had fully decided that if we should find a strike here in progress we should do nothing to work against the interests of the workingmen. The majority of us intend to return, if money is furnished, as we are not overburdened with wealth. We fully understand what this strike is for.⁸⁸

Most of these strikebreakers were returned to Canada but 110 others were brought in to replace them. They began work on the Boom May 22, protected by 80 Pinkertons.⁸⁹

By this time the number of strikers and unemployed had swelled to 4700 men who had lost over more than \$200,000 in wages since the commencement of the strike.⁹⁰

The ground was beginning to crumble under the strikers; many

⁸⁷Muskegon Daily Chronicle, May 6, 1882.

⁸⁸Muskegon Daily Chronicle, May 6, 1882.

⁸⁹Muskegon Weekly Chronicle, May 12, 1882, quoting from the Grand Haven Herald.

⁹⁰News and Reporter (Muskegon), May 24, 1882.

were reportedly low on provisions.⁹¹ Many were in danger of losing their jobs if the use of strikebreakers was successful. Their loyalties to their leaders were also fast fleeting and this, more than anything else, led to a prompt ending of the strike.

Disorganization and reorganization were overtaking the strikers. The Boom strikers met on Thursday, May 18 and selected a new bargaining committee to replace those who were apparently more loyal to DeLong and Cook. Meanwhile, an unauthorized petition was being circulated among the strikers which suggested that the men agree to work a twelve hour day at increased wages.⁹² The strikers were clearly much more conciliatory than before.

From statements made today by some of the most influential men among the strikers it is evident the workingmen are prepared, on their part, to make concessions as will leave the Booming Company little ground for declining them. All that is needed is that the workingmen be permitted to act on their own good judgement, uninfluenced by the men who do not want to see the strike brought to a close.⁹³

Clearly, the only individuals keeping the strikers and the Booming Company from settling were DeLong, Cook, and those who still followed them. The influence of this group was shattered and DeLong's magnetism destroyed when he was publicly cited for malfeasance in office.

DeLong had been an extremely busy man since being elected mayor. He had tried to bring a reform government to Muskegon at the same time he was advocating the cause of the workingmen. In addition

⁹¹News and Reporter (Muskegon), May 17, 1882.

⁹²Muskegon Daily Chronicle, May 18, 1882.

⁹³Muskegon Weekly Chronicle, May 19, 1882.

to these two tasks, he continued to serve as County Prosecuting Attorney. He was met with stiff opposition in all of these endeavors. In attempting to solidify his position as Mayor, he suspended the City Attorney, Andrew B. Allen, who was an old political enemy. He similarly attempted to unseat another leader, political rival Alderman Doran, on the grounds that Doran lived in North Muskegon, thus could not legitimately serve on the Muskegon City Council. Both were dismissed by the City Council at the meeting of May 5.⁹⁴ In so doing, DeLong sealed his doom. Allen and Doran apparently conspired with some of the mill owners to bring charges against DeLong as mayor and prosecuting attorney.

Although DeLong quickly resigned as prosecuting attorney, he stayed to fight it out as mayor. The News and Reporter and the Chronicle had a field day announcing these charges to the public.

Yesterday DeLong resigned his office of Prosecuting Attorney. He had not the nerve to stand an investigation. We have, however, obtained a copy of the charges of corruption in office which are on file with the Governor against him and for which he would undoubtedly have been removed in a very short time.⁹⁵

The document charged DeLong with soliciting bribes of between fifteen and twenty-five dollars from petty criminals in exchange for their freedom.⁹⁶

The charges against DeLong as mayor were more serious. He was charged with dismissing City Attorney Allen and Alderman Doran from office without due process. The charges were taken to Governor Jerome

⁹⁴Muskegon Weekly Chronicle, May 12, 1882.

⁹⁵News and Reporter (Muskegon), May 24, 1882.

⁹⁶Ibid.

who ordered an investigation into DeLong's alleged misconduct.⁹⁷

Obviously shaken by the tactics of his opponents, DeLong answered the charges in a bold public letter.

Muskegon, May 25, 1882

Editors Chronicle:

While the Chronicle and the News and Reporter, of this city, for the past six weeks have teemed with falsehoods in regard to my position concerning the labor questions agitating the public mind, I have remained silent, trusting to the good sense of the people, and not deeming such slander worthy of reply. But last evening, apparently made bold by their former attacks, the editors of these papers saw fit to publish to the world charges, not only false, and in the main by them known to be so, but of so grave a character, and touching my official acts both as Prosecuting Attorney of the County and Mayor of the City of Muskegon, that justice to my constituents seems at this time to demand a word from me.

As to the charge that my resignation as Prosecuting Attorney was precipitated by the charges, I have only this to say that it has been a matter of public notoriety since March first that I intended to resign the office because it was considered detrimental to the law firm of which I am a member. That early in March my resignation was prepared, but at the request of Judge Russell, withheld.

In regard to the charges of official misconduct as Prosecuting Attorney, I only care at this time to simply brand them as absolutely false, and only worthy of their low origin [Sic] and that of their instigators; and I ask the public reader to not only consider the character of the person's making them, but to hold their judgments in abeyance until I have a legal opportunity of being heard.

Concerning the charges of official misconduct as Mayor, I have simply to say this: that I am entirely willing to have all my acts laid bare to the public sight, and at the proper time will do so.

I have only to add, that the malice of this attack is apparent when it is considered that all charges against me as Prosecuting Attorney have been in possession of these newspapers, or of their supporters, for weeks when it was fully known that I should soon tender my resignation, but were kept back until, and only published when, an investigation as to their untruth could not be had except through a tedious course of litigation.

As to the other charges, and upon which it is stated the governor has ordered an investigation, I have only to say that

⁹⁷Ibid., May 27, 1882.

common fairness and the usual practice in such case would demand that I be notified of the same and an opportunity for a hearing given before they are turned to the public by my enemies.

Respectfully yours,
Nelson DeLong⁹⁸

Although none of these charges were ever proven, they did tend to discredit DeLong and diminish his respect in the eyes of the workingmen. Cook was also discredited somewhat. The News and Reporter accused him of delaying a settlement of the strike by suppressing proposals made between the Booming Company and the employees.⁹⁹ Even William Jones, the leader of the Greenback Party in Muskegon and chairman of the strikers relief committee, was accused by the News and Reporter of mismanaging and misappropriating strike funds.¹⁰⁰

With the leaders discredited or concerned with their political futures, the strike quickly came to an end.

On Thursday, May 25th, the day after the charges against DeLong were first published, a large number of the Booming Company employees met and agreed to begin work on the Company's terms, two dollars for an eleven hour day. Although the smaller Muskegon Filers and Sawyers Union attempted to prevent settlement and to hold out for a ten hour day, more than one hundred of the Booming Company employees began work on Friday, May 26.¹⁰¹ By Saturday, more men had applied for work than could be hired, since the company continued to

⁹⁸Muskegon Weekly Chronicle, May 26, 1882.

⁹⁹News and Reporter (Muskegon), May 24, 1882.

¹⁰⁰ibid., May 27, 1882.

¹⁰¹Muskegon Daily Chronicle, May 27 and 28, 1882.

employ the Canadian strikebreakers.¹⁰²

The sympathy strike of the mill employees did not last much longer than the Boom strike and mill employees were no more successful than their brethren on the Boom. The mill employees, however, did get a 10 hour day . . . every Saturday.

On Saturday, May 27, the leading mill owners resolved to start operations on the eleven hour plan, which in some cases was a reduction since some mills had previously operated eleven and one-half hours. Work was to begin at six a.m. and end at six p.m. with one hour for dinner Monday through Friday. The workday on Saturday would end at five p.m.¹⁰³ The daily wages were not increased.

The mill owners issued the following resolution to their employees.

We the undersigned mill owners intend to start our mills on eleven hours time June 1st or as soon thereafter as logs are furnished us by the Booming Company. The foreman of each mill will be at his mill from now til June 1st, to name wages that will be paid, and to take names of all old hands that wish to go to work. After that all vacant places will be filled with new men from outside. Wages will be paid semi-monthly or weekly as may be decided upon by owners of each mill. We give this notice to contradict a rumor that is in circulation that we would not employ on any terms any of our old hands. They can have their old places if they apply within the above named time.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰²ibid., May 29, 1882.

¹⁰³Muskegon Daily Chronicle, May 29, 1882.

¹⁰⁴News and Reporter (Muskegon), May 27, 1882. The resolution was signed by: Blodgett & Byrne, Tillotson & Blodgett, Ryerson, Hills & Co., McCracken, Hovey & Co., M. Wilson & Co., Ducey Lumber Co., C. J. Hamilton, Beidler Manufacturing Co., Hall and Shevlin, Thayer Lumber Co., Alex Rodgers & Co., J. D. Stimson, C. H. Hackley & Co., Swan, White & Smith, Stimson, Fay & Co., A. V. Mann & Co., C. Beaudry & Co., and McGraft & Montgomery.

The strike was officially over on Monday, May 29th, eight weeks after it had begun.

At an early hour this morning the familiar tooting and screeching of the mill whistles announced that the season's campaign of lumber slaughtering was about to begin. At six o'clock the wheels in a majority of mills began to revolve, the saws once more began to buzz and almost angrily flew through the logs sending a constant stream of boards through the mills.¹⁰⁵

The strike had cost the mill and boom employees of Muskegon upwards of \$280,000 all in a losing effort.¹⁰⁶ In addition, approximately one hundred boom men and three hundred saw mill employees lost their jobs as a result of the strike.¹⁰⁷

The strike had cost the mill owners considerably also. It was estimated that more than 150,000,000 board feet of lumber, worth \$1,800,000 could have been manufactured during the strike. But this loss was only temporary since the logs were still there and would eventually be turned into cash.¹⁰⁸ Those profits were delayed until the following year, however, since millions of board feet were left in the boom that winter due to the fact that there was not time enough to have it sorted and milled. Charles Hackley & Co., for example, left 2,817,078 board feet of lumber in the boom at the end of 1882.¹⁰⁹

The Muskegon mill owners were too powerful for the workingmen,

¹⁰⁵Muskegon Daily Chronicle, May 29, 1882.

¹⁰⁶"Strikes and Lockouts", op. cit., pp. 260-263;
Muskegon Daily Chronicle, May 29, 1882.

¹⁰⁷"Strikes and Lockouts", op. cit., pp. 260-263.

¹⁰⁸Muskegon Daily Chronicle, May 29, 1882.

¹⁰⁹Charles H. Hackley & Co. Record Journal, December 31, 1882.

even when they were organized and supplied with leadership. But in the end the Muskegonites were successful in obtaining a ten hour day by other means. Francis Cook was elected to the State Legislature in 1882, running on a Workingman's Ticket, the first state official ever elected in Michigan by a purely Workingman's Party. Cook was responsible for introducing the Ten Hour bill, making ten hours a day's labor in most Michigan factories. He also helped create the Michigan Bureau of Labor and helped introduce several other advancements for labor, some of which became laws.¹¹⁰ Cook's law partner Nelson DeLong also continued to fight for the cause of labor. He was re-elected Mayor of Muskegon in 1883 by the Workingman's Party and from 1889 to 1891 served as City Attorney.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰Michigan Biographies, op. cit., p. 195; Morning News (Muskegon), Souvenir Edition, 1892. In the Spring of 1884 Cook returned to Muskegon where he was elected Mayor. In 1890, he again was elected to the State Legislature.

¹¹¹Portrait and Biographical Record of Muskegon and Ottawa Counties, Michigan, op. cit., pp. 141-142.

III. AUSABLE-OSCODA

One of the most important logging streams flowing into Lake Huron was the AuSable. The AuSable was a narrow but deep river which extended northwestward nearly to Houghton Lake, cutting through the Michigan highland and some of the best pine forests in the state.

At the mouth of the river, but not separated by it, were located the villages of Oscoda and AuSable, the latter located on both sides of the stream and the former located north of it. Both villages were quite small, Oscoda totaling only 3,500 and AuSable only 2,304 in 1884.¹

The first lumber mill established in the area was a water-powered mill built in AuSable by Howard and VanEttan in 1836. That mill was short lived, however, and serious milling did not begin until 1865 when Absolum and Albert Backus built their mill on a point made by the river and the Lake.² This spot later became known as Pott's Point when the mill was sold in 1875 to the J. E. Potts Salt and Lumber Company.³ This mill had an annual capacity of 40,000,000 board feet and employed two hundred men in the mid 1880's.⁴

Also established in 1865 was the Loud, Priest and Shepherd

¹Tawas Herald, July 10, 1884 from State Census of 1884.

²Onilee MacDonald, "A History of AuSable and Oscoda" (unpublished Master's thesis, Wayne University, 1942), p. 8.

³Edna M. Otis, Their Yesterday's: AuSable and Oscoda, 1848 - 1948, (privately published by the author, 1948, no page numbers given.

⁴History of the Lake Huron Shore (Chicago: H. R. Page & Co., 1883), p. 183.

Lumber Company.⁵ Later reorganized as the Oscoda Salt and Lumber Company and headed by Henry M. Loud and H. A. F. Gay, this mill had an annual capacity of 44,000,000 board feet and employed over two hundred men.⁶

By the mid 1880's five other mills were operating in the Oscoda area. They were Pack, Woods and Co., T. F. Thompson and Company, Gratwick, Smith and Fryer Lumber Company, The AuSable Lumber Company, and the Moore and Tanner Lumber Company.

Pack, Woods and Company was owned by George W. Pack, Green Pack, John L. Woods and Edwin F. Holmes. Its annual capacity was 40,000,000 board feet and it employed more than two hundred men.⁷ T. F. Thompson and Company was owned by Thompson and the Penoyer brothers. Its capacity was 15,000,000 board feet per year and it employed only fifty men.⁸ The Gratwick, Smith and Fryer Lumber Company which was owned by William H. Gratwick, Robert Fryer, and Edward Smith, had an annual capacity of 25,000,000 board feet and employed 125 men.⁹ The AuSable Lumber Company, owned by John C. Gram, C. E. Jennison, W. H. Tousey and E. T. Carrington produced 33,000,000 board feet annually and employed approximately 150 men.¹⁰ The Moore and Tanner Lumber Company, owned by Stephen Moore and Charles Tanner,

⁵Otis, op. cit..

⁶History of the Lake Huron Shore, op. cit., p. 184.

⁷ibid., p. 188-189.

⁸ibid., p. 185.

⁹ibid., p. 186.

¹⁰ibid., p. 187.

produced 15,000,000 board feet annually and employed fifty men.¹¹

The mill owners of the area boomed and sorted their own logs through an organization known as the Oscoda Boom Company, established in 1877. Prior to that the mills had been supplied by the AuSable River Boom Company, an organization established in 1867.¹² During the period from 1867 through 1896, for which statistics are available, these two companies boomed and sorted 3,902,119,856 board feet of lumber, a figure which placed the AuSable high on the list of Michigan logging streams.¹³ Total production including the years prior to 1867 and after 1896 would probably approach four and one half billion board feet. The AuSable reached peak production in 1890 when the river produced 324,503,531 board feet of pine lumber.¹⁴

¹¹ ibid., p. 188.

¹² Historical Extracts from "Home-Coming Week on the Sable" - July 29 - August 4, 1906, published and transcribed by Wm. F. Lawler in The Press (Oscoda), p. 7.

¹³ Otis, op. cit.; Hotchkiss, op. cit., p. 372. The AuSable ranks behind the Saginaw, the Muskegon, the Menominee, Manistee, and Manistique.

¹⁴ Otis, op. cit.. The following figures, in board feet, indicate the annual pine lumber production of the AuSable River from 1867 through 1896.

		AuSable River Boom Company			
1867	48,800,000	1871	52,000,000	1875	55,000,000
1868	34,102,341	1872	105,000,000	1876	47,150,000
1869	44,500,000	1873	96,000,000		
1870	60,000,000	1874	52,000,000		
		Oscoda Boom Company			
1877	68,800,000	1884	176,038,000	1891	175,331,717
1878	62,000,000	1885	201,437,986	1892	192,088,470
1879	113,000,000	1886	207,458,138	1893	93,546,010
1880	138,500,000	1887	249,172,865	1894	68,884,710
1881	160,232,347	1888	283,782,031	1895	60,239,120
1882	185,400,000	1889	294,974,580	1896	57,530,010
1883	194,600,000	1890	324,503,531		

The 1880's were for the most part prosperous years for the mill owners of Oscoda and AuSable. Fortunes were made by at least a dozen mill owners, but the majority of workmen failed to enjoy any great prosperity.

Most of the workers in and about the mills of the area were foreigners; estimates vary from eighty to ninety per-cent, which was a very high proportion even for the lumber industry.¹⁵ The bulk of the foreigners were French Canadians, but there were also large contingents of Germans, Scandinavians, Scotch, and Irish.¹⁶

They worked seven or eight months per year in the mills, six days per week. The typical work day was eleven hours long, from six a.m. to six p.m., with one hour for lunch.¹⁷

Although wages were not uniform from one mill to another, they were generally low, ranging from fifty cents to five dollars per day, with all unskilled laborers earning less than \$1.87.

The millwrights, saw filers, engineers, sawyers, edgers, and saw setters receive from two to five dollars per day; the other hands from fifty cents to one dollar and eighty-seven cents per day. One company employed two hundred and sixty-two persons, in which number thirty-three received from two dollars to four dollars and fifty cents per day, and two hundred and twenty-nine received from seventy-five cents to one dollar and eighty-seven cents per day.

Another company employed one hundred and seventy-nine persons,

¹⁵Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, 11 (1884-5), (Lansing: W. S. George & Co., State Printers and Binders, 1885), pp. 34 and 54; The Bay City Evening Press, June 24, 1884.

¹⁶Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, 11, op. cit., p. 154.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 34.

of whom thirty received from two to five dollars per day and one hundred and forty-nine received from fifty cents to one dollar and eighty-seven per day.¹⁸

The dock workers were paid on a somewhat different scale, based upon prevailing freight rates. Their wages were also quite low.

In May, 1884, the principal shippers agreed to establish a schedule of wages for dock laborers during the season. These wages varied with the freight rates. When freight was \$1.25 per 1,000 feet from Bay City to Ohio ports, the wages were to be twenty-five cents per hour. The wages increased five cents for every twenty-five cent increase in freight rate until they reached forty-five with the freight of \$2.25.¹⁹

The mills and booming company employed between 1200 and 1500 persons in the mid 1880's, approximately 250 of whom were boys between the ages of ten and fifteen.²⁰ They worked a full eleven hour day, many of them doing men's work, for wages ranging from fifty cents to one dollar per day.²¹

The average daily wage for all workers, skilled and unskilled, employed in and about the mills was \$1.60.²² Since only forty to fifty per cent of the employees worked in the woods during the winter, this meant that the annual wages of more than half of the employees amounted

¹⁸ ibid., p. 34.

¹⁹ MacDonald, op. cit., p. 40 citing The Lumberman's Gazette (Bay City), Vol. XXIV.

²⁰ Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, 11, op. cit., p. 34; The Bay City Evening Press, June 25, 1884.

²¹ Saginaw Daily Courier, June 25, 1884.

²² Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, 11, op. cit., p. 211.

to less than three hundred dollars.²³

The time and method of payment varied considerably between the various mills. One mill, the AuSable Lumber Company, paid every week. Another mill, T. F. Thompson & Co., paid every two weeks. The remainder of the mills paid monthly. At least four of the mills, Pack, Woods and Company, the Oscoda Salt and Lumber Company, the Gratwick, Smith and Fryer Lumber Company, and the J. E. Potts Salt and Lumber Company, followed the practice of holding back the first fifteen days' wages of their employees until the end of the season.²⁴ This was done to force the men to work satisfactorily for that mill for the duration of the season. If a man quit or was fired during the season, he forfeited the portion of his salary being retained.

Since money was usually scarce between the monthly pay days, two of the larger mills, Pack, Woods and Company and the Oscoda Salt and Lumber Company, maintained stores for the "convenience" of their employees.²⁵ Three other area mills also gave orders upon these company stores in lieu of cash.²⁶ If a worker wanted cash, instead of store orders, he was obliged to take a discount of from eight to fifteen per cent.²⁷

²³ Ibid., p. 57.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 34; MacDonald, op. cit., p. 42.

²⁵ Saginaw Daily Courier, June 25, 1884.

²⁶ Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, 11, op. cit., p. 34. The other companies giving store orders were: J. E. Potts Salt and Lumber Company, Moore and Tanner Lumber Company, and Gratwick, Smith and Fryer Lumber Company.

²⁷ Jensen, op. cit., p. 60

It was generally accepted at the time that prices at company stores were higher than elsewhere and that the mills involved were making healthy profits under the system, but this was never proven.²⁸ Two mills, however, the AuSable Lumber Company and T. F. Thompson & Co., always paid promptly in cash.

Most of the laborers in Oscoda and AuSable were so poor that they did not own their own homes. According to the Michigan Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, between two-thirds and three-fourths of the Oscoda mill workers owned no property at all.²⁹ Most of the workers lived in tenements provided for them by the management.³⁰ The Pack, Woods and Company maintained 110 buildings in the vicinity of the mill in Oscoda. Known as Pack town, these tenements housed over 300 persons. Nearby was Holmesville, a number of boarding houses where many of the unmarried employees of the mill lived.³¹ In AuSable the Oscoda Salt and Lumber Company had also built a number of houses for their employees on the flats near the river. Since all of the houses were painted red, the area was known as Red Row.³² The J. E. Potts Salt and Lumber Company had built more than fifty houses near its mill

²⁸Saginaw Daily Courier, June 25, 1884.

²⁹Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, 11, op. cit., p. 56. The figure was probably much higher since only 518 out of 5480 citizens in AuSable and Oscoda owned property. Ibid., p. 38.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 38 and 56. Eight mill owners in AuSable and Oscoda owned 65% of the property in the two towns.

³¹Otis, op. cit.

³²MacDonald, op. cit., p. 45.

at the mouth of the AuSable. Known as Pott's Point, these houses were generally larger and in better condition than the average tenements.³³ Other employees rented or owned houses in other picturesque areas of town, such as Dead Sable, Hardscrabble, Stovepipetown and Piety Hill.³⁴ Rents for most houses in the area varied from three to seven dollars per month.

Employer-employee relations were generally good in the Oscoda-AuSable area, despite the harsh living and working conditions. The workers were generally a highly individualistic, transient group who registered their discontent by moving elsewhere rather than organizing a union and protesting conditions. As a result, area mill owners were almost always short of help and in search of new workers in the labor markets of Montreal, Chicago, and elsewhere.³⁵

Although labor disorders in AuSable and Oscoda were uncommon, a strike did break out in August of 1881. Although over one thousand men were involved, the strike lasted only six days, the men finally winning a reduction of the work day from twelve to eleven hours.³⁶

The only other major strike in the area mills occurred in June of 1884. This second strike put its predecessor to shame and launched a wave of strikes throughout the Michigan lumber industry over the next two years. The strike was well documented, also, since the Michigan

³³Otis, op. cit.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵MacDonald, op. cit., p. 44.

³⁶"Strikes and Lockouts", op. cit., pp. 256-9.

Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics conducted a study of the situation.

The year 1884 had promised to be another successful year for the mill owners of Oscoda and AuSable. The mills were running full blast, some of them working both day and night. During the month of May, the seven mills cut 31,794,031 board feet of lumber -- a very high figure for that period in the season.³⁷ The workers were undoubtedly happy to be working again, many of them having been unemployed during the winter months.

