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### "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure"| The Smeltermen of Anaconda in War and Peace, 1942-1945

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*The University of Montana*

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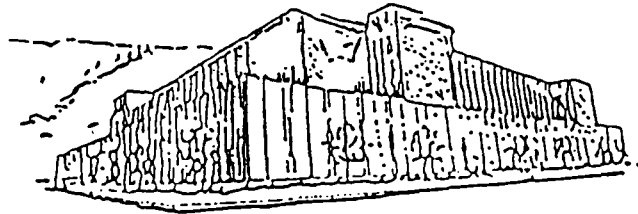
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“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”: The Smeltermen of  
Anaconda in War and Peace, 1942-1945.

by

Matthew L. Basso

B.A. Vassar College, 1990

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements


for the degree of

Master of Art

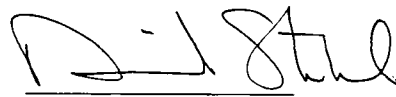
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“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”: The Smeltermen of Anaconda in War and Peace, 1942-1945. (145 pp.)

Director: David M. Emmons 

Chapter One of this thesis focuses on incidents in the early World War II period that illuminate the masculine culture of Montana’s copper communities and the ways these working men tried to keep control of their lives. By studying the men’s reaction to the Anaconda Copper Mining Company (ACM) and government-led production campaign, the internal differences among the community’s male workers become apparent. The discussions surrounding three major topics — deferment from the war, the union and management’s bid to gain identification cards for wartime workers, and the campaign by the workers and the community for government recognition of the Montana copper workers’ special place in the national war machine — all illuminate how Anaconda’s masculine world was constantly redefined and reinforced. Again, in these incidents we see how these men were consistently active in their quest for control over their lives and the future of their society. Finally, I conclude this chapter with a detailed look at a different side of Anaconda’s male ethic: the use of religion by management and union leaders to shape the working men’s behavior during the war.

Chapter Two continues the exploration of how the smeltermen asserted their authority over their world by examining the union’s fight to exclude minority men. The negotiation between the men of the union and those of management on this issue highlights their unusual relationship. And perhaps most critically, this episode set against the backdrop of other debates between union and management provides a window into how white workers and managers dealt with race.

Chapter Three looks at the smeltermen’s fight to keep women out of their male workplace by analyzing the remarkable arguments between Anaconda workers and management on this topic. The chapter uses the images of gender present in the community during these years to assess whether the men’s struggle to exclude women was supported or hindered by local culture. By exploring why the men wanted to keep women out of the smelter a clear picture of the relationship between their work and their societal objectives emerges. Anaconda’s smeltermen wanted to ensure they and their male progeny would have stable, well-paying jobs in the smelter after the war. In addition, they wanted to maximize their own profits during the war. Chapters Two and Three taken together provide a case study in how one particular group of workers asserted their authority over national norms that seemed, in their eyes, to be changing without the workers’ consent.

The Conclusion focuses on one particular facet of the worker’s world, the effort to shape their postwar society. Furthermore, it strives both to tie the previous chapters together and provide a coherent analysis of what this wartime drama means to our understanding of gender, race, and labor history.

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# “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”: The Smeltermen of Anaconda in War and Peace, 1942-1945.

*Matthew L. Basso*

## **Introduction**

### **The Wartime World of the Smeltermen**

This is a story about the working men of Anaconda, Montana, during World War II.<sup>1</sup> Anaconda was the smelting center of the Anaconda Company's copper empire. It is no longer. The town's major landmark was the mammoth Anaconda Reduction Works. It, like the Anaconda Copper Mining Company (ACM) itself, has been dismantled. Today most visitors to Anaconda typically comment on either the sheer size of the 585 foot smelter stack or the vast accumulation of slag that abuts Highway 1, the main road into town. These are the only remaining physical vestiges of Anaconda's smelting activity. If one did not know the history of the place, or more

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<sup>1</sup> The title for this thesis comes from a passage in the Transcripts of the Union - Management Negotiating Sessions at the Anaconda Smelter for the 19 April 1944 meeting. The union on this day showed for the first time their guiding philosophy in these negotiations. John Donovan, replying to W.E. Mitchell's contention that all future problems can be dealt with through traditional grievance channels, asserted "an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure." Transcript of the Anaconda Smelter's Union - Management Grievance Committee Meetings, 13 April 1944, Originals in the possession of Robert Vine, Anaconda, Montana, Copies in the possession of the author. Hereafter this source is abbreviated as ASUMGC.



importantly the people who still populate it, these two icons — the stack and the pile of waste below it — might serve as defining emblems of a dying town. This is far from the truth. The men and women who live in Anaconda today have no plans to let it die. Moreover, they treasure their industrial past and they have deep respect for their ancestors who made this town a powerful and essential component of the national production machine.

The stack sits on a rise known to locals as simply, “the hill.” East and south of the stack and “the hill” sit the majestic Pintler mountains, one of the most scenic areas in western Montana. Each morning, as the sun rises in the east, it first warms Butte — Anaconda’s sister city and past headquarters of ACM — then respectively the Pintlers, the stack, and the town stretched in the thin valley below. The long and wide clearing that once housed the various buildings of the Anaconda Reduction Works, lies in the shade of Mount Haggin. Because of the mountain’s shadow, this spot is one of the last places in Anaconda to see the morning light.<sup>2</sup> In the summer of 1944, or for that matter any other year, the mountain’s shadow made no difference. When the day shift arrived at the smelter for the 7 AM work call, the sun had been up for well over an hour. But, in the winter it must have seemed the sun would never touch the darkness that shrouded the smelter. On these cold, dark days the heat generated by the various furnaces and roasters in the plant could be a blessed relief. Of course, in comparison with the warmth provided by the after-work shot of whiskey that accompanied a

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<sup>2</sup> A note on terminology: throughout this study I use Reduction Works, smelter, and plant interchangeably. When for clarity sake I need to specify a particular part of the Reduction Works, I will do so. I also use the term working men and membership interchangeably. Again, when detail is important I will clarify exactly to whom I am referring. Finally, the Anaconda Copper Mining Company is variously termed ACM and the Company throughout.

boilermaker, the smeltermen's beverage of choice, the smelter's heat was of paltry importance.

Indeed, on a cold winter day the men on the day shift from the most experienced craftsman to the newest laborer serving time on Joe Thomas's bull gang would know exactly where they were heading when the whistle blew at 3 PM. After turning in their time cards, the men would board one of the trolleys run by the company owned street railway system. After the trip down the hill their first stop would be their favorite watering hole along Third Street. Whether it was the "Paradise," the "Sladich Bar," or any other of the numerous establishments that catered to the working men, the bartender would have already set up the first round of drinks for his loyal and punctual customers. During World War II, two shots of whiskey and a glass of beer went for twenty-five cents. Most men would have three rounds. Tradition, always an important facet of Anaconda life, dictated that the last round was on the house. When they finished their drinks and the dinner hour was near, the men headed home. Those men who lived in working class neighborhoods on the west side of Main Street, an area quite a distance from Third Street and which by city ordinance did not allow drinking establishments, would gulp their drinks and catch the last street car home. Those who lived east of First Street, either in the working class neighborhood tightly packed with neat homes that locals called Goosetown or in any of the other small neighborhoods, could easily amble home to a waiting dinner.

Working in the smelter paid well. Most men with a few years under their belts could afford a comfortable home. Usually their wives did not work outside of the home. These men were proud of their roles as breadwinner, husband, and father. They

and their community judged a man by his ability to succeed at all three tasks. Indeed, the very way they earned their bread — the physically demanding nature of smelter work — was essential to their sense of their own masculinity. Although certain jobs in the plant were easier than others, a man had to earn the seniority to qualify for one of these plum assignments by working his way up from the lowest laborer position. This progression typically took many years. Most “old-timers,” as the men called them on the hill, were respected members of the working corps and the community.

For the vast majority of men, no matter their seniority, their work in the smelter was generally hard, dirty, and hot. The complex process of taking rock and separating, then extracting, the various minerals which had bonded together for many millennia necessarily and naturally required brute mechanical and physical strength. In simple parlance, one might describe the process that transformed ore into copper anodes as such: raw ores, mined in Butte’s incredibly rich hills just twenty-five miles to the east, went to the Anaconda Reduction Works where working men processed them into copper and a few other metals. This copper then went by railroad to Great Falls, Montana. There workers refined it into a useable form and shipped it all over the country. However, such a description does not do justice to the monumental nature of the smelting process. To understand the story that follows one must know what went on at the smelter.

Ore reached Anaconda by way of the Butte, Anaconda, and Pacific railroad, which the ACM owned. The BA&P ran both passenger and freight service over a twenty-five mile long track that wound between the mining town and the smelter town. Butte sent fifty ton ore cars pulled variously by either the railroad’s state-of-the-art

locomotives or its classic steam locomotives directly to the smelter rail yard. Here smaller electric locomotives would push ore cars up the elevated track that ran along the back of the giant converter plant. The electric locomotive would then move, or “spot,” ore cars, five-stories above the ground, in the rotary car dumper, or “tipple.” The tipple could handle twenty-four forty foot long ore cars per hour, and thus had a maximum hourly dumping capacity of 1200 tons.

The copper ore process at the Reduction Works called for this raw ore to move from the tipple into a 200 ton ore storage bin. The ore then moved via six-foot wide conveyor belts through a Grizzly hopper, which separated small chunks of ore from large chunks, to the Gyratory crusher, then to the Symons crusher, and finally into a second large storage bin designed exclusively to hold the now partially crushed ore. Next the ore moved along another conveyor system that added water to the material so the trommels and then the Roll crusher could continue the refining process. From the trommels the ore moved into the Anaconda classifier that separated some of the waste from the ore. The waste, with small pieces of ore along for the ride, went to the Dorr thickener. The thickener served as both a dirty water overflow system and a waste processing system. The thickener separated the misguided copper from the true waste prior to the ore reaching the flotation machines. The crushed ore that made it through the classifier next moved through an Allen cone into the massive Hardinge Ball mill. The ore often went through this mill a number of times until it was the right size and consistency. Along the way a Dorr classifier removed any byproducts that did not belong in this stage of the process and sent on the properly treated ore.

From the Hardinge mill the crushed ore went through the flotation machines then through another Dorr thickener. The smeltermen named the area around the floatation machines the “Dead Horse” section because of the smell produced by various reagents during the flotation process. Once the still only partially processed copper separated from other waste remains, which had sunk to the bottom during the flotation circuit, the powder-like copper moved along belts to an Oliver filter then transferred directly to the roasting furnaces. After roasting, belts transferred the processed compound to a second heating stage, the reverberatory furnace. This step produced both virtually finished copper and the smelter’s major solid waste product, slag. From the reverberatory furnace the copper went to a converter for its penultimate treatment. From the converter, the copper went into the casting furnace, and after a cooling period the rough copper traveled to the Great Falls refinery in Northern Pacific railroad cars. There workers turned it into useable copper anodes.

Butte did not just send copper ore to the smelter. The smeltermen also treated ores that contained manganese, iron, zinc, and lead. The concentrator finely ground these minerals. Next, the floatation tanks removed the sulfides of these ores in order to recover the lead and zinc content. What remained from this process, residue called “tailings” were transferred to the manganese concentrator. At this point, processing raised the grade of the product to thirty-eight percent manganese. Furnaces then heated the concentrated manganese to 2,500 degrees Fahrenheit, with the end result being manganese nodules which the men made into ferromanganese by reaction in the

plant's four electric furnaces. Ferromanganese was an essential element of all steel products and thus in high demand throughout the war.<sup>3</sup>

Manganese, copper, and the other metals and compounds treated at the smelter required both a huge physical plant and a large labor pool. In a typical year, upwards of five thousand men on three shifts a day worked at the Reduction Works. There never was a problem finding men to work in these well-paying jobs. The years 1942 through 1945, however, were not typical. During World War II, Anaconda, like industrial cities all over America, lost working men to the Armed Services and to higher paying war production jobs on both coasts. On the surface there was nothing unusual about the labor situation in Anaconda during the war: Anaconda had a manpower problem just like most other industrial towns.<sup>4</sup> It is when we delve a little deeper and look at how management and labor dealt with the manpower shortage that Anaconda's story becomes exceptional.

Historians have ably told the story of women, black men and Mexican men going to work in war production industries across the U.S. during World War II.<sup>5</sup> Employing

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<sup>3</sup> The description of the copper ore process and certain details of wartime Anaconda come from Bob Vine's fine study, The Women of the Washoe. I am indebted to Mr. Vine for sharing his knowledge of Anaconda and the smelter with me. Robert Vine, The Women of the Washoe (Butte: Butte Historical Society, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> There is a vast trove of works on the Homefront during World War II. For example, John Morton Blum, V was for Victory: Politics and American Culture during World War II (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich, 1976); Richard Polenberg, War and Society: The United States, 1941-1945 (New York: J.B. Lippincott, 1972); John Patrick Diggins, The Proud Decades: America in War and in Peace, 1941-1960 (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988); Richard R. Lingeman, Don't You Know There's a War On? The American Homefront, 1941-1945 (New York: Capricorn, 1976); and Mark Jonathan Harris et al., eds., The Homefront: America during World War II (New York: Putnam's, 1984).

<sup>5</sup> For women during World War II, see: Maureen Honey, Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984); Sherna Berger Gluck, Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, The War, and Social Change (Boston: Twayne, 1987); Lynn Y. Wiener, From Working Girl to Working Mother: The Female Labor Force in the United States, 1820-1980 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); and Karen Anderson, Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women during World War II (Westport: Greenwood,

women and minority men became the most common solution to the national labor shortage. After some stalling in the early days of the war, the federal government came out fully in support of this solution. Although the men who worked in these industries prior to the war initially resisted the integration of women and minority men into their previously all male and mostly white work places, they soon grudgingly acquiesced. All parties involved seemed to realize that this was a national emergency requiring a temporary suspension of traditional notions of acceptable gender and race relations. This seeming consensus did not include the men of Anaconda.

The Anaconda Reduction works operated for the first two years of World War II by hiring some new men, but mainly by employing its workforce on a six to seven day a week basis. By late 1943 the cost of overtime for the sixth and seventh shift and the further attrition of the labor pool caused the smelter's management to push for a new source of replacement workers.<sup>6</sup> The Company told Mine, Mill, and Smeltermen's Union No. 117 that these replacements would either be black and Mexican men supplied by the U.S. Employment Agency or local women. Management clearly

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1981). Regarding Minority Men, see: Neil A. Wynn, The Afro-American and the Second World War (London: Paul Elek, 1976); Harvard Sitkoff, "Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War," Journal of American History 58 (Dec. 1971), 661-81; and on Mexican-Americans: Mauricio Mazon, The Zoot-Suit Riots: The Psychology of Symbolic Annihilation (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984).

<sup>6</sup> Two Executive Orders laid down the rules for overtime compensation during the war. The first, Executive Order 9240, dated 9 September 1942, specifically regulated overtime wage compensation. It stated that no premium pay or overtime compensation shall be paid for working on a Saturday or Sunday unless it was a sixth or seventh day worked. Work done on the sixth day of a seven day work week will be for time and a half. And, work performed on the seventh day of a seven day work week will be for double time. Executive Order 9301, dated 9 February 1943, established a minimum wartime work week if forty-eight hours. This Executive Order simply mandated that all places of employment fully utilize their available manpower, and thus not work their employees less than forty-eight hours to save on wages. Both Executive Orders are found in The Code of Federal Regulations, Title 3 - The President, 1938-1943 Compilation (Washington: The Office of the Federal Register, National Archives, and Records Service, 1968), 1207-8, 1253. Hereafter, 3CFR, 1938-1943 Comp.

preferred women and began to hire them in ones and two to work in less physical jobs around the plant. The union initially objected to this practice, but in a critical meeting on 13 April 1944 it seemingly agreed to the further employment of women in the smelter. The working men did this to dissuade the company from using minority men as the solution to the manpower problem.

However, from April to July of 1944, the union successfully stalled the employment of women in large numbers. The smeltermen also succeeded in excluding minority men even though management continually threatened to import such workers. *By August of 1944 the employment situation in the smelter had stabilized. In that month there were seventy-five women working in the smelter. The total number of women working in the plant at any one time never went above that figure. At the end of the war, all of the women were dismissed. The smeltermen's struggle to exclude women and minority men forms the core of this study.*

The actions of these men were exceptional (but, perhaps, their motivations were not — that is an issue for later discussion). By way of contrast, it is worth comparing *in greater detail the conservative approach of Anaconda's smeltermen to that of other smeltermen working in plants with equally grueling work conditions. Other smelters employed women prior to 1944, well before Anaconda. At a Chicago smelter, for instance, over thirty percent of the workforce were women. Arizona had one plant employing 200 women, a second with seventy female employees, and a third smelter in Arizona hired women to make up thirty percent of its crew in the mill.*<sup>7</sup> At two

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<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, the mill workers at Anaconda were some of the most outspoken opponents of women workers.



smelters in California, women made up ten and twenty percent of the workers respectively. In total this plant employed 146 women. Closer to home, in Kellogg, Idaho, forty-four women worked in the lead smelter and ten at the zinc plant. Women at Kellogg worked in the D and L roasters preparing charges, operated conveyor belts, regulated the flow of materials from the bins to the belts, and they served as machinist helpers. Furthermore, in work specific to the lead refinery, women casted and strung number 5 lead ingots, and handled cleaned and operated electric locomotives and charge cars, and cut scrap iron with acetylene torches. All of these jobs came under the responsibilities of the Bull Gang or what the Anacondans called the Joe Thomas line. These were some of the dirtiest and most physically grueling jobs in the plant.<sup>8</sup>

The larger point here is that the working men of Montana's Smelter City not only resisted the integration of women and minority men into the labor force at the Reduction Works, they flat-out fought to exclude both groups.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the workers' exclusion of minority men received the tacit blessing and cooperation of the smelter's management. Their struggle to keep women out of the male domain of the smelter, however, went directly against management's wishes. The primary actors involved in these events were the ethnically diverse, working class men of Mine, Mill, and Smeltermen's Union No. 117 (CIO), and the male managers of the Anaconda

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<sup>8</sup> ASUMGC, 4/13/44, 6-7. By way of contrast, working on the trommel screens, one of the jobs the smeltermen fought hardest to keep for their male union members, required far less strength and certainly was less grueling than working on the Thomas' Bull Gang.

<sup>9</sup> For a brief version of Hobsbawm's argument regarding the power to exclude, and for a sophisticated application of this idea, see, David Emmons, The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875-1925 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 134, 190-92. For Hobsbawm's full treatment see, Eric Hobsbawm, Workers: Worlds of Labor (New York: Pantheon, 1984). For an associated discussion see, John Bodnar, Workers' World: Kinship, Community and Protest in an Industrial Society, 1900-1940 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), all of introduction and 185.

Copper Mining Company's Reduction Works. Also involved in this story were the women of Anaconda whom the smelter managers hoped to employ, and the body of black and Mexican male workers whom the U.S. Employment Agency threatened to send to Anaconda. In addition, a few black men already worked in the Reduction Works when the war started. And finally, involved tangentially were the residents, both workers and managers, men and women, of Butte and Great Falls, the AMC's two other major western Montana operating sites.

Because of the mix of actors and the actions they took, this thesis necessarily addresses issues of gender, race, ethnicity, work, and local autonomy during World War II. Fully noting the disparate nature of these themes, there is a tie that binds together this thesis — the working men of Anaconda's constant struggle to exert authority over their contemporary and future world. I must note here that these are activist workers. Whether we consider their actions right or wrong, they did not sit back passively and let others shape their lives; these men fought to assert their authority in what the historian William Graebner has called an age of contingency.<sup>10</sup> Graebner thinks of the era as contingent for a number of reasons. Most essential here was the sense of contingency caused by transitions in the makeup of the American workforce, the ability to gain employment (and potentially lose it), and the war itself. The smeltermen worked to remove the sense of contingency regarding these first two issues in their community by pushing for an environment that would allow full-employment for any man with roots in the community who wanted to work in the

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<sup>10</sup> On this issue see William Graebner, The Age of Doubt: American Thought and Culture in the 1940s (Boston: Twayne, 1991).

smelter. This, of course, did not include women or minority men who migrated into Anaconda.

