



LINKED LABOR HISTORIES

NEW ENGLAND,
COLOMBIA,
AND THE MAKING
OF A GLOBAL
WORKING CLASS



AVIVA CHOMSKY

LINKED

LABOR

HISTORIES

AMERICAN ENCOUNTERS / GLOBAL INTERACTIONS

A series edited by Gilbert M. Joseph and Emily S. Rosenberg

This series aims to stimulate critical perspectives and fresh interpretive frameworks for scholarship on the history of the imposing global presence of the United States. Its primary concerns include the deployment and contestation of power, the construction and deconstruction of cultural and political borders, the fluid meanings of intercultural encounters, and the complex interplay between the global and the local. American Encounters seeks to strengthen dialogue and collaboration between historians of U.S. international relations and area studies specialists.

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LINKED

New England, Colombia,

LABOR

and the Making of a

HISTORIES

Global Working Class

Aviva Chomsky

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACTWU	Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (formed in 1976 through the merger of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and the TWUA)
AFL	American Federation of Labor
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations
AFSCME	American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
AFT	American Federation of Teachers
AIFLD	American Institute for Free Labor Development
AMTAC	American Manufacturing Trade Action Coalition
ANUC	Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos / National Peasant Association
ATMI	American Textile Manufacturers Institute
ATPA	Andean Trade Preference Act (1991)
ATPDEA	Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act (2002)
AUC	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia/United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (right-wing paramilitary organization founded in 1997 by ranchers Carlos and Fidel Castaño)
Augura	Association of Banana Growers of Urabá
Banadex	Colombian subsidiary of the United Fruit Company
CAFTA	Central America Free Trade Agreement
CAFTA-DR	Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (the Dominican Republic was added in 2004)
Carbocol	Carbones de Colombia (state-owned coal company)

CBI	Caribbean Basin Initiative
CCI	Cotton Council International
CIO	Congress of Industrial Organizations (founded in 1935, this U.S. federation of industrial unions merged with the AFL in 1955)
CLASC	Confederación Latinoamericana de Sindicatos Cristianos / Latin American Confederation of Christian Unions
CLC	Canadian Labour Congress
CLU	Central Labor Union
Coldesa	Colombian Agricultural Development Company (African palm grower in Urabá)
Colsiba	Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Sindicatos Bananeros / Latin American Coordinating Committee of Banana Workers Unions (a regional confederation of Central and South American unions formed in 1993)
Comandos Populares	“Self-defense” paramilitary organization formed by demobilized EPL members in the early 1990s
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CSTC	Confederación Sindical de Trabajadores de Colombia / Trade Union Confederation of Colombian Workers (Colombian union federation affiliated with the Communist Party)
CTAL	Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina/Confederation of Workers of Latin America
CTC	Confederación de Trabajadores de Colombia (Colombian union federation founded in 1936 and close to the Liberal Party)
CTM	Confederación de Trabajadores de México (official Mexican union federation)
CTV	Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela / Confederation of Venezuelan Workers (union federation opposed to many of President Hugo Chávez’s radical reforms)
CUT (Brazil)	Central Unica dos Trabalhadores (Brazil’s main national union confederation)
CUT (Colombia)	Central Unitaria de Trabajadores de Colombia/Colombian Federation of Workers (Colombia’s main national union confederation, founded in 1986)

CWA	Communications Workers of America
DAS	Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad / Administrative Security Department (Colombian state security agency similar to the FBI)
Ecopetrol	Empresa Colombiana de Petr�leos / Colombian Petroleum Company (state oil company created in 1948)
ELN	Ej�rcito de Liberaci�n Nacional/National Liberation Army (Colombian guerrilla organization)
EPL	Ej�rcito Popular de Liberaci�n/Popular Liberation Army (Maoist Colombian guerrilla organization founded in 1967)
Esperanza	Esperanza, Paz y Libertad / Hope, Peace and Freedom (political party founded by demobilized EPL members in 1991)
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia / Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Colombian guerrilla organization founded in 1964 with close ties to the Communist Party)
FAT	Frente Aut�ntico del Trabajo (Mexican independent union)
FECODE	Federaci�n Colombiana de Educadores / Colombian Federation of Teachers
Fedepetrol	Federation of Petroleum Workers (Colombian union federation)
Fedeta	Federaci�n de Trabajadores de Antioquia (regional Colombian labor federation affiliated with the Communist Party/CSTC)
FLT	Federaci�n Libre de Trabajadores (Puerto Rican labor federation affiliated with the AFL)
Funtraenerg�tica	Federaci�n de Trabajadores Minero-Energ�ticos / Federation of Mining and Energy Sector Workers
IBEW	International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
ICEM	International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (an international trade secretariat)
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
IFPCW	International Federation of Petroleum and Chemical Workers (an international trade secretariat)
ILGWU	International Ladies Garment Workers Union (founded in 1900 and affiliated with the AFL)
ILRF	International Labor Rights Fund

IMF	International Monetary Fund
Intercor	International Colombia Resource Corporation (Exxon subsidiary in Colombia)
ISWA	Independent Sheeting Workers of America
ITS	International Trade Secretariat (international federations of unions in related industries)
IUE-CWA	International Union of Electronic, Electrical, Salaried, Machine and Furniture Workers-Communications Workers of America
IUF	International Union of Food and Beverage Workers (an international trade secretariat)
IWW	Industrial Workers of the World
L.U.	Local Union
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NEA	National Education Association
NLRB	National Labor Relations Board
NTWU	National Textile Workers Union (Communist)
NSCC	Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company
ORIT	Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores / Interamerican Regional Organization of Workers (part of the ICFTU)
PC	Partido Comunista / Communist Party
PRD	Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Mexican leftist political party)
PRIDCO	Puerto Rico Industrial Development Company
PTTI	Postal, Telegraph, and Telephone International (an international trade secretariat)
SEIU	Service Employees International Union
SICO	Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria de las Bebidas / National Union of Workers in the Beverage Industry
Sinaltrainal	Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria de Alimentos (leftist union at Colombia's Coca-Cola bottling plants)
Sintagro	Agricultural workers union established in Urabá in 1972
Sintercor	Sindicato de Trabajadores de Intercor / Union of Intercor Workers
Sintranabano	Banana workers union established in Urabá in 1964

Sintrainagro	Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria Agropecuaria / National Agricultural Workers Union (Sintagro and Sintrabanano united in Sintrainagro in 1988)
Sittelecom	Sindicato de Trabajadores de Telecom
TWUA	Textile Workers Union of America (founded in 1939 and affiliated with the CIO)
UE	United Electrical Workers (a progressive, independent union in the United States)
UFCO	United Fruit Company
UFCW	United Food and Commercial Workers
UMWA	United Mineworkers of America
UNITE	Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (formed in 1995 through a merger of ACTWU and the ILGWU)
UNITE-HERE	Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees-Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union (formed in 2004 through a merger of UNITE and HERE)
UP	Unión Patriótica / Patriotic Union (leftist Colombian political party founded by demobilized FARC members in 1985)
UPIU	United Paperworkers International Union
US/LEAP	U.S. Labor Education in the Americas Project
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USIA	U.S. Information Agency
USO	Unión Sindical Obrera (Colombian oil workers union)
USWA	United Steelworkers of America
UTC	Unión de Trabajadores de Colombia (Colombian union federation founded in 1946 and close to the Catholic church and the Conservative Party)
UTW	United Textile Workers (founded in 1901 and affiliated with the AFL)
WEPZA	World Economic Processing Zones Association
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
WTO	World Trade Organization

INTRODUCTION

They complained in the East,
They are paying too high.
They say that your ore ain't worth digging.
That it's much cheaper down
In the South American towns
Where the miners work almost for nothing.