In early June a shadow was cast upon the situation as the effects of the depression were felt. Orders for lumber were canceled, or postponed until economic conditions improved and as a result many of the mills were compelled to lay off men.³⁸ The mills continued to produce lumber, with reduced crews, since they could not afford to shut down while other mills continued in operation.

Discontent began to grow among the laborers, many of whom had been unemployed since the preceding December and who were too poor to

³⁷The Bay City Evening Press, June 10, 1884. Lumber cut of AuSable and Oscoda mills, May, 1884. (in board feet)

Pack, Woods & Co.	7,050,130
J. E. Potts Salt and Lumber Co.	6,897,270
Gratwick, Smith and Fryer Lumber Co.	4,717,970
AuSable Lumber Co.	4,265,060
T. F. Thompson & Co.	2,413,920
Moore and Tanner	2,061,395
Oscoda Salt and Lumber Co.	4,028,286

J. E. Potts Salt and Lumber Company, Oscoda Salt and Lumber Company, and Pack, Woods and Company ran day and night. The others ran only during the day.

³⁸The Tawas Herald, June 19, 1884; The Bay City Evening Press, June 23, 1884.

look elsewhere for work.

The first group to rebel were the dock workers or stevedores. Their wages were determined by freight rates and ranged from twenty-five to forty-five cents per hour of lumber loading. In early May, when freight rates were still relatively high, these men were earning forty cents per hour, but when the depression came, and the lumber markets dwindled, the owners of the lumber schooners and barges were caught in the same predicament as the mill owners. Most of them could not afford to lay up their vessels for any length of time so they were forced by competition to reduce their freight rates hoping to win enough cargoes to stay in business.³⁹

The reduction of the freight rates led to a similar reduction of wages for the dock workers, who by early June were earning only thirty cents per hour. On Friday, June 6, they struck for higher wages.

There has been quite an excitement in lumber shipping interests at this place for the past two days, caused by a strike of the stevedores. So far the wages have been 30 cents per hour, but yesterday the stevedores struck for 40 cents per hour. In the afternoon they organized into a body and went to the different saloons, asking treats for the crowd. At one or two places they were refused. So far 40 cents per hour has not been paid, except in one instance. That was by a captain of a boat loading at Gratwick, Smith and Fryer's dock. All others refused the demand of the strikers.⁴⁰

³⁹The Tawas Herald, June 19, 1884.

⁴⁰Ibid., June 12, 1884 quoting from an article in the AuSable Saturday Night, June 7, 1884. This report is contrary to the report of the Second Annual Report of the Michigan Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, p. 35, which indicates that the dockwhollopers' strike started June 16, 1884.

The dock workers were generally unsuccessful in fulfilling their demands. Their strike did not impair the operation of the mills to any great degree.

It has been suggested that the dock workers attempted to expand the strike throughout various mills by threatening other workers but no evidence of this was discovered.⁴¹

The strike was expanded, but this was undoubtedly the fault of the mill owners, not the laborers. The mill owners, who were forced like the shipping companies, to cut costs because of the depression, turned to their largest unfixed cost -- labor. In many cases no wage arrangements had yet been made, except at those mills that paid weekly or semi-monthly. Since most of the mills paid monthly and held back the first fifteen days wages, the first payday did not arrive, for most men, until Monday, June 16. The men at these mills had been at work for seven weeks before their first payday arrived, during which time they had been living off store orders and charging their rents to their anticipated earnings.⁴²

On June 16, which was payday for most of the men, all of the mills in Oscoda and AuSable uniformly reduced the wages of their employees twenty-five cents.⁴³ In many cases this was retroactive to the beginning of the year. Since the pay reduction was announced in the evening, no further action took place that day except that the lumber

⁴¹Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, 11, op. cit., p. 35.

⁴²ibid.

⁴³ibid., p. 36.

plers on the dock of Gratwick, Smith and Fryer refused to work. The Oscoda Salt and Lumber Company, which was already withholding the first fifteen days' wages of its employees, went even further than the other lumber producers in the area. They issued the following circular to their unskilled employees which could hardly have been intended to calm the waters.

Oscoda, 6-15, 1884

Your wages are \$1.37 $\frac{1}{2}$ per day. If you work until the close of the season and do satisfactory work you will receive 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ cts. per day more. If you do not agree to the above report to the office at once.

Oscoda Salt and Lumber Co.⁴⁴

The rate of wages differed in the notices and in some cases the amount retained was twenty-five cents per day.⁴⁵ This was in addition to the twenty-five cent reduction in pay. Out of 179 men employed by this company, fifty-seven received nothing on that pay day, and forty-six of the latter group owed the company money.⁴⁶

When asked why this practice of withholding salary was adopted, one of the owners of the Company, H. M. Loud, offered the following comment:

It is a custom which has long been practiced in all lumber producing communities, and as any lumberman will tell you, it is a necessary practice. All mill work, to a greater or less degree, is skilled labor, and it is desirable to keep a good man. We hire one man for the season, and the slight reserve kept out of his

⁴⁴The Tawas Herald, June 26, 1884. The circular was sent only to employees earning less than two dollars per day.

⁴⁵Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, 11, op. cit., p. 35.

⁴⁶Ibid.

wages each month is to make a reason that he should keep his contract. A good "edger" or a good "setter" many times will leave you without notice, perhaps overturning all your calculations because he could do a shilling or so better somewhere else. Then another reason, we would like to run clear to December. The chopping and logging season opens in October. The men are anxious to get to the woods for the winter. They like it there and are liable, unless they have got something coming to them, to skip out and leave the mills stripped. We have had to shut ⁴⁷down once or twice on that account and at a heavy loss each time.

Mr. Loud's statement was somewhat out of place in that the men to whom the circular was addressed were not edgers, setters, or skilled men at all. The circular was addressed to the unskilled laborers, those men who made less than \$2.00 per day. The obvious intent of the circular was to keep the men from striking and causing trouble, for if they struck they would not be eligible to receive the retained portions of their salaries.

But the circular failed to fulfill its intended purpose. Rather than submitting to the company's demands, the men rebelled against them. On Tuesday, June 17, the day after the circular was issued, the employees of the Oscoda Salt and Lumber Company struck. The strike spread rapidly until, by late afternoon, all of the mills in the area were involved, as the following newspaper article reported:

Early on Tuesday morning, when the Oscoda Salt and Lumber Company's mill whistle blew for 6 o'clock the laborers all refused to work and at the same time the J. E. Potts' Salt and Lumber Company's men ^[sic] joined them. All formed in line and marched up to the Gratwick, Smith and Fryer Lumber Company mill, whose force joined them. They then proceeded to Moore & Tanner's and were victorious. They then marched to AuSable to T. F. Thompson & Co's and J. C. Gram's ^[AuSable Lumber Company] mills, where the same results favored them, and at 1 p.m. they all in a body

⁴⁷The Bay City Evening Press, June 26, 1884.

marched, to the number of 800, together with a large crowd of boys and men to Pack, Woods & Co's mills and demanded a surrender, which was accomplished with a few revolvers drawn on both sides, when the strikers came out victorious. Pack was quite roughly handled.⁴⁸

The general dissatisfaction of the workers was indicated by the ease with which the strike was carried off. Despite the fact that the strikers had no formal organization and they had made few preparations, most of the workers eagerly joined the strike. As far as could be determined, no men were forced to quit work against their will. The strikers numbered approximately nine hundred out of a work force estimated at between 1200 and 1500.⁴⁹

The strikers did have difficulty stopping one of the mills, but this was not because the employees at that mill did not desire a strike, but rather because one of the mill owners attempted to stop them. As the strikers approached Pack, Woods & Co., one of the owners, Green Pack, turned the mill hose on them to keep them away. The men rushed the hose and in the struggle, Pack was hit over the head with the nozzle.⁵⁰ That was the only incident approaching violence during the strike. Pack later charged four of the strikers with assault and with violating the 1882 conspiracy law.⁵¹

As a precaution against further violence, he, along with the other mill owners, called in the sheriff, Clark Esmond, who arrived

⁴⁸The Tawas Herald, June 19, 1884.

⁴⁹The Bay City Evening Press, June 24, 1884; Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, II, op. cit., p. 34.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 35.

⁵¹Saginaw Daily Courier, June 26, 1884. The men's names were Cyril Julian, John Cole, Julius D'Anjou, and Andrew Oakelor.

with his two deputies that evening (June 17).⁵² Not yet feeling secure, Pack also hired a gang of Pinkerton Detectives from Chicago. When they arrived, on June 21, Pack had all twenty-two of them sworn in as deputy sheriffs.⁵³

As rumors of violence developed, even the state militia was called in. The circumstances which prompted the call for troops were best explained by E. J. Carrington, a partner in the AuSable Lumber Company:

As to the presence of the military I am told that it was thought necessary on account of an imprudent remark made by Henry Loud, of Oscoda Salt and Lumber Co. The town is full of idle men, and many of them congregated at Loud's store. Some discussion brought about warmth of feeling, and he said to them: "Well boys, where are you going to get your dinners?" They took this as a taunt, and a stout mill worker, probably somewhat excited with liquor, answered back: "If we can't get our dinners in any other way, we will break open stores and help ourselves." There was expression of applause at this sentiment, which caused Loud to realize that his remark was injudicious and inopportune. He became frightened, and, going to the other mill men, gave expression to his fears. At once the whispered intelligence went round. "No doubt the men will rob and sack our stores and destroy us." An alarming story was telegraphed to the Governor. The Governor came down to Bay City, called out the city company, reviewed them, engaged transportation for them, issued his written orders and sent them at once to the seat of the war. I can't think the situation is a serious one.⁵⁴

The company from Bay City, totaling fifty-three men, arrived on Saturday, June 21, on the same train with the Pinkertons. Two other companies, from Saginaw and Alpena, respectively, arrived later.⁵⁵

⁵² ibid., June 19, 1884.

⁵³ ibid., June 26, 1884.

⁵⁴ Interview with E. J. Carrington, Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, 11, op. cit., pp. 36-7.

⁵⁵ The Lumberman's Gazette (Bay City), June 25, 1884.

Governor Begole, a lumberman himself, seriously thought there was trouble in Oscoda and even prepared to go there himself.

The governor evidently had a wrong impression of the situation in Oscoda and AuSable. His sympathies are indicated by the telegram he sent to Sheriff Esmond on June 24.

I can not remove the troops until order is restored and the mills and other industries in operation if they so desire. All your efforts to secure such results have my hearty approval. You will see that all of the leaders of the revolt are arrested at once. Soldiers will remain until this is done and order fully restored.⁵⁶

But all of these preparations were unnecessary, as the strikers made no attempt at violence or destruction of property.

On the contrary, the strikers were completely orderly. They even won the support of the townspeople to their cause. The citizens of the two towns went so far as to contribute two thousand dollars to a strike fund for those who required assistance.⁵⁷ The merchants of the area were particularly interested in the strike because it suggested an end to the store order system.⁵⁸

On June 23, the strikers began their first formal efforts at negotiation when a committee of six visited the various mill managers. The spokesman for the strikers was Selig Solomon, a local financier who owned, among other things, the National Hotel, several stores, three tenements, and several other large tracts of land in the

⁵⁶The Tawas Herald, July 3, 1884.

⁵⁷Ibid., June 26, 1884.

⁵⁸Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, 11, op. cit., p. 36.

area.⁵⁹ Solomon was not a leader of the strikers, but rather attempted to serve as an arbitrator.⁶⁰

The committee of workmen presented to the various mill managers the following ungrammatical list of grievances.

To the mill-owners of Oscoda and AuSable.

- 1st. We the laborers, desire to have the same wages as was given last year.
- 2nd. That no money shall be kept back by mill owners.
- 3rd. That there shall be a pay day every Saturday.⁶¹

The major issue in the strike was the custom, practiced in most of the mills, of withholding a portion of the employees' salaries until the end of the season. The men had an unquestionable immediate need for their wages, but they also feared that some of the mills might fail during the depression and sweep away their withheld earnings.

Even the conservative, management oriented Lumberman's Gazette from Bay City agreed that this practice justified the strike.

...we learn that the employers have insisted on paying their men in orders on their store, and withholding the first 15 full days' pay, and 12½ cents per day thereafter from wages of their men until the end of the season, when, if the latter prove satisfactory and remain through the season they are to be paid the balance due them. This is an injustice, against which the employees have

⁵⁹History of the Lake Huron Shore, op. cit., p. 169. Solomon was a native of Russia who emigrated to the United States in 1864. He came to AuSable in 1873 and entered into a partnership with his wife's uncle, Louis Myer, a local storekeeper. He accumulated considerable capital on shrewd investments and loans. In 1882 he sold the store, in order to devote his attention to real estate. In 1884 he was one of the largest property owners in AuSable. His wealth rivaled that of the mill owners.

⁶⁰The Tawas Herald, June 26, 1884.

⁶¹Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, 11, op. cit., p. 36.

a perfect right to remonstrate, even to the extent of striking. The laborer is worthy of his hire, and if they are worth \$1.75 per day, they have a positive right to demand full remuneration at the regularly appointed pay day; and no employer has the right to withhold their money or a portion thereof against their consent or in order to compel them to remain in a position from which they have an undoubted right to withdraw at their pleasure on reasonable notice. If the AuSable and Oscoda strikers had rebelled against this injustice and made that alone the groundwork of their strike, they would evidently have been justified in their action.⁶²

The strikers also wanted weekly cash payment of wages because this would have reduced the need for the much condemned store order system in practice in the area. In fact the strike was most intensely prosecuted against the two firms with stores: Pack, Woods and Company and the Oscoda Salt and Lumber Company.⁶³ Since these two mills were located upstream from the others, the stoppage of these mills interfered with the passage of logs to the others and thus all of the mills were closed. This forced all of the mills to remain closed until the strike was settled with the two upstream firms.

The third issue, the reduction of pay was also significant, but not as important as the other two issues. The men wanted an eleven hour day at the previous season's wages, but most would have accepted the new reduced wages of they were linked with a ten hour day.⁶⁴

Another, rather minor, but hotly contested issue pertained primarily to those employees who were tenants of their employers. These men complained that rents were too high and were collected before they

⁶²The Lumberman's Gazette (Bay City), June 25, 1884.

⁶³Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, 11, op. cit., p. 36.

⁶⁴The Tawas Herald, June 19 and 26, 1884.

were due.⁶⁵ Rents in the tenements varied from three to ten dollars per month and were sometimes collected a month in advance.⁶⁶ The Michigan Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics contended that some employee tenants paid between one-third and one-half of their annual wages back to their employer for rent.⁶⁷ This estimate seems rather excessive, but probably did apply in some instances.

Three of the mills: J. E. Pott's Salt and Lumber Company, T. F. Thompson and Company, and the AuSable Lumber Company immediately came to terms with the strikers.⁶⁸ The mills agreed to pay in cash, weekly or bi-weekly, and not to hold back any portion of the wages. The AuSable Lumber Company and Thompson's mill had been following this practice for years anyway. There were no rent complaints against any of these firms. The mills were unable to raise wages to the level of the previous year because of the depression. The workday remained eleven hours long, but was reduced to ten hours the following year.⁶⁹ After one or two days of deliberation, most of the strikers agreed to these terms, indicating their general willingness to accept a reduction in pay as long as it was paid regularly and in cash.⁷⁰ The men

⁶⁵Glazer, "Labor and Agrarian Movements in Michigan 1876-1896" op. cit., p. 94.

⁶⁶MacDonald, op. cit., p. 46; Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, II, op. cit., pp. 36 and 38.

⁶⁷Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, II, op. cit., p. 59.

⁶⁸The Bay City Evening Press, June 24, 1884.

⁶⁹Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., Table 27, pp. 220-253.

⁷⁰Saginaw Daily Courier, June 26, 1884.

realized that the pay reductions were dictated by the depression.

Although these mills were free to open after June 24, they could not have operated for many days because they were located downstream from the four mills which had not yet settled. Since the upriver mills blocked the passage of logs to the lower mills, none of them could open until the upriver mills settled.

The strikers were very sympathetic, however, with the owners of the mills which had agreed to terms. In fact, one of these mill owners, John Gram, became a local hero.⁷¹ Gram was a logical choice since his company, the AuSable Lumber Company, had paid weekly, cash wages for three years prior to the strike and had paid higher wages than the other firms in the area.⁷² On the same day that the strikers' committee presented their demands, the strikers themselves honored Gram with a visit.

This morning [June 23] a procession of 900 men headed by the band marched down to Gram's place and called him out. The speaker was George Sutherland. He complimented Gram highly, expressed regret that Gram's work had been interfered with, and told him that he might resume [sic] his old terms when he chose. The men gave three cheers and hoisted the American colors over his

⁷¹History of the Lake Huron Shore, op. cit., p. 188. Gram was one of the youngest, most energetic and most liberal mill owners in the state. His practice was to purchase an old, delapidated mill, turn it into a paying enterprise through sound management practices, and then sell it for a handsome profit.

⁷²Saginaw Daily Courier, June 25, 1884; The Bay City Evening Press, June 24, 1884.

mill. Gram passed the cigars. No work was done there today.⁷³

The owners of four area mills were not accorded such cordial relations with the workers, however. Four mills, the Moore and Tanner Company, the Oscoda Salt and Lumber Company, Pack, Woods and Company, and Gratwick, Smith and Fryer Lumber Company continued to hold out for their terms. Three of the mill managers even refused to confer with the committee, contending that they would meet only with committees of men from their own mills. The other said that he would not respond to the dictation of terms.⁷⁴

The owners of the Oscoda Salt and Lumber Company and Pack, Woods and Company were particularly obstinate, primarily because they both maintained stores and would have been severely handicapped by a discontinuance of the store order system.⁷⁵

The mills had no real incentive to settle, since the depression had undercut the lumber markets.

The employers say it will be no disadvantage to them to remain idle for 30 days, and some of them claim it will be a positive benefit, as it will enable them to clear their docks of the

⁷³The Tawas Herald, June 26, 1884. The George Sutherland, mentioned in the article was evidently a leader of the strikers but this is the only mention of his connection with the strike. He was apparently an itinerant jack-of-all-trades, working as a fisherman, a sailor, a hunter and trapper. In 1884, working as a dockwhalloper, he apparently had something to do with organizing the strike. Evidently Sutherland was a very popular man, for in 1895, he became Mayor of AuSable, a post he held for at least 17 years. Perry F. Powers, A History of Northern Michigan and Its People, III, (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1912), pp. 1020-21.

⁷⁴The Tawas Herald, June 26, 1884.

⁷⁵Saginaw Daily Courier, June 26, 1884.

accumulated stocks and be in a position at the commencement of operations again to carry on their work to much better advantage, besides stiffening the market to just the extent of their lack of lumber in sight. They also express a determination to remain closed the remainder of the season rather than submit to the demands of the strikers.⁷⁶

The strikers were determined to hold out also. Although they were poor men and lacked skilled leaders, they had the advantages of being united behind a just cause. In addition, they had the benefit of popular support from the community and the psychological advantage of a partial victory over three of the mills.

On June 24, more help arrived in the form of Daniel C. Blinn, district organizer of the Knights of Labor, who organized a lodge in Oscoda.⁷⁷ Their position continued to improve. On June 25, the three down river mills returned to operation and Governor Begole, confident that order had been restored at the scene of the "revolt", ordered the troops to withdraw.⁷⁸

On that same day an agreement was reached with the stevedores, who agreed to work for forty cents per hour or "Bay City prices".⁷⁹ Their success greatly encouraged the mill strikers.

On June 26, two other firms, the Moore and Tanner Company and Gratwick, Smith and Fryer, came to agreements with the strikers. Although they, too, were unable or unwilling to increase wages to the

⁷⁶The Lumberman's Gazette (Bay City), June 25, 1884.

⁷⁷Saginaw Daily Courier, June 26, 1884.

⁷⁸The Tawas Herald, July 3, 1884; The Bay City Evening Press, June 25, 1884.

⁷⁹The Bay City Evening Press, June 25, 1884.

level of the previous year, they did agree to pay cash weekly or semi-monthly in full.⁸⁰ They resumed operations immediately.

The Oscoda Salt and Lumber Company and Pack, Woods and Company continued to hold out. They, too, eventually agreed to a settlement, probably compelled to do so by the other mills which were already operating and in need of logs. Although neither company would agree to pay more than once per month, they did agree to make full cash payments at the end of each month and agreed not to withhold any wages until the end of the season.⁸¹ The work day remained eleven hours long that season, but all mills reduced to ten hours in 1885.⁸² Wages remained at the same low level and the two companies continued to operate their stores. Their employees accepted these terms and by June 30 all of the mills were again in operation.

The mill strike had lasted two weeks and had cost the employees an estimated \$20,285,⁸³ but it had resulted in a victory for the strikers, a rare occurrence in the Michigan lumber industry. Although the men were forced to accept a reduction of wages from the previous season, they won regular cash payment of wages and a virtual end to the obnoxious store order system, a considerable accomplishment. The issue

⁸⁰Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, II, op. cit., p. 38.

⁸¹Ibid. By 1885 out of a total 903 employees, 238 were paid weekly, 272 were paid bi-weekly and 393 were paid monthly. Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., Table 27, pp. 220-253.

⁸²Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., Table 27, pp. 220-253.

⁸³"Strikes and Lockouts", op. cit., pp. 264-67.

of high rents in the tenements was apparently not resolved.

The strike was expensive from the management viewpoint also. The mill owners, lost approximately \$15,500 in revenue that year because of the strike.⁸⁴ Lumber production in 1884 was down 18,000,000 board feet from the previous year, but the mill owners would probably have had difficulty marketing it regardless.⁸⁵

This was a most peculiar strike. Not only did it result in a partial victory for the strikers, but the strikers accomplished that victory without any formal organization or union and they had no recognizable leader. The strike was not caused by the incitement of the masses by a labor agitator as was the case in so many labor strikes in the lumber industry. Rather, the strike was caused by the ridiculous demands of a few of the mill owners, most notably Henry Loud and Green Pack. These men made such unreasonable demands upon their men, that the latter were forced to rebel if they desired to maintain their freedom.

⁸⁴ ibid.

⁸⁵ Otis, op. cit.

IV. SAGINAW-BAY CITY

Michigan's largest and most productive logging river was the Saginaw. Although the Saginaw River itself was only twenty-five miles long, it received the waters of numerous tributaries, including the Cass, the Flint, the Shiawassee, the Bad, the Pine, the Chippewa, the Tobacco, and the Tittabawassee. These tributaries provided a navigable river system of 864 miles which drained 3,500,000 acres of the finest pine lumber lands in the State of Michigan.¹ The two largest streams were the Tittabawassee and the Cass. The former drained the central pine lands north and west of the Saginaw. According to an 1851 estimate it passed through a pine belt eighty miles long and five miles wide. The Cass River drained almost the entire "thumb" area, and passed through a pine belt one hundred miles long which was between one and one-half and ten miles in width.²

The first saw mill on the Saginaw was built by Harvey Williams in 1835 and was one of the first steam mills in the nation. The engine itself was historic having been originally built for the famous steamboat, Walk-in-the-Water. A second mill, known as the Emerson mill, was built across from the Williams mill in 1836. By 1854 there were

¹William Gerald Rector, American Waterways Series, No. IV: Log Transportation in the Lake States Lumber Industry, 1840-1918, (Glendale, California: The Arthur H. Clark Company), p. 48 from Franklin B. Hough, Report Upon Forestry, p. 512.