Chapter One focuses on incidents in the early war period that illuminate the masculine culture of Montana's copper communities and the ways these working men tried to keep control of their lives. By studying the men's reaction to the Company and government-led production campaign, the internal differences among the community's male workers become apparent. The discussions surrounding three major topics — deferment from the war, the union and management's bid to gain identification cards for wartime workers, and the campaign by the workers and the community for government recognition of the Montana copper workers' special place in the national war machine — all illuminate how Anaconda's masculine world was constantly redefined and reinforced. Again, in these incidents we see how these men were consistently active in their quest for control over their lives and the future of their society. Finally, I conclude this chapter with a detailed look at a different side of Anaconda's male ethic: the use of religion by management and union leaders to shape the working men's behavior during the war. The ways in which various parties manipulated the highly charged masculine environment in these copper towns exposed the importance of masculinity in determining a worker's self image. This is a little understood and complex side of the working man's world.

Chapter Two continues the exploration of how the smeltermen asserted their authority over their world by examining the union's fight to exclude minority men. The negotiation between the men of the union and those of management on this issue

highlights their unusual relationship. And perhaps most critically, this episode set against the backdrop of other debates between union and management provides a window into how white workers and managers dealt with race.

Chapter Three looks at the smeltermen's fight to keep women out of their male workplace by analyzing the remarkable arguments between Anaconda workers and management on this topic. The chapter uses the images of gender present in the community during these years to assess whether the men's struggle to exclude women was supported or hindered by local culture. By exploring why the men wanted to keep women out of the smelter a clear picture of the relationship between their work and their societal objectives emerges. Anaconda's smeltermen wanted to ensure they and their male progeny would have stable, well-paying jobs in the smelter after the war. In addition, they wanted to maximize their own profits during the war. Chapters Two and Three taken together provide a case study in how one particular group of workers asserted their authority over national norms that seemed, in their eyes, to be changing without the workers' consent.

The Conclusion focuses on one particular facet of the worker's world, the effort to shape their postwar society. Furthermore, it strives both to tie the previous chapters together and provide a coherent analysis of what this wartime drama means to our understanding of gender, race, and labor history.

There is much here, but my thesis only touches on some of the remarkable lessons that Anaconda offers. This thesis is above all else an exploratory enterprise. In my eyes it has served its purpose well, for the limited nature of this study has truly frustrated me. There is so much more to say; to comprehend this unique place and its

people fully, I now know that I must examine their lives and their world in the 1920s and the 1930s. Likewise, taking the story into at least the late 1940s will provide a picture of continuity and a chance to trace cause and effect in this tumultuous period.<sup>11</sup> Topically I have only begun to scratch the surface. I hope to infuse national and local culture into this study by analyzing the role both played in shaping the attitudes of Anaconda's citizens (and also how culture reflected these local attitudes). I need to let these women speak and I need to find the voices of these black men; each of these goals is possible.<sup>12</sup> I want to continue exploring the relationship that these men had to different forms of authority including their views of the Company, the state, and the nation.<sup>13</sup> All of these intersecting topics — race, gender (especially masculinity), culture and authority — have not been fully explored for America's immigrant working classes. This thesis is one small step toward a richer comprehension of this remarkable period in our nation's history.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> I am certainly not alone in seeing such linking of periods once considered discrete. See, for example, Elizabeth Faue, Community of Suffering and Struggle: Women, Men, and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991); and Lizabeth Cohen Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990). I believe an analysis from the 1920s to 1950s offers some of same benefits as Faue and Cohen's work.

<sup>12</sup> Laurie Mercier's work on the women of Anaconda, and other oral history projects dealing with the same topic, promise to be fruitful. See, for example, Laurie K. Mercier, "'We are Women Irish': Gender, Class, Religious, and Ethnic Identity in Anaconda, Montana," in Montana: The Magazine of Western History Vol. 44, No. 1 (Winter 1994) 28-43. Finding sources that that reveal the minority men's side of the story will, indeed, be a challenge.

<sup>13</sup> William Freehling's construct on understanding the political world by studying the social world and vice versa, seems particularly fitting for such work. For a full explanation of this idea see, William W. Freehling, The Reintegration of American history: Slavery and the Civil War (New York; Oxford University Press, 1994). 253-274.

<sup>14</sup> There is a paucity of work on masculinity during W.W.II. But, the first great war has been well scoured in this arena. Michael C.C. Adams is the latest scholar to investigate masculinity during W.W.I. He was preceded by Paul Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); and Eric J. Leed, No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). Both authors addressed this issue specifically. See also works by Peter Filene, E. Anthony Rotundo, and Peter Stearns among others who have looked at masculinity during

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this period in general, Adams' work serves as only a foil for this study. Some of Adams conclusions do illustrate the mentality of Anaconda men during W.W.II, even though he is speaking of different men, in a different place at a different time. Adams asserts that although men are not innately compelled to a fascination for war, it is part of the socially masculine role. Adams speaks in broad generalizations regarding his topic, I can go only so far as to say that the shame felt by some of the younger copper workers in the region frozen to their jobs is partially explained by the observation. Michael C.C. Adams. The Great Adventure: Male Desire and the Coming of World War I. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

There has been much more written on what World War II meant to America's women than to America's men. For one excellent account see: William H. Chafe, The Paradox of Change (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 121-2, 134. In assessing the impact of the war on women Chafe argued that the war created a framework where progress could begin upon ultimately destroying traditional ideas of gender separation. Yet, the absence of greater gains in child care, job segregation, and equal pay raises serious doubts about the war's permanent impact on basic attitudes regarding women's roles. Leila Rupp, D'Ann Campbell, Karen Anderson, Susan Hartmann, and Alice-Kessler Harris all see continuity as more defining than change both during and after the war. A final analysis can only be made by assessing whether women kept their jobs, whether the institutional underpinnings governing separate sex roles changed after the war, the change in society's view of women, the effect of the postwar economy, and numerous other factors. This makes the job difficult, if not impossible. However, it can be said that many contemporary observers felt they were witnessing a revolution in woman's role in society. If this was the case, for many women in Anaconda and in Montana's other copper towns, such change was unintentional, and in the minds of the majority of local society, unnecessary. Alice Kessler-Harris speaks to this issue. She believes the potency of sexist ideology derailed women's push for equality. Susan Hartmann, however, places more emphasis on women's commitment to traditional values when addressing this question. I find truth in both positions. There is little doubt that the religious beliefs and ethnic roots of Anaconda's women greatly influenced their actions. See, Alice Kessler-Harris. Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); and Susan M. Hartmann. The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s. (Boston: Twayne, 1982).

## **Chapter 1**

### ***The Production of Manhood***

The aim of this chapter is to illustrate the masculine culture of Montana's copper communities and the ways the working men of these towns tried to keep control of their lives in the early years of World War II. By studying the men's reaction to the Company and government led production campaign, the internal differences among the communities male workers become apparent. Examining three topics that these men saw as crucial — deferment from the war, the union and management's bid to gain identification cards for wartime workers, and the campaign by the workers and the community for government recognition of the Montana copper workers special place in the national war machine — illustrates how Anaconda's masculine world was constantly redefined and reinforced. Simultaneously, these incidents show how these men were consistently active in their quest for control over their lives and the future of their society. Finally, by closely examining the use of religion, which was just one part of the propaganda campaign waged by management and union leaders to shape the working men's behavior during the war, this chapter concludes with a detailed look at the ways in which various parties manipulated the highly charged masculine environment in these copper towns.

Thankfully, there are rich sources that suggest certain events and topics that both impact and reveal these men. One particularly valuable source is the transcripts from the combined Victory Labor-Management Committee of the ACM and the transcripts

for some of its ancillary committees at Butte, Anaconda, and Great Falls.<sup>15</sup> The Anaconda Victory Committee formed immediately after Pearl Harbor. A group of men representing Local No. 117 of the International Union of Mine, Mill & Smelter Workers called upon the Management and presented itself as a 'Defense Committee' to cooperate with Management in plant matter relating to maximum operation and production.<sup>16</sup> Notably, labor took the lead in this affair. The participants at that first meeting unanimously decided that A.F. of L. craftsmen should be included in the "Defense Committee." The men decided that due to the complex organization of the Reduction Works, a central committee would not adequately reach the full spectrum of workers. Thus, on 6 May 1942, members of management, including W.E. Mitchell, Manager; C.A. Lemmon, Assistant Manager; and E.A. Barnard, General Superintendent, met with representatives from the Mill and Smeltermen (CIO), Electricians, Welders, Tanners, Machinists, Laboratory Sample, and Foundry departments (all AFL).

Mitchell, variously referred to as "Bill," "Willard," or more often as "W.E." played a leading role in this story. A graduate of Washington State University with a degree in mining, Mitchell began his career with ACM as a common laborer at the Anaconda Reduction Works, or the Washoe Reduction Works as it was originally called. (It is

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<sup>15</sup> These documents are held at the Montana Historical Society Archives. Hereafter the Anaconda Copper Mining Company's Labor - Management Victory Committee will be referred to as the Victory Committee or in context as simply the Committee.

<sup>16</sup> "Development and Progress of Victory Labor-Management Committees at The Anaconda Reduction Works - Anaconda Copper Mining Company, Anaconda, Montana," Memo included in the Report to Donald Nelson, Chairman War Production Board, Victory Labor-Management Committees at The Anaconda Reduction Works - Anaconda Copper Mining Company, Anaconda, Montana, June 27, 1942, 1. from the Anaconda Copper Mining Company Collections in the Montana Historical Society Archives, Helena, Montana. Hereafter, documents from this source will be abbreviated: Victory.



neither insignificant nor unusual that Mitchell began his career with ACM as a worker.<sup>17</sup> It added credibility to all of his actions as a manager.) Later he became superintendent of the Great Falls Reduction Department's zinc plant, then rose to become the general superintendent of all ACM's Great Falls operations. Mitchell transferred to the larger Anaconda facility in the same capacity and shortly thereafter was finally promoted to the job he held the rest of his career, manager of the Anaconda smelter. The working men of Anaconda respected Bill Mitchell; he was a "straight shooter."<sup>18</sup> More than once during his tenure at the Reduction Works, he had shown himself as a friend of labor. His knowledge of the copper ore process, gained by working as a common laborer and as a manager, was unparalleled.<sup>19</sup>

As guidance for the workers and management who were forming the joint Labor-Management Committee in mid 1942, Mitchell referred to a statement by the War Production Board.<sup>20</sup> He read "The War Production Drive is a voluntary effort. Its success is up to the men and women, labor and management in the plants." Apparently concerned that labor or management might see such a directive as favoring one side or the other, the message continued:

This drive is designed to increase the production of weapons now and not further the special interests of any group. It is not a plan to promote company unions. It is not a device to add to or tear down the power or position of any union. It does not interfere with bargaining machinery where it exists. It is not

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<sup>17</sup> ACM had a history of employing managers who had at one time or another worked as laborers. The tradition started with Marcus Daly and included most of ACM's leaders including Con Kelley, Chairman of the ACM board during World War II. As Isaac Marcossou writes of Kelley, "The onetime dollar and a half a day waterboy in Butte had risen to the highest post . . . in the company." Found in, Isaac F. Marcossou, *Anaconda* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1957), 67-77, 228.

<sup>18</sup> After Mitchell retired the town named a baseball field in his honor. Mitchell Field is still there today.

<sup>19</sup> Marcossou, *Anaconda*, 288, 351.

<sup>20</sup>The WPB regulated the business of war production through a network of sub-agencies, like the Non-Ferrous Commission. For a full explanation of the WPB and other wartime agencies see Blum, *V is for Victory*.

designed to conform to any plan that contemplates a measure of control of management by labor. It does not put management in labor or labor in management. It is not a management plan, a labor plan, or any other plan. It is the War Production Drive plan. It is a perfectly simple, straightforward effort to increase production.

The message holds a key to the distinctions among some American working men regarding definitions of manhood and ideas of patriotic duty. By stressing non-interference, the WPB conceded that some workers would see such a pledge as a conspiracy to sap labor of late Depression era gains. WPB's mission was to counter the effect of these 'radicals' Other workers, who thought patriotism and allegiance to the national agenda came before personal priorities, obviously believed the messages promise that this drive was only "a straightforward effort to increase production."<sup>21</sup>

Among Anaconda's workers there were proponents of each position.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the transcripts provide an excellent conduit to a cross section of Anaconda workers. It is revealing to examine the different perspectives on the war among these men. The Committee deemed a pledge sent to President Roosevelt by 613 workers at the National Transit Pump and Machine works in Oil City, Pennsylvania, important enough to be read twice at the Anaconda Committee's August meeting. The pledge read:

I realize that I am a soldier of production, whose duties are as important in this war as those of the man behind the gun.  
I will do my work well and efficiently and will stay on my job, producing to the best of my ability, until my shift ends.

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<sup>21</sup> Report to Donald Nelson, Victory, June 27, 1942, 2.

<sup>22</sup> The record shows that a goodly proportion of the working men participated in the Committee's activities. See, Report to Donald Nelson, Victory, Summary Year 1942. The Victory Labor-Management Committees at the Anaconda Reduction Works were active. The general committee held five meetings with 79 men from labor and 84 from management attending. The Departmental Committees held 164 meetings with 704 labor representatives and 250 managers participating. All of this in just the eight months the committees operated during 1942.

I will carry out my duties in accordance with instructions.  
I will think before I act.  
I will endeavor to save material by avoiding mistakes and spoilage.  
I will be careful of my health and prevent accidents, to avoid loss of time.  
I will keep my working place tidy and in order.  
All to the end that we may succeed in our efforts to increase production and attain the goal set as necessary to carry us to the final decisive victory over our treacherous enemies who now are threatening the homes of our children and the liberty of our nation.<sup>23</sup>

Tellingly, the Butte Daily Post also printed the pledge in its editorial section, while the union went so far as to post it for the duration of the emergency on union bulletin boards throughout the company area.<sup>24</sup> The pledge obviously illuminates the patriotic aspirations and beliefs of some copper workers. The committee's mediator was certainly sold on its value. He noted that even if the representatives had heard it before, "it's worth reading again, slowly and meditatively." Just the tone of his declaration suggests that obedient Americanism, not surprisingly, held sway eight months into the war — a time of both full employment and of a rising national crisis mentality of a sort that historically unified Americans. The patriotic themes contained in this list would become ubiquitous parts of national and local efforts to keep the men of the homefront focused, and always analyzing whether they were actually being as productive as possible. In particular, the worth of the male producer and his duty to his country and family to work became the two major propaganda motifs of wartime Montana.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>24</sup> Report to Donald Nelson, Victory, August 1942, 2.

Some workers, however, saw the National Transit Pump pledge and those like it as more helpful to the corporation than to the country. Such pledges were in fact problematic. Did keeping the workplace clean really fit in a pledge to President Roosevelt, or was it a sign of discipline and control by management and union leadership? The first seven statements of the above testimony can be read as a carefully drawn map directing workers along a precise path in order to produce a mutually agreed upon closure. In this vein, these steps were meant to represent the only means to this end. Being careful of one's health and carrying out one's duties in accordance with instructions would produce a victory over "our treacherous enemies" who threaten the American way of life and the very lives of our children. Some workers, jaded by corporate profit motives and vividly recalling the not so distant dark ages of labor, saw such propaganda as manipulative.<sup>25</sup> They felt that management had jumped at the chance to invoke martial metaphors and the national emergency to serve itself. They protested and called foul. Both groups of workers, those supporting the all out war effort and those questioning some facets of it, in a certain sense asserted their own power. Those who disliked what they saw as heavy handed management tactics to boost production and profits flat out said so. They were not about to lose the "voice" they had fought so hard to gain during the 1930s, and return to the 1920s.

Conversely, those workers who saw themselves as loyal patriots did not think that

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<sup>25</sup> Various authors have chronicled labor's reaction to corporate and government propaganda during the war. See, Mark H. Leff. "Politics of Sacrifice on the American Home Front in World War II," in The Journal of American History Vol. 77 no. 4 (March 1991) 1296-1318; James R. Green., The World of the Worker: Labor in Twentieth Century America (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980); Joshua Freeman. "Delivering the Goods: Industrial Unionism during World War II," in The Labor History Reader, ed. Daniel J. Leab, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985,) 383-406; Nelson Lichtenstein, Labor's War

supporting the production campaign meant being management's lackeys. And they without question showed they were not beholden to some mythical radical labor tradition that dictated "the working class" fight all capital sponsored imperatives.<sup>26</sup>

In sum the war produced workers with contrary ideas. They did not always divide simply along the convenient lines of ethnicity, race, or skill, although certainly the discriminatory policies of some labor unions did also divide workers.<sup>27</sup> Some saw themselves as loyal unionists who had a chance to continue gaining back some of the losses caused by the anti-labor climate of the 20s and early 30s. Others, by all indications the majority, saw the war as a time to put most differences aside. They knew that there were problems with industrial capitalism, and yes they supported unionism, but they felt they lived in a society that had the potential for equity between employees and employers. They did not see their agenda as riddled with contradictions. And above all, the war must definitely come first. In order to increase production, proponents of this view — concerned citizens, labor leaders, and Company managers — knew they had to keep up the morale of the working men.

The copper worker received less pay, worked in considerably harsher conditions, and was not glorified by the media to the extent of factory workers on glamorous war

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at Home: The CIO in World War II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); and the entire issue of Radical America 9 (July - October 1975).

<sup>26</sup>On the odd view of some that labor in America was not radical enough (and responses to that assessment), see Aileen Kraditor, The Radical Persuasion: Aspects of the Intellectual History and Historiography of Three American Radical Organizations (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981); for the same information specific to Montana see, Emmons, The Butte Irish, 222, 248.

<sup>27</sup> One account of how workers divided along these traditional lines is Ronald H. Bayor, Neighbors in Conflict: The Irish, Germans, Jews, and Italians of New York City, 1929-1941 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

production lines.<sup>28</sup> As early as the summer of 1942, the psychological campaign to bolster the smeltermen's self worth had begun. Management and labor in the metal producing industries realized the detrimental effect a low self image could have on the community, on production, and on the working men. They began a full-throttle campaign immediately to counter such self perceptions. Their efforts on this front did not slow until the cessation of hostilities. The first priority was to reassure the men already at work in the various copper production facilities that the country and the community honored them for their role in the war effort. Many of these workers were long-time residents of the community with deep roots and a great sense of pride in their work. For the union leadership and management, reassuring these men was like reassuring oneself that one's work had importance and meaning and that one did not have to serve in uniform to fulfill manly responsibilities.