—BOB DYLAN, “NORTH COUNTRY BLUES” (*THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGING*, 1964)

The depictions we did have of Latin America in movies and novels and occasional news articles had prepared me to recognize President Estrada Cabrera [of Guatemala in the 1920s] right away. He was a familiar figure: the tropical dictator—exotic, brutal and absurd. It was a stereotype that helped us explain the backwardness of countries like Guatemala as the result of unenlightened leadership. . . . What . . . surprised me was finding out that the great dictator had himself been, in large part, a creature of globalization.

—DANIEL WILKINSON, *SILENCE ON THE MOUNTAIN*, 2003

The regions where new commercial crops and export products have developed over the past 40 years are the most violent places in Colombia today.

—CATHERINE LEGRAND, “THE COLOMBIAN CRISIS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE,”
2003

The Conventional Wisdom

This study grows out of a frustration with conventional wisdom about globalization. During fourteen years teaching Latin American and world history, I have become accustomed to some of the unexamined ideas and preconceptions that students bring into the classroom. One reason for

writing this book is to challenge a worldview that is overwhelmingly prevalent among my students, but that not only is fundamentally flawed and historically inaccurate, but also fails utterly to explain the world we live in today.

The prevailing, generally unarticulated understanding goes something like this: For mysterious reasons, inexplicable by history, the world is divided into wealthy and poor regions. Wealthy regions have industrialized and become “developed,” and therefore their populations have access to a high degree of security, material comfort, and consumer goods. Poor regions have failed to do so (yet), probably because their populations lack the initiative, and have allowed themselves to be governed by corrupt leaders. Although wealthy regions have tried in the past to help poor regions, this aid is misguided, because there are problems at home in the wealthy regions that should be resolved first and because, given the inherent characteristics of the poor regions, it will be misused anyway.

Globalization, according to this perspective, is something new, something inevitable, and something generally positive for all concerned. Industrialization created the technology that is now bringing regions closer together, which will thus extend the benefits of industrialization to all. The definition provided by the International Monetary Fund is as benign as they come: globalization refers to “the increasing integration of economies around the world, particularly through trade and financial flows.” The only problem with globalization, according to the IMF, is that not all regions are equally prepared to benefit from it—poor countries have remained less integrated in the process. The solution, then, is to help poor countries integrate more fully.¹

When critiques of globalization emerge in the mainstream, they often take a protectionist and/or xenophobic cast. Some may note that because the world lacks the resources to sustain 6 billion people living an “American way of life,” it’s probably better to concentrate on maintaining that way of life at home, not exporting it. Others may claim that immigration is undermining the U.S. economy, as immigrants gain access to precious jobs and resources. Still others blame cheap imports for undermining U.S. industries.²

The debate, then, is framed on one hand by the IMF perspective, which argues that globalization should be celebrated because integration will gradually extend its benefits to everybody, and on the other by what we might call the nativist perspective, that globalization will dissipate or undermine

the advantages that the United States has attained so it should be reined in to protect these advantages.

An Alternative Perspective

This book suggests a different perspective on globalization, one that requires that we question some of the basic premises that have informed the debate.³ First, it assumes that economic integration among regions is in fact the *cause* of the regional inequalities that characterize the world today. Unequal exchange allowed some regions to industrialize while others did not. It focuses, however, on the process of industrialization from the mid-nineteenth century on. From its inception, the factory system has depended on, and re-created, regional inequalities in order to strengthen its control over labor. Producers have used two basic methods to do this: bringing workers from poor regions to the site of production, and moving the site of production to where poorer workers are available. That is, immigration and capital flight.

Employers stand to benefit when there is a surplus of labor. When there are more workers than jobs, employers can simply dispense with workers who protest, strike, or seek better conditions and replace them with others whose desperation for a job will lead them to accept inferior conditions. The very threat of surplus labor serves as a disincentive to workers organizing or protesting. Both immigration and capital flight serve the purpose of creating a surplus of labor, because they enlarge the labor pool beyond regional boundaries. They increase what some analysts currently term “flexibility” for employers. (Critics would argue that “flexibility” is a euphemism for employer power over workers.)

Immigration and capital flight serve the interests of employers in another important way. Both strategies relieve employers of paying for the *reproduction* of their workforce. In theory, through wages that go directly to workers, benefits that go to institutions that provide services (such as medical insurance), and taxes that go to governments that provide social services, industries contribute to the sustenance and education of new generations of workers. In fact, throughout much of history, this has not been the case. By relying on immigration and capital mobility, factories rely on others to support the sustenance and education of their workers. If a worker is born and raised in Mexico, Mexican institutions provide for the worker until he or she begins to work for a U.S. company (whether through immigration or

through capital flight). Like the plantation owner who found it cheaper to purchase a new slave of prime working age rather than to encourage reproduction and be encumbered with the costs associated with raising a child, a factory owner can use immigration and capital flight to benefit from a seemingly endless supply of workers, with little or no social investment.

From the beginnings of the factory system, workers and their organizations have been faced with the tension between their need for a job and their desire to improve their working conditions and pay. When employers can point to a ready supply of surplus labor—through immigration or through capital flight—workers' ability to struggle collectively to improve their conditions is severely hampered. When employers can create an environment in which workers *blame* immigrants, or workers in other countries or regions, for being used by employers in this fashion, employers further benefit by deflecting awareness of their own role in the system.

For workers, and unions, the question of how to confront immigration and capital flight (deindustrialization) has been a central one over the entire twentieth century. This book encourages readers to consider the intertwined historical processes—which I call “linked labor histories”—that have led to cycles of deindustrialization and immigration in the United States. If, as I argue, labor history is at the heart of understanding globalization, then the New England textile industry is the place to start examining globalization. The textile industry was one of the first to recruit large numbers of immigrant workers, and it was the first to use its ability to move to cheaper areas as a way to control its workers and to play regions and governments against each other in its search for optimum conditions of production.