²James Cooke Mills, History of Saginaw County, Michigan, I, (Saginaw: Seeman and Peters, Publishers, 1918), pp. 383-384.

twenty-nine mills on the river and nine others under construction. Although they had a total annual capacity of only 100,000,000 board feet, they had started a thriving business for the Saginaw River.³

By 1856 so many mills were producing along the Saginaw that a booming company was necessary to transport and sort the logs. The first such company was organized by Charles Merrill, a local lumberman. Between 1856 and 1864 this company transported 1,700,000,000 board feet of logs down the Tittabawassee River to supply the Saginaw mills.⁴ In 1864 it was replaced by the Tittabawassee Booming Company. Although each of the other major rivers, flowing into the Saginaw, had its own booming company, the Tittabawassee Booming Company was by far the most important. It was at one time the largest booming company in the nation, employing hundreds of laborers and maintaining twelve miles of booms along the Saginaw River.⁵

Along the banks of the Saginaw River several large saw milling centers developed. On opposite sides near the mouth of the river were the thriving cities of Bay City and West Bay City plus their small suburbs of Essexville and Bangor. Bay City, in 1800, had a population of 20,693; West Bay City was much smaller at 6,397.⁶ Fifteen miles above the river mouth, at the head of steam navigation were the

³Ibid., pp. 394-7.

⁴Ibid., p. 398.

⁵Works Projects Administration, Michigan Log Marks, Memoir Bulletin No. 4, (Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station, 1942), pp. 29 and 32.

⁶U. S., Bureau of the Census, Compendium of the Tenth Census: June 1, 1880, p. 457.

twin cities of Saginaw City and East Saginaw along with Saginaw's northern suburbs of Carrollton and Zilwaukee.⁷ Saginaw City was much smaller than her neighbor across the river. Saginaw City had a population of 10,525 in 1880, while East Saginaw contained 19,016.⁸ This fifteen miles of river along the lower Saginaw became the lumber center of the world during the 1870's and 1880's when it led the nation in lumber production. The area was also an important salt producing region. During the 1880's there were as many as 112 saw, shingle, and planing mills.⁹ At eight of these salt blocks were attached.¹⁰

Contemporary accounts, such as the following, hardly exaggerated when they boasted of the industrial prowess of Bay City and Saginaw during the 1880's.

At these cities and in the flourishing villages between them are collected the finest manufacturing establishments in the world, whose total yearly product surpasses that of any other single district. The river which brings the logs to their booms also bears large vessels to their docks, and they have under absolute

⁷Michigan, Commissioner of Immigration, Michigan and Its Resources, op. cit., p. 17. Saginaw, East Saginaw and Carrollton will generally be referred to in this paper as Saginaw. Bay City, West Bay City, Essexville and Bangor will be referred to collectively as Bay City.

⁸U. S., Bureau of the Census, Compendium of the Tenth Census: June 1, 1880, p. 457.

⁹Stanley H. Holbrook, Holy Old Mackinaw, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1961), p. 84. The Saginaws and their suburbs had 63 mills in the mid 1880's, the Bay City region had 49. 94 of these mills manufactured lumber and shingles, the others were planing mills. Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., Table 27, pp.-220-253.

¹⁰Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., p. 110-112.

control all the advantages of cheap water transportation. The Saginaw valley is also connected by several first class lines with the railway system of the continent, and with this multiplied outlet commands access to all the markets of the world.¹¹

The Saginaw River produced an estimated total of 30,764,631,018 board feet during the nineteenth century, worth approximately 400 million dollars, a figure larger than the national debt at the end of the Civil War.¹² The peak production year was 1882, when the mills of the area cut a record 1,011,274,605 board feet of lumber, the highest annual figure for any single river in the world.¹³

Although production fell off somewhat after 1882 because of the depletion of timber and the depression of 1884, it remained at significantly high levels (over 700,000,000 board feet per season) until the early 1890's.

The mills employed large numbers of unskilled laborers. In

¹¹Michigan, Commissioner of Immigration, Michigan and Its Resources, op. cit., pp. 17-8.

¹²Hotchkiss, op. cit., p. 642. Figures based on an assessed value of \$13 per thousand board feet.

¹³Works Projects Administration, op. cit., p. 40. Lumber cut in the Saginaw valley, 1856-94 in board feet.

1856	110,000,000	1869	523,500,830	1882	1,011,274,605
1857	113,700,000	1870	576,726,606	1883	938,675,078
1858	106,500,000	1871	529,682,878	1884	978,497,853
1859	122,750,000	1872	602,118,980	1885	728,497,853
1860	125,000,000	1873	619,877,021	1886	798,826,224
1861	120,000,000	1874	573,632,771	1887	783,661,265
1862	128,000,000	1875	581,558,273	1888	880,669,440
1863	133,580,000	1876	583,950,771	1889	851,823,133
1864	215,000,000	1877	640,166,231	1890	815,054,465
1865	250,639,340	1878	574,162,757	1891	758,610,548
1866	349,767,344	1879	736,106,000	1892	708,465,027
1867	423,963,190	1880	873,047,731	1893	585,839,426
1868	451,395,225	1881	976,320,315	1894	581,244,049

1885 the 94 shingle and saw mills of Saginaw and Bay City provided employment for nearly 7000 laborers.¹⁴ Large numbers of these were foreign since they generally would work for less than natives. By the 1880's foreign laborers outnumbered natives in the lumber mills, shingle mills and salt blocks of the city.¹⁵ French Canadians were the most numerous, but there were also large contingents of Germans, Poles and Irish.¹⁶ The Poles, who worked primarily in Bay City, were the newest arrivals and generally performed the most menial tasks for the lowest wages.

The mills also employed large numbers of boys under sixteen. Of seventy-seven mills and fifty-eight salt blocks in Bay City and Saginaw surveyed in 1885, 563 boys were employed out of a total work force of 5,554.¹⁷

Because of the large number of foreigners and boys and because almost all workers were unskilled, wages were generally low compared to other industries. Wages in Bay City and Saginaw, however, were

¹⁴Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., Table 27, pp. 220-253, states that 94 saw and shingle mills of the Bay City-Saginaw area employed 6675 laborers. 18 planing mills employed an additional 701 persons.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 123. These statistics apply only to the employees who struck in 1885, a total of 5452 workers, but since these numbered nearly ninety per cent of the total work force in the mills and salt blocks of the area, they are fairly accurate, Native strikers numbered 2119, foreign strikers numbered 3,333. Of these, French Canadians numbered 1330, Germans 1121, Polish 584, and Irish 200.

¹⁶Glazer, "Labor and Agrarian Movements in Michigan, 1876-1896", op. cit., p. 98.

¹⁷Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., Table 1, p. 111-112.

generally higher than all other milling centers in the state since the others tended to look to Saginaw for wage and price leadership.

Wages were determined on a daily rather than hourly basis, the customary working day during the early 1880's being eleven hours or longer.¹⁸ Wages were generally paid bi-weekly, but monthly pay days were also common throughout the valley.¹⁹ Wages were almost always paid in cash.

Wages varied considerably from job to job and mill to mill. The lowest paid jobs were, of course, performed by boys who received from \$.50 to \$1.75 per day.²⁰ Boys working in the mills averaged \$.93 per day, while those employed in the salt blocks averaged only \$.85 daily.²¹

Men's wages ranged from \$1.00 per day for some slab pilers, lumber shovers and other unskilled laborers to \$5.00 or \$6.00 per day for a foreman or a good filer or sawer.²² Although the average wage for all mill employees was \$1.77 per day,²³ the daily wages of men employed in the salt blocks averaged only \$1.73.²⁴

¹⁸"Strikes and Lockouts", op. cit., pp. 264-67. Average day's work was 11 hours and 10 minutes.

¹⁹Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., Table 27, pp. 220-253. Out of 5966 employees surveyed in 94 different mills and salt blocks, 410 were paid weekly, 4769 bi-weekly, and 1558 monthly.

²⁰ibid., Tables 3 and 5, pp. 120-21 and 123.

²¹ibid.

²²ibid., Table 2, pp. 112-19.

²³ibid.

²⁴ibid.

Of course, the above cited wages were averages and thus included not only common laborers but skilled workers and even some management personnel. The wages of common laborers were considerably lower. Although the average wage for mill employees, for example, was \$1.77 per day, seventy-two per cent of them received less than that figure.²⁵

Wages in the lumber industry generally tended to reflect the fluctuations in the price of lumber, which in turn was determined by the demand for lumber. During the early 1880's wages and prices increased significantly as the demand for lumber rose. The average daily wages of common labor in 1880, which ranged from \$1.27 to \$1.46 had, by 1883 improved to the extent that the range was \$1.38 to \$1.75.²⁶ But in 1884 the depression destroyed the market. The extent of the depression may be best indicated by production statistics. In 1884, from the beginning of navigation to July 1, the Saginaw River mills shipped 281,155,970 board feet of lumber and 45,598,000 shingles. In 1885 during the same period, the figures were 248,647,000 board feet of lumber and 33,742,000 shingles.²⁷ The decline in production sent wage and price levels tumbling. For example, the price of sawing lumber in 1882 had been \$2.75 per thousand board feet, but in 1885 it was down to \$2.00 and some cases \$1.75.²⁸ Mill men complained

²⁵Ibid. 3072 out of 4232 adult employees reported received \$1.75 or less per day.

²⁶Goodstein, op. cit., p. 200.

²⁷The Bay City Evening Press, July 1, 1885.

²⁸Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., p. 103.

that profits were down fifty per cent from 1881.²⁹ Wages began to skid in 1884 when the average daily wages of common labor ranged from \$1.31 to \$1.62.³⁰ They went even lower in 1885 as the mill owners uniformly reduced wages twelve to twenty-five per cent throughout the valley.³¹ For example, individual reductions averaged twenty-four cents per day, in one mill, twenty-six cents in another.³²

Although wages were reduced in 1884 and 1885, local mill owners felt that they were doing their employees a favor just by permitting them to work. One local mill owner, H. W. Sage, lamented that "this year and last year the wages we have paid have been more than our profits".³³ It was certainly a sad time, indeed, when one's entire work force earned more than the owner.

The depression not only reduced price and wage levels but also brought unemployment problems. By 1885 several hundred men, many of them foreigners, were jobless. The unemployment problem in Saginaw and Bay City was complicated even further by the fact that the area had passed its peak as a lumber producer. As the pine dwindled, unemployment increased.

Working conditions in area mills were as poor as elsewhere.

²⁹ibid.

³⁰Goodstein, op. cit., p. 201.

³¹The Bay City Evening Press, July 7, 1885.

³²Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., p. 103.

³³Goodstein, op. cit., p. 214. Letter of H. W. Sage to H. W. Sage and Company, West Bay City, July 10, 1885.

The long work day presented a particular strain in the mills where the huge saws were not equipped with safety devices. The Lumberman's Gazette devoted a column in each issue to a listing of sawmill accidents; often these concluded with advice to the worker to be more careful. The frequency of accidents did not lessen their horror. Generally there was no accident insurance to provide for the injured man or his family; in some cases employers made gifts of money and provisions; in many more the workers contributed toward a fund to protect their members, or gave directly to the victim.³⁴

Most of the common laborers were so poor that they could not afford adequate housing. Although exact figures are unavailable, it is known that many lived in boarding houses, barracks, and houses rented from their employers. Some of the larger mills in Saginaw and Bay City had company towns. H. W. Sage and Company, for example, practically owned the small community of Wenona near Bay City.³⁵ Wenona had several boarding houses, tenement houses and cottages and at least one company store, all of which were maintained at a healthy profit to the company.³⁶ Another mill, near Zilwaukee, even maintained its own schoolhouse and library.³⁷

The company towns of the Saginaw valley gave mill owners another unquestionable advantage over their employees.

Control of housing facilities and the ability to demand rents during strike periods when the income of the working population

³⁴Goodstein, op. cit., p. 202.

³⁵ibid., p. 203.

³⁶ibid., pp. 203-4. The cottages, for example, rented for \$6.00 to \$10.00 per month in 1873 and were undoubtedly somewhat higher in 1885. The Lumberman's Gazette (Bay City), 11, No. 11, p. 143.

³⁷Harold M. Foehl and Irene M. Hargreaves, The Story of Logging the White Pine in the Saginaw Valley, (Bay City: Red Keg Press, 1965), p. 44.

had been cut off was the most obvious weapon the employer could command as a result of the company town's dependence on the capital resources of one man or a few men whose interests were the same in this sphere of labor relations. Certainly it was a weapon which was used. The company town--even when modified by the entrance of new enterprises of a similar nature--tended to give the employer substantial and direct controls over his working force.³⁸

The mill owners in the Bay City-Saginaw area were extremely powerful businessmen who had adopted patronizing attitudes toward their employees. The mill men knew nothing but contempt for such labor-management innovations as unions, collective bargaining, and strikes. Many of the employees, steeped in individualism, found unionization a new and foreign idea. Yet labor organization did develop in the valley and it brought about some startling achievements.

The first effective efforts to organize labor in the Saginaw valley were carried out by the Knights of Labor who entered the area in the early 1880's. The Saginaw valley had several locals by June of 1882.³⁹ By 1885, Saginaw and Bay City were hot beds of labor organization. The various locals in the area reported that they represented a total of three thousand mill employees.⁴⁰ The Knights of Labor was not exclusively a laborer's organization, however. Its rolls included merchants, tradesmen, professional people and most of the city officials of Saginaw, East Saginaw, and Bay City.⁴¹

³⁸ Goodstein, op. cit., p. 205.

³⁹ Glazer, "Labor and Agrarian Movements in Michigan, 1876-1896", op. cit., p. 42, quoting the Unionist (Detroit), July 24, 1882.

⁴⁰ The Bay City Tribune, July 14, 1885.

⁴¹ Glazer, "Labor and Agrarian Movements in Michigan, 1876-1896", op. cit., p. 96.

The local assemblies of the Knights of Labor in Saginaw and Bay City were among the largest in the state and their leaders were quite influential.⁴² J. A. Quackenbush of Saginaw and W. E. Beard of Bay City were members of the State Executive Committee of the order, and Thomas B. Barry of Saginaw was a national vice-president.⁴³

Although the organization fought for the rights of labor, it was not very militant and generally opposed strikes and labor disturbances.

Despite the non-belligerent intent of the union and the strength of the mill owners, strikes did occur in the Saginaw valley with some regularity. Usually they were small sporadic affairs waged for an increase in wages or a decrease in hours of labor. They were never successful since the mill owners usually hired strike breakers to replace the protesters. One major strike, involving several thousand laborers demanding a reduction in hours, was attempted in June of 1872 but it was short lived and unsuccessful.⁴⁴

The largest strike of all started in Bay City during July of 1885. Usually referred to as the Great Strike of 1885, it was not only the largest strike in the Saginaw valley prior to that time, but it was the largest strike in the history of the Michigan lumber industry.

All authorities agree that the strike was initially the result of a misunderstanding with regard to the Michigan ten hour law, passed

⁴²Ibid., p. 42 citing Knights of Labor National Assembly, Proceedings, 1886, pp. 326-28.

⁴³Saginaw Daily Courier, June 3, 1885.

⁴⁴Goodstein, op. cit., pp. 206-212.

by the legislature earlier in the year. The law, which would have created a statutory ten hour work day in all business enterprises in the state, was not to go into effect until September 15, ninety days after the adjournment of the state legislature.⁴⁵ But for some reason, the mill employees and even many of the employers in Bay City thought that the law was to go into effect July 1.⁴⁶

No one seemed greatly concerned with the matter, however. No preparations were made to put the provision into effect, although the Knights of Labor in Saginaw did try to bring the matter to the attention of the mill men of that city and vicinity by issuing the following circular:

Saginaw, May 6, 1885

Dear Sir:

At a joint meeting of the labor organizations of Saginaw City and South Saginaw, a committee of seven was appointed to confer with a like committee of mill owners in regard to hours to be worked in the mills. We believe that the hours of labor in the mills should be reduced to 10 per day. We further believe that it will be better for mill owners, as well as to the workingmen; and for this reason we wish to meet the owners of mills on fair and impartial footing, and endeavor to come to a satisfactory understanding. We therefore request that the mill owners of Saginaw City and South Saginaw meet and appoint a committee of seven to confer with us. Please name the place of meeting and any time within two weeks from date of this request. Any place you may please to name in Saginaw City for the meeting of the Committee will satisfy us.

The K of L Hall, in Beach & Andre Block, Court Street, can be had free of charge, on any afternoon.

Yours respectfully,
Abbot E. Lawrence
Chairman Workingmen's Committee⁴⁷

⁴⁵Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., p. 93.

⁴⁶ibid.

⁴⁷ibid., p. 106. Lawrence was a local leader of the Knights of Labor and the City Marshall of Saginaw City.

The circular was quite unsuccessful and the proposed meeting apparently never took place.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, the circular does indicate that the laborers were concerned and that the mill owners were aware of the problem. Even the reputable Bay City Evening Press seemed convinced that the law was to go into effect in July. The newspaper, a pro-labor, Democratic journal, continued its ignorance even after the strike began, as is indicated by the following article.

The men are undoubtedly in the right, 10 hours having been made a legal day's work by the state legislature. When the law went into force some of the mill men complied with its provisions.⁴⁹

Most of the mills continued to run eleven hours or more per day during the first three days of July. Despite persistent rumors that the ten hour law was to be in effect, very few mill owners did anything to comply with the law, and neither did their employees. The mills closed on Saturday, July 4, for the holiday and remained closed for the remainder of the weekend.⁵⁰

Most of the Bay City mills recommenced operations on Monday, July 6, with no new provisions for the ten hour day. A few mills, primarily those located north of Bay City, near the mouth of the Saginaw River, remained closed for repairs or for lack of available men. It was at one of these closed mills, one belonging to W. B. Rouse, that the strike began. The following is mill owner Rouse's version

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Bay City Evening Press, July 6, 1885.

⁵⁰ Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., p. 93.

of the sequence of incidents which launched the strike.

My mill was closed on Monday, July 6, for the purpose of cleaning out the boilers. Some six or seven of the men who were about the mill took their dinner pails and started for home. One man took a bandana handkerchief from another man's pocket, fastened it to a stick, and, as they were near McEwen's mill, waived it in the air and shouted, "Hurrah for ten hours." McEwen's mill was not running, some of the men not having got over the "fourth", and the others were around the mill. The shouting of the men started them going, and the strike began. The man has been here since, and says he only did it for fun and did not think of starting a strike. But it looks as though McEwen's men had been talking it over and were all ready for the word.

The papers published the fact of the passage of the "ten-hour law", but did not state the time when it went into effect, and many mill men thought it was to become a law July 1. I had paid no attention to it and did not know when it took effect.⁵¹

From McEwen's mill the strikers reportedly marched to other parts of the city, closing mills as they went. Within three days they had closed most of the mills in the city. Their progress was reported to the Michigan Bureau of Labor by Sheriff Brennan, of Bay County.

This strike commenced on Monday last, the 6th inst. Some mills in lower part of city, or rather Dalsonville, were closed for repairs. Men from these mills had meetings with men who have not been working this season, under the lead of three men named Brookmeyer, Ratelle, and Diedrich. They were formerly mill workmen. I got a telephone from Eddy Bros. that a crowd was trying to stop their mill. I went down and saw Brookmeyer and others, probably one hundred. I told them they must not interfere with any mills or any workmen. They all said they would obey the laws. There was no danger of the regular mill employees striking if left alone.

The crowd went from there to Pitts and Cranage's mill. A number of Dalson, Chapin, and Co's men went with them, that mill having shut down. The men working for Pitts and Cranage would not quit work.

Monday night a large meeting was held in the first ward, some four hundred being present. D. C. Blinn, one "Revere" and others made speeches, advising the closing of every industry.

Pitts and Cranage's mill started Tuesday morning, but the men went right out. The crowd did not force them out, but stood outside the mill beckoning and shouting for men to quit, and they

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 93, statement of W. B. Rouse.

quit and shut down the mill.

The crowd sent a committee into Eddy Bros.' mill but the workmen would not talk with them, but kept on working. They then went to Hay, Butman & Co's mill where they were determined to stop the mill. I had six men with me and ordered them to desist and not to interfere with the mill.

Tuesday night they had another big meeting in the park. Wednesday morning the crowd had doubled by accessions from the mill men where the mills had closed and from idlers. Probably 500 went to Folsom & Arnold's. I ordered them not to go into the mill or interfere, and none of them entered the mill. Folsom and Arnold's men-a part of them-had not reported for work in the morning, and the rest of them weakened and would not work. I think some of them were afraid to go to work.

The crowd then went to the pipe factory, or pipe works. I went with them. A committee was sent into the mill and the men quit work and joined the crowd. Eddy Bros.' men also quit. The crowd, now increased to probably 800, went to Hay, Butman & Co.' mill. They were getting more boisterous and noisy and were determined to stop the mill. They had clubs and were shouting; men went into the mill; they were ordered out, and went. Loaded carts attempted to come out, and the crowd commenced throwing clubs at the horses and drivers. I had six deputies and six policemen and endeavored to stop them. The men had clubs, and both myself and my officers were hit; I was hit with a slab. We arrested two of the leaders and I sent them to the station, a third man was arrested at the Third Street Bridge for striking a policeman, and he was sent to the station. We in the end drove them off.

I then went to Birdsall & Barker's mill, but it had been shut down before the crowd or myself arrived.⁵²

Sheriff Brennan's sketchy report included only a few of the major mills, but by Wednesday all of the forty odd mills in Bay City and vicinity had been closed. The mills in West Bay City were not struck but were closed voluntarily by their owners until the question of hours was settled.⁵³ By June 10, the salt blocks of the city had

⁵² Ibid., pp. 94-95. Statement of Sheriff Brennan of Bay County.

⁵³ The Bay City Evening Press, July 6, 7, and 8, 1885. Mills closed by strikers included: Monday, J. R. Hall's shingle mill, S. G. Gate's mill and all other mills north of Center Street in Bay City; Tuesday, Miller Bros.' mill; Wednesday, Rust Bros. & Co., McGraw's mill, Murphy and Dorr's mill, E. J. Hargrease & Son's mill. All of the mills in West Bay City including those belonging to L. L. Hotchkiss & Co., W. H. Malone & Co., H. W. Sage & Co., and Geo. C. Meyer were closed by their owners Wednesday before the strikers came near them.

similarly been closed.

The men were generally orderly and caused absolutely no trouble except on the third day of the strike when a few strikers attempted to forcibly stop the Hay, Butman & Co. mill from operating and a few of the presumed leaders were arrested for assault.⁵⁴

The strikers wanted a ten hour day at the same wages as prevailed under the eleven hour system. Several of the mill men were perfectly willing to grant a ten hour day, with a proportionate reduction in wages, but this was unacceptable to the strikers.⁵⁵ The strike continued.