Convincing the transient labor pool and younger local workers that being a production worker in the copper industry was a position of high honor and worth proved more difficult. Pride, the principle stimulant needed to sell older workers, lost its primacy to base economics and the salesmanship required to make some of these men believe they were working for America not ACM. This was a sticky and recurrent problem. Walter Dooley, a Smeltermen's Union representative, in a discussion at a Victory Committee meeting in August 1942, noted that some employees perceived the push for salvaging materials and increasing production during the war was designed to help the Company. For the Committee Chairman and member

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<sup>28</sup> "Development and Progress of Victory Labor-Management Committees at The Anaconda Reduction Works - Anaconda Copper Mining Company, Anaconda, Montana," June 27, 1942, *Victory*, 10.

of the ACM management team, Donald Nelson, this made little sense. He emphasized that the workers should feel they are not just working for the Company but also for the boys on the front. W.E. Mitchell supported Nelson's perspective. He added that "the name 'Labor-Management' is misleading. It marks a distinction between Labor and Management rather than making them a unified team working together toward an ultimate goal." Mitchell suggested a name with "American" in the title. "The word 'American' means everyone, not Labor, not Management, but everyone. 'American' spelled AMER-I-CAN should make every American realize that the last part of the word refers to him -- 'I-CAN' "29

Such sentiments, though reminiscent of bad advertising and modern election politics, should not be dismissed. They represented the wave of wartime patriotism which was very much alive in 1942. But some smeltermen, especially the younger one's without deep roots in the community, could criticize Mitchell's words on one level. His was, no matter his credentials as a friend of the worker, the stance of a middle class manager representing ACM. Mark Leff's study on the politics of sacrifice during World War II informs this particular dynamic between labor and management. Leff discusses the role of privately donated advertising in shaping the imagery of sacrifice. He concludes that certain groups, specifically corporate interests, were able to "domesticate and delimit the meaning of sacrifice to define it in terms that reinforced the validity of their own political interests and claims."30 Anaconda management did use formal methods such as advertising to convince the working men

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<sup>29</sup> Report to Donald Nelson, August 1942, Victory, 3.

<sup>30</sup> Leff, 1298. For a more general treatment of ubiquitous role of sacrifice in wartime culture see John Morton Blum, V was for Victory.

to sacrifice their agenda, however informal references during meetings and other forms of interaction were just as constant. The working men considered such ploys as symbolic of an inequality of sacrifice between labor and capital. Thus, it was not difficult to reason that much of what management labeled as patriotic duty could be dismissed. This was the ideological split between labor and corporate leaders that Walter Dooley was trying to get across. Nonetheless, he and the other members of the committee agreed that most workers could be convinced to fall into line behind the production program if the right arguments (and managerial concessions) were made.

The Company and union attempted to bombard the men with propaganda about what it meant to be a good worker and good citizen throughout 1942. The Victory Committee set up a pledge team assigned the task of formulating, printing, and distributing pledges that tied workers to different parts of the wartime program. Conflicts arose from the start. Labor and management agreed in general terms about the worth of such a program, but they often did not concur on the details. In this case the union found fault with the method of distribution and tone of the pledges themselves. Ed McGlone, Manager of Company operations in Butte, read a pledge “To the Armed Forces of the United States” at the 15 October meeting. It asserted: “I pledge myself wholeheartedly to every phase of our Industrial War Production Program. I will work to my full ability to meet every demand of our country’s war effort; and so far as it is humanly possible, I will work every available shift to meet those demands.”<sup>31</sup> McGlone then noted that each worker would be given a booklet

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<sup>31</sup> This could be interpreted as the government pushing men to earn overtime.



with two of the above pledges, one to keep and one that would be posted on the workplace bulletin board. The pledges would be sought as the men arrived at their workplaces by a group of four or six men who would then be responsible for finding out why anyone who signed the pledge did not give his maximum effort.

Ed McGlone, Mitchell's immediate supervisor, worked at AMC headquarters in Butte. With a degree in mining engineering and a background that included working as a "mucker" in the Butte mines, McGlone's credentials for knowing the business and knowing the working men were equal to Mitchell's. McGlone, who eventually rose to vice-president of ACM's Montana operations, served as general manager of Montana's mining and metallurgical operations during the war.<sup>32</sup> In the case of these pledges, however, McGlone's knowledge of the working men seemed to have been temporarily misplaced.

Patrick McCarthy, President of the Smeltermen's Union from 1938 through 1940 and a member of the negotiating team, responded for the union men. He asserted that the workers saw through what they regarded as heavy handed tactics. And, though McGlone and others were interested in pledges and buttons, the men at this point and throughout the war were interested in matters of the pocketbook. Manpower shortages and the essential nature of copper production made the war an ideal time to gain higher wages either through hourly wage increases or working longer hours. "We will take that up with our union members," McCarthy told McGlone. He then added, "Right now they want the \$2.00 or \$1.25 increase in pay or whatever it will be. They

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<sup>32</sup> Vine, Women of the Washoe, 25.

are not in very good humor until that issue is decided.” McGlone seemed rather incredulous that this was the mood of the workers. But John Bird, known to be in touch with worker opinion throughout the region because he interviewed men in all of the copper towns through his affiliation with the Victory Committee’s bi-weekly wartime newspaper, the Copper Commando, confirmed McCarthy’s assessment. McCarthy then moved to elucidate the worker’s position. “A lot of them think they are getting the ‘run around’ and they are not in a good humor. They think their patriotism is being imposed upon at the present time.” The men did not feel the Company was moving quickly enough on the contract negotiations then in progress. McGlone simply did not understand this reasoning. Mr. Cavanaugh, another of the union representatives on the Victory board finally got through to McGlone. He argued that the men were angry that an agreement still had not been signed even though the old contract was up as of 1 October. He added that the men “feel they are working for less wages than any other place.”<sup>33</sup> Wages obviously were one of the driving forces behind the union’s actions. It was apparent to the men that management was not practicing an equality of sacrifice; the union regularly called ACM’s propaganda contradictory. However, the men were also self-serving. Their call for a wage increase could be seen as capitalizing on the sacrifices made by others during the war. Certainly that is the way management painted any union demand. But, a more convincing analysis seems to be that the men wanted to share in a period of prosperity

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<sup>33</sup> Meeting Transcripts, October 15, 1942, Victory, 12-14.

and establish security for themselves while they had the opportunity. They only wanted their fair share.<sup>34</sup>

While many workers pushed for increased wages during the war (and in light of this, some did not appreciate the blunt propaganda of the times), many others, while concerned about the economics of the workplace, were more fixated on their chances of being drafted. Deferment from serving, and the maze of regulations that dictated whether a man would or would not be deferred, was on every man's mind. But whether they went to war or stayed home, whether they were pushing for higher wages or happy to just have jobs, all of these men consciously or subconsciously realized the implications on their manly reputation that serving or not serving would have.<sup>35</sup> Thus, deferment, usually seen as critical when considering manpower questions, also had a mighty effect on the realm of manhood. As such it opens previously closed doors into the interacting worlds of masculinity and work.

Joe Marcille, a union representative, raised deferment as an issue during a Victory Committee meeting in August 1942. Marcille represented a group of men who wanted protection from the draft so they could stay in Anaconda and be assured of work. On this day he ingenuously inquired why men in the ACM employ were not being deferred. Marcille's comment opened a floodgate of action and debate that would not run its course until the end of 1943. On this particular day another smeltermen, Fred

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<sup>34</sup> Leff's and Joshua Freeman's discussions of Roosevelt's proposed ceiling on profits which labor backed reinforces the idea that labor only wanted to equalize sacrifice and opportunity. Leff, 1302-5; Freeman, 386.

<sup>35</sup> Walter Dooley noted at the ceremony awarding the Army-Navy "E" pennant to the Reduction Works for their contribution to the war, that as of February 1943, 600 men from the Mine, Mill, and Smeltermen's Union were serving in the armed services. Vine, Women of the Washoe, 3.

Grey, mentioned that men from other parts of the country were deferred, then came to Anaconda to work. Marcille added that he felt that skilled workers had more worth in the workplace than as soldiers.<sup>36</sup> The representatives appointed a sub-committee to look into the matter. Marcille and Grey's twin concerns revolved around economics and manhood. Marcille apparently wanted to stay home and he felt that the nature of work in the copper industry should qualify him for deferment. Grey also wanted to be recognized, as apparently men in other industries had, but he also wanted Anaconda's jobs protected from those less than manly men who chose to abuse the system.

Deferment was a complex and critical question to all of the men in Montana's copper communities. The central Victory Committee, because of its ties to all three major copper towns, Anaconda, Butte, and Great Falls, took up the question after Marcille and Grey first broached it. What is clear is that the men of each of these communities had the same basic concerns. Demanding deferment was, in the most basic analysis, self serving. One should not dismiss this fact. However, the men also saw their agenda as potentially benefiting the community as a whole by protecting established social patterns.

It was two months before the Committee again officially addressed Marcille and Gray's concerns. Much research and discussion had occurred in those sixty days. Bert Riley of the Butte Miners Union reported to the Committee on 3 September 1942 that Colonel Birely, head of the deferment board in Helena, had agreed that miners had to be deferred if they continued to work in the copper industry. His remarks considerably

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<sup>36</sup> Report to Donald Nelson, August 1942, Victory, 2.

cheered the Victory Committee, but Riley quickly brought the men back to reality. He noted that there would be some men who would not consider deferment a good deal and others who would not be considered essential but who would fight for just such a classification. The issue boiled down to the complex codes of manhood, and the impact of patriotism, economic benefits, and future prospects on these codes, that were prevalent in these towns and in these workplaces. For instance, Riley asked “what about oilers and other men like them: Are they going to take them? They might have to take the place of an engineer should he die.” Riley concluded that the committee’s number one priority in this regard should be to see “that everyone is given the privilege of going into the army or working in the mines as he wishes.” But the issue involved more than just doing one’s masculine duty on the homefront or on the front lines. Both union and management men were concerned that those who chose to stay would be considered shirkers, as less than manly.<sup>37</sup>

The problem was complicated, as Fred Grey had noted, by the arrival of men who had recently moved from other jobs in town, or actually come to Anaconda, Butte, or Great Falls to work so they could avoid the war. Copper work had always been considered the epitome of men’s work. Now men were coming to the mines in order to dodge what was perceived as their masculine wartime duty — soldiering. The miners, millers, and smeltermen felt their own manhood was being besmirched in the process. McGlone and Black said as much on 2 September. McGlone started. “There has been a lot of doubt as to the attitude of men who have transferred from other

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<sup>37</sup> Meeting Transcripts, September 3, 1942, Victory, 1,5-6.

industries into our industry.” He continued, “I have heard rumors criticizing a man who never worked for the Company, who was working up town and went to work in the mines.” Black elaborated on the situation. “I have heard of two, the Harkins kid and Chappelle. The two of them worked a few days in the mines and both quit already. One of them is now working in the iron works as a welder and Harkins is back on the old man’s truck. They worked four or five days, possibly a week. I did not see [Harkins], but heard a lot of comments on him.” The situation did not end after this series of comments on Harkins’ slacking. “When Harkins went to deliver they would ask if it was from Harkins, and he would be told not to deliver it,” added Black. The working men of Montana’s copper communities did not tolerate what they perceived as draft dodging, but they also wanted their own hides protected, as McGlone implied immediately after hearing the Harkins’ story. He heartened the committee, saying that the Company would make every effort to keep the men in the mines and not be satisfied with replacements from out of state.<sup>38</sup>

Exactly how these local men expected to be taken care of, and what they believed was their own masculine role is difficult to discover. It is clear that some men who continued to work in non-production jobs throughout the copper communities were considered by the workers, or at least by some committee representatives, to be shirking their manly responsibilities. An exchange that revolved around pledge cards, referred to earlier by E.S. McGlone, demonstrated that while there were strict codes of masculine conduct in these communities the world of men was nonetheless confusing

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

and often what appeared as a clear cut issue — men not going immediately into the Armed Forces should take production jobs — was actually befuddling. Representative Cavanaugh told his fellow committee members that he felt that the pledge cards should be given to the dealers at the local gambling halls, a group of men who seemed obviously not to be fulfilling the obligations of manhood. The dealers, Cavanaugh felt, needed a reminder that every available man should be in the mines or plants or at the front.

There was perhaps more to his suggestion than what initially met the eye. Cavanaugh and the other union men knew that the more local men who signed up to work copper jobs the less chance that outsiders of undesirable origins, that is anyone of color, would be imported as emergency labor.<sup>39</sup> E.S. McGlone replied that “some of [the dealers] have taken the position that if they applied for a job they would be considered as draft dodgers.” In other words, taking a production job could actually label a man as less manly than simply staying in a nonessential position and waiting to be drafted.<sup>40</sup>

Bert Riley, for one, found the dealer’s position contradictory. If these men were afraid of being labeled draft dodgers, why did they not just enlist in the Armed Services? What Riley did not explain but surely must have known as everyone did,

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<sup>39</sup> The Butte men were already feeling pressure from the U.S. Employment Agency regarding the manpower shortage in the mines. In all likelihood the government had already indicated they were sending a brigade of black miners to Butte. This indeed happened in November of 1942. See: “Labor: Industrial Democracy,” in Henry R. Luce, ed., *Time*, November 23, 1942, 93-4. Responding to why the Butte miners would not give into pressure from the CIO, WLB, Army and the Company, Jim Byrne, President of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers Local No. 1, said “We’re going on the theory that this is still a democracy.” Daniel Kelly, Mine Manager, noted the Company was “just on the sidelines in all this show.”

<sup>40</sup> Meeting Transcripts, October 15, 1942, Victory, 14-18.

was that the choices of men during this trying time were not so simple. Few, including many of the most patriotic copper workers, wanted to enlist directly, knowing they would be leaving their families for a less than certain proposition. The opportunity to be shot at was not especially attractive to anyone, no matter his nationalist proclivities. It was even less attractive for older men who had greater attachments and obligations.

Riley was not in the dealer's predicament. He has a production job in an essential industry. There was virtually no chance he would be drafted out of that job. Nor would he be labeled a draft dodger. He did not have to move from an unprotected position to one that would likely be considered a deferment job for the length of the war. Because of his selection for an elite committee we can surmise that his peers respected Riley both as a man and as a worker. He was also almost certainly a family man. He must have been relieved that his wife and children would not be left alone wondering if their father would return. So, then, did he have room to criticize? Perhaps. Riley was at least sixty years old. He might have had a son in the Service. Or, he might have fought in World War I, and thus known the sacrifices some men must make to serve their country. It is difficult to decide whether such a criticism as Riley's — "I don't think that is the right attitude for [the dealers] to take. We have signs right in our hall welcoming them" — was considered credible by local male society.

The transcripts also show that the predicament of the dealers was shared by many during this trying time, even by some men in the copper industry. Deferment was a complex issue, often misunderstood by the general populace. Suffice it to say that virtually every man felt that there was the possibility that the government would draft



him. For older men with families, and especially those with sons in the service, such an action by the government was highly unlikely. The odds rose considerably for men under forty. Thus, determining which jobs the government deemed essential and thereby which workers would be deferred because of their “essential” status, quickly became a hot topic. Many men, very aware of their image, wanted to gain deferment, but sought not to lose their masculine status in the process. Comments by Representative Pettit, another member of the Victory Committee, made this clear. He noted immediately after Riley’s earlier remark about the dealers that “The laborers of the copper tanks think if they transfer underground or anything else, they would be considered draft dodgers.” E.S. McGlone responded that this was the very reason that the head of the local deferment board, Colonel Birely, came out with a statement noting men who transferred to war industry jobs from those in non-essential fields were not dodging their duty. But McGlone underestimated the importance of image. Colonel Birely’s judgment of the situation did not match the community’s. A man’s masculine image was not guaranteed by the edict of a bureaucrat, but rather by the following the local value system that labeled certain actions as draft dodging. No man in Anaconda, Butte, or Great Falls wanted to be considered less than manly.

Yet some men might have been willing to serve their country in uniform to avoid working in the mines. They might be willing to gamble that their number would not come up, or that they would do just fine in the Armed Forces if it came to that. The majority of men did not serve as combat soldiers, the odds of coming home seemed

pretty good. Many men were not so sure they would make it out of the mines.<sup>41</sup> Hard rock mining was some of the most dangerous work in the country. The fatality statistics staggered the mind: one man a day died of TB or miner's con, one man a week died in a mining accident.<sup>42</sup> There is no doubt that men were well aware of these facts. What, then, was more manly, mine work or soldiering?

Not surviving the mines was a concern not just for those men who had never worked in the industry, but also for those already working for ACM as evidenced by the reaction to McGlone's suggestion that "old-timers" could be used "to replace top labor and the men replaced can go underground." In response Riley rhetorically asked, "You think it is all right to take men from surface jobs, who worked their way up to jobs like on the Copper Tanks, jobs loading, etc., some of the older fellows, you think it is all right to put those men down in the mines?" McGlone's proposal deeply concerned the union men for a number of reasons, not the least of which were seniority, occupational security, and the rights of older men who had proved their worth to have physically easier jobs during their waning years. These "old-timers" felt fortunate that their number did not come up when they were underground. They did not want to take the risk of heading back down into the shafts for a second run. When asked point blank what he thought about McGlone's suggestion, Andy Pettit, one of the Butte Miners Union men who worked on the Copper Tanks, backed Riley's position. He noted that the men working at the Tanks "feel we are getting the 'run

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>42</sup> For statistics on injury, disability, and death see Emmons, *Butte Irish*, 148-50; Michael Malone, *Battle for Butte: Mining and Politics on the northern Frontier* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981); and Mark Wyman, *Hardrock Epic: Western Miners and the Industrial Revolution, 1860-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

around' down there. Out of the seventeen men down there fourteen are eligible for the draft. The oldest man of the seventeen is 53 years old, and I think that in order to replace us fellows down there you are going to have them in the same category we are in."<sup>43</sup>

Deferment represented both the reality of staying home to care for one's family and a much contested arena for defining wartime manhood. What was at stake was the acceptance that a man had done his duty. Moreover, the very definition of manly work was under debate. The government and the Company, as represented by Birely and McGlone respectively, were saying that some work was more important than other work: that some men served in more skilled positions, that others could be replaced by anyone. It was this sort of construction that Pettit and Riley abhorred. They had good reason, for each man, at least in Butte, who was considered replaceable had more-or-less to choose between the mines and the service. As if this choice did not sting the men enough, McGlone, obviously lacking any touch of sensitivity on this day, told the committee that some jobs around the various facilities could be done by men throughout the community who were currently at home because they were handicapped. No matter the fairness of the construction, or its modern day political correctness, a man who was replaced by someone who was by definition less than fully able, had to call into question his own worth as a man.

Bert Riley's response to McGlone's contention provides a telling lesson. He did not see the system as fair. After McGlone indicated that many of the men working on

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<sup>43</sup> Meeting Transcripts, October 15, 1942, Victory, 17.

the Copper Tanks would not be protected, Riley openly disagreed with his boss. “The day we were over in Helena we were told you can get deferments for men on the Copper Tanks.” McGlone argued that it was not that easy. “It depends upon the skill of the job and the length of time required to train new men to take his place.” Tellingly he concluded, “A man is a man with us now.” There were then no special prerogatives for having put in your time or being an expert at your work. For men who had staked so much of their self worth on their experience and expertise these were very hard words to hear. They had been respected figures in the culture of the workplace and the culture of the community. They did not believe that “a man is a man.” Men had to earn their manhood in the copper industry. They were not replaceable cogs. But McGlone and the government were saying otherwise. McGlone asserted, “If you were working as a surface laborer and Harry here was a handicapped man and could do your work, and we could not sign an affidavit that you could not be replaced when he was available, you would be out of luck.” Pettit again countered with the position of his fellow surface workers. He did not mince words. “The fellows are very dissatisfied on the proposition.”<sup>44</sup> He was right. The feelings of the surface men, gleaned from suggestions sent to the Victory Committee, added detail to the picture of how intimately the issue of manhood was tied to deferment.

Five workers, James L. Barnicoat, John Lasky, William Rozenski, Martin Kovacich, and Pete McDonald, wrote “In regard to having all young top men go underground to work and replacing them with older men on top, we (the top men) are

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 18.

willing to accept such changes in order to aid in production for the war effort, but on certain conditions, namely:

We want only old Butte miners to replace us in our present jobs, and we want all 'special watchmen', who are as physically fit as we, to give their jobs to old Butte miners also, and accept underground work. If these men who are composed of salesmen, etc., and who, for the most part, never worked in a mine and many not even at a mine before, are willing to accept such terms, we will go underground gladly but otherwise we will protest.