From a labor history perspective, globalization has less to do with countries, cultural contact, and speed and more to do with capital's search for cheap labor. A fundamental contradiction between democracy and capitalism emerges from this approach. Democracy demands government by, for, and of the people. Capital seeks governments that will control the people in its interest. Democracy thrives on social equality; capitalism thrives on social inequality.

Can democratic labor movements challenge the ability of capitalism to foster the social inequality it thrives on? Examples abound to suggest that they can. Lack of political democracy, however, can help tip the balance in favor of capital. Where companies can mobilize violence and where workers have few rights, their movements can be crushed. The U.S. government

mobilized violence at home, and to a much greater extent it has mobilized violence abroad, to cater to capital's pursuit of profits.

Some analysts have suggested that the power of national governments is diminishing in the age of globalization. The labor history approach suggests a somewhat different perspective. From a labor history perspective, national governments have frequently been tugged between the demands of capital and the challenges of popular movements. When pressed by popular movements, they have been at their most democratic. When pressed by capital, they have gone to extraordinary lengths to repress, undermine, and evade popular aspirations.

The results of this tug of war can often be seen in policies that structure the distribution of resources. Democratic movements tend to pursue economic policies that distribute society's resources downward and broadly. Capital seeks policies that allow resources to be concentrated at the top. When New England governments broadened the democratic rights of labor and began to protect workers' rights, textile companies fled south, where local governments wooed them with promises and gifts (and inequality). In the 1930s and 1940s, the New Deal implemented redistributive policies, which included granting rights and voice to labor. Capital got something in the bargain too: guaranteed markets in military production and an aggressive foreign policy that set the stage for a massive transfer of investments abroad by crushing workers' movements and democracy itself.

As the twentieth century drew to an end, former industrial cities in the United States were turning themselves into enterprise zones, mimicking the third world's free trade zones, which in turn replicated the way southern communities marketed themselves to northern firms in the early part of the century. Connecticut advertises its "business-friendly environment," including high worker productivity ("at an all-time high, with output per worker more than 33% above the national average"), and low corporate taxes. "We've developed creative incentives to Connecticut businesses including financial assistance, tax abatements and credits, labor training and flexible utility rates," the state's Department of Economic and Community Development brags.⁴

The Structure of the Book

This study approaches the large themes in global labor history through a detailed examination of several specific, interrelated cases. The first part of

the book (four chapters) focuses on the New England textile industry and its workers; the second part (three chapters) looks at labor and violence in Colombia. Workers in New England's textile industry were among the first to face the challenges of globalization that confronted almost all U.S. workers and unions in the late twentieth century, as textile factories began seeking more favorable investment conditions in the U.S. South starting in the late nineteenth century. Colombia at the turn of the twenty-first century has been called the cutting edge of neoliberalism and privatization, as much of Latin America, led by Colombia's neighbor Venezuela, has shifted to the left. U.S. foreign aid and investment are flooding Colombia, and workers and unions struggle against the combined threats of disinvestment, job loss, and paramilitary terror. In both cases, control of labor forged a favorable climate that made these regions magnets for investment, and workers struggled to preserve their jobs while imagining that another world was possible.

The two parts of the book are connected not only conceptually, but in immediate terms, as Colombian workers and products produced by Colombian workers flow into New England, and as the products of the U.S. defense industry (many produced by what used to be textile factories) flow into Colombia. The AFL-CIO's long history in Colombia also provides a link, as its involvement there has shifted from cold war policies to grappling with new forms of cross-border solidarity in the 1990s. These concrete connections are developed in each of the chapters.

The book approaches the topic of global labor history by exploring three main conceptual areas through its case studies in New England and Colombia: migration, labor-management collaboration, and the mobility of capital. Each of these themes is woven into each of the chapters. Each chapter suggests a different way that the issue can be approached historically. Together, they offer an intricate, interwoven tapestry of two regions, their industries, and their workers and the myriad links between them over the long twentieth century, as well as a new way to conceptualize globalization as a long-term process.

Themes

The first major theme is migration. Chapter 1 looks at radical immigrant workers in the early twentieth century in the Draper loom factory. Draper was a Massachusetts company that also exported looms to Latin America. The company was active in anti-immigrant politics at the same time that it

employed immigrant workers, and both company and workers tried to appropriate the concept of “Americanism.” The global use of Draper looms contributed to the restructuring of the textile industry, and to late twentieth-century Colombian immigration to old New England textile centers. Chapter 2, on the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company, looks at another group of early twentieth-century immigrants, and how more recent immigrant radicalism challenged older immigrant conservatism in their union. Chapter 3 addresses the relationship of outsourcing and the global assembly line to immigration, and chapter 4 looks at Latin American migration to old New England textile towns. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 shift to Colombia, looking at how foreign investment and U.S. foreign policy contribute to domestic conditions spurring out-migration. Chapter 5 looks at contemporary domestic migration and labor patterns in Colombia in the context of U.S. investment in the Urabá banana zone. Chapter 6 discusses how the AFL-CIO has dealt with the issue of immigrant workers over its history. Chapters 5 and 7 depict displacement and violence associated with foreign investment as a spur to out-migration.

The second theme is labor-management collaboration. Chapters 1, 2, and 3 look at how New England factory owners used the threat of plant closure to try to domesticate their labor force starting in the late nineteenth century, the development of a strategy of labor-management collaboration on the part of some U.S. unions, and how this related to concepts of patriotism and Americanism. Chapter 6, on the AFL-CIO, looks at how the organization’s business unionism related to its international policies in the post–World War II period, focusing on the activities of the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) in Colombia. Chapter 5 relates how extraordinary violence combined with threats of disinvestment domesticated a radical union in Colombia’s banana zone. Chapter 7 examines how unions in Colombia’s foreign-owned coal mines have negotiated paramilitary violence and their rather privileged position in the country’s labor force and how U.S. unions have dealt with the closure of U.S. mines that have moved to Colombia.

The third theme is global economic restructuring. In New England, this has meant deindustrialization; in Colombia, it has meant privatization and neoliberalism. Chapters 1, 2, and 3 locate the phenomenon in New England in the early twentieth century rather than the end of the century, where it has traditionally been imagined to occur. These chapters also look at how

unions and workers have struggled with this issue and show that despite management threats, labor militancy alone rarely led to plant closure. In the case of New England's textile industry, federal immigration restrictions in the 1920s played a key role in limiting access to cheap labor, but, in part because of outsourcing, textile unions remained weak. These chapters also examine how the textile factories under study ended up shifting into defense production and the role of defense production in the new global economy. Chapter 4 looks at how recent immigration into postindustrial communities is structurally related to global shifts in production, how workers fit into the new economies, and how U.S. unions are slowly coming to grapple with the new challenges. Chapters 5 and 7 look at two Colombian export industries, bananas and coal, that have grown dramatically under conditions that one analyst termed "the cutting edge of neo-liberalism in Latin America," and how workers and communities have continued to struggle for their rights under the most adverse conditions.⁵ Chapter 6 discusses how the AFL-CIO created its niche in the postwar economic order, how its actions to preserve that order ended up contributing to transformation rather than preservation, and how it is coming to terms with the new forms of corporate globalization that have emerged.