The leader of the strikers was the fiery and fanatical Daniel C. Blinn, editor of the Labor Vindicator, a Bay City weekly founded in 1884.⁵⁶ Blinn had addressed the first mass meeting of the strikers on the evening of July 6 and from that time on had been recognized as the leader of the strikers.⁵⁷ He was an outstanding orator, an able organizer and an outspoken radical. He was also an important official in the Knights of Labor.⁵⁸ According to a biographer:

⁵⁴ According to The Bay City Evening Press, July 8, 1885, the trouble was caused at the Rust Bros.' mill, which was next to the Hay, Butman & Co. mill. Three men were arrested. Jacob Frenski for assaulting a cart driver and Godfrey Schulz and Joseph Geroski for assaulting patrolmen. The arrested men were later released by the Mayor of Bay City, George H. Shearer.

⁵⁵ Ibid., July 6, 1885.

⁵⁶ Geo. E. Butterfield (ed.), Bay County Past and Present, (Bay City, C. & J. Gregory, Publishers, n.d.), p. 28.

⁵⁷ Goodstein, op. cit., p. 213.

⁵⁸ Saginaw Daily Courier, June 26, 1884.

Blinn rejected entirely the individualistic philosophy of the employers in dealing with their labor force. He saw the strike as a class struggle in which labor as a separate interest was arraigned against the rest of the community, its employer.⁵⁹

Blinn at the outset of the strike encouraged the men to close every industry in the city and to make no concessions to the capitalists.⁶⁰ He helped direct the Bay City strike from the beginning and played a large role in expanding the scope of the strike to include the even larger lumber center of Saginaw.

On the day after the inception of the Bay City strike, several hundred dockwallopers in Saginaw had also walked off the job demanding higher wages. Their wages had been reduced during the previous year to thirty cents per hour and they demanded an increase to forty cents.⁶¹ They also wanted to end the "jobbing" system on the Saginaw River. The "jobber" was a middleman labor contractor who received a contract to load a vessel and then hired men to do the work while he did nothing.⁶²

The Saginaw strikers were almost immediately joined by Rep. Thomas Barry, a member of the state legislature and the most powerful

⁵⁹Goodstein, op. cit., p. 213.

⁶⁰Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., p. 94, statement of Sheriff Brennan. The Bay City Evening Press, July 11, 1885.

⁶¹Saginaw Daily Courier, June 25, 1884; The Bay City Evening Press, July 9, 1885; statement of T. Dailey Mower, Chief of Police, East Saginaw, Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., p. 97. Dockwallopers in Bay City and Saginaw in 1884 were receiving between thirty-five and fifty cents per hour.

⁶²The Bay City Evening Press, July 21, 1885.

official of the Knights of Labor in Michigan,⁶³ who became their leader. Barry advised the men that they would have greater success if they joined the Knights of Labor, which many of them promptly proceeded to do.⁶⁴

The dock wallopers of Bay City joined the strike on July 8, and sent a delegation to Saginaw where they developed their strike strategy.⁶⁵ Many of the Saginaw mill workers were reportedly also on the verge of striking, but were waiting for a favorable opportunity.⁶⁶

In order to provide that opportunity, Barry looked to Bay City for aid. On July 9, he and a number of dock wallopers chartered a steamer for Bay City with the intention of joining forces with Blinn's

⁶³S. D. Bingham, Early History of Michigan, (Lansing: Thorp & Godfrey, State Printers and Binders, 1888), p. 74; Maurice M. Ramsey, "The Knights of Labor in Michigan, 1878-1888", (unpublished Master's thesis, Wayne State University, 1932), p. 24 citing Industrial Leaders of Today (Detroit, 1888), p. 12. Barry was born in Cohoes, New York, (a small town in Albany County) July 17, 1852 and never attended a day of school in his life. An axemaker by trade, he worked in Pennsylvania and Ontario and Cleveland, Ohio, before coming to East Saginaw in 1882. In Cleveland he organized an axemakers union which staged a strike in 1882 for which he was discharged and blacklisted by the Axemakers Association. In Saginaw he worked at various jobs and gained a reputation as a labor organizer. He became one of the first members of the Knights of Labor in Michigan and from 1883 to 1888 served on the national general executive board of the Knights, eventually rising to the position of vice-president of the order. He disagreed with Grand Master Workman, Terrence Powderly, on a number of issues, including the use of the strike, Barry contending that strikes should be used whenever necessary.

While a member of the Knights, Barry launched his political career. Running as a Greenback Democrat, he won election to the Michigan legislature in 1884, defeating his Republican opponent, a mill owner named E. R. Phinney, by the slim margin of 2390 to 2337 votes. In Lansing he helped draft the ten hour law.

⁶⁴Saginaw Daily Courier, July 9, 1885.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid.

strikers and bringing back reinforcements to expand the strike in Saginaw.

The Bay City Evening Press reported Barry's arrival in the following article:

The steamer W. R. Burk, of the river line, brought down from East Saginaw this morning a large load of stevedores accompanied by Representative Barry. Upon their arrival in this city the men marched to the Madison Avenue park, where Mr. Barry, the author of the ten hour bill announced that he was not in condition to speak but would be prepared to do justice to himself in the afternoon. Accordingly an adjournment was made until 1 o'clock p.m.⁶⁷

The meeting that afternoon fulfilled Barry's expectations and led to a general mill strike throughout the entire Saginaw Valley.

The meeting of the Striking workmen at Madison park yesterday afternoon proved a most successful and enthusiastic one, fully 2,000 people being present. Representative Barry was the first speaker and occupied fully two and one-half hours. He proved to be a most eloquent and forcible orator and was frequently interrupted by long and prolonged applause. He handled the labor question in a most masterly manner and made many friends among the laboring classes. He was followed by D. C. Blinn, editor of the Labor Vindicator, who was well received. Mayor Shearer made a short address and was followed by James A. Green of the mill firm of Green & Stevens. This gentleman electrified his hearers by saying that the firm would operate their mill on the 10 hour plan at full wages. Continuing he cautioned the men to hold firm and promised \$500 in support of the movement. He was loudly cheered, and after he had concluded the men formed in line and, headed by a band, they marched to Third Street, thence to Water Street, thence to Center Street, and on Center Street to F. & P. M. railroad depot, where the visitors from East Saginaw boarded a train for home. Throughout the day the greatest enthusiasm prevailed and the men received most cheering reports from mill men. Before evening it had been decided that the men would visit East Saginaw this morning, in an effort to induce the employees of the mills in that city to join issue with them.⁶⁸

The following morning, June 10, more than one thousand Bay City strikers, led by Barry and Blinn, boarded two barges and a steamer and

⁶⁷The Bay City Evening Press, July 9, 1885.

⁶⁸Ibid., July 10, 1885.

made their way upstream to Saginaw, closing many of the mills along the way.⁶⁹

News of their journey traveled before them and the city officials of the Saginaws made hasty preparations for their arrival. Early that morning the mayors of both East Saginaw and Saginaw City, plus the county sheriff and the Board of Police commissioners met and issued the following proclamation, intended to control the anticipated trouble.

July 10, 1885

In view of the present condition of affairs we deem it proper to make public the following statement of the course which the duly constituted authorities of the cities of East Saginaw and Saginaw City and of the County of Saginaw will pursue with respect to the preservation of order.

All lawful assembling of the people for the discussion in quiet and orderly manner will be permitted, but all riotous and disorderly assemblages, parades, and demonstrations liable to lead to injury to property, public or private, or to the disturbance of the peace are strictly forbidden. Any attempt to interfere with private property or business, or interrupt the same is expressly prohibited. All employers and all employees now engaged in work and who desire to be protected in the continuance of their work will be protected when proper requisition is made by all the lawful means at our command.

Until further orders all persons engaged in the sale of intoxicating liquors in either of said cities are hereby required to close their respective places of business.

John S. Estabrook, Mayor of East Saginaw
Charles Benjamin, Mayor, Saginaw City
Angus McIntyre, Sheriff, Saginaw County⁷⁰

A number of special policemen were also appointed for the occasion. The strikers were obviously not welcome.

When the strikers arrived, Barry and Blinn were promptly

⁶⁹ ibid.

⁷⁰ Saginaw Daily Courier, July 11, 1885.

invited to a conference with the city officials to discuss the anticipated walkout.

Both Barry and Blinn came. Barry was asked what he and the crowd intended to do. He said he had invited these men to come from Bay City and that they were going to the different mills to invite the men to quit work and ask for ten hours. If any refused to quit they would leave them alone and go on. That was all they intended to do. Mr. Barry, said, in effect, that he would hold his liberty and his life responsible for the peaceable action of the men. We had issued a proclamation; Barry said there was no need of it--there would be no demonstrating, violent or ungentlemanly conduct. We did not think the crowd would go to the mills in a mass. Mr. Barry gave us to understand that a committee, would visit each mill, and if the men did not want to quit they would leave them.

In the afternoon Blinn and Barry rejoined the strikers where they made final preparations for the assault against the Saginaw mills. Barry in a stirring speech again accepted responsibility for the strike and cautioned the men against violence.

Before starting out Rep. Barry made a brief address in which he referred to the proclamations issued by Mayors Estabrook and Benjamin, and Sheriff McIntyre, and stated that in his opinion there was no cause of it. He believed the men would act peaceably and would make no riotous demonstration. He took the credit of being the principal leader in the movement in favor of ten hours as a day's work, and although he was anxious to see it succeed yet it was his desire to have system and order observed in the achievement of their purpose. Concluding he said:

"If there are any depredations and destruction of property, I will be responsible. I will take that responsibility. Look to me! I have that confidence in the men whose cause I champion, that they will not do anything wrong. (addressing strikers) I place my life, my liberty in your hands: see that you protect it. We have a moral right; that right we will defend. We have the sympathy of all liberal thinking people--in fact of all good citizens, and we will by our behavior, merit a continuance of that sympathy."⁷²

⁷¹Statement of Charles L. Benjamin, Mayor of Saginaw City. Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., p. 100.

⁷²Saginaw Daily Courier, July 11, 1885. ---

Barry then led the strikers to Carrollton and Saginaw City. Carrying placards reading "10 hours or no sawdust" and "In God We Trust: they proceeded to shut mill after mill.

Although many mills were closed by their owners before the strikers reached them, the common procedure was for the strikers to surround a mill, douse the fires and turn off the machinery. Generally speaking, the Saginaw mill workers were in no hurry to quit work and on some occasions quit work only because physical force and violence were used to intimidate them.⁷³ The strikers hardly lived up to Barry's gentlemanly predictions as is indicated by the following statements from Saginaw police officials.

There was, I think, from 1,000 to 1,200 in the crowd when they crossed the bridge, about one-half from Bay City, Barry and Blinn leading. They marched very regularly across the bridge, but when they reached Patterson's mill, which is just at the end of the bridge, they made a grand rush for the mill. Part of them were armed with clubs and began shouting "Shut her down," "Shut her down", "Come out", "Come out", They crowded into the mill in a big jam. The machinery was kept running for some minutes after the crowd went into the mill--perhaps five or seven--but was then closed. The mill men did not fall in with the crowd; they did not seem to be prepared for it, and very few went with the strikers when they left.

The crowd then went to Whittier's mill and acted the same. Neither Barry nor Blinn tried to stop them. The mill was closed; then the crowd divided, part going to Williams' mill and part to C. K. Eddy's. I saw them going among the slab pilers, pulling and hauling, the slab men about and obliging them to quit and go with them.⁷⁴

After closing Williams' and Eddy's mills the crowd got out of hand and became a virtual mob. Their subsequent actions were described

⁷³Saginaw Daily Courier, July 11, 1885.

⁷⁴Statement of Captain Walsh, East Saginaw Police, Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., p. 97.

by the Saginaw County Sheriff.

From Williams' mill they went to N. A. Barnard's. Myself and undersheriff took a short cut over to Barnard's from Williams' mill. The street gate was locked and police officers at the gate. Think there were six - four, or five, or six--may be more; we only had ten in the city. A large crowd remained at the gate. Mr. Barnard told me he forbid them coming in. Mr. Barry and some more men came into the yard; they must have jumped the fence, but I did not see them, as I was inside the grounds. Two or three men, one being Barry, went up into mill, and after being there some time came down. Barry stood talking with me and the undersheriff; told us men wanted ten hours, but did not like to quit. While talking with Barry about the situation, a crowd of, I should judge, one hundred came through the gate into the mill yard. Think they pushed the gate before them... The crowd marched up to the mill and commenced throwing chunks, blocks, clubs, or whatever you have in mind to call them, at the mill. Barry ordered them to stop right off, insisted upon it, and they stopped. The mill was closed after the club throwing. Barry's influence made them stop throwing clubs.

I then heard some men had drawn a revolver on some of the crowd, one of Barnard's men. I saw a cluster together in lower part of the mill and was making for them when Mr. Chapman, the mill foreman, was passing through the lower part of the mill; some one in the crowd said "there he is", and the crowd surged right in towards him and commenced striking at him with clubs, Mr. Chapman backing away from them as well as he could. Barry got to him first, got hold of Chapman and kept backing with him towards the stairway or roadway leading to the tramway, and ordered the crowd at the top of his voice to stop, at the same time gesticulating and swinging his arms. Barry at last got Chapman on the tramway. I and my undersheriff got to the roadway, and, with the assistance of some men in the crowd whom I did not know, succeeded in keeping the crowd from going on the tramway, and then it quieted down.

The crowd then left Barnard's and went to Cameron & Merrill's mill and Green, Ring & Co's mill, but the mills had been closed before the men arrived.

They (the crowd) then came back to the bridge and went across to South Saginaw. I did not follow. Don't think the full crowd went to upper mills.⁷⁵

The shutdown continued the following day, Saturday, July 11.

Saturday forenoon, Blinn spoke to the crowd and urged and advised them to stop every industry in the city; drive watchmen from the yards; barnmen from the barns, so that the proprietors

⁷⁵Statement of Angus McIntyre, Sheriff of Saginaw County, Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., pp. 99-100.

would have to take care of their own horses; and even the servant girls from the kitchens.⁷⁶

The strikers proceeded to close all of the mills and salt blocks which had not previously shut down.⁷⁷ Approximately four hundred strikers closed everything on the west side of the river from Carrollton to Zilwaukee, then proceeded back up river on the east side.⁷⁸

By evening all of the mills and salt blocks in Saginaw City, East Saginaw, Carrollton and Zilwaukee were idle. The strikers had met relatively little opposition, since most of the mills were already closed when the crowd appeared. The Bay City Evening Press summed up the situation with the following statement: "The manufacturers seemed determined to shut down and let the mills lay idle for an indefinite period rather than yield to the demands of men not in their employ."⁷⁹ Even the Tittabawassee Boom Company was forced to suspend operations.⁸⁰

The strike put over three thousand Saginaw area men out of work and nearly that many more in Bay City.⁸¹ But very few of the Saginaw employees, not more than six per cent according to The Bay City Evening Press had joined the strikers.⁸² Although their working conditions and wages were just as poor as the Bay City workers, most

⁷⁶Statement of Sheriff Brennan, (Bay County), ibid., p. 95.

⁷⁷The Bay City Evening Press, July 11, 1885.

⁷⁸Saginaw Daily Courier, July 12, 1885.

⁷⁹The Bay City Evening Press, July 10, 1885.

⁸⁰Saginaw Daily Courier, July 11, 1885.

⁸¹"Strikes and Lockouts", op. cit., pp. 264-67.

⁸²The Bay City Evening Press, July 11, 1885.

of the Saginaw men had been forced to quit work.

Whereas the citizens of Bay City tended to sympathize with the strikers and aid them in their plight, many Saginaw citizens, led by the management oriented Saginaw Daily Courier, considered the situation atrocious and blamed Barry, Blinn and the Bay City strikers for their troubles.

It will not be disputed that nine-tenths of the mill employees at this end of the River were satisfied with the existing order of things and were opposed to a strike. The logic of events the past two days conclusively attest the truth of this assertion. While those who desired the ten hour system had a perfect right to quit work, they had no right to interfere with those who were satisfied with things as they were, and in utter absence of any demand on the part of a majority of the wage workers at this end of the river for a change in the arrangement as to hours, the authorities were negligent and lacking in their duty in permitting men from another county to come in and stop the wheels of industry by main force. If even a majority of mill employees in Saginaw County had expressed a desire to work only 10 hours, and had, through the appointment of committees, asked the mill owners to confer with them on the subject, there is little doubt that arrangements mutually satisfactory to all interested would have resulted. Ten hours is long enough, but if men are willing and anxious to work 11 hours, they should be protected in so doing. Now that the event, which is deplored, has arrived it is hoped that the mill employees of Saginaw County, who were forced into idleness against their will, will take the matter of an amicable adjustment of the trouble into their own hands. It is hoped and believed that the mill owners will meet them halfway and in a friendly spirit.⁸³

Several errors should be noted in the Courier article. For example, the Saginaw workers, two months prior to the strike, had petitioned the mill owners for a ten hour day and had established a committee to carry out their request.⁸⁴ In addition, the Saginaw shingle workers had demanded more pay or fewer hours on July 4, only a

⁸³Saginaw Daily Courier, July 12, 1885.

⁸⁴Above, p. 105.

few days prior to the strike.⁸⁵ Thus the Saginaw workers were not "willing and anxious to work 11 hours". They preferred to work a ten hour day, but were too conservative to strike for it. When the strike was forced upon them, many Saginaw laborers, like a large number of their counterparts in Bay City, acquiesced to the situation and refused to return to work until the matter was settled.⁸⁶ Generally speaking the Saginaw men continued to look to Bay City for leadership in the strike and manifested very little effort to settle the strike on their own.

Despite the tense situation, labor leaders in both Saginaw and Bay City commenced work on a settlement of the controversy. A committee of seven was appointed in Saginaw, headed by Chauncy McCarthy, a Circuit Court Commissioner.⁸⁷ McCarthy issued the following statement.

For the purpose of coming to an understanding and affecting a settlement in the present controversy between the mill men and their employers, it is requested that a committee of seven lumber manufacturers of Saginaw City be appointed to meet with a like committee already appointed by ~~and~~ on the part of the laboring men for a discussion of the subject.⁸⁸

McCarthy's committee, however, did not have the support of a majority of the mill employees of Saginaw and he failed to win a conference with the mill owners.

The strikers in Bay City had better luck. Since they were the originators and prime movers of the strike, it was apparent that the

⁸⁵Saginaw Daily Courier, July 14, 1885.

⁸⁶Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., p. 101.

⁸⁷Saginaw Daily Courier, July 11, 1885.

⁸⁸Ibid., July 12, 1885.

first efforts at settlement should come from them.

A meeting between Bay City labor and management was called for July 11. D. C. Blinn served as chairman. A committee composed of George Boston, W. S. Fisk and S. G. Felker represented the strikers. Selwyn Eddy, S. McLean, F. Bradley and E. Hargreave represented the mill owners.⁸⁹

After some organizational delay, the strikers' committee presented the following resolution.

Resolved. That we, the sawmill men of Bay City and West Bay City demand from our employers:

- 1st -- That ten hours shall constitute a day's work.
- 2nd -- That we shall be paid the same wages as heretofore paid for 11 hours.
- 3rd -- That we shall be paid every two weeks.
- 4th -- That all men now out shall be reinstated in their former positions and no discrimination made in the future against men because of their connection with this movement.⁹⁰

The strikers were aware by this time that the ten hour law had not yet gone into effect, yet they continued to stress this demand. Now that they were out of work they decided ten hours was enough for a day's work, regardless of when the state law went into effect.⁹¹

The laborers' point of view was best expressed by The Bay City Evening Press.

The conviction is quite general that ten hours a day for labor is enough and that the rapid work of the mills pursued for ten hours puts the human machine under as great a strain as it can stand without inducing premature decay of its powers.⁹²

⁸⁹The Bay City Evening Press, July 11, 1885.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid., July 16, 1885.

⁹²Ibid., July 13, 1885.

Now at the same time the laborers wanted to maintain their wages at the same level as before. They had already suffered recent wage reductions and could not afford another.

The third demand was included because most of the Bay City laborers, who were paid monthly, hoped to cut down on credit expenses by being paid more frequently.

The laboring men would be much benefitted by receiving their pay oftener than once a month. More frequent payment would enable them to avoid running accounts at the stores, which is always more expensive than paying cash and less satisfactory all around. People always do more buying when they trade on account and in many cases pay higher prices, because the dealer must protect himself against bad accounts. The most honest people sometimes find themselves unable to pay and against such accidents the trade protects itself. Give a laboring man his wages every week or every two weeks and as a general thing he will be more frugal and inclined to save for he has his money in hand and his knowledge of its power and value are increased, and when he pays it out for things it will always be more carefully.⁹³

The last demand was included to assure that no labor leader would be fired or blacklisted by vengeful employers for participation in the strike.

The demands were presented to the mill owners, who returned to their colleagues to discuss the issues. A second committee of mill owners, composed of Eddy, J. L. Dolsen and L. L. Hotchkiss returned in the afternoon to announce that the terms were unacceptable. The mill owners were proud men and objected to any "outsiders" or laborers telling them how to run their mills.⁹⁴ The mill owners were unwilling to concede any point to the laborers' committee.

⁹³ ibid.

⁹⁴ The Bay City Evening Press, July 11, 1885.

The mill owners' position on hours and wages was that their only hope of profit rested with the eleven hour system since the depression had reduced lumber prices to rock bottom levels.⁹⁵ They insisted that they must run eleven hours or not run at all. The mill owners' position was best described later by Thomas H. McGraw, a lumber man from Bay City.

...it is very evident why the same wages cannot be paid for 10 hours' work as for 11. Three years ago coarse, common lumber was bringing \$11 and \$12 per thousand; now it is worth only \$7.50 and \$8. At that time we received \$2.75 for saw bills; now contracts are taken for \$1.50 in Saginaw and \$1.75 and \$2 in Bay City. The freights make the difference in price. The great trouble arises from the fact that there are mills in the Saginaw valley that can not be supplied with its lumber. The mills were built before the vast lumber resources were so seriously cut into as they are now. These mills must all be kept running, and to do so the saw bills must be made seriously low. Of course, wages must be in proportion.

There is another reason, too, why there is much less profit in lumber now than formerly. It is the variation in quality of lumber within the different grades. Now, along from 1875 to 1878 the grades of lumber would not vary in price from \$5, \$10, and \$30 to \$6, \$12, and \$35. The best timber has been cut and although we now have good lumber it varies much more in prices. It runs now from \$6, \$12, and \$36 to \$10, \$20, and \$40. Most of it is nearer the former than the latter figures.... In seasons of depression in prices or when other causes have arisen, making profit from the mills impossible, we had had our salt to fall back upon. We have at seasons run the mills at great expenses to keep the men employed and money circulating, relying for profit upon the salt. Now this is changed. The discovery of brine in other parts of Michigan have seriously reduced the price of salt. I tell you the mill men have paid all the wages they could. At the little profit, it was necessary to do an extra amount of work to make the season amount to anything. That is the reason that so many of the mills have been running 11 hours.⁹⁶

⁹⁵Saginaw Daily Courier, July 11, 1885. Mill owners claimed that the current price paid for sawing was the lowest ever paid on the Saginaw River. They further insisted that reduction of sawing prices from the previous year amounted to fifty cents per day for every employee.

⁹⁶The Bay City Evening Press, July 21, 1885 quoting from the Detroit Journal, n.d. A sawbill was the price charged by a mill for cutting 1000 board feet of lumber.

The employees were unimpressed with the plight of the mill owners.