With the choice of these words these five men were informing management of the worker value system. Barnicoat, Lasky, Rozenski, Kovacich, and McDonald did not want to go underground. Working the mines was the most masculine occupation in Montana's copper communities, but it was also the most dangerous. These men believed in the code of manhood, but also knew that being considered a real man meant nothing if you were not around to support your family. Going into the mines was risky, and in their eyes, a sacrifice. These five wanted other men who at least nominally held white-collar positions to make an equal sacrifice.<sup>45</sup> Equality of sacrifice meant more than just financial sacrifice. It also meant risking one's comfortable and stable position, no matter one's class. Barnicoat, Lasky, Rozenski, Kovacich, and McDonald also wanted only men who had earned status and proven their manhood — old Butte miners — to replace them on their surface jobs. With this demand these five men made a final claim for their own masculine worth. They wanted the Company and everyone else to know that special watchmen and salesmen did not have equal masculine status to surface men. Such white-collar workers were not good enough to warrant replacing the surface men at their jobs.

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<sup>45</sup> See Leff on the concept of equality of sacrifice.

The reply of the Operations Department of the Anaconda Company to the comment by these five men indicates that on some points management agreed with labor. They considered production an essential element of manhood.<sup>46</sup> The Operations Department wrote that after taking a survey of all surface employees no matter their classification, they “hope to induce every able-bodied man who is now working on [the] surface on a non-productive job to go work underground.”<sup>47</sup> The response continued by stating plainly that Operations was trying to find as many old-timers as possible to replace surface labor. Operations understood the reasoning behind such a demand; they understood the masculine hierarchy.

Hence it is apparent why the men saw deferment and job status as so critical. It effected virtually every working person in some way. What stands out from the discussions recorded on these transcripts is the complex world of manhood in these communities, and the struggle by these men to control their own destiny even when interacting with a confusing and sometimes overpowering government bureaucracies like the Draft Board, Manpower Commission, and National Labor Relations Board.

It is fair to say that the Company, despite focusing on production (sometimes at the expense of the men’s morale), showed a definite awareness of the anxiety that revolved around deferment and other masculine work issues during the early war years. Keeping the working men’s spirits high constituted one of ACM and the Victory Committee’s major concerns. To do this required ensuring that copper was

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<sup>46</sup> It is worth noting that such an equation reinforced the smeltermen’s opposition to seeing women in producer jobs.

<sup>47</sup> Meeting Transcripts, October 15, 1942. Victory, 18.

recognized as a critical industry and that the industry's workers were given every advantage. Representative of this was the orchestration of the Terra Haute Boots for copper workers campaign, the Meat for copper workers drive, and the push for special recognition certificates for copper workers.<sup>48</sup> The union's role in all of these events reinforces the notion that men actively worked to control their own lives and to use the war to gain some advantages equal to those they felt capital always gained.

The Committee, in a series of correspondence to national agencies and the Terra Haute Boot Company, pushed for an immediate solution to the war induced shortage of good work boots for the miners. ACM, to its credit, saw this as an issue they must resolve. Word had gotten out among the copper workers that they were considered a lower priority to receive such basic equipment as boots because their work was not as essential as that of others in the overall national production effort. The joint Labor-Management Committee quickly moved to quash such rumors and also to get these boots, which physically protected the miners from the toxic water constantly washing through the mines. The Committee also acted to protect the miners from the ravages of low self worth. The rapid success of this effort can be attributed to the effort of the Company and the Committee and to the actual opinion in the government that copper was an immensely important war industry.

More revealing of these same themes was the "Meat for Copper Production" drive, one of the most labor intensive and well received of the Victory Committee's activities throughout the war. The simple purpose of the campaign was to get a larger weekly

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<sup>48</sup>Meeting Transcripts, September 17, 1942, Victory, 1-2, 9.

meat allowance from the government for the hard-working men of the copper communities. The drive and its remarkably popular support, besides being emblematic of the every day concerns of homefront America, also showed the opinion this community had of itself and its importance to the war cause. In addition, it indicated that the community, at least subconsciously, knew that the men who remained behind as soldiers of production needed to be reassured of their own worth to the enclave.<sup>49</sup>

Dennis McMahon, A BMU man and a member of the Rationing Sub-Committee that was responsible for the mission of procuring more meat for the working men, reported to the Victory board as a whole that the Sub-Committee had aided in the mass rally at Butte's Fox Theater. An estimated one thousand people attended this event in support of the "Meat for Copper Production" drive. "Residents of the community were asked to send cards to Washington representatives, pointing to the need for more meat for copper workers." "We figure that upwards of five thousand cards have already been sent to Washington," added McMahon, "and it is our hope that we may reach the figure of twenty-five thousand within the next week."

McMahon then reported that the previous Saturday evening, John Claxton, Chairman of the Victory Committee, had appeared on a radio broadcast with Paul Fall of the Miners' Union, to discuss the drive. In rough form the philosophy behind the drive — men need meat, the more manly the work the more meat, the more meat allotted the more worthy the man — had permeated the culture of the community.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> I have appropriated this term from John Bodnar. It fits the community of Anaconda in much the same ways as it defined the ethnic communities of the Pennsylvania mining and steel region. See John Bodnar, Workers' World, Introduction.

<sup>50</sup> Meeting Transcripts, June 22, 1943, Victory, 2; Meeting Transcripts, August 3, 1943, 6-8.



The Victory Committee's push for special certificates of recognition for the men of the mining industry had a parallel reasoning to that of the "Meat" drive. Deferred men living in the region's copper communities needed reassurance that they were considered equal, both in future worth and current manhood, to their comrades serving in the Armed Forces. Or so thought the Victory Committee. As Major Walter Mendelsohn of the Manpower Division in Washington D.C. wrote in response to one of the Committee's letters, "since the discontinuance of voluntary enlistment, however, the fact that a man is not in uniform should be no reflection on his patriotism." The working men forcibly deferred by the government agreed fully with this sentiment. Yet it is unlikely that they agreed with Mendelsohn's following point: "If he is in business clothes or in overalls, it is probably because the Government wants him that way. The entire effort is now to get the right worker into the right war job, and that war job may be either in uniform or civilian clothes."<sup>51</sup> Perhaps such a formulation which equated men in "business clothes" with men in "overalls" made sense in the East, but as was evident from the earlier acerbic observation by James L. Barnicoat, John Lasky, William Rozenski, Martin Kovacich, and Pete McDonald regarding "salesmen," it did not carry weight in the industrial West.<sup>52</sup>

It was therefore not surprising that the bureaucrats in the nation's capital did not see the need for the identification cards for copper workers requested by the Victory

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-5.

<sup>52</sup> The work of Mark Carnes and Mary Ann Clawson addresses these issues. See Mark Carnes and Clyde Griffen, eds., *Meanings for Manhood* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1990); Mark Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); and Mary Ann Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

Committee. As Major Mendelsohn wrote, "Every man now registered has a registration card as evidence that he has presented himself for service, whether he was accepted, rejected, or deferred." "Selective Service," the Major continued, "has been described as an act of volunteering en masse, and as people come to comprehend the basic good sense and philosophy of this statement, the situation which promotes the desire for insignia should cease." The men of management and labor quickly agreed that the fellows in Washington were far removed from the reality of being a worker and a man. As one Victory Committee member put it, "Young fellows working in the mines . . . were deferred and for that reason they couldn't join the armed forces if they wanted to. These young fellows were called slackers at different times." Another member of the Committee responded that "all the people are not as well informed about these things as selective service is. The fact is that it is not so well know here."<sup>53</sup> The value placed on government edicts regarding who was doing their duty and who was shirking it, was much different in Washington D.C. than in Montana. Montanans looked at a man's actions, his reputation, and his occupation when forming an opinion of his masculine worth. While changes in how one defined a man's worth might be accepted in the nation's capitol, those changes had not yet registered in the copper communities. Montana's removal from the center of national life did not insulate its men from the vagaries of changing standards of masculinity. Rather, it exposed them to the difficult principles of their collective past in an age of bureaucracy.

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<sup>53</sup>Meeting Transcripts, June 22, 1943, Victory, 4-5.

These men were concerned with being able to prove physically they were not “slackers.” They literally wanted to wear their manhood on their sleeve or on their chest. But as armbands and buttons showing that a man was a soldier of production were deemed unrealistic by a Committee concerned that such signifiers “could be passed on to anybody and there was nothing to distinguish the person or prove the emblem was in the proper place,” the working men needed to find another solution. They were truly worried about the weight, responsibility, and image of manhood. They did not want the standard tarnished. Those who did not make the cut did not deserve to be associated with the real men of the community. Impostors were as dangerous as government administrators who did not realize the important things in life.

Moreover, the Company fully agreed with the men’s take on this situation. McGlone, responding to labor’s criticism of Mendelsohn’s reasoning said simply, “you are correct.” He added that Selective Service cards were not good enough. Thus, the Committee has “decided we would ask for a temporary certificate for the men and at the end of the war he would get some kind of certificate which would identify him as a man that served the country in an industrial job of some kind which was probably just as important as his serving in the armed service, and I still think we shouldn’t let the matter drop.” McGlone was for the men on an issue that validated the masculine standards of the age. He made clear the deep seated bond between war and manhood.

Perhaps his reference to industrial work being “probably” as critical as soldiering was unconscious but nonetheless it spoke volumes about what was expected of men.<sup>54</sup>

The masculine myth, assiduously followed by the working men of this province, required that during times of war real men became warriors. War in an industrial age did not allow for all men to do so.<sup>55</sup> Although in the real world some men, perhaps many, had avoided the warrior during wartime paradigm, they had always either done so with community support or faced humiliation. This timeless equation of men’s place was at battle during times of strife also penetrated the world of smeltermen, millers, and miners. What to do? How does one navigate between family duty and manly honor?

McGlone’s response to the suggestion that the committee produce local cards represented a new solution to such dilemmas: the men could rely on national authority to validate their masculine status as soldiers of production. Perhaps a powerful central government could heal the wounds and solve the problems of working men. After all, local standards of right and wrong were in some ways being superseded by a federal model. Could such a re-engineering include ideas of manhood? Should it? The problems of federal control and standards were also readily apparent to these men. One Victory committee member spoke for the rest. He noted the seemingly automatic and rote dismissal of the committee’s request for recognition cards. “It seems to me it is more or less a blanket answer to anything along that line.” The conundrum then

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 3-5.

<sup>55</sup> On this theme, see Michael Kimmel, Manhood in America: A Cultural History (New York: The Free Press, 1996).

went like this: the national bureaucracy was not going to act, and the local people felt that their word would not carry any real power or prestige.

The Victory Committee's proposed solution was indicative of this very quandary. McGlone recommended that the committee "should keep the ball rolling and probably . . . should have some correspondence with the Copper Production Branch of the War Production Board and maybe the War Manpower Commission." He hoped to find a receptive agency, one that was more closely affiliated with the problems of workers. He did not wish to avoid the government altogether. Mr. Newcomb, editor of the Copper Commando, had a different suggestion. He argued that since "the community doesn't realize these things, as Mr. Renouard stated, it is up to the committee to improve that situation and see that the public knows about it. This letter went to the War Department, the Selective Service, and the War Manpower Commission. There doesn't seem to be any other government agency to turn to." Newcomb concluded, "I think we should tackle this thing ourselves and see what we can do here." Renouard's reply summarized the transitory state between local and national authority in which these men found themselves. "It might be if we did start something we would receive recognition from some government agency that would carry it out."

The Committee did not exactly feel powerless, but it did feel its imperative carried little weight without a national seal of approval. The problem was rooted in both public perception and job protection. The public had obviously been less than supportive of the men who had stayed behind to work. Or at least this was the feeling of the Victory Committee. But the extant evidence is not that one-sided. The representatives should be taken at their word, they knew their community, but the

“Meat for copper workers drive,” to name just one occasion, indicates a higher level of community support. Perhaps the committee members were vocalizing their own fears that they were deemed less than manly for not being in uniform. Or perhaps they were, indeed, reflecting the word on the streets. Either way John Bird’s comment on this matter was telling. “Publicity,” he argued, “is all right but the trouble is that people’s memories are awful frail. A couple of months from now they forget all about it.” Bird did not trust the public to continue supporting the copper workers. He like the others wanted the men to “have something to show.”

Thus, it is not clear how such cards would help short term local opinion, but it is certain they could be of long term use. The committee was worried that soldiers of production would be considered second class citizens in comparison to those soldiers who actually fought. Mr. Riley noted, “We have seen the time when, if you didn’t have a certificate of discharge from the last war, you were just out of luck.” Yes, a certificate from ACMC would carry some weight locally, but as McGlone realized “it will not suffice to get a job if [a worker] applies at Hoover Dam, for instance.”<sup>56</sup> The committee knew that national employment models were changing. Mobility was long past being an oddity.<sup>57</sup> It was the norm. There was a good chance that even in this community of loyal and multi-generational residents some men after the war would want to move about the country in search of the most profitable work and the best living conditions. The Committee’s idea that a national certificate would best serve the

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 5-7, 11.

<sup>57</sup>For general coverage on the trend toward mobility, see Mark Jonathan Harris et al., eds., The Homefront: America during World War II (New York: Putnam’s, 1984). On mobility as a cultural construct see: William Graebner, The Age of Doubt, 76.

working men was therefore well supported. So too was their belief that national recognition, in the form of an actual certificate, would reassure the men of their manliness.

But even when government authority was recognized and sought, it was not considered always a benefactor of the people. Some of the Victory Committee felt the Government itself was “the worst offender,” when it came to recognizing the work of men on the homefront. The government said “that ex-service men shall be preferred,” over workers tied to the production line argued Boardman.<sup>58</sup> But this was only more reason to believe that Selective Service recognition of this issue would have far reaching practical effects on worker’s postwar lives. If the working men could convince the government to play ball it would go a long way in protecting those men who did not serve in uniform. As John Bird posited, the committee should, “stress the fact that [men who were deferred] are not allowed to volunteer and if they don’t want to recognize that fact the best thing they can do is to give them the privilege of enlisting.”<sup>59</sup> The working men of Anaconda, Butte, and Great Falls plainly wanted recognition.

In fact, it was not just the Victory Committee that saw the image of the war worker as problematic. Fred J. Steiner, a past employee of ACMC, sent in “Suggestion No. 244” to the Victory Committee from his duty station, Fort Douglas, Utah. Steiner thought it was absolutely necessary that “workers who are working steady be given definite and public evidence of that fact” via a recognition card.

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<sup>58</sup> The men conveniently forgot the details of the Selective Service Act when they were arguing against employing women in the smelter.

<sup>59</sup> Meeting Transcripts, June 22, 1943, Victory, 11-12.

Steiner understood both the need for praise by workers and the need for symbols to keep workers contributing. For Steiner such a card should track a worker's consistency. He wrote that "to give [a recognition card] dramatic progression it might take the form of a stream of bullets from a gun, bombs dropped from a plane or, say, the red stripes on the white field of an American flag." Workers, he argued, were proud of the job they were doing and would appreciate any sign that allowed them to "say (in effect) that all this talk about absenteeism doesn't refer to me. See, I'm in there swinging every day."<sup>60</sup>

While Sergeant Steiner, the government to a certain degree, and certainly the Victory Committee and the citizens of these communities were concerned with the men's images of themselves, all of these groups, as we have seen, were not above using manhood as a catalyst to promote production and win the war. The most telling example of this trend was the Victory Committee's use of the church's pulpit and authority to promote their agenda. This strategy, orchestrated by the Victory Committee, called for a few of the union and management men to visit the Catholic and Episcopal Bishops and the Ministerial Association in Butte and persuade the clergy to discuss production and absenteeism.<sup>61</sup> When the church going men of the

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 22-23.

<sup>61</sup> However, when it came time to return the favor and disseminate clergy's message and cooperate with their own pet project the committee was far more circumspect. These men knew the limits of a worker's patience. The minister's request that the committee cooperate in "enforcing the liquor regulations here in Butte," and that the committee discuss the liquor problem with those who supplied the stuff themselves, the Retail Liquor Dealers' Association, did not sit well. Brother Bird, of the BMU, put the men's response in gentle prose, "We did not feel that we wanted to go quite that strong." Found in Meeting Transcripts, October 15, 1942, Victory, 6-7.



copper belt arrived at services during the Fall of 1942 they were likely to again hear what their manly duty was as prescribed by God, country, the Company, and the union.<sup>62</sup>

Catholic Bishop Joseph Gilmore of Helena's letter to "the Clergy and Laity of the City of Butte and Anaconda" was indicative of the religious message. He did not mince words. The Bishop opened with what had even at this early stage become a standard refrain throughout the copper communities. "A serious responsibility rests upon all of us to do everything we possibly can to promote the war-effort." He then reiterated the importance of copper to the war effort and made it perfectly clear that the community must never put itself in the position of being a possible bottleneck in the national war production program. If the local men working outside of the copper industry did not understand their task and the community's focus, the bishop spelled it out. "A sense of patriotic duty will urge all able-bodied men now engaged in non-essential work to make their direct contribution to the war-effort by 'getting out the ore.'" For those men already working in the mines and mills Gilmore also had blunt advice. Do not miss work; do not slack off. Copper workers "should serve as earnestly and as honorably[as the troops] by reporting faithfully for work."

If any in the congregation were asleep or had perhaps let their minds wander for the first half of the Bishop's directive (as can be the habit of church-going folk everywhere), his next sentence succinctly summarized his argument. A man who missed work was not only being less than masculine, but was also akin to a saboteur.

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<sup>62</sup> Meeting Transcripts, October 15, 1942, Victory, 7-9.

“Absenteeism is, to say the least, a mild form of sabotage.” This was not nearly the last time the bishop would use manly responsibilities to fulcrum desired behavior and reinforce the community’s view of ideal wartime and postwar behavior. For example, he also said “To the citizen of the community, especially to heads of families, this consideration [the deferment from military service] is important. A concerted effort should be made to preserve in as far as possible, the normal life of the home and the community during these days of war. An opportunity to achieve this desirable aim is provided by the recognition given the status of workers in essential industries. They can remain at home and at the same time serve their country.”

The role of man as caretaker for family and nation was therefore connected in the Bishop’s mind. If one was deferred, one’s duties increased rather than decreased. Furthermore, men and women should understand that it was critical to “preserve the normal life of the home and the community” during this time of crisis.<sup>63</sup> In other words, men had a duty to be men, and women had a duty to be women.

Bishop Daniels struck the same points, more or less, with his letter. However, Daniel chose to focus not on absenteeism, but on convincing his flock that the men who remained at home to fight the production war served America just as those in uniform. Daniel’s wrote, “Dear Brethren . . . You can help by assuring people generally that they who remain at home producing the essentials for the vigorous prosecution of the war, are just as truly serving their country as if they were in uniform.”<sup>64</sup> Apparently Daniels had also heard that some men were feeling public

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 6-8.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 9.

ridicule — either in an overt manner from saucier citizens or more likely covertly through subtle gestures and looks — because they were at home not in the trenches where men belonged.

The effect of these or like words coming from the many churches in the area should have been mighty indeed.<sup>65</sup> Not only did the church men have a large audience but the moral authority of such a message would be much greater than that preached by management. Furthermore, the message would reach the wives of these men. If these women agreed in principle with the campaign they could assert far more pressure than any committee of labor and management or even more than religion.