Case Studies: Part I

Part I of this book consists of four chapters that place New England's labor history in global context. The first focuses on the Draper Loom Company (after 1916, Draper Loom Corporation) of Hopedale, Massachusetts. Draper designed automatic looms that transformed the global textile industry in the twentieth century. Rather than refurbish antiquated New England mills, many investors took advantage of the new technology to shift operations to the U.S. South. Starting in 1917, Draper looms also supplied textile factories throughout Latin America. Draper's Hopedale workers were mostly immigrant Italians, many of whom joined the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in the second decade of the twentieth century. Although benefiting from immigrant labor, Draper's owners were also active in anti-immigrant politics, promoting organizations like the Pioneer Fund, the sponsor of racist research throughout the twentieth century. Draper's looms outlived the company and the industry they helped to build and destroy, and in the 1960s some of the last remaining New England textile mills began recruiting Colombian workers trained on Draper looms in Medellín to staff their facto-

ries, creating Colombian enclaves in Central Falls, Rhode Island, and Lowell, Massachusetts.

The second chapter examines the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company of Salem, Massachusetts, focusing especially on the issue of labor-management collaboration. Naumkeag manufactured Pequot brand sheets from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. In the 1920s, the mill became a national paragon of labor-management collaboration as the United Textile Workers (UTW) local convinced workers to participate in an innovative joint research plan to raise productivity. The union believed that this approach would keep the mill in Salem while so many New England factories were closing, but by 1933 the mill's workers rebelled and began a wildcat strike against the research plan. With help from the communist National Textile Workers Union (NTWU), immigrant French Canadian and Polish workers won their demands after an eleven-week strike, and the mill stayed in Salem. In the early 1950s, however, it followed so many others and moved to Spartanburg County, South Carolina. After passing through several owners, the assets of the bankrupt mill were turned over to the GE Capital Corporation in 2001.

The third chapter takes a long historical view of the issue of speculation, outsourcing, and deindustrialization, following the textile industry from New England to the U.S. South, to Puerto Rico, Japan, Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, and Colombia. It follows the trail of the Textron company from its New England roots into global reach over the course of the twentieth century. It focuses in particular on U.S. federal and local government policies aimed at creating business-friendly environments, company investments strategies and the factors guiding them, the relationship of the textile industry with the military and the system of "military Keynesianism" that developed after World War II, the growth of export-processing zones, how the mobility of capital has affected workers, and what unions have tried to do about it. The chapter ends by looking at Colombia's textile industry and the various free trade agreements that have encouraged U.S. manufacturers to invest and outsource there.

Chapter 4 examines the question first raised by the sociologist Michael Piore in the 1970s of the apparent paradox that even as working conditions have improved for some workers in industrialized countries, industrialization seems to continue to create low-wage employment and to seek immigrant workers to fill substandard jobs. "How is it," Piore asks, "that industrial

economies seem not only able to absorb, but in fact are actively seeking out uneducated, illiterate workers from the very types of societies to which they are, in the conventional view of what industrialization is all about, generally contrasted?"⁶ In the post-1970 period, as deindustrialization took hold in New England, even larger numbers of immigrants flowed into the region to fill low-paid jobs in the service sector.

Throughout New England, old textile towns have become home to a new generation of Latino immigrants as deindustrialization deepened. Chapter 4 looks at Central Falls, Rhode Island, and Lowell, Massachusetts, two former textile centers that began to import Colombian workers just as their last textile factories were struggling to survive. In some cases, like the Colombian textile workers, migrant streams began with workers directly recruited in their homelands. In others, manufacturers transferred or sought workers from larger immigrant centers such as New York. Most ended up, however, in the vast, unregulated lower end of the service economy, cleaning houses, offices, hospitals, and yards, caring for elders, or washing dishes. They worked to maintain the lifestyles of the wealthy and of stressed two-income families in what was formerly the middle class in a society and economy that were shifting from a globe-shape to an hourglass as the industry that had turned an earlier generation of working-class people into a middle class lurched away in search of a more exploitable proletariat.

Case Studies: Part II

If New England's textile industry and its workers were among the first to confront the challenges of globalization, Colombia's workers today are seen by many as being at the forefront of the struggle to rein in the race to the bottom. As by far the largest recipient of U.S. military aid in the hemisphere, Colombia is the centerpiece of current U.S. strategies for a neoliberal model of labor control. Colombia's organized working class has also been on the front lines of resistance to this strategy, and thousands of union members and organizers have been killed since the 1980s.

Chapter 5 looks at a part of Colombia where violence against organized labor has been particularly acute, the Urabá banana zone in the north. When the Boston-founded United Fruit Company (UFCO) entered the Urabá zone in the early 1960s, it recapitulated systems and patterns that it had developed almost a century earlier in its operations in Central America and Santa Marta, Colombia, in lightly populated areas, isolated from the centers

of government and power, with little state presence. As in its earlier operations, it was able to ally with sectors of the local and national elite and convince the state to offer it economic, fiscal, police, and military support for its project. The United Fruit Company had invented its own race to the bottom long before late twentieth-century activists gave it a name: from the very beginning of the century it hedged its bets and spread its risks by maintaining production in numerous countries at once and playing national governments off against each other to achieve optimal conditions, always with the threat of pulling out if its wishes were not granted.

Labor unions in Urabá were weak until the 1980s, when a strong guerrilla presence in the region contributed to the growth of leftist unions. In the 1990s, paramilitary forces took over the region and decimated the left, leaving a union open to good relations with management in the project of maintaining the conditions to keep the industry strong. International union federations have responded in complex and sometimes contradictory ways to the divisions between left and right in Colombia's union movement.

Chapter 6 takes up the thorny question of U.S. union involvement in foreign policy and in creating and maintaining optimum conditions for U.S. corporations operating abroad, focusing on the AFL-CIO's involvement in Colombia. In the 1960s, Colombia became a laboratory for U.S. counter-insurgency doctrine. The AFL-CIO collaborated with the U.S. government to undermine the left in the trade union movement there, as elsewhere in the continent and the world. By the 1990s, Colombia had become the most dangerous country in the world for unionists, and the AFL-CIO was revamping both its programs and its image, replacing the discredited AIFLD with the new Solidarity Center. The Colombia program was one of the centerpieces of the Solidarity Center, bringing unionists whose lives were under threat to the United States for nine months of refuge, training, and activism. While some Colombians have argued that the Solidarity Center programs have continued to work against the left in Colombia, others believe that it represented a clear break from the AFL-CIO's conciliatory past.