Mr. Gould, of the strikers committee, said he did not see any use to prolong the meeting. The workingmen could not stand a reduction and ten hours was long enough for any man to work. He thought the committee had its duty and if the mill men could make no further report the strike would have to be continued.

Mr. Buckowski said he represented probably the lowest paid men in the valley--the Polanders. These men could not submit to a reduction in wages. They had large families and done the lowest grade work, hence they received the lowest pay. The wives were oppressed by the long working hours of their husbands. The men, their wives and children should be considered.

Mr. Gould said that the laboring men could not be held responsible for the errors of mill men who were compelled to sell their stock at a lower figure than what it cost them. When the mill owners found their error they always made the men suffer for it by taking it out of their wages.⁹⁷

Since compromise seemed out of the question, the meeting was adjourned.

The strikers were thus far victorious. They had two able leaders in Barry and Blinn, they had some support from the community, and they had some degree of organization. Most of the mills in the area were closed and the strike was spreading further, as the ships' carpenters, stove-cutters and boot blacks of Bay City joined the strike.⁹⁸

Lumber production had been severely limited. Lumber shipments from Bay City during the week prior to the strike (June 29-July 3) totaled 18,176,468 board feet and that week had been only five days long.⁹⁹ During the first week of the strike (July 6-11) lumber

⁹⁷The Bay City Evening Press, July 11, 1885.

⁹⁸Ibid., July 13, 1885.

⁹⁹Ibid., July 6, 1885.

shipments from Bay City amounted to only 9,276,000 board feet.¹⁰⁰ The week following the strike, lumber shipments were so low that they were not even printed.

Over the weekend the situation changed somewhat. On Saturday evening Blinn staged a monster rally in Bay City at which he apparently exploded with an extremely volatile tirade against the mill owners, although this was not evident from the newspaper reports of the meeting.

Among other things:

...he advised the strikers to hold out firmly for their rights and see that every manufactory on the river was kept closed.... He advised the men to be orderly and to not molest the water works. He said that the mill men would have another meeting Monday morning.... The labor committee had no more meetings appointed, but after the mill men held their Monday morning session a power greater than that yet manifested would take hold and aid the strikers. It was understood that he meant the Knights of Labor who thus far have not, as a body, been identified with the strike.¹⁰¹

Blinn had apparently been counting all along on assistance from the Knights of Labor. Their support, he hoped, would unify the strikers and bring them aid from the unions' strike fund.

Blinn was undoubtedly quite chagrined, therefore, when the local District Assembly of the Knights of Labor met on Sunday, July 12 and approved the following resolution.

Whereas, This Assembly, which up to this time has taken no action in the labor troubles now agitating the public mind; therefore,

¹⁰⁰ ibid., July 11, 1885.

¹⁰¹ ibid., July 13 and 14, 1885. Blinn had reportedly advised that all manufacturing establishments in the city be closed by force if necessary, but there is no record of any incendiary remarks uttered by him, and he later denied advocating violence or destruction of property in any form.

Resolved, That in order to restore confidence and bring about a peaceful solution of existing difficulties, we repudiate the assumed or pretended leadership of D. C. Blinn, and disclaim any sympathy with or disposition to support any of the unlawful incendiary propositions made at Madison Park yesterday.¹⁰²

Although the union denounced Blinn it did generally support the cause of the workingmen. The remainder of their resolution read:

Resolved, That we wish to put ourselves on record as being in favor of the starting up of any sawmill whose proprietors are now or may at any time in the future accede to the demands of the laboring men as set forth by the laboring men's committee.

1st--That ten hours shall constitute a day's work.

2nd--That we shall receive the same wages as heretofore paid for 11 hours work.

3rd--That we shall be paid every two weeks.

4th--That all men now out shall be reinstated in their former positions and no discrimination made in the future against men because of their connection with this movement.¹⁰³

The union in effect took over leadership of the strike from that point on as Blinn fell deeper and deeper into disrepute. The first action of the Knights was to call for another meeting with the mill owners. The meeting was held July 13.

At 2:15 o'clock this afternoon the Knights of Labor committee met a committee of the mill men, composed of Messrs. L. L. Hotchkiss, Alex Folsom, R. Hall, John L. Dolsen, Selwyn Eddy, Elmer Bradley, and F. D. Pierson, in the office of City Surveyor Turner.

Mr. Hotchkiss announced that he had been chosen chairman of the committee, and that the members of that committee had come to settle the differences and report to the mill owners tomorrow morning.

C. F. Gibson, chairman of the Knights of Labor committee, announced that although the strike had been attributed to the Knights of Labor such was not the case. The Knights of Labor had not taken hold of the matter until it became apparent that a mediator was necessary. The committee represented at least 3,000 men, and would be glad to receive any propositions from the mill men. The K. of L. committee would like to hear what portion of the

¹⁰² ibid., July 13, 1885.

¹⁰³ ibid.

propositions made by the laboring men would be accepted and what portion rejected and what would be submitted in place of the portion rejected.¹⁰⁴

The mill men were unwilling to either deal with the union committee or to make any compromises. After bickering back and forth with the union men, the mill owners retired to another room to deliberate among themselves. They finally returned with the following statement:

Your committee find the condition of things a little different from what they expected. It was expected to meet a committee for discussing the question and are asked for a proposition to be submitted to a committee of Knights of Labor as mediators. They are not prepared to make a proposition of themselves, not having been authorized to do so, but will bring the matter before a full meeting tomorrow.¹⁰⁵

The meeting adjourned immediately thereafter. Although the two committees made arrangements to meet again, negotiations ceased for several days.

But that meeting never took place. The mill owners held a secret meeting on Tuesday morning, July 14 at which the following resolutions were adopted. They clearly indicate the unwillingness of the mill owners to recognize the Knights of Labor as mediators.

Preamble and Resolutions

Whereas, The mills of Bay County have been closed by means of force and intimidation, by men not employed in the mills, and

Whereas, The announcement is made that the mills should not be run except by the adoption of rates of wages and hours of labor dictated by men other than the owners and employes of the mills, and

Whereas, The city authorities have thus far been unable to protect the mills and laborers from interferences and intimidation, and

Whereas, Our regard for our rights as business men will not

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

permit unauthorized persons to assume and manage our business, while our duty as citizens forbids that we should provoke rioting and violence on our premises, which the city authorities are unable to suppress, therefore,

Resolved, As the sense of the mill owners present that we will not start again until we can do so without molestation or intimidation, and with such protection to our business and to the men in our employ as of right belongs to every citizen, and further,

Resolved, That we have no propositions to make or negotiations to carry on with any parties other than those in our employ and further,

Resolved, That the general rate of wages paid in the mills was as high as the business justified; that the men employed in the mills as a general rule were satisfied; that whenever any grievances existed we have always been ready to confer with the men and to set right whatever was wrong, and that in the future as in the past we shall endeavor to do justice to our men and cultivate the most amicable relations with them.¹⁰⁶

The mill owners in Saginaw met a few days later and drafted an identical set of resolutions.¹⁰⁷

The mill owners in both Bay City and Saginaw had contended all along that their mills had not been closed by their own discontented employees but had instead been stopped by a band of unemployed hoodlums, led by Blinn and Barry, who had forced their loyal employees to quit through threats of violence. These same hoodlums had been keeping the mills shut by continued threats. Therefore, from the mill owners' point of view, any attempts at negotiations with the Knights of Labor would be fruitless, as long as the mob remained in control. If, however, the mob could be controlled, they were confident that the mills could start again.

There was some evidence to support the beliefs of the mill owners. During the first days of the strike, several mill workers had

¹⁰⁶ ibid., July 15, 1885.

¹⁰⁷ Saginaw Daily Courier, July 19, 1885.

been injured by the strikers. Blinn had reportedly suggested riots and violence, wild rumors were circulating in Bay City that the strikers intended to shut down the water works and fire the city.¹⁰⁸

The mill owners, therefore, felt quite justified in demanding protection for their property and employees.

Local officials in both Bay City and Saginaw, had, in fact, already taken steps to provide that protection.

On July 13th and 14th the officials of Saginaw and Bay City, respectively, issued proclamations forbidding work interference, riotous behavior and even public assembly.¹⁰⁹ The Bay City decree, for example, read as follows:

To the citizens of Bay City:

For several days past large bodies of men have congregated in various places and have paraded the streets of Bay City, going to mills and other manufacturing establishments, and by threats and other means of intimidation, have prevented citizens of this city from pursuing their lawful avocation therein. We have repeatedly requested these men to desist from so doing and they have refused.

Now, therefore, by virtue of the power vested in us by law, we do hereby command all persons to desist and refrain from in any way interfering or preventing any other person whomsoever from pursuing his lawful occupation; or from entering upon private property for illegal purposes; or disturbing the peace of the city by parading the public streets or otherwise; and we hereby warn all persons that the authority of this city and county by the aid, if necessary of the state authorities, propose to protect in all his rights as a citizen, every person within this municipality. Any illegal interference with the operations of any shop, mill or other manufacturing establishment, or with those who desire to resume their lawful business, or any riotous conduct or unlawful assemblage will be immediately suppressed, and all persons engaged therein promptly apprehended and dealt with according to law.

We ask the co-operation of all good citizens to aid us in the restoration of peace and good order, and we assure the public that

¹⁰⁸The Bay City Evening Press, July 9, 1885.

¹⁰⁹Saginaw Daily Courier, July 14, 1885; The Bay City Evening Press, July 15, 1885.

all power within our hands will be exercised to protect life and property.

Martin Brennan
 Sheriff of Bay County
 Geo. A. Shearer
 Mayor of Bay City¹¹⁰

The Saginaw proclamation, issued by Mayor Benjamin of Saginaw City was essentially the same, although a bit more forcefully worded.¹¹¹

Although the strikers continued to stage mass meetings in violation of the proclamations, they were generally orderly and respectful of authority. Nevertheless, the local officials proceeded with preparations to enforce the measure. The Knights of Labor had already offered to supply a large force of men to protect property but these were unacceptable to the mill owners and city officials in both Bay City and Saginaw.¹¹² Instead the local officials hired several special deputies, some of whom were unemployed mill workers, to keep the peace.¹¹³

In addition, the mill owners had already sent for Pinkerton Detectives from Chicago to safeguard the mills.¹¹⁴ They had arrived on Sunday, July 12; one hundred in Saginaw and the remainder in Bay City.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰The Bay City Evening Press, July 15, 1885.

¹¹¹Saginaw Daily Courier, July 14, 1885.

¹¹²Statement of Sheriff Brennan, Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., p. 90.

¹¹³Statement of Sheriff McIntyre, Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., p. 100.

¹¹⁴Statement of Mayor Benjamin of Saginaw City, Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., p. 101.

¹¹⁵The Bay City Evening Press, July 13, 1885; Saginaw Daily Courier, July 14, 1885.

These "detectives" turned out to be nothing but thugs in uniform. They were not even legitimate Pinkerton's, as the following telegram to the publisher of The Bay City Evening Press from the owner of the detective agency indicates.

I understand a number of men are in your city claiming to be Pinkerton's policemen. I desire to inform the public at large that these men are in no way connected with the Pinkerton's National Detective Agency, founded by Allan Pinkerton. They are simply men picked up by one Matt W. Pinkerton, who is in no way connected by relationship or business with this office and sent forward by him in hopes that he will deceive the public in making them believe he is connected with this office. Please inform the public as to the real standing of this man.

W. A. Pinkerton¹¹⁶

The Pinkerton's were later augmented by several companies of state militia ordered to the area by Governor Russell A. Alger.

Alger, a lumberman turned politician, had arrived in Bay City on Monday, July 14, for the avowed purpose of investigating the labor disorders.¹¹⁷ His investigations were somewhat one-sided, however, since he spent most of his time in Bay City conferring with a large number of local mill owners and businessmen and refused an invitation to meet with the laborers' committee.¹¹⁸

Alger generally supported the laborers' right to strike and even suggested that the mill owners should make some concessions, such as the ten hour day, to their employers, but the mill owners ignored his counsel and tried to convince him that the strikers were evil doers

¹¹⁶The Bay City Evening Press, July 13, 1885.

¹¹⁷ibid., July 14, 1885.

¹¹⁸ibid., July 15, 1885.

whose object it was to destroy the mills.¹¹⁹

In the end the mill owners drafted the following request for state militia, which the governor approved.

Whereas, The events of the last few days have demonstrated that this city and county are in the possession and under the control of an organized force of men, with whom the local authorities have proven themselves wholly unable to cope, and

Whereas, Said force of men are engaged in preventing a large number of industrious laboring men with families dependent upon them for support from carrying on their extraordinary avocations, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of this meeting that the time has now come when the sheriff of this county should call upon the governor of this state for military assistance to enable him to protect the rights and interests of all men and enforce the laws of the state.¹²⁰

The governor received a similar request for troops from the mill owners and sheriff of Saginaw County. In addition to the local companies in Saginaw and Bay City which were already standing by for action, the governor ordered four companies from Detroit to report to Bay City and single companies from Flint, Port Huron, and Alpena to report to Saginaw.¹²¹

Law and order triumphed again on July 14th when Representative Barry was arrested in Saginaw City for violating sections 9273 through 9275 of the General Statutes of the State of Michigan.¹²² The complaint, signed by Mayor Benjamin, charged that Barry and his strikers:

Wilfully did conspire, combine, confederate and agree together willfully and maliciously to obstruct and impede the regular

¹¹⁹ Ibid., July 15 and 16, 1885.

¹²⁰ Ibid., July 15, 1885.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Above, p. 41.

operations and conduct of the business of one Arthur Barnard in the City of Saginaw and the county and state aforesaid, to wit: The business of conducting and operating the mill and appurtenances of said Barnard, situated in said City of Saginaw, then and there operated and conducted by the said Barnard for the manufacture of lumber and salt, by acts and means of intimidation by them, and there riotously assembling together and that and there by threats and violence, and armed with clubs and other weapons, advancing and entering into and upon the premises of said Barnard, wherein are situated the said mill and appurtenances, owned and operated then and there by the said Barnard and then and there by force and violence shutting down said mill, and causing said mill by force and violence to cease operating, and the men there employed by said Barnard thereat to cease work, and then and there assaulting divers of said employes at said mill, contrary to the form of the statute in such case made and provided and against the peace and dignity of the people of the state of Michigan.¹²³

Barry was arrested on three other occasions for similar offenses against the mill firms of Warner and Eastman, James Patterson, and Eaton and Potter respectively, but remained free on bail totaling \$12,000.¹²⁴ Blinn was charged with offenses under the same warrant used against Barry.¹²⁵ After spending three nights in jail, he found someone willing to put up the \$3,000 bail bond.¹²⁶ Each time that Barry was arrested proved to be an occasion for further unrest among the strikers.¹²⁷ He aggravated the situation further by calling the governor, the mill owners, the military, the Pinkerton men and the Saginaw Daily Courier names.¹²⁸

¹²³Saginaw Daily Courier, July 15, 1885.

¹²⁴Ibid., July 15 and 17, 1885.

¹²⁵Ibid., July 16, 1885.

¹²⁶The Bay City Evening Press, July 18, 1885.

¹²⁷Glazer, "Labor and Agrarian Movements in Michigan, 1876-1896", op. cit., p. 96 citing Detroit Labor Leaf, July 22, 1885.

¹²⁸Saginaw Daily Courier, July 15, 1885.

With the support from the militia and Pinkertons and with Blinn and Barry otherwise occupied by the law enforcement officials, the mill owners considered reopening the mills on their terms. With few exceptions, the mill men agreed to resume work only under the old system of eleven hours work for regular wages, and the few exceptions were generally forced to yield to the demands of the majority.¹²⁹

The mill owners were confident that their faithful employees would eagerly return to work under any terms now that they could be assured protection from the threats of the hoodlums.

Unfortunately the mill men had seriously underestimated the loyalty of the mill laborers. Although some of them were undoubtedly coerced to remain idle, the vast majority of them were united in favor of the ten hour day and would not return to work under any other terms.¹³⁰

Although several mills in both Saginaw and Bay City attempted to operate on the eleven hour system after the troops arrived, none of them were successful. The laborers simply refused to work on those terms.

The outlook today is not favorable for a speedy settlement of the labor troubles. The military are here to protect the mills which can obtain men enough to start, but it is doubtful if any of them can be manned. Crews could not be obtained for the Saginaw mills and it is doubtful if men can be secured to start the mills here. As many men as there are employed and who would rejoice in an opportunity to earn even meager wages under ordinary circumstances, it is unlikely that a sufficient number can be obtained to take the place of the strikers. There is a bond of sympathy

¹²⁹The Bay City Evening Press, July 16, 1885.

¹³⁰Ibid.

uniting the laboring class as firmly as the bond of interest and pride unites the mill men. Their feelings are misunderstood. The iron has entered the souls of every one of them and they will not betray each other. Those who count upon a speedy settlement of the difficulty because the military are here underestimate the depth of feeling and determination in the hearts of the laborers. They imagine they are led by outsiders, but if they will mingle with the men they will learn that the mass are the motive power and drive others forward, but are not led.¹³¹

Since the eleven hour mills could not open under any circumstances, and since the strikers had generally remained orderly, there was no longer any need for the Pinkertons and militia. The former were sent back to Chicago on July 17.¹³² The latter remained until July 20, when they were finally dismissed, having cost the taxpayers of Saginaw and Bay Counties a total of \$18,000 for their expenses.¹³³

By keeping the eleven hour mills closed, the strikers had won another victory. That victory was enhanced by the opening of the Miller Brothers' mill on the ten hour system at full pay.¹³⁴ The mill, located on an island between Bay City and West Bay City had begun operating on the ten hour plan on Monday morning, July 13. On the second day of operation under the new system, the mill produced 97,000 board feet of lumber which amounted to more lumber than it ever produced in a single, eleven hour day.¹³⁵ The ten hour movement gained additional ground as two other sawmills and a shingle began

¹³¹ ibid., July 15, 1885.

¹³² Saginaw Daily Courier, July 17, 1885.

¹³³ The Bay City Evening Press, July 21, 1885.

¹³⁴ ibid., July 13, 1885.

¹³⁵ ibid., July 15, 1885.

operating on the new program on or before July 16.¹³⁶

The strikers seemed to be in relatively good position and were prepared to hold out indefinitely. Their major problem, once the military had left the scene, was financial. The Bay City laborers alone were losing approximately \$25,000 in wages each week,¹³⁷ and the Saginaw workers were losing at least that much or more. Nevertheless the needy were well taken care of as the Knights of Labor secured contributions of money and provisions from friends of the labor movement in Bay City and Saginaw as well as the rest of the state.¹³⁸ The strikers reportedly had enough provisions to last thirty days and longer if necessary.¹³⁹ During the strike the Knights of Labor reportedly fed 4000 people.¹⁴⁰

The strikers augmented their strike fund by peddling the following handbills, entitled the "Capitalists Revised Commandments" for five cents apiece:

1. Thou shalt have no other boss but me.
2. Thou shalt not make to thyself any comforts or the likeness of anything to thine own interest, neither on the earth above nor the pit below. Thou shalt bow down to me and worship me, for I am thy boss, and a zealous boss, and I will show thee no mercy, but endeavor to make thee keep my commandments.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of thy boss in vain, least I discharge thee in two weeks from the time of so doing.
4. Remember that thou must work from 6:30 a.m. to 6:45 p.m.,

¹³⁶ Ibid., July 16, 1885.

¹³⁷ Ibid., July 21, 1885.

¹³⁸ Ibid., July 15 and 16, 1885.

¹³⁹ Ibid., July 16, 1885.

¹⁴⁰ Goodstein, op. cit., p. 216 citing an article from John Swinton's Paper, (New York City), August 16, 1885.

six days a week with all thy might and strength, and do all that I desire of thee and on the seventh day thou shalt stay at home and do no manner of work, but thou shalt do all thou canst to recruit thy exhausted strength for my services on Monday morning.

5. Honor thy boss that thy days may be short and few, for I shall not want thee when thou gettest old and have to spend thy days at the Bay County farm, as I shall not care.

6. Thou shalt not belong to any laboringman's society or organization, whether it be for social purposes or not, for it is against my will.

7. Thou shalt always speak well of me, although I oppose thee and continue to cut thy wages for 5 to 15 per cent. Thou shalt be content if I only find thee work and pay thee 90 cents a day, and advise thee to save half of it.

8. Thou shalt starve and go naked and cold if it is anything to my interest. Thou shalt earn money to pay my salary and furnish my house with costly furniture and my stable with sleek horses.

9. Thou shalt hold no meeting to consider thine own interests nor protect against a reduction of wages. Thou shalt read no newspapers of any sort, as I wish to keep thee in ignorance and poverty all the days of thy life.

10. Thou shalt not covet thy master's money, or his comforts, or his luxuries, or anything that is his. Thou shalt not covet any overseer's room; thou shalt not covet his money, though he gets three dollars a day and thou only one dollar. Thou shalt not object to anything, as I want to reign over thee, and tyrannize over thee, and keep thee in bondage all the days of thy life.¹⁴¹

Neither the mill workers nor the mill owners seemed willing to alter their positions. For that matter neither side was willing to even make the first move toward a resumption of negotiations.

At this critical juncture a possible hope for solution arrived in the person of Commissioner C. V. R. Pond of the Michigan Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics. Arriving on July 19, Pond visited most of the mill owners and employees involved, although he apparently did not talk with either Blinn or Barry.¹⁴²

Pond immediately took measures to settle the strike, by encouraging mill owners to meet with their own individual crews and work out

¹⁴¹The Bay City Evening Press, July 15, 1885.

¹⁴²ibid., July 20, 1885.

their differences on a more personal basis than could be accomplished through committees. Pond reported on his own progress, or rather lack of progress, in the following terms.

In the efforts to bring the employer and employe together upon a basis of equity, the fact that "ten hours" for a days work was a right and reasonable request, one in full harmony with the betterment and advancement in social condition of the employe, was positively argued by the Commissioner. In connection with the making of "ten hours" a days work in the mills, he also asked that no cut in wages upon those receiving \$1.50 per day, or less should be made. He asked that each mill owner should call his employes together, and, treating them as his business family, start out upon the above basis and make such further arrangements as justice and equity demanded, believing that a resumption of work would be the result. While a few mill owners objected to any arrangement that should bring about a resumption of work except upon the same basis in vogue when the mills stopped, a very large majority were in favor of our proposition, or else of having a committee of mill owners and mill workmen jointly adopt a plan upon which all mills should resume.

The few referred to argued that their mills were closed by a mob, and that to start up again upon any basis of hours and wages other than those in force when closed was an acknowledgement of the right of outside forces to stop industry at any time. In fact nearly all mill owners expressed similar sentiment, while all, save those sawing upon contract, claimed that at no time in years were they so willing to have their mills remain closed as a pecuniary benefit to themselves.

But, outside of the few, the willingness to end the loss of wage earners of their wages and to revive the business of the valley made them willing to attempt a resumption upon the basis referred to.

The employes were talked with, and aside from a few who were getting the highest wages, a wish to arrange with their employers was expressed. Several mill owners attempted thus to meet their men, but only a few, in most instances, came at the invitation.

An investigation of the cause for non-attendance of the mill workmen at meetings with their employers led to the discovery that advice was being given "to hold out" that "they would be cared for a long time" and in the end the demand of "ten hours and old wages" would be fully complied with. A few mills made arrangements with their employes and resumed work.... Others resumed and, running one or two days, again closed for lack of workmen, the men having been advised to "quit and hold out".¹⁴³

¹⁴³ Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., pp. 106-7.