While the Victory Committee was busy holding the men to task and fueling the fires of a production oriented culture, the men of the smelters and mines continued to fight in various ways and in various arenas — deferment, identification cards for copper workers, and the Meat for Copper Workers campaign to name a few — to control their own destinies and improve their own condition. Certainly they could not help but hear and many probably heeded, out of personal conviction or community pressure, the Committee's evocations. But in the immediate, as evidenced by the transcripts of union-management negotiations and the Victory Committee meetings,

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<sup>65</sup> Mr. Mickelson, in response to the local clergies effort to communicate a pro-production and anti-absenteeism message, noted "I heard a lot of favorable comment from fellows who went to church last Sunday. I think it will do a lot of good." Mickelson's comment could simply represent an affirmation of these ideals by the group of workers who already favored such a mindset. The various letters to "Absentee" workers might indicate this very point. Even if this is not the case it is essential to remember that workers often saw themselves split along philosophical lines team players, patriots, producers, company lackeys, suckers, individualists, to name but a few. They did not always primarily categorize themselves into the sorts of factions that historians like to imagine: by age, ethnicity, and pro-union or anti-union, although these later categories often informed the earlier ideas of self-definition. See *Ibid.*, 20-21.

the men of Anaconda and Butte were more concerned with topics like the BMU's call for a six day work week with a rest day for shaft maintenance and safety work, and with their push for a change in procedures that would allow operating with two men on all jobs, "so that when something happens or a man gets hurt there will be somebody to help him, and maybe save a life." A quick study of the agendas of union - management negotiating sessions in 1943 shows that that these sort of typical worker concerns took primacy throughout the year. In 1944, however, this trend would change dramatically.

The remainder of this thesis deals with the main issue of 1944 at the Anaconda smelter: how the men of Anaconda could guarantee that traditional gender and racial values would dominate their postwar society. As they argued amongst themselves and with the management at the Anaconda Copper Mining Company's Reduction Works during the spring and summer of 1944 over the exclusion of black and Mexican male workers and local women, they detailed their belief system. The actions of these working men further illuminated the complexity of the masculine experience in Anaconda during World War II. Moreover, their struggle to decide which workers posed a greater threat to Anaconda's wartime and postwar society exposed the smeltermen's views on gender, work, and race.

With this said, the fundamental theme of the remainder of this study is indisputably that these men's work, intimately bound to their sense of manhood, was an indispensable and inseparable part of how they dealt with both race and gender during the war. This chapter has painted some of the background on how this unique

masculine perspective was created. The focus of the next chapter is the exclusion of black and Mexican male workers by the smeltermen of Anaconda. This is followed by a chapter which examines the workplace and social consequences associated with the employment of women in the smelter.

## Chapter 2

### *A Means to Persist — The Exclusion of “Minority” Men from the Community*

Manpower had reemerged as a major concern across Montana’s copper communities in the fall of 1943. The principle reason was simple attrition without a significant number of replacements. The labor shortage was particularly acute in the smelting city of Anaconda. In the first year and a half of the war, the men of Anaconda had worked six and seven day weeks to ensure production quotas were met; they were happy for the overtime. As the war entered its third year the continuation of this practice might have been deemed acceptable, but the Company was tired of paying overtime costs, and the government was pushing replacement workers as a way to ensure that copper production did not waver.<sup>66</sup>

On 13 April 1944, in a watershed meeting between labor and management, Willard “W.E.” Mitchell, manager of the Anaconda smelter, addressed this issue head-on. He told the Anaconda Mill and Smeltermen’s Union executive committee, comprised of

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<sup>66</sup> Establishing that the smeltermen did receive overtime wages for working sixth and seventh shifts in a seven day work week is critical. Executive Orders 9240 and 9301, cited in footnote 6, show that national legislation was in place for such a pay system. Comments made by Bob Lemmon, W.E. Mitchell and Owen McNally on 13 April 1944 confirm it. Lemmon, in reference to a union request that all men work on a seven day basis, responded that the union does not “have to meet payroll.” Mitchell followed Lemmon’s comment with a longer explanation. He said “No, I’m not going to agree with you fellows that I’ll ever employ anyone on a 7-day basis. We will employ them as we need them. I’m not going to agree that we will employ men on a 7-day basis and pay them double time. We have done only done that in the past when we had to have them. . . It will be one of the things that would shut this plant down pretty fast.” McNally responded, “Well, in most of these plants that you hear about that are hiring women, and from those [working men] that came back from the coast - they are working [the men] 16 hours, if [the men] want to - all the overtime they possibly can handle. That’s one way [the managers] get around the manpower shortage.” 3CFR, 1938-1943 Comp., 1207-8, 1253. ASUMGC, 13 April 1944, 7-8. References to the government pushing minority men as replacement workers for the smelter are found throughout the Grievance Committee transcripts. ASUMGC, April - June, passim.

Charles “Bubs” McLean, John Donovan, Owen McNally, and Walter Dooley — all Irish and all veteran smelter workers — that the Anaconda Copper Mining Company (ACM) could foresee only four solutions to the manpower crisis at the smelter. Mitchell insisted the Company could either curtail production, get Mexican men from U.S. Employment Service, get black men from the same agency, or hire women to fill the labor shortage.<sup>67</sup> Each participant at the meeting was aware that time-and-again the Company and the union had pledged to maintain production. This ruled out curtailment as a solution and seemingly guaranteed that at least one of these three groups of replacement workers would be employed in the smelter.

In reference to the second and third option, Mitchell commented later in the same meeting that the previous day a representative from the Man Power Commission had told him that “they have 200,000 Mexicans in various parts of the country available for transportation.” He further noted that the Man Power Commission would also probably present “colored fellows,” and that “this is no idle conversation. You fellows know that Mexicans were imported into Montana last year. You also know that colored fellows from the Islands were imported into this country last year.”<sup>68</sup>

Women were the fourth option. They were heavily favored by Mitchell as an ideal solution to the smelter’s personnel shortage. Unfortunately, at least in Mitchell’s eyes, the union was “making a lot of toodo about” employing women in the smelter.<sup>69</sup> Something or someone would have to give. The manpower problem was certainly real. As Mitchell described it, “Last week we worked 367 men, seven days. We were

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<sup>67</sup> ASUMGC, 13 April 1944, 4.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

short, as of April 12, 123 men for a six-day operation. We have 80 men in the draft age group, [ages] 22 through 25. At the present time we need 150 men, steady, in the plant from now until the first of October to take care of vacancies, [this equals] an indicated shortage of something over 500 men.”<sup>70</sup> This was a serious shortage, indeed; one which logically required an influx of new workers. Yet, the working men of Anaconda did not see the situation in these terms.

In keeping with the men’s push to assert more control over their work world and their social world, they dismissed Mitchell’s claim that there were only four possible solutions to the manpower crisis. These men sponsored a fifth alternative: a continuation of the local wartime status quo that included the exclusion of both minority men and women from employment in the smelter. Such exclusion was a manifestation of what Eric Hobsbawm has called the power to exclude. (Hobsbawm’s conceit must figure prominently in any attempt to decipher the story of wartime Anaconda, however an extended discussion of it is best left for later in this chapter.)<sup>71</sup> The workers of Anaconda — men like Charles McLean who had been born and raised in Anaconda and was raising his own four boys in the Smelter City — based their decision to exclude primarily on a desire to persist.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 1-4.

<sup>71</sup> Again, see Eric Hobsbawm and David Emmons (Footnote 7) for a more detailed discussion on the power to exclude.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Margaret Tracy McLean, Anaconda, 23 April 1996. Interview by Matthew L. Basso, Tapes in the possession of the author; Laurie Mercier, “We are Women Irish”: On the McLean Family, see also Anaconda Federal Credit Union, No. 4401, 25th Anniversary: March 29, 1941 - March 29, 1966 (Anaconda, 1966). Booklet in the possession of the author.



Understanding how persistence fits into the nexus of values in this community, and thus how it shaped the wartime history of Anaconda, is essential. A rather extended aside on this issue is in order. “Persist” here means possibly more than Emmons meant it in regard to turn-of-the-century Butte miners.<sup>73</sup> This in itself is a telling point. To make an effort toward persisting in Butte — as mentioned earlier, a city that offers a sound comparison to Anaconda on a number of levels — required losing the trappings of the typically transitory miner lifestyle. This is a simplistic definition of persistence, but for the purposes of this comparison it will do. For the Irish miners of Butte at the end of the nineteenth-century joining the enclave through marriage and family, a commitment to associational life, and/or owning property defined one as persistent. Some miners persisted for a few years, then for economic or other reasons left Butte. Of those who did stay, few were joined in the deep mines by their sons.<sup>74</sup> In this fact lies the most striking contrast between persisting in Anaconda and persisting in Butte.

To persist in Anaconda, as “Bubs” and his wife Margaret McLean desired to, meant occupational continuity from generation to generation. If the workers of Butte had measured stability in years, the workers of Anaconda measured it in decades. Margaret Tracy McLean’s father had worked in the smelter; not coincidentally so had Charles McLean’s.<sup>75</sup> The smeltermen valued stability, but stability based on terms they helped dictate. This is not to imply that the smeltermen were able to dictate policy to the Anaconda Company; they could not. Nor is this to imply that achieving

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<sup>73</sup> For Emmons’ discussion on persistence see, *The Butte Irish*, 182.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, Chap. 6, *passim*. However, a good number of the second generation took jobs and foremen and managers around the mines.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Margaret Tracy McLean.

persistence was a simple matter or a bygone conclusion. On the contrary, the point is how difficult it was to achieve persistence in Anaconda because of the vagaries of industrial work and labor competition, and even more so that persistence required that one fight for a secure place in the community's work and social world.<sup>76</sup> By its very nature multi-generational persistence — the ability for the children of settled workers to gain employment and thus stability in the community — called for worker activism not just to protect and define short term prerogatives, but also to control the composition of the future workforce. Perhaps it does not need saying, but at best this was a difficult enterprise. Assuring it took both vigilance in the workplace, often to check managerial malfeasance, and in the community, to ensure that prescribed local customs held sway. The working men did not want to force their sons to adopt the ideology of persistence, they simply wanted to give their sons and the other young men of the community the option to work in the smelter. It was not always easy to convince the younger generation to stay in Anaconda. Persistence did run against the grain of mobility, unarguably the dominant cultural value in America as a whole.<sup>77</sup>

Preliminary evidence (much of which is discussed in Chapter Four) suggests that the value of persistence, at least in regarding gender roles, was imbued in each new generation of Anacondans. For example, school children were educated to assume

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid. By way of example on the difficulty of persisting in an idealized fashion, Charles McLean's mother was one of the women who ended up working in the smelter during the war, and the McLean's four sons became in order a surgeon, a lawyer, an Army General, and a judge. This, however, does not mean they rejected the model of persistence -- it only shows how difficult it is to get it to stick and how flexible the next generation could be with the concept. Speculatively, one might reason that for this following generation persistence did not always mean a dismissal of mobility.

<sup>77</sup> See William Graebner's discussion of Margaret Mead's analysis of the wartime American ethos. Graebner, 76, 107-8, 109

appropriate gender roles. As both Chapter One and Chapter Three assert, the culture of the community reflected specific gendered norms.<sup>78</sup> And, as is also noted in Chapter Three, the parents of boys at war wanted their sons to work in the smelter when they returned. This was true even if the boys had never worked there before. Moreover, these parents also wanted their daughters, if they were working in the smelter, to return home to work in what they saw as the traditional female sphere.<sup>79</sup>

This bears specifically on the ongoing discourse regarding social mobility. The periodization of this study makes the ideology of persistence espoused by the Ancondans all that much more surprising. World War II, for good reason, has always been seen as a catalyst for the postwar culture of abundance. The ideological cornerstone that undergirded the culture of abundance — and also buttressed claims that postwar America culture was the welcome and universally desired fruition of an individualistic capitalist ethic — was the assumption of “mobility” or “modernization.” As James Henretta noted in his pathbreaking article on the topic, “the study of ‘mobility’ reflects, even embodies, certain assumptions about the nature of human motivation and of social reality which achieved intellectual prominence during the 1950s and early 1960s.”<sup>80</sup> Although such a social reality based upon the moral and philosophical foundations of liberal capitalist society had already been dominant in

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<sup>78</sup> For a graphic example of gendered education for youth, see the Copper Commando article on Bonner, Montana. (A full explanation of the Copper Commando is found in footnote 108). Robert Newcomb, ed., “Bonner,” CC 3, No. 3 (September 29, 1944): 6. For comments by Bill Mitchell regarding the education of local women, see ASUMGC, 21 June 1944, 14.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, see also ASUMGC, 18 May 1944, 4.

<sup>80</sup> James A. Henretta, “The Study of Social Mobility: Ideological Assumptions and Conceptual Bias,” in The Labor History Reader, ed. Daniel J. Leab (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985,) 28-41. Originally published in Labor History 18 (Spring 1977), 165-78.

American culture for years, it did not dominate wartime Anaconda. Mobility was not a desired value for the smelters. They wanted their sons to have the option, and they encouraged them, to come work in the smelter after the war. “Modernization,” in other works, did not always mean progress.

In fact, persistence based on an idealized status quo which included full employment at a living wage was the postwar *capitalist* ethic for which these working men were striving. I use *capitalist* here purposely. The smelters of Anaconda in their campaign to assure inter-generational persistence, did not reject capitalism. Such a claim would be foolhardy. Capitalism put a roof over their head and food on their table. It is worth noting that the ancestors of these men and women had to leave their homelands because they could not make a living wage. Once in America they could. Yes, this is simplistic formulation and it ignores the realities of transnational macroeconomics — push and pull factors and the effects of industrialization on European peasant farmers, to name just two — however this formulation was reality in ethnic Anaconda. That is not to say the working men did not see problems in the system; their consistent activism proves that they did.

All of this suggests that the working men of Anaconda seemed to not subscribe to social mobility as an essential and inevitable part of the American ethic.<sup>81</sup> There was no single American ethic, even by 1941, even in an age of mass culture.

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<sup>81</sup> Others, as Henretta notes, have made this point. However, most studies that tackle this issue focus on nineteenth century America. See for example: Paul Faler, “Cultural Aspects of the Industrial Revolution: Lynn Massachusetts, Shoemakers and Industrial Mobility, 1826-1860,” *Labor History*, 15 (1974), 367-94; Stephen Thernstrom, *Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City* (Cambridge: Harvard University press, 1964.); and Oscar Handlin, *Boston’s Immigrants, 1790-1880: A Study in Acculturation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959).

“Acculturation,” “Americanization,” or whatever term one chooses to graft onto the American program of social homogenization, was not successful selling upward mobility as the only acceptable national definition of success. Others have made this point, however, Anaconda highlights one practiced alternative to the ethic of individual mobility.<sup>82</sup> In Anaconda at least, persistence not mobility may have guided the decision making process. This brings us back to the smeltermen’s decision to fight for the exclusion of minority men and women from the smelter: the fifth solution if you will.

The men’s desire to continue persisting — to stymie both any challenge to their own job security, and to insure that their sons and other young members of the enclave would have jobs in the smelter following the war if they desired them — necessitated, in the eyes of the union membership, the exclusion of both women and outside minority men.<sup>83</sup> Although the struggle to exclude black and Mexican men occurred more-or-less simultaneously with that to keep out women, thematically the exclusion of these minority men should be dealt with before the smeltermen’s campaign to exclude women (which is the subject of the following chapter). There is one overriding reason for this structure: the working men of Anaconda asserted control over their present and future by using management’s distaste toward the government’s importation of minority men (and the bond between management and labor) as a lever

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<sup>82</sup> See, for example, Stephen Thernstrom, The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1970 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973).

<sup>83</sup> In this usage of enclave I refer to John Bodnar’s cross-ethnic enclave as he describes it in Worker’s World, not to David Emmon’s Irish enclave as he describes it in the Butte Irish.

to exclude both minority men and local women — and as such race influenced gender.<sup>84</sup> This is a strong statement. If it is valid, it makes Anaconda's wartime story that much more exceptional. The smeltermen did accept a number of white migrant workers at the beginning of the war, they just did not want an influx of minority men.<sup>85</sup>

This use of race by the smeltermen was a truly remarkable strategy. Again, it strongly implies that the smeltermen, their acquiescence to management's racist rhetoric aside, feared the arrival of a large body of minority male workers because these Mexican and black men threatened first and foremost short term profits and long term job security, not community's racial makeup. It further implies — and *here* is the surprising part — that *like* labor the management of the Anaconda smelter also feared that minority men would threaten the *union men's* long term job security, but *unlike* labor, the managers were, at least in word, *equally* fearful of how minority men would effect local social structures. This is not to say the men were not racist — they certainly were prejudiced to the idea of a large number of minority men living in their town. It is to say that, in my analysis, minority men concerned the smeltermen the most because of these migrants effect on the smeltermen's struggle to persist. Whereas, I believe that management, going against their own economic interest, wanted to keep the minority men out of Anaconda as a means of assisting the working men's drive to persist and as a means of protecting the local community from what the managers saw as an unsavory invasion.

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<sup>84</sup> Regarding the friendship between union members and management, their bond seemed truly extraordinary. These men very often referred to each other by first name, and at one point W.E. Mitchell even asked, "Aren't we good enough friends that we can sit down here and discuss [any problems with the women] at the time they happen?" ASUMGC. 19 April 1944, 2-5.

<sup>85</sup> Interview with Margaret Tracy McLean.

Regarding the union's position, look, for instance, at the references to these minority men during negotiating sessions between the union and management. They are almost without exception grouped together: "Mexican and black men." In a community practiced at thinking in ethnically distinct terms this phraseology was odd. Black men and Mexican men were considered distinct; they came from different locales and very likely were represented by different stereotypes. Furthermore, there were already Mexican and black men working in Montana's copper communities. In Butte, Mexican men worked in the Belmont mine. Indeed, there was a long tradition of experienced Mexican miners working in Butte, and a longer tradition of Mexican men working in the major hardrock mining centers of the southwest.<sup>86</sup>

Black men, on the other hand, were not common in the hardrock mining communities of the West. In Butte during World War II, white miners physically opposed the presence of black men in the mines.<sup>87</sup> But, this is a story best saved for later. More important for current purposes was the relatively large black population that lived and worked in Anaconda during the war. That is to say that the black population per capita was relatively large in comparison to other cities in Montana. All told there were seventy-seven blacks who lived in Anaconda; a substantial number of these were men working in the smelter.<sup>88</sup> These men were considered "the colored

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<sup>86</sup> On this issue and on the West during World War II, see Gerald D. Nash, The American West Transformed: The Impact of the Second World War (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

<sup>87</sup> Time, November 23, 1942, 93-4.

<sup>88</sup> Bureau of the Census. Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940 Population, vol. 2 (Washington; GPO, 1943),544. By way of reference, in 1950 there were seventy-two black men and women counted. Bureau of the Census. Seventeenth Census of the United States: 1950 Population, vol. 2 (Washington; GPO, 1952),26-39. Supplemental information from an Interview with Jerry Hansen, Anaconda, 23 April 1996. Interview by Matthew L. Basso. Notes in the possession of the author. and Interview with Robert Vine, Anaconda, 23 April 1996. Interview by Matthew L. Basso. Notes in the possession of the author.

fellows,” and they were certainly not confused with Mexican men. Add to the evidence that there appears to be no record of Mexican men working in the Anaconda smelter. The conclusion is easy to draw, but nonetheless important: blacks and Mexicans were not interchangeable, they were seen as distinct and different groups in the Montana copper communities. Yet, in the vast majority of discussions regarding the manpower crisis black and Mexican men were considered together. Why?, because their ethnicity and race mattered less than the fact they were men who threatened the ability of the smeltermen to persist. Or so such evidence, when coupled with the ideology of persistence, seems to indicate.

As is probably obvious, up to this point I have only alluded to racism as a factor in the events unfolding at Anaconda during the spring and summer of 1944. To be more specific, I have hinted that management more so than labor voiced some racist attitudes. The role of racism in what occurred at Anaconda is difficult to decipher. But deciphering it is perhaps one of the more important goals of this study. It would be easy to look at some of the discussions between labor and management and label them racist. It would be equally easy to look at the bare fact of excluding black and Mexican men from the smelter and label this action as racist. I believe to do so hastily would be incorrect. This is not to deny that racism played a role in wartime Anaconda. Rather, it is to measure any evaluation through the full prism of evidence from the beginning of spring 1944.