The final chapter looks at the coal mining industry, another example of U.S. industry and labor involvement in Colombia. If the globalization of the textile industry is more visible, the globalization of the energy industry is no less crucial. In the 1980s two U.S. coal mining companies, Drummond and Exxon, began to close their U.S. operations to move to Colombia, where they opened two of the largest open-pit coal mines in the world. In the

1990s, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) began to impose a neoliberal agenda on Colombia, mandating the privatization of the mining sector, lower taxes, and deregulation. Paramilitary forces also stepped up their activity in the mining zone. This chapter looks at how the different social actors, especially labor unions in both countries, have been affected by and been actors in this process. It also looks at how the consumers of coal, in particular power plants and their customers along the East Coast of the United States and Canada, have become involved.

My conclusion locates globalization as a phenomenon of the entire twentieth century, with labor history as its center. It looks at parallels, continuities, and connections between the labor history of the New England textile industry, the first example of deindustrialization and the race to the bottom, and that of Colombia, the site of the most vicious repression of organized labor in the late twentieth century. Attempts by capital to control labor, and attempts by labor to resist that control, characterize much of this linked labor history. There are parallels in workers' struggles and unions' attempts to grapple with runaway industries in different times and places, and in capital's use of threats of disinvestment, manipulation of racial and ethnic divisions, and promotion of collaborationist unions to control workers. There are continuities in capital's search for optimal investment conditions in a shifting global environment. There are connections created by the products, from looms to fabrics to bananas to coal, that travel across borders and create links among people, and organizations from the IWW and the Communist Party in the early twentieth century to the unions and other cross-border solidarity movements that have tried to construct their own globalization from below as the century ended.

PART I *New England*

THE DRAPER COMPANY

From Hopedale to Medellín and Back

Let me tell you what has happened in Fall River; it was told to me by one of the spinners there. "Twenty-five years ago," this man said, "we had 2,000 men in our union, spinners, and there has never been a time since then that a spinner working in that city did not belong to our union," and he felt proud of his union. He was asked "how many power mules have you here now?" and he answered "About 350." Now, this is what has happened: In these twenty-five years the number of mules had decreased from 2,000 to 350. What has become of them? They have been carried to the scrap heap, and their places have been taken by the spinning frame, and the father is out on the street looking for a job at whatever he can get, and the child is in the mill working at spinning. I want to tell you about the loom, the Draper loom. No one would have been more surprised at this than the textile worker of twenty five years ago. To-day in the town of Waterville a cotton weaver is running forty looms. Do you know what that means? Well, that means ten times as many looms as the weaver in India ran ten or twelve years ago. That means four times the number of looms that the most expert cotton weaver ran in the city of Fall River ten years ago, and is nearly four times as many as they are running there to-day, but that loom has not come there as yet. . . . I doubt very much if there is cotton enough grown in the world to supply the production which is made possible through the introduction of this loom.

—THOMAS POWERS, PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND, AT THE FOUNDING CONVENTION OF THE IWW IN CHICAGO, JULY 7, 1905

The troops, the older people that were in the mill, came to me and said, "Hey, I don't want any more students. I'm through teaching." So I got 'em together. I sat 'em down in the back room and said, "How come? What's the matter?" They're thoroughly disgusted that people don't want to learn. They're wasting their time; and they're

wasting my money; and they don't want to have any part of it. O.K. Then comes the time when my first Colombian came in here.

Oh, Christ, it must have been 1970. Can't remember, somewhere in there. He was legal. His name was Mario. I'll never forget the guy as long as I live. He drove up in a car, he spoke English, he asked me if I needed a Draper loom fixer. And I said, "Buddy, I'll give you a kiss if you know how to fix a Draper loom." He says, "Let me show you." He . . . puts on a set of coveralls, takes his tool box out, walks out in the mill, and shows me that this man knows what he's doing. I said, "Jesus Christ, you've got a job." He said, "Would you like some more Colombian people?" I said, "I sure as hell would."

—TED LARTER, PRESIDENT OF WANNALANCIT TEXTILE COMPANY, LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS, 1979, QUOTED IN ELEANOR E. GLAESSEL-BROWN, "A TIME OF TRANSITION: COLOMBIAN TEXTILE WORKERS IN LOWELL IN THE 1970S"

If Mario was an expert at fixing Draper looms, he came by this knowledge, and brought it to Lowell, as part of a long historical process that intertwines the labor and industrial histories of New England and Latin America. The capital that initiated New England's industry had its origins in the slave trade between Africa and Latin America, and its new pattern of industrial investment quickly spread beyond New England. The Hopedale, Massachusetts, Draper Loom Corporation—the largest in the world—supplied looms to Latin America's burgeoning textile industry in the early twentieth century. New England capitalists invested in mills in the U.S. South and in Latin America; they exported their products to Latin America, they built mill equipment to sell there, and, when they closed their New England mills, they shipped the machines, obsolete or not, to these locales. The Colombian textile workers who migrated to New England in the 1970s were the heirs to decades of the intermeshing of capital, machinery, education, ideology, and labor management techniques that shaped a global textile industry. And if unions in the United States at the end of the twentieth century were facing the so-called race to the bottom as industries challenged regions and countries to offer them the most lucrative deals and the lowest wages, they were only the latest players in a drama that textile workers and unions have been facing for many decades.¹

Many of the paradoxes inherent in the process of industrialization, de-industrialization, and the waves of immigration that have accompanied both processes can be seen played out in the history of the Draper Corporation, producers of textile machinery for the global textile industry. Owned by a

family with many members prominent in Massachusetts politics, Draper was built over the remnants of the nineteenth-century utopian community of Hopedale. The mills employed immigrant workers—including Italian anarchist Nicola Sacco—and when the IWW organized a bitter four-month strike at the Hopedale plant in 1913, the Drapers were not loathe to use scabs and violence to break it. The Drapers were major players in the creation of the southern U.S. textile industry and Latin America’s textile industry. Like Salem’s Pequot Mills, Draper opened a plant in, and eventually moved to, one of the largest textile-producing regions in the South, Spartanburg, South Carolina. Draper fortunes supported anti-immigrant legislation in the 1920s and right-wing racist and eugenicist causes throughout the century, even as the Draper plant brought immigrants to the United States. The looms that the Drapers sent to Latin America were a key factor in bringing Latin American workers to New England in the 1960s and 1970s.

The drive to lower costs is an inherent aspect of the capitalist system of production, and technological development and automation are inherent aspects of industrialization. Few companies, however, embody the system as overtly and as enthusiastically as Draper.² The power loom that the company perfected in the early 1900s allowed textile companies to dramatically increase production while decreasing the hours of work. Draper’s advertising relentlessly pursued this theme: to compete successfully, textile factories must reduce the cost of labor, and Draper’s Northrop loom was the way to do it.