Pond's plan was an obvious and miserable failure. The mill owners were convinced that they had done everything that could be expected of them and that now the mills would remain idle.¹⁴⁴ Although a few mill owners had agreed to run on the ten hour plan, most of them remained adamant in supporting the old eleven hour system. They also refused to deal with anyone other than their own workingmen. They wanted no contact with Blinn, Barry, or the Knights of Labor since they felt that recognition of the union's status would greatly enhance the future bargaining position of the laborers. The mill owners made their position perfectly clear when most of them met in East Saginaw on the morning of July 23 and passed the following resolution:¹⁴⁵

As efforts are being constantly made by designing men to convey the impression to our employes that it is the intention of the mill owners to soon start their mills and salt works on various new plans as to hours of running and scale of wages, and believing that many of the employes are deluded by these false premises; now therefore, that the position of the mill owners may be fully understood, we make the following statement and pledge:

The wages which prevailed in the various mills and salt works at the time the men were compelled to quit work were fully as high and in some cases higher than employers could afford to pay without actual pecuniary loss, the wages paid being higher than the average paid for that class of labor throughout the United States, being over \$1.70 per day.

Second--No complaint has been made by employes as to hours of labor for the past 10 years. Some of the mill owners last spring offered to run their mills on 10 hours time with proportionate pay, which offer was rejected by the employes.

Third--In view of the fact that the wages paid were as high as we could afford to pay, and the hours for labor satisfactory to our employes until interference by professional agitators; therefore, we hereby determine not to start our mills and salt

¹⁴⁴ibid., p. 107.

¹⁴⁵The Bay City Evening Press, July 24, 1885. 71 of the 88 lumber mills on the Saginaw River were represented by members or by proxy.

works until the men are willing to return to work on the same ¹⁴⁶ basis as they were when our works were closed by an armed mob.

Although the mill owners were prepared to remain closed indefinitely, they consented to one final attempt at compromise. A group of Bay City merchants, encouraged by Pond, had offered to act as mediators and arrange a meeting between committees chosen by the mill owners and employees respectively. ¹⁴⁷

The meeting was arranged with the understanding on the part of the employers that they would meet only workingmen and businessmen; no committee of any association made up of other than workingmen would they confer with. The meeting was called for three o'clock, July 23. The mill owners and businessmen were on hand, awaiting until four o'clock brought the information that the workingmen were advised not to appoint a special committee, but that, unless the mill owners would meet a committee already appointed, no meeting would be held. An adjournment sine die was at once made, with the declaration by the mill owners that they "would never meet a committee of politicians as representatives of the workingmen when there were no workingmen among them, to discuss matters that interested the workingmen only."¹⁴⁸

The situation remained essentially the same for the next several weeks as both strikers and mill owners refused to make concessions, but they were merely prolonging the inevitable. The mill owners were obviously in the dominant position. They could hold out much longer

¹⁴⁶ ibid., July 24, 1885. Some of the mill men wanted to include a resolution which would have offered a ten hour day at a proportionate reduction in wages, but this suggestion was rejected by an overwhelming majority of the mill owners.

¹⁴⁷ ibid., July 21, 1885. The merchant's committee was composed of C.R. Hawley, a dry goods dealer, Charles Supe, a wholesale grocer, J. R. Campbell, a retail grocer, C. L. Lovell, a dry goods dealer, and E. T. Holcomb, a hardware dealer. The mill owners' committee was composed of George Lewis, Benjamin Birdsall, John McEwen, E. J. Hargrave, and J. Frank Eddy.

¹⁴⁸ Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., p. 107.

than the strikers and they knew that the longer they held out the higher the prices of lumber would be forced. H. W. Sage, for example, expected the price of lumber to increase appreciably:

The effect of this strike on the lumber business will be to better it, undoubtedly. The daily production when everything is in full operation amounts to about 6,000,000 feet per day. This makes a shortage already of 120,000,000 feet. Should this strike continue long enough the shortage might be 500,000,000 feet or about 50 per cent of the entire year's production on the river. This must inevitably have a marked effect on prices all over the United States, as may readily be seen. A large shortage in production would result in good prices for stocks now produced, and also for next year's production.¹⁴⁹

As the days and weeks went by, many of the unorganized men came to terms with individual mill owners. These men and mill owners generally agreed to a compromise whereby the work day was reduced to ten hours, but the wages of many of the mill hands were reduced proportionately.¹⁵⁰ The mill owners also hired many men who had been unemployed prior to the strike

By the latter part of August, the strike had been broken. By August 24, fifteen mills were operating in the Bay City area, most of them on the ten hour system, as the following article from The Bay City Evening Press indicates.

Seven weeks ago today the 10-hour movement was inaugurated in this city and every mill in this city and West Bay City was shut down. To-day 15 of these mills are in operation and in 11 of them the workmen may be said to have scored a victory, while in but one of the other four is a full crew at work. The mills running 10 hours are those of Carrier & Heath; J. P. Hall; Dolsen, Chapen & Co.; S. G. M. Gates; F. E. Bradley & Co.; S. McLean & Son; J. R. Hitchcock; Geo. C. Meyers; Miller Bros.; H. H. Culver; and Green

¹⁴⁹The Bay City Evening Press, July 29, 1885.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., August 4, 1885.

& Stevens. The mills running on old time and wages are those of Pitts & Cranage, Metter & Lewis, Birdsall & Barker, and John Welch. Of these only Pitts & Cranage have a full crew although it is probable that Birdsall & Baker will have every portion of their mill in operation tomorrow.¹⁵¹

Many of the mills in Saginaw returned to operation promptly on terms similar to those mills which had previously settled. Nevertheless, the Knights of Labor and other organized laborers continued to strike but they did not hold out for long.¹⁵² They, too, eventually agreed to accept a compromise solution. The organized strikers were undoubtedly weary of the long layoff and found it increasingly difficult to hold out while their fellow strikers gradually returned to work. There were also many unemployed workers ready to work in place of the union men. The Knights of Labor had lost much of its control over the strikers since the mill owners refused to recognize the union and virtually all bargaining was taking place at the individual mill level. Thus the strikers were prepared to compromise.

On the other hand, many of the mill owners were also prepared to make some wage concessions since the price of lumber had increased somewhat during the course of the strike. In addition the Michigan ten-hour law was to go into effect September 15, and would force most lumber manufacturers to comply with the strikers' demands for a reduction of hours.

By September 1, nearly all of the mills in Bay City and

¹⁵¹ibid., August 24, 1885.

¹⁵²Glazer, "Labor and Agrarian Movements in Michigan, 1876-1896", op. cit., p. 96.

Saginaw had returned to operation. Most of the mills operated on a ten hour system with pay reductions of ten per cent although some mill owners settled for a five per cent reduction and some enforced no reduction.¹⁵³

A few mill owners, such as H. W. Sage and A. W. Wright, attempted to operate eleven hours. On September 15, when the ten hour law went into effect, the mill owners met and established the ten hour day uniformly throughout the valley.¹⁵⁴ One mill owner, A. W. Wright, reportedly refused to accede to the ten hour demands, but his objections were short lived according to the well known historian Stewart Holbrook, "When he found miniature coffins tied to the door-knob of his office, it is said he pulled up stakes and left the valley for good."¹⁵⁵

This strike was clearly no victory for the strikers. The only thing they won was a ten hour day, which would have been brought about by law regardless. A few managed to maintain the same wages as previously, but most took a reduction in pay. To 'win' this, many of the strikers remained out of work for nearly two long months. The average time off was $32\frac{1}{4}$ working days.¹⁵⁶ Workers in striking had lost at least \$385,614.47 in wages.¹⁵⁷ Some of the strikers also lost their

¹⁵³ Goodstein, op. cit., p. 219.

¹⁵⁴ ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Holbrook, op. cit., p. 106.

¹⁵⁶ Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., p. 109.

¹⁵⁷ ibid.

jobs as the mill owners hired 1130 new employees.¹⁵⁸

Although the strikers failed to taste victory, the Knights of Labor and Thomas Barry maintained respected positions in the community. The Knights of Labor gained membership during the course of the strike, and Barry added to his reputation as a labor organizer.¹⁵⁹

The mill owners, however, were the obvious victors of this prolonged strike. They conceded a ten hour day, but this meant relatively little since the area had already passed its peak, and the dwindling production would require fewer man-hours of labor. The mill owners had also "lost" the profits of approximately 191,971,000 board feet of lumber and 25,739,000 shingles which could have been cut if the mills had been in operation during July and August. This loss was only temporary, however, since the lumber and shingles were still there and could eventually be cut and sold.¹⁶⁰ The strike was actually quite beneficial to the mill owners since it prevented a further reduction in lumber prices and actually caused an increase. This

¹⁵⁸"Strikes and Lockouts", op. cit., pp. 264-7.

¹⁵⁹Ramsey, op. cit., pp. 24-5. Although the strike was only a partial victory, Barry acquired a considerable popularity and a substantial reputation as a labor organizer. In 1886 Barry was sent to Chicago to help organize the Chicago Packers' strike. His position in support of strikers, eventually came into conflict with the opinions of Terrence Powderly, Grand Master Workman of the Order. This conflict eventually led to Barry's expulsion from the order in 1888. He subsequently formed another union, the Brotherhood of United Labor, composed primarily of disgruntled Michigan Knights of Labor. Although the brotherhood was never very powerful, it destroyed the Knights of Labor in Michigan by attracting most of the latter's membership

¹⁶⁰Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., p. 109.

effect of the strike was explained by an unidentified mill owner and salt producer as follows:

I think that the delay in manufacturing caused by the strike lessened the seasons product for the Saginaw Valley, thereby preventing a decline in prices on many grades of lumber, particularly low grades. In that way, it helped the owners of logs and lumber. I do not believe that the owners of logs, lumber and salt in the valley suffered real loss in consequence of the delay, but am of opinion that it was really a benefit.¹⁶¹

Keeping in mind the groups and individuals who benefitted from the strike, let us now attempt to establish responsibility for the strike.

This was no ordinary strike. Most strikes in the lumber industry were sporadic affairs, but the organization and implementation of this strike made it appear that it was premeditated. That, at least, was the assumption of The Bay City Evening Press when it reported the events of the first day:

According to preconcerted arrangement the employees of several mills along the river this morning refused to allow 11 hours as a day's work. Being refused, at many mills, the men started out to join those at other mills.¹⁶²

Many individuals, including mill owners, workers, and businessmen agreed that the strike was premeditated, but contended that the mobs were made up of large numbers of "idlers" and unemployed workmen. For example, a local mill owner wrote, "I think now this strike had been talked up a long time before it started, and it was precipitated by a lot of idlers and men not employed in the mills."¹⁶³ A Bay City

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 110.

¹⁶² The Bay City Evening Press, July 6, 1885.

¹⁶³ Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., p. 102.

businessman made a similar remark:

The first day I recognized every "bum" and every "drunk" that I have seen around Bay City for years in the crowd; they were men who never work and would not work if offered five dollars per day. The next day there were some mill workingmen in the crowd, men from the mills not running. I heard this strike talked of as possible as early as June 1.¹⁶⁴

In all probability, both workers and idlers were involved in the mob which closed down the first mills, but regardless of the composition of the group, it is apparent that the strike was preplanned. If this was the case, the crucial question is "who or what organized it?" Of no less importance is the related question, "who or what was most responsible for continuing the strike once it had begun?"

Many of the local mill owners blamed the Knights of Labor for organizing and maintaining the strike. H. W. Sage, for example, wrote that "the strike did not originate with the laboring man" and that the only reason it lasted so long was due to the "influence of Labor Knights and Politicians".¹⁶⁵ Such charges were largely fictitious, however. Although the local assemblies of the Knights of Labor generally agreed with the demands of the strikers, provided relief assistance to strikers' families and tried, unsuccessfully, to arbitrate the strike, they repeatedly denounced strikes and violence of any sort.¹⁶⁶ They did not even recognize the strike until July 12.

Although the order did very little to organize the strike,

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 105.

¹⁶⁵ Goodstein, op. cit., p. 215 quoting letters from H. W. Sage to H. W. Sage & Co., West Bay City, July 10, 1885 and H. W. Sage to Dean Sage, August 3, 1885.

¹⁶⁶ The Bay City Evening Press, July 13 and 27, 1885.

individual Knights such as Blinn and Barry, were often accused of instigating the strike from the beginning. David Blinn in particular was the subject of a number of diatribes, such as the following article by James Collins, editor of the Labor Journal, a statewide newspaper, published in Alpena. Collins did not directly accuse Blinn of organizing the strike, but left no doubt that that was not out of the question.

D. C. Blinn is a ranting political parasite...whether this strike was the voluntary action of the laboring men themselves, or whether they were incited to violence by the "oratorical" rantings of political parasites like D. C. Blinn. (We are not yet prepared to pass sentence upon Representative Barry)--parasites who invariably flock around labor unions, as vultures flock around carrion--we are unable to say at the present writing.¹⁶⁷

Blinn naturally denied that he had caused the strike.

He said the strike was a most premature affair and that he did not know where it had originated. He had not given it any attention until he felt certain that it was a dangerous movement.¹⁶⁸

There is no proof that either Blinn or Barry had any part in organizing the strike, but it is possible that one or the other or both were involved.

Some of the mill owners, themselves, were accused of organizing the strike, as the following statement from an unidentified Bay City mill owner indicates.

There is in this city an element of about one-third of the mill owners who represent fully two-thirds of the business. This is the strongest element we now have to control against. I am of

¹⁶⁷The Bay City Evening Press, July 23, 1885 quoting the Labor Journal (Alpena), July 18, 1885.

¹⁶⁸The Bay City Evening Press, July 11, 1885.

the opinion that this whole movement originated with the element I have mentioned. They have all along hoped to shut down all the mills on the river, in the hope of bettering the condition of the lumber market, and knowing their inability to close down the mills of the remaining two-thirds of the mill owners, have inaugurated this strike to accomplish the object. They are of the opinion that 60 days of idleness on the part of the mills will increase the price of lumber.¹⁶⁹

Such charges were echoed by Blinn and others involved in the controversy,¹⁷⁰ and were not without foundation. The mill owners were the most obvious beneficiaries of the strike since it limited production and subsequently drove up the price of lumber, something which could not have been accomplished otherwise. In addition, many of the members of the mobs which closed the mills were reportedly not "strikers" but idlers and unemployed laborers.¹⁷¹ Such men had no obvious interest in the results of the strike, but could easily have been hired to encourage the mill workers to strike. Also most mills were not closed by the mobs but rather by mill owners who reportedly feared mob action.

It is very possible that some mill owners hired men to stage the demonstration which led to the strike. It is even possible that they hired Blinn and Barry to help organize the strike. (Such a charge was actually made and denied by Barry.)¹⁷² Unfortunately there is no way to prove or disprove any of the allegations.

Regardless of who was responsible for causing the strike there is no doubt that it was expanded and worsened by the activities of

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., July 16, 1885.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., July 11, 1885.

¹⁷¹ Above, p. 144.

¹⁷² Saginaw Daily Courier, July 18, 1885.

Blinn and Barry. They led and encouraged the mobs after the first day which closed the mills in Bay City and Saginaw. They were responsible for the shutting of machinery, the intimidating of workers, and the limited violence that ensued. Thus they must accept a large share of the responsibility for the strike.

Barry and Blinn were often accused of forcing the long duration of the strike since they were the obvious leaders of the strikers and encouraged the men to hold out. Among those who held them solely responsible for prolonging the strike was C. V. R. Pond, Commissioner of the Michigan Bureau of Labor who, although he failed to mention them by name in his report on the causes of the strike, could have meant no others.

The wage-earner was being kept from earning his daily wage by a class of "political demagogues". This was not the work of any political party as a party, for the better men of all parties deprecated the efforts to block the wheels of industry. It was the work of men identified (at some one time at least) with some one of the several political parties; men who sought office; men who had not the full respect of their several parties, and had at times, failed to be elected. They were not workingmen; they earned no wages; they joined the Knights of Labor for their own political purpose; they were of the class described by General Master Workman T. V. Powderly of the Knights of Labor, who, speaking of the classes excluded from the order, named "professional politicians," and says "they sometimes get in, but when discovered are ejected." These men who assumed to be the friends of the mill workingmen, in Bay City especially, and advised a continuance of idleness, knowing that the pecuniary loss to the men and the whole valley had assumed fearful proportions, had "got-in" to the Knights of Labor order and had not been "ejected". The workingmen listened to their sophistry of argument, and being mentally influenced by the daily depression of mind as they saw no wages for daily work as formerly, were led to feel that "truly these are our friends". The awakening to the truth of the real object actuating these politicians came at an expensively late hour to the workingmen, but we believe the intelligence of the employes of the Saginaw Valley, as well as of the State at large, will cause them to see that men who advise a continuance of daily loss of wages, rather adjust their differences with their employers in honest conference,

are "agitators" and "political demagogues" having nothing to lose, but are desirous of gaining the favor and votes of honest men of toil, even though they financially ruin the object of their prey in the attempt.

With the information gained and given in the preceding pages, we give as we believe, a reasonable conclusion that the responsibility for the long continuance of enforced idleness in the Saginaw Valley this summer does not lay with the mill workingmen nor the mill owners, nor with the Knights of Labor as an order, but does attach directly to the few "professional politicians" who, in the guise of Knights of Labor, were using their place in the order in direct violation of the principles announced by its greatest authority.¹⁷³

Although Pond's accusations had some validity, his report was somewhat one-sided and misleading. Blinn and Barry were no more responsible for prolonging the strike than were the uncompromising mill owners who made it so much more difficult to bring about a settlement by calling in unnecessary Pinkertons and state militia, by refusing to recognize the Knights of Labor committee, by treating the strikers complaints with indifference and by obstinately insisting upon an eleven hour day despite the inevitable enforcement of the ten hour law.

The Bay City-Saginaw strike was the largest and best organized in the Michigan lumber industry. It ended as most such strikes ended, in failure for the cause of the workingmen, but it did demonstrate the growing power of labor when properly led.

¹⁷³Michigan, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, III, op. cit., p. 108.

V. MENOMINEE

The most important logging stream in Michigan's upper peninsula was the Menominee. The river formed a portion of the boundary between Wisconsin and Michigan and flowed southward into Green Bay, forming a relatively good harbor. At the mouth of the river stood three small communities: Marinette and Menekaunee, Wisconsin and Menominee, Michigan. Although separate entities, the towns were so close to one another that there was little distinction made between them. "To treat of Marinette and neglect Menominee would be like cutting open a remarkably plump apple and throwing half away."¹ The three towns were usually referred to collectively as the Menominee region since the largest of the towns was Menominee, an unincorporated community of 3,500 in 1881.² The populations of Marinette and Menekaunee in 1881 were 2,750 and 1,274 respectively.³ Both towns were growing rapidly and according to the County Census of 1885, Marinette had a population of 7,827.⁴

These towns all became important mill towns during the late

¹ Brief History of Marinette County and City of Menominee up to 1881, reprint of an article in the History of Northern Wisconsin, 1881? p. 601.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 578.

⁴ Marinette and Peshtigo Eagle, August 29, 1884.

nineteenth century primarily because the Menominee River drained the best stand of white pine in the entire upper peninsula region and accounted for approximately three-fourths of the lumber production of the upper peninsula prior to 1910, a total of approximately 13,291,644,575 board feet.⁵

Menominee has at all times in the history of lumbering in the Upper Peninsula, been and still is the most important point in this industry, and the south and southeast shore of the Peninsula has been the scene of a very large percentage of all the lumbering that has been done. This has been the natural result of the physical construction of the country, which, as has already been described, drains the territory from the watershed within a few miles of Lake Superior, south to the waters of Green Bay. So, too, Menominee has been the principle lumbering point because, from its location at the mouth of the Menominee river it has, jointly with Marinette, on the Wisconsin side, had the supply of timber from the vast area drained by the Menominee and its numerous large tributaries, among which are the Brule, continuing on the state boundary, the Sturgeon, Point, Iron, and Little Cedar on the Michigan side and the Wausaukee, Pike, and Pembine on the Wisconsin side. Nearly all this large territory was natural pine country....

Lumbering had long been an important and profitable industry in the area as the following ultra-adulatory passage from a local publication, printed in the 1890's, indicates.

Lumbering has been and is now, the leading industry of the city. It is nearly sixty years since the first saw-mill was built in the county, but lumbering did not assume any considerable proportions till about 1856; from that time forth the lumberman's star has been in the ascendent and brightens year by year. Within the past thirty years many are the fortunes that have been made, and many still are making; for they who have engaged in lumbering, in this city or county, have been few, indeed, who have not prospered beyond their expectations. Logging is done in winter (and on no river in the country is the amount of logging greater,

⁵Alvah L. Sawyer, A History of the Northern Peninsula of Michigan, I, (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1911), p. 303.

⁶Ibid., p. 293.

each season) and sawing in summer; while so much is the demand in excess of the present means of supply, that every known machine for facilitating or hastening work is in demand, and every possible device is used to make the most and best lumber from a given scale of logs.⁷

The 1880's were years of great expansion for the mills along the Menominee. The Menominee region showed a greater increase in lumber production than any other region in the nation during the decade from 1880 to 1890. In 1880 the community of Menominee, exclusive of Marinette, ranked as the sixth largest lumber producing area in the country. In 1890 it ranked second but combined with Marinette and Menekaunee, it was the largest.⁸ The peak year for lumber production on the Menominee was 1889, when 642,137,318 board feet were scaled,⁹ of which 332,469,247 board feet was sawed in Marinette and Menekaunee and 59,668,071 board feet towed away as logs.¹⁰

The Booming Company on the Menominee River was most unusual. It was known as the Menominee River Manufacturing Company, but had absolutely nothing to do with manufacturing. It was actually two companies in one. The Menominee River Manufacturing Company of Wisconsin was incorporated in Wisconsin in 1867 and supplied the Wisconsin mills. The Menominee River Manufacturing Company of Michigan

⁷Menominee, Michigan, Illustrated, (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Art Gravure and Etching Co., 1891), p. 6.

⁸Sawyer, op. cit., p. 579; Menominee, Michigan, Illustrated, op. cit., p. 8, information from the Extra Census Bulletin No. 5 issued by the Department of the Interior, Washington, D. C., July 1891.

⁹Fred C. Burke, Logs on the Menominee: The History of the Menominee River Boom Company, (Marinette: By the author, 1946), p. 22.

¹⁰Sawyer, op. cit., p. 579.

was incorporated in 1878 in Michigan and supplied the Michigan mills with their logs.¹¹ During its life time from 1868 to 1917, the company transported 10,608,229,506 board feet of lumber down the river to the mills.¹²

Owners and directors of the Booming Company were the mill owners along the river. The Booming Company supplied lumber to eighteen mills located at the mouth of the Menominee, the largest of which belonged to the famous Kirby Carpenter Company. This company, owned by a large outstate syndicate, operated three mills in Menominee and could produce a maximum of 120,000,000 board feet of lumber per year, or approximately twenty per cent of the total for the entire Menominee area.¹³

The sawmills of the Menominee gave employment to nearly three thousand men, most of whom were unskilled laborers. An exceptionally large number of the laborers were foreign immigrants primarily from

¹¹ Burke, op. cit., p. 22.