Management brought up the importation of Mexican and black men only when the union membership balked at allowing women to enter the smelter. During the 13 April



1944 meeting the membership had indeed conceded that women were preferable to minority men, and consented to female employees in the smelter.<sup>89</sup> However, throughout the spring and summer, the men found reason after reason to stall the employment of women. In response to these union tactics, W.E. Mitchell, who had repeatedly warned the men that black and Mexican men would be brought in if women were not hired, confronted the union negotiators. He pointedly asked, "Do you fellows honestly figure that this is an idle threat about Mexican and colored labor?" Mitchell likely wondered what had happened to the friendship between union and management that he had so zealously helped to build. In response to Mitchell, Charles McLean noted, "That's the consensus of opinion of lots of the members, but not the consensus [of the executive committee]."<sup>90</sup> Continuing, McLean told the management negotiating team that some of the members could not be convinced about the legitimacy of this threat. Mitchell replied, "They would be convinced if Mexican labor came in." In the eyes of management, the Company had made the majority of concessions in an effort to keep blacks and Mexicans out of Montana. The Company "[had] been very decent in this proposition," Mitchell argued, by working many men seven days and paying the requisite overtime, but the Company could not continue operating in that manner.<sup>91</sup> Mitchell stated that the bottom line for management was not whether they had the right to employ new workers, but how and where.<sup>92</sup>

However, the men knew that who was to be employed was just as important. The

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<sup>89</sup> ASUMGC, 13 April 1944, 2-5.

<sup>90</sup> ASUMGC, 13 June 1944, 10.

<sup>91</sup> See footnote 66 regarding overtime.

<sup>92</sup> ASUMGC, 19 April 1944, 8.

Company had made it clear that they absolutely did not want to employ a group of minority men provided by the U.S. Employment Agency, even though these men would have reduced costs and probably bolstered production.

W.E. Mitchell and the rest of the smelter management plainly felt that the union, with its opposition to women workers, was forcing trouble on Anaconda — town and Company. The men knew only that they were persisting by protecting their jobs, their seniority, and by making as much money as possible on overtime. The smeltermen, in their struggle to persist, placed their priority on gender over race because they believed the company would not act on its threat to import minority men. As a corporation, ACM had its own needs if it was to persist. The company required new workers to save on overtime and to keep the government out of their business. As early as May of 1943 the cost of overtime had already become prohibitive. The Victory Committee report for that month noted that the labor problem was “[becoming] more serious” and costing the Company considerable overtime expense. “One hundred eight more men quit than were hired. In order to keep the plants in operation, it was necessary to work many 7th shifts during the weeks. The number of 7th shifts worked amounted to 2773.”<sup>93</sup>

The problem was no better by April 1944. On the government front, the Non-Ferrous Commission was the agency in cooperation with the War Manpower Commission that most threatened to interfere in ACM affairs. If it had forced ACM's hand it would not have been the first time. The Non-Ferrous Commission, for

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<sup>93</sup> Report to Donald Nelson, May 1943, Victory, 1.

example, did so at the San Francisco Plant of the A.S.&R., and at the Selby, Tacoma, and Los Angeles Plants.<sup>94</sup> The managers of ACM's Anaconda Plant definitely knew they could be next. It is also worth adding that Mitchell was in regular contact with these agencies, and that he was the one who informed the union of the Non-Ferrous Commission's intercession at the above locations. Obviously the Company would have problems with the government if it did not produce the required amount of copper.

For some reasons, then, it was in ACM's best interest to get women working in the smelter. It could select and control women at the local level and simultaneously solve at least part of the overtime problem. The Company could only accomplish half of this with minority men. Women, the Company rationalized, seemed the better of two bad choices. Such reasoning provides part of the answer to why management did not want minority men. But, what was still apparent was that the pool of women was small and therefore would only reduce a small fraction of labor costs, and that minority men, because they would in the long term drive down employment costs through competition, were an economically wiser labor choice. ACM's championing of women was for other reasons than economic. But, without a doubt ACM did want to employ women. To solve their problems, Mitchell and his associates felt they only had to convince the membership to stop stalling on the women question. The Company's strategy was to play on three major themes: what they perceived as the men's fear of

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<sup>94</sup> ASUMGC, 21 June 1944, 16-17.

minority men, the union's civic virtue, and finally the men's desire for continued overtime.

Mitchell first had to convince the membership that the threat of minority men being used in the smelter was real. He then had to associate women as the best defense against that threat. He struck such a dual theme continuously from April to July of 1944. For example: "There is only one reason, as far as I am concerned, that I want to see a woman going into the Mill. I would rather see one of our women in the Mill than getting what Mr. Durfee [the head of the U.S. Employment Office's western region] might give us." Mitchell, it is worth noting, must have been encouraged after this particular sortie. He succeeded in swaying at least one of the union representatives who openly supported his testament. "From my personal experience, I would rather work alongside a woman than a Mexican," noted Brother Kalso, a craft union representative sitting in on the negotiations for the first time that summer.<sup>95</sup> Later Mitchell voiced the same general message but in decidedly more pointed language. He asserted "We only want to employ these women because of the manpower shortage, and we prefer to employ them on jobs they can do rather than open ourselves up - you fellows and the management - to the possible influx of minority groups."<sup>96</sup> The men seemed to agree in general terms to such sentiments, but they did not make the employment of women any easier. This was certainly perplexing behavior. W.E. Mitchell in particular must have been at least a little confused regarding the union's thinking.

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<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

But management did not give up. ACM, in a different tactic, consciously sought to shame the working men into cooperating with its plan to employ larger numbers of women. E.A. Bernard, the smelter's Supervisor, voiced what many people in the community must have been thinking about the question of race and gender. "It doesn't seem to me that the boys up there are very patriotic. Naturally they hate to give up those soft jobs up there, but suppose some newspaper got out and published that the Anaconda Mill & Smeltermen would only allow women to work on dirty jobs at the Mill. I would be very much ashamed. You certainly don't want to import some of this Mexican and negro labor and stuff like that in order to supply labor to keep this plant going."

Bernard approached the problem from the viewpoint of a manager, a resident of Anaconda, and a man of his time and place. It is apparent that he saw the union as culpable and deserving of blame for the situation. The Company had no intention of tarnishing its public image by supporting the membership's unpatriotic and selfish position. Furthermore, Bernard said what the smeltermen must have been silently struggling with within their psyches. Shame would be an inevitable part of the baggage of their unusual battle. The smeltermen were unchivalrous, potentially causing a problem in production, and again potentially forcing the community to deal with an unwanted influx of minority men. All of this might come to pass because the men would not cooperate regarding women workers. But, these were men to whom pride and masculinity were inseparable. They believed in their visibly masculine role of caretaker. Bernard was implicating the entire group in behavior that was far less than manly. The reasons for feeling ashamed could not be more obvious, or so he argued.

These men had tried to hide from it, tried to placate their own inner-doubts by reassuring each other that their position was the right and honorable one. But Bernard had only to blow on their ideological house of cards. His acknowledgment of shame, coming from a bystander not a direct participant, suggests the potency of community-shared masculine values and exposed the error of the membership's ways.

Barney Bernard, however, had not come to bury Caesar, but to reanimate him. Bernard, the manager, presented a simple solution to the union's bind. Bernard thought the men could shed what he thought of as their mantle of dishonor and save the community future ills by controlling their masculine hubris. He reasoned the smeltermen could act like real men and sacrifice but a little. All would gain so much: women could work in the smelter during this time of national emergency, yet not be forced to work "on dirty jobs;" the community could be saved from, in Bernard's language — "stuff like that" — black and Mexican men. The smeltermen had withstood such propaganda before; it was not that hard to dismiss Barney Bernard's definition of patriotism. One could also define a patriot as a man who saved the job of his friend busy soldiering in the Armed Services. Struggling to persist, in the eyes of these blue-collar patriots, was an equally American aspiration.

ACM was nothing if not flexible in its campaign to convince the men to fall into line. Mitchell, realizing that the reasoning (and shame-oriented tactics) of middle-class managers could ring hollow in the ears of working men, used the example of how other workers on the national stage had reacted to wartime personnel changes to strengthen his argument. Perhaps he thought if the working men of Anaconda would not listen to him they would follow the guidance of their union hierarchy. "Your own

International is signing contracts with no discrimination as to sex, creed, or color, aren't they?" asked Mitchell. Dooley, in the spirit of autonomy which characterized the philosophy of the Anaconda workers, would not take the bait. "That isn't the first time it has been put to us," he replied. The Mill and Smeltermen had a long history of conflict with their international.<sup>97</sup> Mitchell sensed a bit of us-versus-them camaraderie in Dooley's comment. He leapt at the chance to find common ground. "The one thing you and I are facing is that there is nothing to stop the United States Employment Service sending colored men in here this morning." But it was for naught. The working men were still not buying his bill of goods. Indeed, Dooley in an emblematic bit of overconfident sarcasm, replied to Mitchell, "Colored women also."<sup>98</sup>

These ACM ploys did not work; the smeltermen continued to be unimpressed by the threat of an "influx" of minority men, and they likewise continued to stall the Company's plans on employing women. By all of Mitchell's calculations the men should have responded in a different manner. Mitchell based his tactics on his

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<sup>97</sup> ON the CIO see Lichtenstein, *Labor's War at Home*, and Freeman, "Delivering the Goods: Industrial Unionism during World War II."

<sup>98</sup> In "Last Hired, First Fired: Black Women Workers during World War II," Karen Anderson addresses the plight of black women during the war. Anderson quotes William Chafe as saying the opportunities of the war-time economy and the long-term changes they produced equaled a "second emancipation" for black women. In summary, Chafe thinks the war provided considerable change, albeit with continuing prejudice. Anderson disagrees, calling such evaluations sanguine. She stresses the degree discrimination and sexism persisted, and notes what is truly significant for black women is "the extent to which barriers remained intact." The events in Anaconda support Anderson's conclusion. The possibility of black women being imported was unlikely, but was apparent where they would stand in the pecking order if they did compete for jobs in Anaconda. Employers when hiring women or minorities utilized a complex hiring preference hierarchy which inevitably placed black women last. The automobile industry is the primary example of this phenomenon. Black women also faced more discrimination in the work place than black men. The war-time white male labor force only considered black men a threat when they entered the labor force at somewhere besides the bottom, or if they were promoted. The white female labor force saw black women as a threat to maintaining social distinction. Hate strikes to keep black women out of the work place, fairly common in large industrial centers like Baltimore or Detroit, were signs of racial not economic prejudice. See, Karen Anderson, "Last Hired, First Fired: Black Women Workers During World War II," in *Journal of American History* 69 (March 1982): 82.

knowledge of the way the working men thought. Often in the history of U.S. labor relations such managerial efforts at prediction were based on a paternalistic superiority. Not in Mitchell's case. He truly did know the working men. As noted earlier in this essay, Mitchell had started as an entry level laborer himself. Moreover, *and this is critical* to understanding events in Anaconda, Mitchell often looked out for the working men's best interest. He honestly felt that what benefited the Company was not mutually exclusive with what helped the smeltermen. In the vast majority of cases, the smeltermen agreed. These men of union and management, it is not too much to say, were friends.

It is extraordinary that union and management at Anaconda during this period got along as well as they did. For the distinct differences between labor and management typically surfaced in harsh contour when, in instances like this one, the two parties' priorities clashed. In simple terms, production *almost* always came first for the Company, whereas the union *almost* always saw stability as primary. These stimuli could and often did go hand in hand. After all, as historian David Emmons has noted, the Anaconda Company and its workers had a remarkable history of cooperation.<sup>99</sup> But World War II was different. It put a premium on production, not stability. The crisis mentality and the concomitant call for maximum labor cooperation fettered the workers' ability to oppose management initiatives that were unfair to labor. And although the smeltermen were handsomely rewarded, especially considering the low wages of the not so distant Depression years, and although WPB codes protected the

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<sup>99</sup> And during certain periods, a remarkable history of strife. See Emmons, Butte Irish, Chapters 8 and 10, *passim*.



unions to some extent, the smeltermen still wanted more money, security, and autonomy as a reward for their role in increasing output. ACM had no intention of granting the smeltermen's constant demand for overtime shifts. Such a clash of principles would typically have produced an immediate explosion between employee and employer. It did not.

There is little doubt that this bond between employee and employer was a unique part of the Anaconda labor landscape. On balance the Anaconda Copper Mining Company had good relations with its workers. The working men of Anaconda, Butte, and Great Falls showed their appreciation for this policy by rarely engaging in labor activism. Although other industrial towns had at one point been characterized by the same tight relationship, few could still claim such a collective spirit. Anaconda's genesis as a company town, and the remarkable history of managers who had started as common laborers or had been raised in the area, was the key to unity and any similarities in outlook. Many of these men had worked together as young adults and played together as young children. Essential to the fostering and continuation of this relationship was the physical layout of Anaconda. As Alan Trachtenberg, Robert Wiebe, and others have noted, the industrializing of America served physically to separate employee from employer within the community landscape.<sup>100</sup> Where once they had lived and worked cheek to jowl, now the standard pattern of the cityscape included different residence and leisure areas for labor and capital. Anaconda, literally built from the ground up by Marcus Daly during the Gilded Age, reflected her

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<sup>100</sup> Robert Wiebe, The Search for Order, 1827-1920 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); and Alan Trachtenberg, The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982).

founder's roots as a worker and comrade of the men, not as a capitalist above and separate from the men. Although time made Anaconda more like standard industrial towns, its residents, no matter their class, saw each other not from across magisterial hedges and walls, but rather from neighboring church pews, park benches, and stadium bleachers.<sup>101</sup>

It therefore surprised Mitchell and the other members of the management negotiating team that the smeltermen would treat women as a greater threat than migrant male workers. Management thought they knew the working men. They did not; or, at least they did not count on the working men manipulating the same trust management had counted on to solve the manpower problem without conflict. W.E. Mitchell, calling on his friendship with the working men, trusted they would take the common sense and low risk route. He was unable to comprehend that the working men saw women as the priority problem because the men knew that management did not want to employ minority men.

It was up to the union, if it were to ensure persistence, to respond to each management salient. The working men were playing for high stakes, indeed. Furthermore, their first draw of cards did not look all that good. Early on, Mitchell attempted to illustrate the membership's flimsy position by referencing a situation that was literally close to home. "I saw a statement in an Eastern paper last night - I read under a Montana date line - how pleased the farmers were with the Mexican labor - a

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<sup>101</sup> Vine, Anaconda Memories, 1883-1983 ( Butte: Artcraft Printers, 1983); Ruth Meidl and George P. Welcome, eds., Anaconda, Montana: A Century of History, 1883-1983 (Anaconda: n.p., [1983]); Interview with Margaret Tracy McLean.

two column story on how wonderful they were.” By using these farm hands as an example and not mentioning the rejection of the replacement black miners in Butte in the context of how the Company was not going to permit such insubordination a second time, Mitchell again did more harm than good to his fight. The union’s hand had begun to look better and better. They had guessed that Mitchell did not want to employ minority men and part of their evidence was what had happened in Butte, by not referencing such an obvious example they knew he was thinking as they had predicted. Mitchell was in essence issuing an unspoken but empty dare that on this occasion pushed Dooley and the representatives for the first time to flaunt their trump card. “Yet a couple of years ago,” Dooley reassuredly noted, “you read about the zoot-suit trouble in California and other places.” To this Mitchell simply, and in the union’s eyes predictably, stated, “I don’t want to see them in Anaconda.”

Mitchell had, in truth, misread the union’s stance. The membership did not think the Company’s threat to employ blacks and Mexicans was serious, but they were indeed worried that women would be hired. Ensuring that other male laborers were not imported to fill the manpower shortage rationally still should have been the union’s number one priority, especially since such an outcome seemed a very real possibility even if women went to work in the smelter. After all, Walter Dooley’s estimate on 13 April that 400 to 500 local women were prepared to work in the smelter was indeed absurdly high, and he had to have known it. Granted that Dooley’s associate John Donovan’s estimate of “two” was equally inaccurate, averaging the two figures produces at most 250 potential female candidates for employment. With the benefit of hindsight (as always a historian’s best friend), we know that all told less than 200

women ever worked in the smelter during the war. Thus, keeping Mitchell's 13 April personnel shortage figures in mind — he approximated a shortfall of 500 workers — it had to seem more than just an idle threat that male workers would be brought in.

On the surface, this situation had to give the workers pause and cast doubt upon their risky venture. As alluded to earlier a trip to Butte, just twenty miles to the east, would only have reinforced the notion that at the government's urging the ACM was prepared not to only bring in new male workers, but also to allow black workers to gain employment in the industry. The story of how these black men were treated when they arrived in Butte must be sketched quickly here.

It was ironic that in September of 1942 E.S. McGlone speaking for the management asked the Union men to treat the replacement personnel, who had just arrived to alleviate some of the manpower shortage, with patience and respect. "The new men are green and need the help of more experienced miners so the hill could continue to produce copper for the war effort." Charles Black, chairman of Butte Miners' Union, offended that McGlone and management would imply that union men would be hard on the new miners, told the management representatives that the only trouble these new workers had faced came from foremen who expected too much and showed little patience with the new workers.<sup>102</sup>

The regiment of furloughed black miners whom the government sent to Butte in the late fall of 1942 had more than just impatient foremen to contend with. These men met what seemed to be a racism so open that it made national news. Time Magazine

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<sup>102</sup> Meeting Transcripts, September 17, 1942. Victory, 16.

ran an article on the fact that white miners refused to go into the mines with these black men.<sup>103</sup> Part of the reason the miners were so upset could have been that they expected an entirely different group of men. They expected replacements to come via Manpower Commissions recruiting efforts in South Dakota, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Wyoming, not the black miners who arrived.<sup>104</sup> This aside, what happened in Butte is one of the ugly stories of wartime race relations.

In contrast, the smeltermen's exclusion of minority men and local women did not make headlines. Perhaps the men's reasons for having apprehension about women workers were more convincing. Across the country, the male world of work was being turned upside down. And, without doubt, the membership thought Anaconda would be next. But the ethnic mix of 'White Anaconda' was not under attack, so why make a vigorous effort to defend it when you worked for your own best ally? Hiring black and Mexican male workers was simply not a preferred or even viable alternative to the managers of the Reduction Works, and the union knew it.<sup>105</sup> Local history and local customs were on their side.

The failure of the Butte experiment must have also, upon further reflection, provided some assurance. Would the Company or the government risk such a high profile failure again? It was unlikely, especially with German propaganda focused on

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<sup>103</sup> Time, November 23, 1942, 93-4. See also Interview with Jerry Hansen and Interview with Robert Vine.

<sup>104</sup> Meeting Transcripts, September 3, 1942, Victory, 7.

<sup>105</sup> However, it was also informative to examine what the Company could lose if such an agreement on female workers was finalized. Mitchell argued that an agreement in writing on women's employment was unwise. He espoused a theory of independence from government control for the Company, and supported the membership's power to exclude in a remarkable amount of cases. A written agreement could open up the Company to accusations of misconduct by the government, and perhaps give the union too much power.

U.S. race relations and national black activists alert to such prejudice. But this was a slim frame upon which to build the entire structure of one's plan. The men, however, saw other weaknesses in the Company's claims. Mitchell's repeated assertion that the Company could not afford to continue paying overtime also rang hollow. As mentioned earlier, by May of 1943 the cost for overtime was already prohibitive. Remember the Victory Committee report noted that for that month the number of 7th shifts worked amounted to 2773.<sup>106</sup> Yet things continued to run as normal (including periodic threats to end the overtime system.) Such evidence certainly made it appear that ACM was crying wolf.