Over the course of the early twentieth century, as state and federal legislation began to restrict hours of work and establish minimum wages, Draper explicitly offered companies a way to avoid suffering any decrease in profits. “High cost labor with shorter working hours makes a large increase in manufacturing costs,” a company newsletter warned in 1919. “Should the mills adopt a 48 hour week, this reduction in hours will largely increase the overhead expense as the product per loom, or other textile machine, per hour will be the same whether the working hours are more or less per week. **THE NORTHROP LOOM under such conditions has a greater advantage than ever before.**”³ “With the trend towards less hours per annum the advantages of automatic machinery in general and Northrop Looms in particular need no argument. The capacity of the Northrop Loom to be operated during the noon hour and a corresponding time night or morning without any weavers at all is a great advantage both to stockholders in the mills and to the

weavers. Looms under such conditions increase the amount of cloth 15 to 25 per cent per loom compared with common looms on the same goods running mill hours only," the Draper newsletter enthused a year later. Best of all, "Looms under such conditions VIOLATE NO LABOR LAWS. The shorter the working day the greater the proportional advantage of the Northrop Loom in product both per loom and per weaver."⁴

The Drapers and Their Corporation: Profits and Perfection

The capitalists who invested in New England's early industries brought to their operations a curious ideological heritage. They were the elites in a society that was founded on principles of racial inequality, yet they considered themselves the purveyors of an unprecedented egalitarianism. They trembled at the social ills they saw in England's nascent industries, yet believed that they could avoid those ills in their own industrial experiments. Their capital had its origins in international commerce and in the slave economy, yet they fought for protective tariffs and against slavery (sometimes). They prided themselves on their American independence, yet clung to their Anglo-Saxon identity. They invested their money to make a profit, yet were fervently committed to using their wealth for the betterment of society. They were at once radical, imagining themselves capable of creating an entirely new world, and conservative, bent on maintaining their privilege and containing movements from below that threatened the social order.

Robert Dalzell's study of the Boston Associates who founded the Waltham-Lowell mill system illuminates many of these paradoxes and provides a useful counterpoint for analyzing the beliefs and actions of the Draper family and the goals of their company. Dalzell argues that for Francis Lowell, Nathan Appleton, and other members of the Boston elite, investing in textiles was a means to an end that went beyond simple profit. They held a particular vision of the role of elites in society based on civic engagement, public service, and philanthropy. "Money alone was never enough; it had to be paired with an appropriate measure of public service."⁵ Investment in textile production was a way of amassing the resources and security that would allow these men to fulfill their proper social functions in government and to create and sustain private institutions like colleges and hospitals that would both maintain the class structure and uplift the overall level of society.

The dual goals of class privilege and general uplift also underlay the Associates' decision to establish their mills in rural areas and seek a work-

force of young women from “respectable” farming families whose moral character would be overseen by the boarding house system. The industrial revolution in England had brought about “dirty towns, corrupt and debased lower classes, beggars and thieves.”⁶ Not only was this an undesirable social order, but without the instruments of repression that the English upper classes could rely on, it was downright threatening to American elites. The Boston Associates brought a strong dose of utopian engineering to their industrial experiments.

Other New England utopians engaged in their own forms of social engineering in the nineteenth century, establishing intentional communities such as Brook Farm (founded in 1841 in West Roxbury) and Fruitlands (founded in 1843 in Harvard) in which intellectuals from Nathaniel Hawthorne to Ralph Waldo Emerson to Bronson Alcott (father of Louisa May) participated. Among these was Hope Dale, established in Milford, Massachusetts, by the minister Adin Ballou in 1841 to embody his philosophy of Practical Christianity, incorporating “Christian socialism, abolitionism, temperance, nonviolence, and racial and sexual equality.”⁷ One of the founding members was Ebenezer Draper, the son of Ira Draper, who had invented and patented the rotary temple, an early predecessor of the automatic loom. Unlike some of the other utopian communities, Hope Dale intended to produce for profit at the same time it sought moral perfection, by manufacturing and selling textile machinery. Members purchased stock in the enterprise, combining collective management with individual profit.⁸

In 1856 Ebenezer’s brother George Draper joined the community, and the two carried out what historians have referred to as a “coup,” violating the voluntary bylaws by withdrawing all of their stock—which amounted to three quarters of the total shares—thus essentially destroying the community. “The Drapers took . . . the land, mill, streets, shops, houses, and other buildings; in 1873 they even took possession of the cemetery.”⁹

George and his sons William, who became president after his father’s death in 1887, Eben Sumner, who took over from William and ran the company until he died in 1914, and George Albert, who took over until his own death in 1923, had little interest in Practical Christianity. Nevertheless, they inherited their own form of utopian thinking, which shaped the way they ran and invested in their business and what was, essentially, their town, Hopedale.¹⁰ In George Albert’s son Wickliffe Draper, born in 1891, utopianism emerged as obsession with eugenics.

Like the Boston Associates, the Drapers were committed to a paternalistic view of social betterment and urban uplift, and they committed their company's resources to their town. Hopedale was a company town, "not a tenement-ridden slum associated with many of the era's factories and sweatshops but a rural textile community totally under the paternalistic control of the Draper company, which offered job security, medical aid, and low rent in company houses for its employees in an effort to promote unity of interest between labor and capital. . . . To preserve the town's rural character, the Draper Company prohibited fences, street signs, and mailboxes and created an extensive system of parks and gardens" and even a pond.¹¹ The design of their worker duplexes received awards at international expositions from St. Louis to Paris to Milan.¹²

Wickliffe Draper inherited both his father's fortune and his "ardent desire . . . to use his wealth for some loftier purpose." Like the Boston Associates, he believed that his wealth should be used to have a "larger impact on the well-being of the society."¹³ He found his cause in eugenics, the pseudoscience of the era dedicated to proving the superiority of the white race and enforcing policies toward the Nordicization of the U.S. population, including the repatriation of blacks to Africa, selective sterilization, and immigration restrictions.

Draper was not unique in his infatuation with racial thought and racial betterment. New England's cultural and intellectual elite and its institutions were permeated with these ideas in the early twentieth century. Harvard University, so generously funded by the Boston Associates in earlier years, and Wickliffe Draper's alma mater, was one of the centers of racist scholarship.¹⁴ Draper went beyond many of his contemporaries, however, in choosing racist research specifically as the beneficiary of his philanthropic largesse and in continuing to be faithful to his passion until his death in 1972, long after it had been marginalized from the academic mainstream.

His interest in eugenics put Draper in close contact with men like Harry H. Laughlin and Charles Davenport of the Eugenics Record Office, which conducted the research that helped convince Congress to pass the 1924 immigration restrictions drastically limiting immigration from southern and eastern Europe. Draper served as vice president of the Boston-based Immigration Restriction League, whose best known member was the racist researcher Madison Grant, an important influence on Adolf Hitler in later years.