¹² Ibid., p. 91.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 91-92; Hotchkiss, op. cit., p. 291. Other mills, in 1885, included: N. Ludington Company, Hamilton and Merryman Company, H. Witbeck Company, Marinette Sawmill Company, R. W. Merryman Company, Sawyer-Goodman Company and Menominee River Lumber Company all in Marinette, Ludington, Wells, and VanSchaick Company (two mills), Barr's Lumber Company, Spies and Martin, Girard Lumber Company, Menominee Bay Shore Lumber Company, Detriot Lumber Company, Ramsey and Jones, M. F. Merick Lumber Company and the Mayhew Brothers Lumber Company all in Menominee.

Canada and Scandinavia.¹⁴ Probably due to the large foreign population, the frontier environment, and the great distance from large manufacturing areas, working conditions in the Menominee area were among the worst in the lumber industry.

The men were generally compelled to work eleven and one-half hours per day, six days per week. The work was extremely hazardous, as is indicated by the following report from the Wisconsin Bureau of Labor in 1886.

An unpleasant fact to be recorded is the constant danger to life and limb to those engaged in making lumber. Dr. E. H. Mann, of the Menominee River Hospital, at Marinette, reports to the Bureau no less than thirty-five accidents that came under his treatment in the course of a single season. The hospital on the Michigan side of the river probably had an equal number.

¹⁴U. S., Bureau of the Census, Compendium of the Tenth Census: June 1, 1880. Table XXI, p. 512. Although nativity statistics for the saw mill workers are not available, census returns do show that citizens of foreign birth constituted a majority in Menominee County and a large minority in the city of Marinette.

Menominee County

Total population (1880)	11,990
Total native population	5,649
Total foreign population	6,341
Canada	2,688
Sweden and Norway	1,335
Germany	662
Ireland	566
England and Wales	519
Scotland	62
France	53

Marinette County Census returns, 1885, printed in the Marinette and Peshtigo Eagle, August 29, 1885, show that in the city of Marinette,

Total population was	7,827
Total native population	4,204
Total foreign population	3,623
Scandinavia	1,125
Canada	1,091
Germany	645
Great Britain	626
Ireland	153
Holland	21
France	17

That many of these accidents are quite serious is proven by the fact that a total of 1,129 days were spent at the hospital by these thirty-five patients, or an average of $32\frac{1}{4}$ days to each patient....

Many fatal accidents happen in the camps by falling trees and rolling logs of which the public never hears.¹⁵

Wages were lower in the Menominee lumber industry than in most other lumber producing areas in Michigan and considerably lower than in most other industries in the state.

Following is the scale of wages ranging in Marinette sawmills during season of 1885-86: Sawyers, \$3.50 per day; setters, \$2. per day; carriers, \$30 per month; log rollers, \$26 per month; scalers, \$35 per month; engineers, \$2.50 per day; filers, \$3.50 per day; trimmers, \$22 per month; laborers, \$16 to \$22 per month.¹⁶

Common woods laborers received from \$18 to \$20 per month plus board.¹⁷

Most unskilled workers were earning considerably less than one dollar per day plus board, while workers of the same caliber in Muskegon or Saginaw at that time were making nearly twice that much.

These salary figures for the Menominee area were even lower than the average figures for laborers in the Wisconsin lumber industry which were ridiculously low themselves.¹⁸ The average unskilled mill worker during the 1880's received one dollar per day, plus board; head

¹⁵Wisconsin, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, 11, (Madison, Wisconsin: 1886), p. 246.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Marinette and Peshtigo Eagle, November 28, 1885.

¹⁸Robert F. Fries, Empire in Pine: The Story of Lumbering in Wisconsin, 1830-1900, (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1951), p. 206. The per capita income of workers in the lumber industry ranked 46 among 63 Wisconsin industries. The average per capita wage in Wisconsin in 1897 was \$416.79, the average of the lumber industry was \$369.09. According to Fries, wages did not vary much in Wisconsin from 1880 to 1900.

sawyers received three to four dollars per day and common woods laborers received from fifteen to twenty-five dollars per month plus board.¹⁷

Single men at most of the mills were required to board at the company boarding house or take ten dollars extra pay and board elsewhere.²⁰ Married men were paid \$12 to \$13 extra per month to cover board.²¹

Employees seldom received all of their wages in cash since most of the mill owners had most of their ready cash tied up in land and contracts. Most mill and logging companies in the Menominee area during the early 1880's paid in due bills which were payable in the Fall or Spring when cash was available.

Because of the lack of cash, most of the larger companies maintained company stores which would redeem the due bills for supplies or would advance goods on credit to company employees.

Lumber companies encouraged this practice by extending liberal credit, and since the company store was the only place where employees could buy on credit during the long payless months, most of them had no choice but to trade there. Not all companies used the due bill system, but even those who did not do so required their employees to wait until the close of the season for their pay.²²

Employees contended that the prices at the company stores were from eight to fifteen per cent higher than at other stores in the

¹⁹Ibid., p. 207.

²⁰Marinette and Peshtigo Eagle, August 1, 1885.

²¹Ibid.

²²Fries, op. cit., p. 207.

area.²³

For those individuals who did not wish to trade at the company store or who had other expenses for which they needed immediate cash, it was possible to cash in the due bills prior to their expiration date. In this circumstance, the employer was usually willing to discount their due bills for ten per cent or more.²⁴

The problem of money was particularly difficult in the winter when the men were working deep in the woods and their families at home had no income at all.

The men...complained that while in the logging camps during the winter they received, but a small portion of their wages in cash, something like \$6.00 per month, which circumstances really compelled their families at home to obtain credit at the company stores for several months, at whatever prices the proprietors chose to charge for the goods.

There can be no doubt that in this there was an advantage on the side of the companies which the workmen were unable to offset. The companies declared that they never wronged their employees through their vast system of credit, but, on the contrary, gave the men steady work and their families a sure supply of the necessities of life during the long winter months.²⁵

Thus, the men worked long hours for inadequate and irregular pay and many had become entrapped by the complicated credit system. The men did not seem overly concerned with the long hours or low pay, but were most bitter about the lack of ready cash and the credit-factory store system.

...the sentiment was unanimous among the workmen in favor of weekly

²³Wisconsin, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, II, op. cit., p. 244.

²⁴Fries, op. cit., p. 207.

²⁵Wisconsin, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, II, op. cit., p. 244.

cash payments and no credit at company stores based simply on the fact that they were employees of the proprietors of these stores.²⁶

The workingmen of Menominee and Marinette were generally quite apathetic and had never participated in any labor disorders. This was true generally of workers in all of the industries of that area. For this there were several possible reasons. The Menominee region was on the frontier of civilization. Most of its citizens were foreigners or recent migrants from other parts of the country. The frontier psychology of rugged individualism, optimism and unlimited opportunity still prevailed, factors which would have prevented most men from seeking the security and aid of union membership. Also, the leading newspapers of the area, the Marinette and Peshtigo Eagle, edited and published by Luther B. Noyes, and the Menominee Herald, edited and published by Hank O. Fifield, as well as most of the area's businessmen and leading citizens all seemed opposed to labor organization and walkouts and advised the men to be content with their lot.

Nevertheless, by the summer of 1885, perhaps spurred on by the economic distress of the depression, perhaps encouraged by labor organizers from Iron Mountain, Milwaukee and elsewhere, the mill workers of the Menominee region were prepared to act, through peaceful means, to improve their situation.

Under the leadership of an itinerant workman named J. H. Fitzgibbon, the workingmen held a meeting, July 14, attended by nearly three thousand people. The impudent Marinette and Peshtigo Eagle remarked at the time, "It was the first meeting ever called by laborers

²⁶ ibid., p. 245.

and many no doubt attended out of curiosity."²⁷

The men wanted cash payments of salaries at all mills and an end to the credit factory store system. In addition, perhaps having heard of the labor disorders then transpiring in Saginaw and Bay City, they demanded shorter hours and more pay.²⁸

The men voted to form a labor union and elected Fitzgibbon its organizational chairman.²⁹ Fitzgibbon in turn appointed union leaders for each mill and began a crash membership drive, designed to enroll all the laborers on the river. Their ultimate goal was to organize all workmen on the river and force the mills and lumber camps to hire only union men. The organization, known as the Menominee River Laboring Men's Protective and Benevolent Union, affiliated with the Michigan Knights of Labor and on July 21, 1885 was granted its charter. At that time, Fitzgibbon was elected president of the union and O. H. Rollins became secretary. Although some two thousand laborers had reportedly pledged their support to the union, only a few hundred of these had paid their dues and actively joined.³⁰ Only five hundred men attended the first meeting of the organized union, held on June 24.³¹

The union, composed primarily of unskilled workmen, immediately began pressing for improvements in working conditions and salary

²⁷Marinette and Peshtigo Eagle, July 18, 1885.

²⁸Ibid., July 25, 1885.

²⁹Ibid., July 18, 1885.

³⁰Ibid., July 25, 1885.

³¹Ibid., August 1, 1885.

payments, threatening a strike on the mills and a boycott on the company stores and boarding houses if their demands were not met.

Among the first concessions made by the mills was an announcement that after August 3, the workday would be shortened from eleven and one-half hours to eleven hours, the extra half hour being added to the *nooning period*, giving the men an hour for dinner. The local establishments, not wishing this change to appear as a concession to the union, indicated that the reduction in hours was made out of the kindness of their hearts. The leading newspaper of the area, the Marinette and Peshtigo Eagle, edited and published by Luther B. Noyes, a pro-management Republican who professed to be a friend of labor, announced the change in policy in the following manner:

This result, far from being a concession to the labor agitators, has been done voluntarily by the mill owners, on their own motion. ...Had the contemplated strike taken place here, or had even any general demands been made on the companies by the Union men, it is safe to say that no concessions whatever would have been made by the mill owners. The fact that the great majority of the employees have not been interested in the labor agitations and that a still greater number have as yet failed to affiliate with the Knights of Labor since their organization, thus tacitly expressing their satisfaction with past arrangements, doubtless had its influence on the determination of the mill owners and had vastly more weight than any organized demands could possibly have had. The Eagle is glad to note the change. It has always been the friend alike to labor and capital, and long since advocated the change made for sanitary reasons and the consequent increased efficiency of labor that would result.³²

The half hour "concession" of the mill owners was not enough for the union, however. They continued to demand a ten hour day, plus regular cash payments of wages and an end to the store order system. Their position was derided again and again in the pages of the local

³²Ibid.

newspapers.

To sum up, there is less cause of complaint among the employees of the mill companies on the Menominee river than in any other place we know of in the entire west or northwest.

With reference to the reduction of the hours of labor, the people here well know that The Eagle has always advocated that and does yet whenever it has occasion to say anything about it. But it would be suicidal for these companies to do so while all the rest all over the country adhered to the old system. Therefore, The Eagle believes that the demand that hours of labor in these mills should be reduced from 11 to 10 hours is, under the circumstances, an unreasonable one, unless it is accompanied with a corresponding reduction in wages. The ten hour system if it is inaugurated at all, should be inaugurated by general law, and enforced simultaneously all over the country.³³

The position of the local newspapers seemed clear enough. Both the Marinette and Peshtigo Eagle and the Menominee Herald appeared to be the foe of labor rather than friends. As a result both newspapers quickly won the wrath of the Union organizers. The feeling was mutual.

At the labor meeting in Menominee last week Friday evening, the demagogue Fitzgibbon and the fellow McIntosh took occasion to pay their respects to The Eagle in language more forcible than elegant. These men have no love for the laboring men, but would use them, if possible, for their own self-aggrandizements. Neither of them have very savory records; and if they keep on in their present course, The Eagle may have occasion to do the laborers and public generally a service by writing them up in their true colors.³⁴

Since the union could expect no support from the Eagle or its prime competitor, the Herald, Fitzgibbon and other leaders formed their own newspaper, The Menominee River Laborer, which was established "for the enlightenment of the public on matters connected with logging, driving, booming, and sawing",³⁵ and advocated boycotting both the

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., August 8, 1885.

³⁵ Wisconsin, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, II, op. cit., p. 245.

Herald and the Eagle. Begun in August of 1885, this newspaper inserted boycott phrases in English, Norwegian and French.³⁶ The editor of the Eagle thereafter wisely tempered his views toward labor and reported the subsequent labor disorders in a relatively unbiased fashion.

The Union members continued to seek redress for their grievances. Among other things they refused to trade at the company stores hoping to force some of the companies to discontinue the practice or to sell at "city prices".³⁷ They held informative meetings, and called in outside labor leaders to educate union members as to their comparative position with regard to laborers elsewhere. The largest such meeting was held September 10, and was reported rather fairly by the Marinette and Peshtigo Eagle.

Thursday evening was a gala evening for the labor union of the Menominee River. A large concourse of laborers assembled in front of the headquarters of the Union in Evenson's building, on Dunlap Square early in the evening and formed a procession, headed by the Cornet Band and marched to meet the procession of their brethren coming from Menominee. After meeting the Menominee members, they repaired to the rink which was densely packed. The meeting was addressed in a brief speech by Hon. John Power, of Escanaba, whose remarks were well received, after which Mr. Fitzgibbon the president of the Union, introduced Hon. Robert Schilling, of Milwaukee, who made the address of the evening. The speech was well timed, able and exhaustive and replete with wholesome truths which all classes would do well to heed. The lateness of the hour and our limited space precludes any extended remarks this week. If Mr. Schilling's speech of Thursday is a sample of his speeches generally, he has been basely slandered by the metropolitan press who have traduced him as a Communist, a Jacobin and hair-brained agitator. There certainly was nothing in his remarks last Thursday night to warrant the application of any of these epithets. His speech was enthusiastically received and if the good advice which he gave was strictly followed by both

³⁶ ibid., p. 374.

³⁷ Fries, op. cit., p. 208.

laborer and capitalists, the world would be much better of Mr. Schilling's having lived in it.³⁸

The workers were relatively well organized and led but were unaccustomed to such protest methods as strikes and boycotts. They had a number of legitimate grievances but they were opposed by a group of conservative mill owners who were accustomed to giving orders, not taking them. These were men who could not countenance the interference of any labor union.

The men would probably never have struck had they not been forced to do so by certain unwarranted demands upon them by the mill owners.

Nevertheless, a strike did come. It was a relatively mild strike for this period and one that was well documented. The Wisconsin Bureau of Labor visited Marinette during the strike and conducted a reasonably thorough study of the situation there.

The strike was most unusual in that it was precipitated by the Michigan ten hour day law, passed by the Michigan legislature in 1885. The law, which defined a day's labor in any mill or factory in the state to be ten hours, became effective on September 15, 1885.

Several days after the law went into effect, all but two of the mills on the Menominee side of the river closed for the day because the mill owners contended they wanted to "adjust the situation to correspond to the new law".³⁹

When the men returned to work on September 22, the mill

³⁸ Marinette and Peshtigo Eagle, September 12, 1885.

³⁹ Ibid., September 26, 1885.

operators presented the following documents to their employees for their signatures.

Whereas, the _____ are about to employ me to work for them in their lumbering operations and about their yards, and in various ways connected with their lumbering operations, now, therefore I agree that, in consideration of such employment, and as one of the conditions thereof, I do hereby waive the provisions of the act of the legislature of the State of Michigan, passed in 1885, making ten hours a day's labor, and agree that a day's labor shall be eleven hours and this agreement shall be in force so long as I am in the employ of the _____ company.⁴⁰

Although a few men (about 260) did agree to waive their rights to a ten hour day, the vast majority of them refused to do so.⁴¹ The men, through the Union, agreed to continue working an eleven hour day under the prevailing conditions for the remainder of the sawing season and would sign contracts to that effect. The Union offered the following ultimatum to that effect:

We the undersigned, employees of _____ Co., hereby agree to continue work for the balance of the sawing season of 1885 as heretofore, allowing one hour for dinner and to give weekly receipts in full for time worked to date of said receipt.⁴²

However, the bulk of the men refused to sign the document presented to them by the mill men believing that the document would bind them to work an eleven hour day for all future seasons, instead of the ten hour day to which they were entitled by law.

The laborers were perfectly correct in refusing to work under

⁴⁰Wisconsin, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, 11, op. cit., p. 239. The contract was basically the same as one then being used in some mills in Saginaw, except that a few words had been deleted.

⁴¹ibid.

⁴²Marinette and Peshtigo Eagle, September 26, 1885.

the circumstances. The Wisconsin Bureau of Labor, most citizens, the local newspapers, and even the conservative Northwestern Lumberman, the most respected journal in the industry spoke out against employers for their irresponsible actions.

The mill owners of Michigan, who appear to be determined to elude the new 10-hour law of that state by requiring their men to sign contracts to work more than 10 hours a day, should consider well the probable effect of the course they are taking. They should remember that there is equity in the matter, as well as the letter of the law, to be considered. The public will generally conclude that, if other manufacturers submit to the 10-hour rule, paying regular wages for such a day's work, the sawmill men can do the same. If \$1.50 is usual pay for a day's work at common labor, the public will want to know why the lumbermen cannot pay it as well as other people. If trouble occurs because of the bloodshed, arson, and calling out of militia at the expense of the state, it is very probable that the people will not greatly sympathize with the mill owners. There is also a political side to the situation, and the lumbermen are very likely to meet it at the polls, and need not be surprised if state legislation shall be hereafter unfriendly to them, if they do not take steps to amicably readjust their business on the 10-hour basis. It is well enough to think of these things before matters are driven to extremities.⁴³

Despite general disapproval of their actions, most of the Menominee mill owners told their employees that the mills would be closed unless the waivers were signed.⁴⁴ Although negotiations continued, most of the Michigan mills did subsequently bank their fires

⁴³Northwestern Lumberman, no date, reproduced in the Marinette and Peshtigo Eagle, October 3, 1885.

⁴⁴Marinette and Peshtigo Eagle, September 26, 1885; Wisconsin, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, II, op. cit., p. 239. A few of the Menominee mills were willing to make concessions. The Detroit Lumber Company was willing to work an eleven hour day for the remainder of the season, reverting to a ten hour day in the Spring of 1886. The Ludington, Wells, and VanSchaick Company was willing to conform to the law and immediately reduce the work day to ten hours, with a proportioned reduction in pay. The Bay Shore Lumber Company was willing to do either.

and refused to call any of their employees back to work. One exception to this was the Kirby Carpenter Company, which maintained three mills in the area and was the largest lumber concern on the Menominee River. Anticipating trouble, this company began to hire non-union men and to bring in outsiders to run their mills.

Encouraged by Robert Schilling, the labor organizer from Milwaukee, and others, the strikers came to an agreement with most of the Menominee mill owners. The men agreed to return to work October 5 on the eleven hour plan for the remainder of the sawing season and to continue the old practice through the winter logging season and the spring drive. They agreed that the ten hour plan would not, therefore, go into effect until the season started in the spring.⁴⁵ The mills also agreed to pay wages weekly beginning in the following spring.

By this time, some of the mill owners had reconciled themselves to the inevitable presence of a union. One local mill owner, General Strong, made the following comment:

It matters but little what we manufacturers think of the labor movement--whether we like it or dislike it. It is here, and I think it is here to stay. We may just as well amicably adjust ourselves to the new order of things first as last. The only strange thing about the movement is, that in as much as it is all over the country, that it has not reached this region years ago.⁴⁶

Unfortunately, the giant Kirby Carpenter Company, which usually employed seven hundred men, refused to deal with the union and continued to operate their mills with scabs brought in from elsewhere.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Marinette and Peshtigo Eagle, October 3, 1885.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Wisconsin, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, 11, op. cit., p. 239.

Some 175 new men were eventually hired.⁴⁸

A few days thereafter, on October 14, the union answered this threat to their existence by ordering all of its members from both sides of the river to go to Menominee to picket the Kirby Carpenter Company mills. The men were generally orderly and non-violent except when approximately one thousand of them surrounded the Kirby Carpenter Company boarding house to keep the non-union employees and strike breakers from going to work. Two hundred and fifty deputy sheriffs were sworn in on that occasion, who forced the men to disperse without violence.⁴⁹

The strikers did break the law but their leaders thought this action was necessary if the union was ever to have any meaning. If the Kirby Carpenter Company was permitted to hire non-union men, the others might attempt that also.

The entrance of the Marinette union members into the boycott forced the closure of the mills on that side of the river, and thus the strike invaded Wisconsin. It should be noted, however, that the Marinette mills would have been forced to shut down very shortly under any circumstances because when the Menominee mills had closed they had caused a back-up of logs in the boom making it impossible for the booming company to service any of the mills with logs.⁵⁰

⁴⁸"Strikes and Lockouts", op. cit., pp. 264-7.

⁴⁹Wisconsin, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, 11, op. cit., p. 240.

⁵⁰Marinette and Peshtigo Eagle, September 26, 1885.

The strike put nearly 2500 men out of work⁵¹ in the Menominee area at a time of year, near the end of the sawing season, when few could afford it. Not only would the strike end salaries for that sawing season but it could also cause unemployment in the logging camps during the winter. If too many uncut logs were left in the river, there would be no need to cut large amounts of new logs for the following sawing season, particularly if some of the mills were about to run only ten hours.

But the men knew what they were doing. Statistics for the Marinette strikes, which are more abundant than those for Menominee, indicate that over eighty per cent of the Marinette strikers were active participants in the strike.⁵²

The Marinette strikers were not only protesting the Kirby Carpenter Company's attempt to run their mills on the eleven hour plan with non-union men; they were also attempting to win the ten hour day for themselves for the following sawing season, even though they were not entitled to it, at that time, according to Wisconsin state law. It would have, indeed, presented an untenable situation the following season when the mills on one side of the river worked only ten hours, while the mills opposite them worked eleven.

The mill owners were clearly opposed to the union and would not permit it to govern their affairs. On October 15, the day following the boycott of the Kirby Carpenter Company, the mill owners from

⁵¹ ibid., October 17, 1885.

⁵² "Strikes and Lockouts", op. cit., pp. 604-7.

both sides of the river met and called for a general lockout, to teach the strikers a lesson. They subsequently issued the following resolutions:

Whereas, A large portion of the crews from all the mills on the river left their positions and joined together for the express purpose of intimidating certain men from performing labor for which they were legally hired, and to stop work which was being legally prosecuted, therefore,

Resolved, That a proper regard for our own interests and for the welfare of society, makes it incumbent upon us to take measures to prevent the recurrence of such unwarrantable proceedings.

Resolved, That we are not warranted in further continuing work at the mills when subject to such interference.

Resolved, That it is advisable to close all of the saw mills on both sides of the Menominee as soon as practicable, to remain closed until such time as business can be resumed upon a satisfactory basis.⁵³

The workers were encouraged to return to work by the leading citizens of the area, including the "friend of labor" Luther Noyes, editor and publisher of the Marinette and Peshtigo Eagle, who pleaded with them to discard their principles.

When calm and sober reason has taken the place of prejudice and passion, when the storms of winter whistle through the ill-constructed tenements of poverty and want, and the wail of hundreds of little ones with whom the light of life's morning is being quenched or dimmed by the giant wolf of hunger, imposed by a tyranny more grinding than they vainly sought to escape, is borne to the ears of the misguided men who have caused this disaster, we hope the lesson will not go unheeded. This walkout should it last till the close of the sawing season, will cause from \$175,000 to \$200,000 less than usual to be disbursed here in payment of wages this fall. This is a most serious blow to the interests of all and deeply deplored. Let us all hope for the best, and that, in spite of the troubled outlook, the matter may yet be amicably settled.⁵⁴

The union was unwilling to move from its position, but a small

⁵³Wisconsin, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, 11, op. cit., p. 240.