But proof that the union was on firm ground in its fight did not end there. In virtually every instance when he voiced his opinion on the manpower problem, Mitchell provided an indication of management's real stance. The men could not help but notice that management also wanted to keep minority men out of the community. Mitchell erased any lingering uncertainty on 21 June. "Now, I have thought many times," Mitchell argued, "that it was far better for us to string along here indefinitely, as far as 7 days are concerned and employing what local women were available on jobs they can do, rather than let ourselves open to an order from the U.S. Employment Office, which can very easily be a bus load of colored fellows or a bus load of Mexicans."<sup>107</sup> In a moment of weakness, ACM's highest representative at the Reduction Works, agreed to keep the status quo in place. Yes he noted that local women should be hired. But, the Company had begun employing women in early

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<sup>106</sup> Meeting Transcripts, September 17, 1942, Victory, 16.

<sup>107</sup> ASUMGC, 21 June 1944, 12.

1944. So in truth that condition had been met. The men just had to hold the line on future female hires. W.E. Mitchell would hold the line on minority men.

With all of this evidence in mind it was fair for the smeltermen to conclude that the Company was loathe — as indeed the smelter were — to have Mexicans and blacks in Anaconda. In truth, the majority of the membership might have shared Kelso's and Mitchell's sentiments, but the union could not bother with such details now. It was in the midst of a high-stakes game to exclude both minorities and women from the smelter. We, however, can and must bother with such details. The story of the black men who worked in Anaconda's smelter prior to and during the war provides the best evidence available regarding labor and management's views on race.

In some ways the fight to exclude black men was perplexing. Anaconda, prior to the war, had one of the highest percentage of black residents of any city in Montana.<sup>108</sup> Many of these men worked in the Smelter, although for a good percentage of them, duties were limited to janitorial work. Those men who worked in the smelter worked in one crew together, and by tradition had some of the most physically difficult jobs. It was not the black smelter crew who were at issue, but the black janitors who had "retired" to their positions. Mitchell wanted to put these old black men back in the smelter. The union's response was mixed. On 13 April Charles McLean responded to Mitchell's suggestion by arguing, "Before we get to them we ought to get to the timekeepers."<sup>109</sup> McLean's phrasing suggests that before black men were pulled off

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<sup>108</sup> Bureau of the Census. Sixteenth Census of the United States, and Interview with Jerry Hansen.

<sup>109</sup> ASUMGC, 13 April 1944, 6.

positions they had earned, healthy white men, ostensibly white-collar management types, should be placed in laborer jobs. Just one week later, John Donovan, replying to the same query about the black janitors, told Mitchell “if there is enough work for those 7 men to work as a crew, under the supervision of a white foreman in the Surface, I don’t think the Union has any objection of putting those out following those lines.”<sup>110</sup> One can only surmise from this limited evidence that black men were treated like workers, but often like unequal workers.

It is safe to say that the membership definitely did not want migrant Mexican and black men working in the smelter. They were making the exclusion of these minority workers their top priority. However, Walter Dooley’s reiteration later in the 13 April meeting that before women worked in the plant the union’s concerns regarding seniority, what jobs would be given to women, and women’s status after the war must first be addressed, added a complex twist to the situation. Why did the representatives return to this topic when they had apparently agreed to the employment of women in the smelter? Dooley’s comment lends credence to the notion that the union was playing a subtle and perhaps deceitful game with management. The representatives hoped to find out the ACMC’s true position on the minority workers by charting a cooperative tack regarding female replacements. Dooley, the leader of this effort, asked Mitchell if he was on the union’s side, or if he was more concerned with finding new workers. Mitchell, in a confusing statement, said that he “would prefer [to hire]

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<sup>110</sup> ASUMGC, 19 April 1944, 11.



Anaconda women rather than Mexican boys,” but then added that the hiring of women should proceed cautiously, for production levels must be maintained.<sup>111</sup>

His statement was almost exactly what the union hoped to hear. If this was indeed the case, and there was no guarantee, they could use Mitchell to protect their flanks against the government’s plan to potentially send minority men to the smelter, and simultaneously they could take Mitchell’s concept of “caution” in bringing women into the smelter to new heights by dragging their feet on every possible issue related to work and women. They could close both groups out. But could they be sure of the management’s stance? Mitchell’s remarks might be construed differently. If the union representatives were wrong it would spell disaster. It was no difficult chore for them to imagine the degeneration of the community upon the first bend in their rigid social codes. It is clear that the working men of Anaconda had only one overriding goal, to stall, and to stall to such an extent that neither Mexican and black male workers nor women became new employees at the Reduction Works. But as of this 13 April meeting they could wait no longer to execute their plan. Management had started hiring local women early in 1944. The smeltermen chose to gamble that their read of Mitchell was correct. But they were not foolhardy. Their stalling tactic would serve a second purpose - namely nailing down Mitchell’s exact stance on these points. They were leaving room to maneuver.

Another aspect of the union-management bond deserves mention when considering how the union manipulated its power to exclude. First it must be noted that even with

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<sup>111</sup> ASUMGC, 13 April 1944, 9.

virtually constant reassurances, the union representatives still concluded and stated repeatedly that the company was pushing women for one reason — profits. By doing so, the union was questioning the very bond they counted on. Although on the surface this made no sense, in truth the union's questioning management's sincerity was a propitious action. As management heard these questions the unstated premise was that the union still believed in and cherished the employee-employer relationship. In other words, the union's public expression of worry over the possibility that management would break the bond was very likely a complex psychological ploy to reassure the Company that the smeltermen were still following the tenets of the bond. Moreover, raising these doubts served a second purpose: it allowed the union to test the waters. Each time they questioned management's sincerity they usually elicited an extemporaneous and highly revealing response by Mitchell, for example his willingness to continue on a seven day a week overtime schedule. His confessions laid bare the Company's true position on race and other critical questions.

Interestingly, Mitchell's continual return to the possibility that the government might force black and Mexican workers on Anaconda suggests that he did not share the union's confidence in his own ability to control the situation. It is fascinating that there was a very real chance that the union's tactic could have blown up in its face. It did not realize the tenuous nature of their defense against what they saw as a pending invasion of blacks and Mexicans into Anaconda. They thought Mitchell's comments during this period were only the typical banter in a long running union-management game.

It is worth noting the national picture on race at this point. It was likely that the men and women of Montana's copper communities had heard the reasoned voices of activists interested in racial equality. Voices that were raised from both within and from outside the nation. This call for justice had led the federal government to take steps toward integrating wartime America. Expanded job opportunities in the Navy and Marines, integrated officer training, enhanced programs to teach blacks defense industry skills, and the Committee on Fair Employment Practices, were just a few examples of these inroads. Moreover, the residents of Anaconda must have been aware, through at least word of mouth, of the extraordinary circumstances developing only ninety miles away at Missoula's Smoke Jumper Base. There an all black battalion of paratroopers was training to fight forest fires caused by the Japanese release of incendiary balloons all over the Pacific Northwest: remarkable challenge for remarkable men. Although these changes in Montana and elsewhere were noteworthy, white Americans — particularly those in the South — did not want to grant blacks the four freedoms for which they were fighting.<sup>112</sup> Anaconda was no different.

White attitudes on the homefront in general, and in Anaconda in particular, were typical of continued racial injustice. Despite playing their part in bond drives, civil defense, food conservation, and in organizations like the Red Cross and USO, black morale was driven to a new low during the war years as the historian John Hope Franklin pointed out.<sup>113</sup> The experience of living in two worlds had prepared blacks to wage two wars simultaneously: one against the Axis Powers an ocean away, and one

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<sup>112</sup>For example, John Morton Blum, V was for Victory, Richard Polenberg, War and Society, and John Patrick Diggins, The Proud Decades.

<sup>113</sup> John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1974). 453-4.

in their own backyard. Keeping the home fires burning to the black community meant eliminating discrimination and maltreatment.<sup>114</sup> Such discrimination and maltreatment were more than evident in Montana's copper towns. Notably, then, the lessons of Anaconda do not support Sitkoff's proposal that the labor realities of World War II undermined "the most powerful source of white resistance to the advancement of blacks," that is to say, black economic progress coming at the expense of whites. For, as Sitkoff argues, there was certainly enough opportunity for every class and every race to prosper during the war.<sup>115</sup> But even the knowledge that black economic success would not come at the expense of their own prosperity did not persuade Anaconda's working men to give black and Mexican workers a chance. Their racism, based in part on a rationalization of protecting the future of their community closed the door on a rare opportunity. The war in many parts of the republic provided the circumstances to force black and white together, for men and women to base their opinions not on fear and hatred, but on the experience of shared lives and work. But in Anaconda, exclusion — not acceptance — was the watch word. Union and

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid. August Meier and Elliot Rudwick also address some of the same significant problems, notably, discrimination in both hiring and in the work force, racial tensions in cities and army posts, and the overall prejudicial treatment of black soldiers. However, the lack of a similar event to the Red Summer of 1919, upon the demobilization of troops shows the advances made during the war in Meier and Rudwick's eyes. Their assessment is that World War II's major impact on black society was the seeds it laid for changes during the Truman administration and later. These seeds were sown in the urban ghetto by the communities aggressive new leaders, and would eventually produce the civil rights movement. Meier and Rudwick's optimism likely stems from the time they were writing in, 1966/67. Their study in various places preaches against violence as the answer to black struggle, not because it is morally wrong but ineffective. They conclude that "Today the economically impoverished Negroes are pushing s far as they realistically can." August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, From Plantation to Ghetto New York: Hill and Wang, 1966), 217-220.

<sup>115</sup> Harvard Sitkoff, "The Preconditions for Racial Change," in A History of Our Time, ed. by William Chafe and Harvard Sitkoff (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 151-157.

management created an effective team defense intent on, and successful in, ensuring that this community remained “lily white” after the war.

One can only conclude that the union did not actually consider imported male labor as less of a threat than women, rather they understood that the ACM did not want such men in their communities. This stance coupled with Mitchell’s statement on 13 April — regarding production and showing caution in employing women — explains the Company’s unusual, even illogical position concerning new wartime workers. A typical response by management usually considered what type of labor set-up best promoted company profits. Historically, labor competition meant lower wages, and lower wages, of course, meant higher profits. But, the Smelter’s management did not see it this way.

The transcripts make it evident (as the next chapter shows) that Mitchell, who had himself started as a common laborer at the Anaconda Reduction Works, intended on protecting his working class neighbors by hiring women to work in traditionally male jobs during the war. He would do this even if the smeltermen did not see that such an action would in fact guarantee postwar job stability and aid in modeling local postwar on the prewar status quo. Mitchell believed that other men brought in to work in the Reduction Works, no matter their racial or ethnic origin, would be a much greater threat to the smeltermen’s jobs over the long run. The men agreed, but they hoped that they could also quell what they saw as the great threat to the *success* of their postwar society — a change in community gender roles. In Anaconda at least, race was the key to preventing such a gender role transition.



### Chapter 3

#### *Joe Copper's War — Fighting for a Postwar Gender Status Quo*

While the men of Mine, Mill, and Smelter and those of management were arguing about how to deal with the threat of minority men they were also debating whether the Company should employ women in the Reduction Works. Chapter Three discussed the relationship between these issues of gender and race. This chapter will focus on the various aspects of what women working in the smelter meant to the working men. The Company hired a few women to work in the sampling department's laboratory in early 1944. These were jobs that men had traditionally held, but the white collar nature of the work allowed the working men to ignore this transgression. Yet when management began to push the smeltermen to accept women as the solution to the manpower problem, the union men could no longer ignore the situation.

Because women were technically already in the smelter, and because the union had proclaimed they would rather work next to women than minority men, the union and management, meeting in weekly negotiating sessions, shifted their focus from *whether* women would be hired to *how, where, in what status, and under whose control* women would work in the smelter. These discussions also made explicit what the men felt women working in the smelter would mean to postwar Anaconda. In thematic sequence, then, this chapter discusses male worker control of the workplace to secure present and future opportunity, and some ways in which local culture supported this impetus through the reinforcement of traditional gender roles — especially the link

between patriotism, shame, and masculinity. Next, the chapter examines the ways in which some cultural iconography balanced new and old gender standards, and in contrast to this iconography, the subsequent renewed claims by the working men that women were indeed a threat to the ideology of persistence. And finally, it covers how the men conducted their campaign to exclude women, why they did so, and the compromise that was reached.

Before continuing I must reiterate two points. First, that there was no confusing the matter, even if this shift in the language of negotiation seemed to imply a tacit agreement to allow women to work in other traditionally male jobs in the smelter, the union membership was still four-square against the idea and fought such a shift with every means at its disposal. The men's best case scenario always was the total exclusion of women from the smelter; their worst case scenario was women permanently taking men's jobs and a concomitant shift in community gender roles. Neither the men's highest hopes nor their worst fears came to pass. Women did work in the smelter in a wide variety of men's jobs including some of the most "masculine," but their numbers were relatively small and they were all dismissed at the end of the war.<sup>116</sup>

And second, that protecting the community from outsiders did not provide the primary stimulus for the union's effort to keep women out of the Smelter. There was little threat of women migrating to Anaconda for wartime work — especially when factories on both coast were actively recruiting and offering higher pay than the

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<sup>116</sup> No more than seventy-five women worked at any one time during the war. Vine, Women of the Washoe.



smelter ever would, and when the government was trying to place minority men not women. Unlike the exclusion of these black and Mexican men, the exclusion of local women was primarily an issue that centered on the smeltermen's determination to maintain a measure of control over the future shape of their society. To Anaconda's working men, women in the smelter would greatly damage their ability to exercise that control. With women in the smelter, the rigid walls of appropriate gender behavior, meticulously constructed by previous generations of local folk, would flex most probably beyond the point of return. For the smeltermen the risks inherent in the employment of women in the smelter were just too great.

That is the framework for this the most volatile act in Anaconda's wartime drama. Labor and management wrote the script as they voiced their respective positions during Union - Management Grievance Committee Meetings at the Anaconda Reduction Works. The parties recorded these negotiations in a detailed and amazingly frank set of transcripts. In addition to these transcripts, two other exceptional sources, the Copper Commando and the meeting transcripts of the Victory Labor - Management Committee, (which served as the key to unlocking the early-war masculine world in Chapter Two), provide information on the interior and exterior world of gender — the culture, belief, propaganda, and hopes — in this society.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> The Copper Commando was a jointly run union-management paper which served a number of purposes, not the least of which was bonding the communities of Anaconda, Butte, and Great Falls to the war production effort. The Victory Labor - Management Committee, an umbrella group comprised of representatives from labor and capital from all three of these towns was charged with handling problems of production and morale throughout the war. Robert Newcomb, ed., Copper Commando. Complete set for the years of publication 1942-1945 housed at the Butte-Silverbow County Archives, Butte, Montana. This source hereafter abbreviated as CC.

From the start and throughout this confrontation, a pattern of resistance, based upon the idea that women workers threatened both the men's ability to make overtime pay and the men's seniority set-up, was evident in the smeltermen's actions. Initially, the union membership chose to put its opposition to women in the plant in these very terms. The working men, in April of 1944 noted that these women, like black and Mexican migrant hires, would threaten their short term profits through the loss of overtime, and their long term job security.<sup>118</sup> The membership also felt, and stated plainly, that women employed in the smelter during the war could call on seniority rights to protect their positions in any postwar scramble for jobs. This would leave workers who had been serving in the Armed Forces, and boys who had never worked in the smelter but counted on it as the future source of their livelihood, out in the cold. The men could not abide this challenge to multi-generational persistence. They were left with the question of how they should respond.

The workingmen's tactics to keep women out were not set in stone; as community opinion evolved, and it did evolve (the women in town and those men who were not employed at the Reduction Works were not just passive) and the situation changed, the men adapted. Operating under the principle that the best offense is a good defense, the union in late 1943 initially gave ground to the Company's demands, all the while searching for the most defensible terrain. Thus, in November of that year, understanding their precarious situation but not willing to abandon entirely their basic position, the union submitted a short list of jobs they felt women could handle.<sup>119</sup> For

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<sup>118</sup> ASUMGC, 13 April 1944. *passim*.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*. This list is not with the union-management transcripts for 1943.

the Company the union's list did not go nearly far enough. Management believed it had to have more new workers if it was going to stop the government from forcing their hand. In early 1944 Mitchell let the union's representatives know that their list was inadequate. Under continued pressure from the company, and with the threat that black or Mexican workers might soon be imported by the U.S. Employment Service, the union plotted and stalled, hoping they could devise a strategy that would continue to exclude black and Mexican men and stymie management's bid to hire local women. Their successful campaign against minority men was discussed in the last chapter. The smeltermen, however, were failing at the second phase of their plan: by late March it had become apparent that the Company was proceeding with its plan to hire women for production jobs in the Smelter.

The men scrambled for an adequate response. They initially tried calling on their bond with W.E. Mitchell. This was a logical option, for Mitchell's position on employing women in the smelter was contradictory. The union felt it had some room to maneuver. Mitchell flatly stated early in the April 13th meeting, that the Company was unwilling to maintain the current rate of overtime work, yet he also made it unmistakable that he would proceed slowly with the employment of women. In some ways it is odd that he spoke of showing caution when bringing women into the smelter. Due to government mandated production quotas, the Company had to continue using men in an overtime status until they found workers to make up their personnel shortages. Thus caution equaled overtime which equaled loss of profit. Furthermore, because Butte, the source of copper for Anaconda's smelter, had by Mitchell's own admission hit a run of rock that lacked the typical concentration of

copper and thereby had slowed the pace of work at the mill and smelter this was an ideal time to train women in the plant.<sup>120</sup> In light of this, there appears to be a second explanation, besides Mitchell's affinity for his neighbors, for his ostensibly incompatible goals of hiring slowly and maintaining production. Showing caution in employing women represented Mitchell's belief that women's place was not in the smelter. Cutting down on overtime and ensuring production through a larger workforce was his duty as the manager of Anaconda's copper smelter. For a period Mitchell was willing to sacrifice the second aim for the first. Mitchell was waging a battle within himself — trying to make his personal feelings match his public role as the smelter's manager — while attempting to understand the massive changes brought on by the wartime emergency and what they would mean to his and his community's future.

In Mitchell's case, making and controlling these transitions literally required negotiation with the union representatives, but it also required internal negotiations with his own value system. He had to decide what was more important, the Company's wartime profits and the national copper production program or eradicating what he also saw as a possible menace to Anaconda's postwar gender codes. The smeltermen were in a similar bind. They believed women did not belong in the smelter and said so during union meetings. But once the women were working there, it was difficult to deny the public system of masculine behavior that dictated that women be treated with chivalry. Neither did women escape these personal contradictions.

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 8-9.

Women in the smelter spoke of their work only as a wartime duty, but for simple economic reasons many privately wanted to remain at work.<sup>121</sup> Like Augusta Clawson, they also liked the feeling of self-worth that their accomplishments in this male arena provided.<sup>122</sup> Moreover, they enjoyed the independence of jobs that paid well. Yet, there was no denying that many of these women believed in the traditional roles ascribed to them by Anaconda's conservative social structure.<sup>123</sup>

While this process of internal and external negotiation was obvious throughout this drama (and thus helps us understand this complex world), it did not effect the smeltermen's conception of how they wanted their future society to appear; mobility was still not their goal.<sup>124</sup> Even during emergency times, Anaconda and the rest of the copper communities of Montana offered hints of what this idealized masculine-driven future would look like. Local culture reinforced traditional gender roles by presenting home-bound images of women. While it was clear that other mothers on the national stage were actively protecting their families by working in war plants — for example, in the 16 July 1943 Commando, a women munitions worker was pictured on the cover assembling foot long projectiles — Montana's women, by and large, were

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<sup>121</sup> Mary Spellman's oral histories of these women show this to be the case. See Vine, Women of the Washoe.

<sup>122</sup> Augusta Clawson, "Shipyard Diary of a Women Welder," excerpted in Mary Beth Norton, ed., Major Problems in the History of American Women (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1993). Clawson, a metal worker in the shipping industry, faced many of the same obstacles. See also Gluck, Rosie the Riveter Revisited.