Draper's financial backing of eugenics began in the mid-1920s with several small grants to Davenport and the Eugenics Research Association. In the 1930s he began to fund Earnest Sevier Cox, who was working assiduously to convince Congress to legislate the repatriation of blacks to Africa. In 1937 Draper founded the Pioneer Fund, appointing his old colleague Harry Laughlin president, as a conduit for distributing his money to racist causes. While the fund was nominally governed by a board of directors, Draper "clearly exercised final authority on whether to fund a proposal because the money came out of his private coffers, and Pioneer had no other resources."¹⁵

Over the course of the twentieth century Pioneer became a key source of research to prove racial inequality, aimed at public policy to maintain racial segregation, and Draper's money continued to be its bastion. Draper contributed to the movement against civil rights and racial integration in the 1950s and 1960s and kept alive the flames of neo-Nazism. According to his biographer, Draper's fortune was "the most important single financial resource for the struggle to maintain American apartheid." After Draper's death, Pioneer continued the tradition that his private donations had established during his lifetime, subsidizing research, policy initiatives, and public relations campaigns by proponents of white racial superiority the likes of Wilmot Robertson (*The Dispossessed Majority*), William Shockley, and Arthur Jensen. After the immigration reform of 1965, Pioneer revived Draper's earlier interest in decrying the malevolent influence of immigrants considered nonwhite on the country's racial well-being. The Federation for American Immigration Reform and the American Immigration Control Foundation, both of which fought to enhance the whiteness of the United States by restricting the immigration and citizenship of nonwhites, were major Pioneer recipients.¹⁶

The tradition of public engagement and philanthropy among U.S. industrial magnates could take different forms. Dalzell's most generous account suggests that a genuine commitment to social uplift, combined with an unquestioned sense of noblesse oblige and commitment to maintaining a class society, underlay the Boston Associates' philanthropy. Wickliffe Draper's passionate commitment to eugenics and racial inequality could be interpreted as mere eccentricity, as could the textile magnate Roger Milliken's devotion of time and resources to economic nationalism in the 1980s, in an era in which most textile producers were discovering the profitable

potential of free trade (see chapter 3). Eccentric though they may have been personally, their ideas and the movements they funded were far from marginal to the development of the U.S. economy and the place of workers in it.

At first glance, it would appear that anti-immigrant agitation would run counter to the interests of an industry that depended so heavily on immigrant labor. In fact, the Draper loom company was a major employer of the very southern and eastern European workers whose suitability as citizens was being challenged by institutions close to the Draper family and members of the family themselves. But an examination of the company's relationship with its mostly Italian employees, using the most bitter strike in Draper's history in 1913 as a case study, reveals how and why anti-immigrant attitudes and policies were in fact quite congruent with the use of immigrant workers. Anti-immigrant racism underlay a social order that naturalized and justified exploitive working conditions and violent repression of worker activism.

Anti-immigrant racism, like economic nationalism, also created a space for employers to appeal to the mainstream union movement, epitomized in the early years of the century by the American Federation of Labor (AFL), based on a shared conception of "Americanism." Americanism divided native from immigrant workers, but it also provided a route for immigrant workers to "assimilate" by distancing themselves from their radical pasts. Racism and the exclusion of blacks from the workforce helped the textile industry to avoid and crush unions for many generations in the U.S. South.¹⁷ Milliken's program of economic nationalism created new opportunities for labor-management collaboration in the 1980s, as unions struggled to redefine international solidarity in the context of the anti-corporate globalization movement. In both cases, a form of exclusivist, white-identified nationalism encouraged white workers to join their employers in promoting an economic system that granted certain privileges to the white working class.

Radical Immigrants in Hopedale and Milford

Like New England's textile mills, Draper employed primarily immigrant workers in the early twentieth century. Unlike the textile mills, however, Draper's workforce was overwhelmingly male: out of 2,200 workers in 1913, the company stated that only eight to ten were women.¹⁸ Most of the workers lived not in the company's award-winning duplexes in the bucolic com-

pany town of Hopedale but in tenements in neighboring Milford. While Draper was the largest employer in the area, Milford was also home to a number of other industries, including granite cutting, foundries, and shoe factories.

Between the 1880s and the second decade of the twentieth century, Milford, like many U.S. industrial cities, experienced a large influx of immigration from southern and eastern Europe. William Draper was ambassador to Italy from 1898 to 1902, and perhaps did some recruiting for the factory while he was there.¹⁹ In a pattern of chain migration, villages and regions were re-created in the United States as friends, kin, and acquaintances followed each other to the same location. Milford's "little Italy" was "a veritable 'Little Foggia,' as hundreds of immigrants from a few neighboring towns in the Italian province of Foggia settled there."²⁰ One immigrant who arrived in 1916 explained, "Foggiani had been emigrating to Milford for a long time. Most left for economic reasons. It was a poor province with a history of strikes and peasant disturbances."²¹

The first mass by an Italian priest was held in Milford in 1894, and in 1905 the bishop of Springfield sent Reverend Rocco Petrarca to minister to Milford's Italian population. One of his first goals was to establish a new church, what was known as a "national parish" specifically for the Italian workers, which was accomplished with the founding of the Sacred Heart Parish later that year.²² One elderly Italian in Milford recalled that Sacred Heart "was the Italian Catholic church in town. There was another Catholic church attended by the Irish and a Congregational church for the Yankees. They didn't like the Italians—the Irish or the Yankees."²³

When Ferdinando (later Nicola) Sacco left Italy in 1908 at age 17, he sailed with his brother from Naples to Boston. They continued directly on to Milford, where they stayed with a friend of their father's who had settled there, "amid a colony of Foggian immigrants, including a barber, a baker and an undertaker, in addition to shoe workers, laborers, and mill hands."²⁴ He first found work as a water boy working for a Draper contractor, then in the Draper foundry itself. Sacco left Draper after a year to train in a small shoe factory in Milford, and after a brief hiatus when he worked in a shoe factory in Webster, he returned to Milford to the Milford Shoe Company, where he worked from 1910 to 1917.²⁵

As in many Italian and other immigrant communities, radical newspapers, ideas, and organizations formed a strong component of working-

class life in Milford. Two radical Italian newspapers, *Il Proletario*, edited by the IWW activist Arturo Giovannitti, and *Cronaca Sovversiva*, edited in Lynn, Massachusetts, by the anarchist Luigi Galleani, circulated in the community. Many workers joined or attended events sponsored by the anarchist Circolo di Studi Sociali or the Milford Socialist Club, founded by the Rhode Island Socialist Party activist Joseph M. Coldwell.²⁶ A Milford resident recalled, “The radicals—mostly socialists and IWWs—had a club on East Main street, directly across from our house. All the radicals met there and called themselves socialists.”²⁷ A member of an anarchist group in nearby Franklin, Massachusetts, explained, “We went to Milford quite often—it is not far from Franklin—for picnics and plays.”²⁸