⁵⁴Marinette and Peshtigo Eagle, October 17, 1885.

group of non-union filers, engineers and unskilled workmen ignored the union and attempted to come to an amicable agreement with their employers. They drafted the following petition:

To the Executive Committee of Mill Owners of Marinette, Wis., and Menominee, Mich.:

Whereas, It was resolved in a meeting of the mill owners of the Menominee River on Thursday, October 15, 1885, that a proper regard for their own interests, and the welfare of society, it was absolutely necessary on the part of such proprietors to take measures to prevent a recurrence of such proceedings as named in the preamble of those resolutions. And whereas, it was unanimously declared advisable to close all mills until such time that business can be resumed upon a satisfactory basis;

Therefore, be it resolved that we, for ourselves as individuals, and as representatives of the employees in the said mills of the Menominee River, hereby pledge ourselves to resume work upon the following basis.

First. We will not countenance or aid in any manner or plan, scheme, or organization to interfere or interrupt the remainder of the sawing season of 1885.

Second. We will not in any manner be subject to, guided or directed by any union, or any other organization while we are performing our daily labor or executing the promises of these resolutions during the time above named.

Third. We will resume work upon the same basis or conditions, the same hours, the same wages, as existed prior to October 14, 1885.

Fourth. We will use all fair and honorable means, so far as it lies in our power, to carry out the spirit and intent of these resolutions.

Fifth. That we submit these resolutions to said executive committee for action, adjustment, and settlement of existing difficulties.

Henry Branshaw, Chairman
 John Rondeau, with N. Ludington Co.
 Chas. Chosa, with Hamilton & Merriman Co.
 Jos. Reinboldt, with Edward Schofield
 M. A. Thurlow, with Rob't Merryman
 James Wood, with Sawyer, Goodman & Co.
 J. LeBeau, with M. R. Lumber Co.⁵⁵

These men who were skilled workmen did not speak for the majority of unskilled laborers, who were primarily union members and they

⁵⁵Wisconsin, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, 11, op. cit., pp. 240-1.

did not speak for anyone in Menominee, since they were employed in Marinette mills.

The owners responded affirmatively to the petition with the following communication.

Menominee, Mich., Oct. 20, 1885

To H. Branshaw and others, Committee

Gentlemen: The executive committee of the mill men received the petition which your representative has submitted to us, and will say that when a sufficient number of men have signed that petition to warrant all the mills on both sides of the river in starting up, all or in part, we shall advise that work may be resumed.

By order of the Executive Committee
C. H. Jones, Chairman
Caleb Williams, Secretary⁵⁶

Although the petition was immediately placed in circulation, very few workers could be found to sign it. Most of the strikers were in the process of finding work elsewhere. Aided by the president of the union, J. H. Fitzgibbon, who acted as their agent, many of the strikers found jobs on the new railway lines being constructed at that time in southern Wisconsin. Logging contractors and other industrial agents flocked to Menominee and Marinette in search of workers for their enterprises.⁵⁷ Therefore, there were not enough competent men left in town to run all the mills full or even part time.

The lockout continued for approximately two weeks. Finally the mill men, desirous of starting work at any costs, met on the morning of October 23 and issued the following resolution.

⁵⁶ibid., p. 241.

⁵⁷Marinette and Peshtigo Eagle, October 24, 1885. Most of the men who left were single men without obligations, however, many married men were included in the group.

At meeting of Executive Com. of the mill men. Moved by S. M. Stephenson; seconded by J. W. Wells: That the mills be recommended to start on Saturday, October 24, with the men who have signed or will sign the Branshaw resolution.

Carried unanimously,

C. A. Jones, Chairman
Caleb Williams, Secretary⁵⁸

Despite the lack of laborers, some of the mills did resume work but many of them remained closed for the season. The situation left some men, mostly married union members, out of jobs. This group was, however, relatively small.

The strike and lockout had a telling effect upon lumber production that season. Through the end of September 272,506,925 board feet had been sorted through the boom.⁵⁹ During the remainder of the season only 63,100,001 board feet was sorted for a season total of 335,606,926 board feet, a very low figure.⁶⁰ This meant a financial loss of several hundred thousand dollars to the mill owners, but the loss was only temporary and could be made up the following season.

The strike cost the laborers at least fifty thousand dollars in wages and probably considerably more.⁶¹

At first glance it would appear as if the mill owners were once again victorious. The mills were operating again under old conditions and those men who were working had totally given in to the demands of their employers.

⁵⁸ ibid.

⁵⁹ ibid., October 10, 1885.

⁶⁰ ibid., December 5, 1885; Burke, op. cit., p. 91. The totals for 1883 and 1884 were 422,000,000 board feet and 377,738,265 board feet respectively.

⁶¹ "Strikes and Lockouts", op. cit., pp. 264-7 and 604-7.

The final outcome of the dispute, however, was not defeat for the union, but rather victory. 1885 was the first year in which workers in the Menominee area had ever offered their employers any difficulty. Management had learned to appreciate labor at long last. As the local newspaper editorialized,

While the situation is much to be regretted, it has served to open the eyes of the capitalists interested in this river, to the fact that labor organizations of some kind are bound to exist and that it will be the port of wisdom, and for their own best interests to treat them amicably.⁶²

When the spring sawing season of 1886 arrived, the mills on both sides of the river were working only ten hours. All mills provided an hour for dinner and all had begun to make cash payments for wages.⁶³ The factory store credit system was also on its way out.⁶⁴

The Menominee strike bore fruit elsewhere. The Wisconsin Bureau of Labor discovered that in 1886 ninety other lumber mills in Wisconsin had followed Marinette's lead and reduced their working day to ten hours.⁶⁵

In assessing causes of the labor difficulties in Menominee, the mill owners must bear a large share of the blame. Had they not attempted to force their employees to waive their legal rights to a ten hour day, there would have been no strike and no subsequent lockout.

⁶²Marinette and Peshtigo Eagle, October 24, 1885.

⁶³Wisconsin, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, 11, op. cit., p. 245.

⁶⁴Fries, op. cit., p. 208.

⁶⁵Wisconsin, Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report, 11, op. cit., p. 245.

The strike may not have been staged had the union not been organized. The laborers of the Menominee area were unusually apathetic, possibly because many of them were foreigners, and had they not been united through the union, may have acquiesced to the mill owners' demands and waived their rights to a ten hour day. Thus the union and the labor leaders such as Fitzgibbon and Schilling were partially responsible in bringing about the strike, but only to the extent that they organized the men and informed them of their legal prerogatives.

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VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The strikes dealt with in previous chapters were not the only strikes in the Michigan lumber industry during the 1880's. Although the others involved fewer men and were considerably shorter in duration, they, nonetheless, represented dissatisfaction on the part of Michigan lumber workers.

From 1880 through 1883 strikes were relatively infrequent. Except for the Muskegon strikes of 1881 and 1882, only two other strikes occurred during that period: the first in Oscoda and AuSable in 1881 and a second in Saginaw in 1883.¹ During that period wages were generally rising in the industry and labor organization had not yet developed in most parts of the state.

The number of strikes began to increase in 1884 as the depression reduced markets and forced wage cuts. In addition to the AuSable-Oscoda strike of that year, another less significant, strike occurred at Grand Haven.²

The next year, 1885, was the banner year for strikes in the Michigan lumber industry. In addition to the Bay City-Saginaw and the Menominee strikes, labor disorders occurred in such other lumber centers as Cheyboan, Muskegon, Manistee, and East Tawas.³

¹"Strikes and Lockouts", op. cit., pp. 256-63.

²Ibid., pp. 264-7.

³Ibid.

After 1885 the number of strikes declined significantly. By 1886 the effects of the depression had dissipated so that prices and wages in the lumber industry were back to normal. Also, the ten hour day was practiced in almost all lumber mills throughout the state by 1886. In addition, the unions which had been organized in Michigan during the early 1880's had failed to spread after the strikes of 1885. The Knights of Labor lost previous influence, and no other union was successfully able to take its place as an organizer of Michigan labor unions. As Michigan began to decline, during the late 1880's, as an important lumber producing region, lumbermen and laborers migrated to the developing lumber areas of the South and West. Laborers in Michigan's lumber industry found it impossible to bargain successfully under these conditions and consequently only a few sporadic labor disorders are recorded in the state's lumber industry after 1885.

The strikes which occurred in the Michigan lumber industry during the early 1880's were symptomatic of labor unrest throughout the state and nation at that time. Although each strike was localized and apparently unrelated to the others, they all had much in common.

Most of the strikes were spontaneous affairs, developing as automatic responses to some action of the management. Such was the case in Muskegon in 1881, AuSable and Oscoda in 1884, and Menominee in 1885. On the other hand, some strikes were not so obviously spontaneous. The Muskegon of 1882, for example, was obviously planned as a continuation of the 1881 strike. There is also some evidence that the Bay City-Saginaw strike was prepared beforehand.

The objectives of labor in all of the strikes were only the most obvious and immediate. The laborers did not seek long range,

idealistic and extravagant goals, but rather sought only to remedy their most pressing problems.

In the small, out of the way lumbering areas, the most pressing problems facing labor was financial. In lumber towns such as AuSable-Oscoda and Menominee, where wages were always poor and employee practices were among the least enlightened in the nation, the most urgent demands of labor were financial improvements. Despite the poor conditions, the strikers in small towns did not make unreasonable demands, but merely requested that which they felt should legitimately be theirs. Such laborers seldom demanded pay raises, but did loudly object when wages were reduced in order to compensate for a declining market. They also objected to the company towns, the company housing, the store order system, irregular pay days, lack of ready cash, and the practice of withholding pay until the end of the season.

In the leading lumber centers such as Muskegon, Bay City and Saginaw, the laborers had higher horizons. Since wages in these cities were relatively good, compared to the rest of the lumber industry, the primary objections were against working conditions. Thus the workers in these cities pressed hardest for the ten hour day and other improvements while financial matters played a secondary role.

In all cases the objectives of labor were so obvious that the strike usually received widespread acceptance among the laborers. In Muskegon, AuSable-Oscoda and Menominee the active strikers represented at least three-quarters of the mill employees. In Saginaw and Bay City the percentage of active strikers was much less but nonetheless represented approximately one-half of the labor force.

Working conditions and wages were always poorest among the unskilled laborers who constituted over ninety per cent of the labor force of the union. Consequently most strikers were unskilled laborers. Occasionally, as was the case in the Muskegon strike, some of the skilled employees joined the strike. For the most part, however, the skilled employees were well paid, well taken care of by their employers and had few grievances. They were in a better position, than were their unskilled colleagues, to bargain individually with the management. The unskilled laborers, on the other hand, had no special abilities, could be replaced easily, and had very little in bargaining position. They were compelled to strike in order to be heard.

In all of the strikes a large percentage of the strikers were of foreign origin. Foreigners comprised at least forty percent of the active strikers in Muskegon, fifty percent in Bay City, Saginaw and Menominee and eighty percent in AuSable and Oscoda. Foreigners, who comprised a large portion of the labor force in all sawmill towns, usually had the hardest, least desirable and lowest paying jobs in the mills and were therefore sometimes compelled to strike for improved working conditions. Foreigners were usually more timid and docile and consequently could be coerced to join the strike by the aggressive native laborers. Foreigners seldom, if ever, took leading roles in any of the strikes.

It is interesting to note that all of the strikes in the Michigan lumber industry involved mill men or boom employees. Michigan lumberjacks, or shanty boys, never struck. Most lumberjacks were farmers, railroad workers, miners and itinerant laborers. Lumbering

was only a source of temporary employment for them and they had no real interest in striking. Lumber camps were also isolated, deep in the woods, where the management controlled everything including lodging, transportation, supplies, and communication. Labor organization among lumberjacks was therefore next to impossible. Organization among mill workers and boom men was much more attainable.

Organization was obviously an essential ingredient in any strike and contrary to the opinions of other students of the Michigan lumber industry, the major strikes of the 1880's were all surprisingly well organized.

All of the major strikes in the Michigan lumber industry during the 1880's were associated with labor unions. In some cases, such as in Bay City-Saginaw and Menominee, the unions were present prior to the strike. In other cases the unions developed during the early development of the strikes, as happened in AuSable-Oscoda and Muskegon. In all cases the unions were locally oriented although some had national connections. Some had political connections as in Muskegon and Bay City-Saginaw.

The strikers were usually able to count upon able, competent leaders. In the Muskegon, Bay City and Saginaw strikes the most significant leaders were outsiders, men who for political, personal, selfish, or moral purposes supported or led the organization of the labor movement. In Bay City and Saginaw the leaders were highly experienced in labor organization. Despite their expertise, such leaders were not particularly effective. They were listened to by

the laborers, but not necessarily trusted because they were outsiders. They were usually not trusted by the mill owners. The most effective leaders of the strikes came from the ranks of labor. What they lacked in experience, was more than compensated for by their enthusiasm, respect, and understanding of their fellow laborers.

The tactics used to carry out the strikes were also remarkably similar. The usual technique was to gather together a large force of men who then marched from mill to mill inducing the mill employees, by fair means or foul, to quit work, thus closing all or most of the mills on the river. At the same time, care was taken to block the flow of logs, either by enticing the employees of the booming company to strike (as was the case in Muskegon) or by closing the upriver mills (as was the case in Bay City-Saginaw, AuSable-Oscoda, and Menominee-Marinette). In either case the result was the same: All of the mills were closed and none could obtain a sufficient amount of logs to run for any length of time.

This technique had several factors in its favor. By shutting down all of the mills and jamming the river with logs, the entire river was closed to traffic until the strike was over. No mill could operate until the other mills had settled. Although a few mills might have been able to find enough strike breakers to resume operations, there were not enough strike breakers to start all of the mills and few strike breakers were able to face a large angry mob of club waving strikers. The mill owners were forced, theoretically, to bargain with the representatives of the labor unions.

Some of the mill owners, especially those who were either

sawing on contract or operating on borrowed money, were necessarily anxious to return to operations and therefore were willing to make immediate concessions to the laborers. These mill owners could be expected to put additional pressure upon the stronger more affluent mill owner and they often did. Some of them even spoke at strike rallies and evidenced considerable sympathy for the laborers. But like the other mill owners, they were enmeshed in the cut throat competition of the lumber industry. None of them could afford to reduce the hours of labor or raise wages unless the others did likewise.

Despite the theoretical attributes of these strike tactics, they did not always succeed. In fact, victory was the exception rather than the rule. Out of 182 lumbering establishments struck in Michigan between 1881 and 1886, only 54 resulted in victory for the strikers.⁴ (Included here are the establishments successfully struck in AuSable-Oscoda and Menominee.) Although this was a considerably higher rate of success than was attained elsewhere in the lumber industry, it was, nonetheless, a sorry record indeed.⁵

The mill owners were always well prepared to deal with most types of labor disorders. They controlled the towns, including many of the stores, banks and housing facilities. They had the added advantage of blacklists, strike breakers and, in some cases, the differential wage payment system to discourage labor activities. The

⁴ibid., p. 966.

⁵ibid., p. 1008. Of 213 establishments struck outside Michigan between 1881 and 1886, only seventeen were successful.

owners also had "law and order" on their side. In all of the strikes, most of the local law enforcement officials lined up on the side of management. In addition to the local officials, the mill owners brought in Pinkerton detectives or hired additional deputies in order to protect mill property from mob violence. State law enforcement officials also took a deep interest in the labor disorders and usually sided with the mill owners. This is not surprising since two of the governors during the early 1880's: David Jerome (1881-1883) and Russell Alger (1885-1887) were lumbermen themselves. They were more than willing to order state militia to help the local officials deal with the labor "riots"--even when there were no riots to quell.

Once the threat of violence was countered, most strikes degenerated into mere sieges. Under the circumstances, the strikers were distinctly disadvantaged. The strikers had overwhelming numbers but this advantage was countered by "law and order" on the side of management.

They had unions, but in all cases the unions were locally oriented and represented only a minority of the laborers. The unions provided leadership, unity, a limited degree of organization, encouragement and some financial aid but little else of any value for the strike effort. Although the Knights of Labor was associated with some of the Michigan strikes, their support amounted to practically nothing.

The strikers had competent leaders but many of them lacked education and experience in strike organization and labor negotiation. Those who were educated and experienced were easily discredited or kept occupied by law suits and court action, as was the situation with

DeLong and Cook in Muskegon and Blinn and Barry in Bay City and Saginaw respectively.

The strikers had some financial support, but this was usually limited to individual savings and small, union established strike funds which never amounted to more than a few thousand dollars. At the same time their idleness was costing them thousands of dollars per day in permanently lost wages.

The strikers could usually count upon some community support, especially from lower class citizens and middle class businessmen and professionals who were jealous of the power and influence exerted in the community by the mill owners. Such community support was usually more moral than material, however. Most community leaders either sided with the establishment or remained neutral. They realized that the well being of the community was entirely dependent upon the continued prosperity of the mills. Even the local newspapers were usually pro-management. This was so much the case that in some areas the strikers were forced to establish their own newspapers, such as the Bay City Labor Vindicator and the Menominee River Laborer, to print their version of the "truth".

The mill owners were particularly reluctant to deal with strikers who were represented by unions since such action would have implied official recognition. The mill owners preferred, instead, to deal only with their individual mill crews as they had always done. They feared the potential power of mass organization and collective bargaining. The mill owners were also extremely resentful of any local leaders or other outsiders who offered counsel and advice to the

strikers. Intelligent, educated, influential leaders such as Barry and Blinn in Saginaw and Bay City, respectively, DeLong, Cook, and Trevelick in Muskegon, Solomon and Gram in AuSable and Oscoda and Schilling in Menominee were considered unwelcome interlopers.

Management's attitude to union organization was certainly not the wisest approach to the problems at hand, but was the only approach most mill men understood.

This intense opposition to unionism in the major lumber producing areas should not be interpreted as a careless disregard for human welfare. Most lumbermen engaged in labor controversies were not without conscience and may be said to have pursued a course that seemed to them proper and best calculated to promote the interests and welfare of all concerned. The spirit under which the lumber operators moved was, in part, a reflection of the times and the existing social conscience. Law and custom did not require the employer to grant recognition, while it did give him the right to suppress organizations of workers if he could.⁶

Rather than submit to the union, most mill owners, whose resources were vastly superior to those of the strikers, were perfectly willing to remain closed during a strike. This was especially true during the periods of depression when lumber prices were so low that production was unprofitable. Limitation of production, which the mill owners could not achieve among themselves because of the demands of competition, was effected for them by the labor force. From their point of view, a strike during a period of depression was a blessing in disguise.

In the end, the mill owners were almost always triumphant. The occasional strikes that resulted in labor victories were not defeats for management but merely management concessions. The mill owners

⁶Jensen, op. cit., p. 32.

never surrendered their right to determine wages and working conditions. During the 1880's they continued to regard labor as a mere factor of production with no voice in the determination of labor policy. The situation remained virtually unchanged until the Michigan lumber industry was no more.

APPENDIX A

LUMBER INDUSTRY STRIKES -- UNITED STATES -- 1881-1886

State	Number	Establishments			Results	
		Number Closed	Total Days Closed	Average Number Days Closed	Success	Failure
1. Illinois	151	151	2,252	14.9	1	150
2. Indiana	9	8	24	3.0	9	—
3. Iowa	4	2	24	12.0	1	3
4. Maine	4	4	47	11.8	3	1
5. Michigan	182	182	5,276	29.0	55	127
6. Minnesota	16	—	—	—	4	12
7. Missouri	10	9	126	14.0	1	9
8. Texas	1	1	7	7.0	1	—
9. Wisconsin	18	14	111	7.9	2	16
Total	395	371	7,867	21.2	77	318

State	Monetary Loss		Employees Assistance	Number of Employees		
	Employers	Employees		Before Strike	After Strike	Employees Striking
1. Illinois	\$200,000	\$270,096	\$150	12,016	12,016	8,016
2. Indiana	23,000	1,400	—	550	550	462
3. Iowa	500	4,415	100	1,150	1,150	352
4. Maine	10,300	5,200	220	290	220	238
5. Michigan	231,800	610,352	1,600	16,317	16,317	11,466
6. Minnesota	4,200	3,513	—	2,223	2,223	602
7. Missouri	4,000	9,176	—	624	624	185
8. Texas	—	718	—	70	70	70
9. Wisconsin	36,400	40,781	—	3,511	3,511	2,544
Total	510,700	945,661	2,070	36,691	36,621	23,935

Source: U.S., Commissioner of Labor, Third Annual Report: 1887. Strikes and Lockouts. (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1888), pp. 798-800.

Appendix B

Public Acts of 1885 for the State of Michigan

Act Number 145

Section one. The People of the State of Michigan enact:
That any number of persons, not less than five, may associate themselves together and become a body corporate and politic for the improvement of their social and material interests, the regulation of wages, the laws and conditions of their employment, the protection of their joint and individual rights in the prosecution of their trades of industrial avocations, the collection and payment of funds for the benefit of sick, disabled, or unemployed members, the securing of benefits to the families of deceased members, and for such other and further objects of material benefit and protection as are germane to the purposes of this act. The persons so associating shall execute articles of association as hereafter provided, sign and acknowledge the same before some officer duly authorized by the laws of this state to take acknowledgements of deeds, and upon the execution and acknowledgement of said articles of association aforesaid, the said association shall become a body politic for the purposes set forth in said articles of agreement.

Appendix C

Public Acts of 1885 for the State of Michigan

Act Number 137

Ten Hour Working Day

Section one. The People of the State of Michigan enact: That in all factories, workshops, salt blocks, saw-mills, logging or lumber camps, booms or drives, mines or other places used for mechanical, manufacturing or other purposes within the state of Michigan, where men or women are employed, ten hours per day shall constitute a legal day's work, and any proprietor, stockholder, manager, clerk, foreman, or other employers of labor who shall require any person or persons in their employ to perform more than ten hours per day, shall be compelled to pay such employees for all overtime or extra hours at the regular per diem rate, unless there be an agreement to the contrary.

Section two. That in all contracts, engagements, or agreements to labor in any mechanical, manufacturing, or other labor calling, where such contracts or agreements are silent, or no express conditions specified, ten hours shall constitute a day's work, and the contract or agreement shall be so construed.

Section three. Any individual, firm, agent of any corporation, or other employers of labor who shall take any unlawful advantage of any person or persons in their employ, or seeking employment, because of their poverty or misfortunes, to invalidate any of the provisions of the preceding section, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction thereof, shall be fined not less than five dollars, nor more than fifty dollars for each offense, and it shall be the duty of the prosecuting attorney of the county in which such offense was committed, upon receiving complaint, to prosecute all such cases in the name of the people of the state of Michigan, before any justice of the peace or other competent court of jurisdiction.

Section four. All fines collected for violation of this act shall be turned over to the school board, or board of education of the city or township wherein such fine may be collected and the same shall by them be dispersed for and in benefit of the public schools.

Section five. Nothing in this act shall be construed to apply to domestic or farm laborers, or other laborers who agree to work more than ten hours per day.

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