The 1912 textile strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts, aroused significant interest in Milford’s immigrant community. The Milford socialists enthusiastically supported Lawrence’s Bread and Roses strikers (Coldwell later said that his first visit to Hopedale was to raise funds for the Lawrence strikers), and the IWW organizers Joseph Ettor and Arturo Giovannitti spoke twice at mass meetings in the Milford Town Hall.²⁹ The “fiery Joe Ettor, one of the Wobblies’ most gifted speakers,” later played an important role in the Hopedale strike.³⁰

At the Hopedale meetings, “Coldwell didn’t attempt to veil his references to the Hopedale plant, and these brought forth cheers that showed there is a strong undercurrent of feeling, particularly among the Italians employed there, against the practices that have reduced wages to a minimum in the big works.”³¹ In particular, the piecework system at the plant made it extremely difficult for workers to earn even a minimal subsistence wage. A three-week strike at Milford’s Archer Rubber Company, where fifty to sixty workers were IWW members, in February 1913 further set the stage for Draper’s workers.³²

On March 20, 1913, three hundred Draper workers attended an IWW meeting—conducted in Italian—in Milford’s Oliveri Hall after being refused a permit by the board of selectmen to use the town hall or an outdoor square. As enthusiasm for a strike built, another IWW meeting on March 23 also attracted three hundred, and on March 28 a crowd of five hundred at the Charles River Hall listened to speeches in English, Italian, and Armenian, and “cheered the utterances lustily, the same being plentifully punctuated with references to the Draper Co. and the Hopedale plant, where most of the men are employed.” According to the newspaper, some five hundred



Figure 1. Draper strikers demonstrate in front of the company's main office on Hopedale Street in 1913. Courtesy of the American Textile History Museum, Lowell, Massachusetts.

Draper employees were dues-paying IWW members, and many others were sympathizers. “Scattered through the crowd were many English-speaking men, and a small sprinkling of other races, besides the Italians, who, of course, predominated.”³³

Three days later, on Monday, March 31, workers at another mass meeting at the Charles River Hall voted to strike. Organizers quickly printed up leaflets in Italian and English which were distributed through the town, and the following day some one thousand workers struck, with hundreds rallying around the factory gates to urge workers to stay out.³⁴

Ethnic and Class Identities

Anita Cardillo Danker, author of the lone published study of the strike, emphasizes the ethnic division in the workforce, “with the immigrants walking and the natives, for the most part, remaining loyal to the company.” The company insisted that “it was only the immigrant workers, easily excitable and unfamiliar with the give and take of the system, who deserted the company.” Danker partially agreed: “As outsiders largely unaware of the

utopian tradition and the Draper history of benevolent paternalism, [immigrants] were quicker to ignite and to erupt into defiant protest at perceived injustices than were the long-established, more loyal, native operatives.”³⁵ The company’s “benevolent paternalism,” however, was directed toward its more established, and better paid, English-speaking employees.

The strike immediately attracted attention from activists and organizers outside Milford. The *rw*w organizer John Morris was a “forceful orator” at the March 28 meeting, describing the 1909 strike of Slavic workers against the Pressed Steel Car Company in McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania. On the first day of the strike Morris (this time identified as Frank Morris—the same person?) again spoke, along with Italian and Armenian speakers, this time “deploring the fact that not more of the English-speaking employees were with them.”³⁶ Morris, along with an Italian organizer from Boston, Flavio Albizzati, continued to address the crowds and coordinate actions during the first days of the strike.³⁷ Joseph Coldwell also returned to Milford (from Worcester) in the first days of the strike and took a leading role. On April 2, he addressed a meeting of Armenian workers at the Armenian Club. The strike committee, formed at a mass meeting of workers on April 2 to present workers’ demands to the company, consisted of four workers carefully chosen to represent the four nationalities of the strikers: Italian, American, Lithuanian, and Armenian.³⁸

The *rw*w as an organization, and *rw*w leaders, including “Big Bill” Haywood, who came to Hopedale to assist with the strike, were nourished by the experience of the Lawrence strike a year earlier.³⁹ In Lawrence, neighborhood and ethnic and national organizations formed the backbone to the strike. While earlier studies credited the *rw*w with a definitive role in leading the strike, Ardis Cameron sees more of a give-and-take between outside organizers and local activists: “The genius of the Wobblies who came to Lawrence lay in their ability to assimilate local leadership into the decision-making process and to build upon the scattered bases of local power that already existed in the community.”⁴⁰

In particular, *rw*w organizers in Lawrence had to reconcile strikers’ ethnic solidarity with their organization’s commitment to internationalism. “Rooted in the traditions of revolutionary syndicalism, Wobblies were understandably suspicious of the nationality form of organization, which they saw as an explosive barrier to cooperation and united action. . . . Strikers, however, had already established patterns of authority that crisscrossed

ethnic communities, and [the iww organizer Joseph] Ettor wisely adhered to the decentralized format that had been established . . . Locally organized and attuned to the ear of the neighborhoods, the language federations allowed for the widest possible participation among a population comprised of over forty national groups.”⁴¹

In Hopedale, the company clearly promoted the idea that the strikers were outsiders, in all possible ways: not workers, not from Hopedale or Milford, and not Americans. On the first day of the strike the company’s statement to the press emphasized all three aspects, describing the strikers variously as “a number of men, largely not employees of the Draper Co”; “principally Italians and Armenians”; and “so-called iww leaders, and it is believed that organization is responsible for the trouble.” A few days later another company statement reiterated the point: “Of the several hundred men who are out there are not more than 36 who are American citizens, and they are substantially all of Italian or Armenian extraction.”⁴² In the company newsletter, the editors reiterated this: “None of the strikers are Americans by birth; most of them are Italians and Armenians; few of them are able to speak English; hardly any are citizens by naturalization.”⁴³

Joseph Coldwell responded with a biting statement of his own: “It is too late for the Draper Co. to raise the question of American citizenship, as they have been notorious in displacing American with foreign labor for the simple reason that they could hire these poor foreigners cheaper than the American citizen.” Besides, Coldwell argued, it “is not a question of citizenship or nationality. It is a question of humanity.” Finally, he insisted that the company’s attack on the iww was missing the point: “The strikers have presented their demands as employees of the Draper Co. and not as members of the iww. They have not requested, neither do they expect recognition of that organization by the company, therefore the company cannot hide behind the cloud which they have raised of iww-ism, as that is not embodied in the demands.”⁴⁴

When the workers formulated their demands, respect was high among them, indicating that the derogatory racial and national atmosphere in the Draper plant was a long-standing grievance. “Conditions at the mill are not as they should be,” the strikers’ statement noted. Whether for tactical or other reasons, strikers blamed individual foremen, rather than the company, for the treatment they received in the plant. “The foremen were haughty and insolent to us. They looked after their own personal interests, and not after