<sup>123</sup> It is of course unlikely that W.E. Mitchell, the union representatives, the smeltermen, or the new smelterwomen understood the process of change they were going through in terms of "negotiations." Yet, there is no better literal or figurative term to describe how these men and women privately and publicly, internally and externally, came to understand and shape their world. Considering this dynamic is essential to comprehending the story of how gender and work issues commingled with ethnicity, class, regionalism, and culture to produce the realities of postwar Anaconda.

<sup>124</sup> Henretta, "The Study of Social Mobility: Ideological Assumptions and Conceptual Bias."

relegated to passively pleading for Copper production within the pages of this same newspaper. Never was women's limited work sphere nor their restricted role mentioned as a product of a male society with a siege mentality.<sup>125</sup>

The "Commando Kitchen's" marriage of union and management women in its 18 June 1943 issue reinforces this point. The "Commando Kitchen" was an invention of the Commando editors that brought together women whose husbands were members of management, the AFL, and the CIO to share ideas on how better to serve their husbands. While some differences regarding women's roles must have existed at least in the eyes of a few people in the community, what stands out here is that these women fit perfectly within the narrow range of roles the smeltermen saw for them. For instance, the Commando Kitchen on this day showed these women working together to better feed their husbands. Hearing that "Helen voted in favor of the meat pie and went for seconds" would certainly reassure men that, at least in their world, radical changes were firmly controlled. Proper topics, all in the domestic sphere, engaged these women. Providing a good meal for their men was foremost among these concerns. When next "Mary became so interested in Dorothy's recipe for using leftovers that she forgot to eat," most smeltermen likely applauded her devotion to the task at hand.<sup>126</sup> Mary's own hunger was subservient to serving her family. She could

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<sup>125</sup> I see this siege mentality as the key to understanding a very specific set of questions which revolve around a particular group, in a particular place, at a particular time. The smeltermen of Anaconda in 1944 were afraid their role as the community breadwinners, and every other facet of their existence which made them who they were — which defined their manhood — were in jeopardy. Also, a relevant question (and one that deserves far more research and analysis) is whether Anaconda was extraordinary because working class women did not have to work, the comparison between what middle class women whose husbands worked in white collar jobs and blue collar wives produces more similarities than differences.

<sup>126</sup> Robert Newcomb, ed., "Commando Kitchen," CC 1, No. 22, (18 June 1943): 2-4, 14. Newcomb, Vol. 1, No. 22, (18 June 1943): 2-4.

best do this by practicing economy and still feeding them well. Good recipes for leftovers accomplished both.

The every day concerns dealt with by the Victory Committee provide nuance to this gendered world. By studying how the Committee approached the wartime transportation problem, the perceived role of women and children comes into a bit more focus. The problem revolved around the area's bus and trolley system being overcrowded after 4pm. This was when the working men needed to use the transportation to get home (and, although not mentioned by the Committee, to the bars). As a partial solution to the problem the Committee, in conjunction with other local authorities, introduced a five cent fare for children so they could get around town, but also legislated that the fare was not good after 4pm. Women also were a concern. Through the Victory Committee's comments and actions, the men's view on women's place and on women in general becomes a little clearer. Bert Riley noted that the street cars have signs in them that "are really nice." "They tell the ladies to do their shopping early and go home right away." Riley thought these signs would solve the crowding problem. His comment also suggests exactly what a woman should be concentrating on during the war — not social life or any other distractions — just playing the careful consumer and caring for the home. But even if Riley felt the signs would solve the crowding problem, another committee member saw things differently. "I don't think there is much we can do about it. I suppose the women naturally like to mingle with the men anyway."<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Meeting Transcripts, October 15, 1942, Victory, 12.

Public spectacles and days of celebration also reinforced the differences between men's and women's worlds. For example, Miner's Union Day, held every June 13th, saw female drum corps and marching bands parading down Main Street in Butte. But what followed them was the day's real attraction — miners, hundreds and hundreds of them, marching in their Sunday best and being recognized along the way as the town's aristocracy.<sup>128</sup> Certainly it was their day and they were supposed to be the main attraction, but the men's place in their communities was unique. Images in the local papers and in the Copper Commando made it evident that these were the men who kept Butte and her sister cities running. They, by virtue of sheer numbers, in cooperation with the Company managers, defined these towns. Women on the other hand, dressed in the various costumes of whatever special parade function they carried out, appeared as nothing more than supporting cast or, even worse, as stage props in a male drama. Where else in America did the physical embodiment of a male work place march each year through the middle of town on a holiday unique to their copper trade? In Butte, Anaconda, and Montana's other copper centers, the working man was truly the *pater familias*.<sup>129</sup> Women entering his work place did not fit in his worldview. Moreover, through the Commando, other local sources, and the Company itself, men knew what role they were supposed to fill. They heard and saw constant reference to their masculine self-image and to the idea of a "Man's War."

The Victory Committee, for instance, from its first meeting onward was busy creating a carefully crafted physical environment that would shape the attitude of the

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<sup>128</sup> David Emmons explains the role of miners in Butte fully. He also discusses the conservative nature of the region's working men. See The Butte Irish, Chapters 6 and 7.

<sup>129</sup> Newcomb, "Pictures of Miner's Day," CC 1, No. 23, (2 July 1943): 12.



Company's workers. Each department in the Reduction Works agreed to have a "Victory Labor Management" bulletin board displayed in a prominent part of the work area. On the board the names of men in the section who were serving in the Armed Forces would be displayed.<sup>130</sup> There was thus a constant reminder of the sacrifice their coworkers were making for the American way of life. These warriors cum workers had placed their trust in their friends who remained in Anaconda for one reason or another. They expected the right sort of welcome if and when they returned. Women in their smelter did not fit in this picture, and the men at home knew it.

For the first time on 21 August 1942 and flying every day thereafter, as they walked to work for their shift the working men would see a "Minute Man Flag" raised high over the plant.<sup>131</sup> Besides the trust of their buddies in the Service, visually represented on the area bulletin boards, the working men saw this and other symbolic images of American manhood every day. On its basest level, the flag symbolized that over 90% of the employees at the plant were subscribing to War Bonds on the Payroll Deduction Plan. But the Minuteman had a much deeper meaning to citizens, new and old, versed in the traditions of Americana during this patriotic age.<sup>132</sup> The sacrifices of generations of American men fighting at a moments notice for intangible yet powerful ideas like liberty resonated in the Minuteman. The smeltermen knew that serving as a warrior for democracy was a right of passage for the American male. Some of their friends had heeded the call, some had gone in the past, but many had never and would

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<sup>130</sup> Meeting Minutes, August 6, 1942. Victory, 10.

<sup>131</sup> Vine, Women of the Washoe, 1.

<sup>132</sup> Blum, "V" is for Victory. Leila Rupp, Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944).

never do so. How did they come to terms with this truth? Was it a important to them? The intensely masculine nature of this arena implies that these were critical issues. Such displays tweaked pride and guilt in the working men, and reminded them to work harder. A physical culture of pride, guilt, and patriotism all wrapped around masculinity was part of every day Anaconda for the working men. They were proud of the part they were playing in producing copper, a truly critical war commodity. In newspaper articles, posters, and other forms of media they constantly received praise for their performance. Yet, the smeltermen also felt guilt when they heard of a friend that was killed, or saw a star in some family's window. The government and the Company constantly reminded the men that a drop in production could mean the death of an American soldier. These feelings combined to create an interesting patriotism that manifested itself a truly astounding production record and in the smeltermen's campaign to exclude minority men and women.

The August 1942 Report of the Victory Committee provides further clues to the work-a-day culture of the copper worker; to the subtle reminders of what his culture expected of him. John J. Morris, a miner, recommended the following changes to the work atmosphere in Butte:

1. That a loud speaker be placed in the Change House in order that records with speeches could be played at the change shift time to make the men more 'war conscious.'
2. That some type of exhibit be placed in the downtown district to make the people as a whole more 'war conscious.'<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>133</sup>, Report to Donald Nelson, August 1942, Victory, 5-7.

Similar ideas inevitably surfaced in other copper towns. Even the normal tenor of the committee meetings showed the charged atmosphere of masculinity. Dick Daniels, Chairman of the Deer Lodge County War Bond Drive, speaking to the Committee on the subject of bond purchases closed his presentation with a telling quotation from Rudyard Kipling.

“Ain’t the guns or armament  
Nor the funds that they pay,  
But it’s close cooperation  
That makes them win the day,

Ain’t the individual  
Nor the army as a whole,  
But the everlasting teamwork  
Of every bloomin’ soul.”<sup>134</sup>

Besides constantly hearing speakers and seeing bulletin boards and flags, Anaconda’s workers also witnessed a poster campaign and a radio onslaught. The labor leaders and managers initiated a poster committee and a radio committee which were charged with blanketing the towns walls and radio waves with pro-production messages.<sup>135</sup>

When not using guilt, labor and management also tried to raise production by calling on masculine pride. Part of this strategy involved shaming the men into an even better attendance record, and in general to get them to fall in line with the Company’s

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<sup>134</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>135</sup> Meeting Minutes, August 6, 1942, Victory, 10. A disturbing aside to these propaganda campaigns were seen in the union-management newspaper. The Copper Commando printed vitriolic anti-Japanese ads within its pages. These ads also noted movies carrying the same message were playing regularly in the copper communities. As a whole they painted the Japanese as sub-human and barbaric. Regarding Anti-Japanese propaganda in print and film see, William Graebner, The Age of Doubt; Bernard F. Dick, The Star-Spangled Screen: The American World War II Film (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1985); John W. Dower, War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War (New York: Pantheon, 1986).

wartime program. The central theme was obvious: if women made it to work then a man should not have problems with absenteeism.<sup>136</sup> Slackers could not be harbored when the rest of the country was pulling their share. Profiling Mrs. Mary Santagueda, a wartime employee of the American Brass Company's Waterbury plant, the Commando noted she "is a production veteran of two wars. An employee during World War I, Mrs. Santagueda was the first to apply for a job when the United States entered World War II. She has neither been late nor absent since she started the week following Pearl Harbor. She has her own way of saying — without words — that she knows how essential it is that the boys on the firing line have the equipment with which to get this war won."<sup>137</sup>

If questioning a worker's manhood by comparing his attendance record to a mother who started working just after Pearl Harbor did not produce the desired results, then the union and the Management turned to more poignant forms of guilt which emphasized the relationship of manly duty between male workers safe in America and male soldiers in harm's way. In a profile immediately adjacent to that of Mrs. Santagueda, the editors of the Commando told Second Lieutenant Harold Babcock's story. Babcock, an Army aviator, described his reaction to the death of his brother, a Marine Corps Private First Class. The paper noted that Harold

wants more than ever now to get into the South Pacific for he feels he has a private grudge and he intends to settle it. Harold, who worked in the mines of Butte before he enlisted said, 'I didn't realize until my brother was killed the full

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<sup>136</sup> This was an ironic bit of propaganda considering one of the major problems with women workers was absenteeism throughout the war. Then again women were often pulling triple duty: worker, housekeeper, and parent. Men could not claim these excuses. See Chafe, Hartmann, or Anderson for a detailed discussion of the problem.

<sup>137</sup> Newcomb, "People and Places," CC 2, No. 14. (3 March 1944): 8. The American Brass Company was an ACM subsidiary. See Marcossan, Anaconda, for the complete story.

meaning of War, now I do. If only everyone could feel what I feel now without having the same experience then more sons and brothers would be coming back. There would be fewer casualties. I want to give everything I've got to Uncle Sam until the war is won. Tell the folks here that if they all pitch in and give us the materials we need, we'll use them effectively.<sup>138</sup>

Working men had a responsibility to act like men and preserve the local ethic of manhood while their male friends were doing their manly duty as warriors. Women, local propaganda had already made clear, were also restricted to a feminine sphere. Yet, at least in certain parts of the country, women like Mrs. Santagueda were needed as workers. How then was a man to make sense of this situation? And, how would local culture make sense of this inherent contradiction?

It was in its third edition, published 19 September 1942, that the Copper Commando had first tackled the problem of how working women should be represented during the war. The question was a sensitive one within this conservative community. From this edition to virtually the last, the editors chose to highlight that working women in the region were doing their part but in traditionally female jobs.<sup>139</sup> In, "Meet the Great Falls Girls," a classic Commando story about female workers, the women profiled were office hands.<sup>140</sup> In later editions, the paper would concentrate on telling the tale of switchboard operators in Anaconda, Butte, and Great Falls. The men of the mines, mills, and smelters did not see these profiles of working women in the copper industry as offensive to their traditional belief in a segmented labor force because the boundary between masculine and feminine work was not being crossed.

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<sup>138</sup>Newcomb, "People and Places," CC 2, No. 14. (3 March 1944): 8.

<sup>139</sup>This policy would continue until August of 1944.

<sup>140</sup>Newcomb, ed., "Meet the Great Falls Girls," CC I, No. 3 (19 September 1942): 14.

Yet, from the beginning of the Copper Commando's run, it should have been apparent to the copper workers that their exclusionary stance on women in the male workplace was unusual. "The Great Falls Girls" made explicit reference to women working in factories across the U.S., and to the manpower problems in the copper industry.<sup>141</sup> An abundance of foresight was not required to see that problems lay just over the horizon. Just one month later, in the October 23rd issue of the Commando, the rising predicament became graphically real. In a cartoon section called "Copper Shorts," the editors offered seemingly frivolous and trivial information related to the nonferrous mining industry. These "Shorts" were meant to elicit a chuckle of amusement or a "whatta ya know" from the newspaper's audience. Besides discovering that "the new war nickel has no nickel in it," readers learned from the caricatured lips of an old, donkey-riding, placer miner that women were now working in the copper mines of Arizona. Montana's copper men found little to laugh at in the comic image of this old timer ogling a phalanx of well-proportioned, attractive women miners, nor in his lascivious comment, "Blast me for an ol desert rat - if I wasn't born fifty years too soon."<sup>142</sup> The men must have wondered from that moment on when their time would come.

Directly or indirectly, as of late 1942, the smeltermen must have felt that a siege on their masculine traditions had begun. They were nervous, and although the battle had not been joined in Montana, the union membership certainly started to think things over and talk among themselves. All available evidence indicates that the majority felt

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Newcomb, ed., "Copper Shorts," CC 1, No. 5, (23 October 1942): 15.

strongly about the masculine nature of the work in the mill and smelter and that they believed in the clearly delineated roles men and women played in Anaconda.

It would be another year before the crossing of gendered work lines became a local issue. Moreover, it would not be for another four months after that point that the union would have to fight what in their eyes was a homefront campaign to determine the social structure of postwar Anaconda and the dominant cultural values of the coming generation. They would not easily allow their community's values to be changed, war or no war. However, they did not enunciate this ideology in the first months or the first years of World War II. Why did they wait? This is a particularly salient question in light of the effort they later made on this very issue. One possibility is that their minds were not made up. Confusion over the seriousness of the threat reigned. The community was fixated on war related topics: the draft, the first losses of American soldiers, early failures and successes in Africa then Europe, rationing, Victory Gardens, and the other mundane but time consuming aspects of home life. Who would work was not the number one question, but it was increasingly in people's minds. The local media reflected this state of flux.

The first Commando of 1943 presented literally a mixed picture of women's war roles. On a page devoted to women at work titled, "The Gals got Busy," the paper showed some women seriously at work. However, other photos belied the egalitarian tone of the title and introductory sentence: "A MAN's war? Not so you'd notice it!" The Commando then reminded readers that "The gals got into the fracas too, lots of them. Like the lady at the left [an older woman wearing a man's work shirt and trousers, unglamorous, but looking very competent], shown polishing a cannon

component casting.” On the basis of this first image, the article appeared headed toward addressing the radical changes that the war had wrought in women’s work role. Certainly this was not unusual. Papers and magazines across the country ran stories on the heroic role of “Rosie the Riveter” and her working sisters throughout the war. Yet, the tenor of the Commando’s coverage abruptly shifted after this initial impression. The next two images became progressively less professional. The first of these two was of an attractive young woman again in work clothes, but this time America’s new working woman was not busy at work, she was busy “chatting with an Army officer.” The Commando chose to highlight her physical attributes over her work skills. They described her gleefully as an “Ordnance eyeful.” Next to this photo, two women wearing semi-formal attire (apparently the editors did not think this deserved explanation), mug for the camera in a scrap yard. The Commando wryly described them as “scrap-conscious sweeties.” Following these three pictures were photos of three more women unadorned and focused on their work. The Commando finished the montage by showing a woman cooking for a soldier, “American homes were opened up to fighting men hungry for a home-cooked meal.”<sup>143</sup>

What to make of these contrasts? There are a variety of possible interpretations. The most basic analysis requires putting aside what is known about this community’s mores and taking the words and images of the Commando at face value. What emerges is an article that highlights different roles because American women did have different roles. This was then the variety of American lifestyles manifested. But how

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<sup>143</sup> Newcomb, ed., “The Gals Got Busy.” CC I, No. 10, (1 January 1943): 10.



to account for those “scrapyard sweeties” and that “ordnance eyeful?” A clue might be found by discounting the second half of the introductory sentence and the following interrogative. Doing this leaves only one possible answer - that it was truly a man’s war. And one had better notice it and women, in particular, had better not forget it. Yes, a thankful nation saluted them for their patriotism, but women’s work in traditionally male occupations was for the emergency period only. Men — soldiers — were fighting to protect society and their place in it, not to find women in their jobs when they returned. The Commando asked if it was “A MAN’s war?” It seemed to answer that it was indeed — in more ways than one.

This final picture then can be seen as precisely men’s idealized image of women’s role. More than likely the men and women of industrial Montana gravitated toward this message. “The Gals Got Busy” indicated that if “Gals” were going to “[Get] Busy” in factories they would be seen as laughable or as mere objects - pretty and patriotic but nothing more, but if they worked in the home they were doing their real duty. As the remainder of this chapter makes evident, this conservative portrayal of women’s place was not the exception but the rule. There was a fundamental problem, however, with this propaganda approach: it was an obvious contradiction to constantly tell the working men they had better act like men and keep production up, then to turn-around and tell them to stop being concerned about masculinity and let women work in their male domain. The men of Anaconda chose to fight these wartime changes. They believed that such a shift in gender roles would not prove innocuous or temporary. Women in the smelter would, in the men’s eyes, very possibly displace those men who left the smelter because of the war and those local

boys who were also serving and who had never been given a chance to work in the smelter.<sup>144</sup> So again we return to the question of how to conduct such a fight.

In April of 1944, after waiting as long as possible, the smeltermen actively began their campaign to stall their way out of the situation by raising what began as legitimate concerns about how women would effect seniority in the plant. The capstone of the union's effort to block women's employment by raising work related concerns was the membership's call for a written agreement on the terms of women's stay in the smelter.<sup>145</sup> The Union's recording secretary, John Donovan, first presented Mitchell with the proposed supplementary agreement at the meeting on 13 April 1944. The nine-point proposal specified that the union and the Company would agree to:

1. The employment of all available men on a seven (7) day or fifty six (56) hour per week basis.
2. The employment of women in jobs their physical capability will permit. (a) Provided, however, said employment of women will not deprive any member of the union of his full seniority rights.
3. Men who have started on jobs within a certain department will not be moved off these jobs to other departments in order to make places for women, unless otherwise agreed upon.
4. All women going to work on Smeltermen's jobs will be under the jurisdiction of the Mill & Smeltermen's Union No. 117, and will be required to have a permit from the union in order to continue to work. The permit fee will be \$10.00 and \$1.25 per month thereafter. The same fee is charged as dues and will be covered by the same provisions as in the contract concerning the 'check off.'
5. Women can be employed for the period of the manpower shortage or the duration of the war, whichever shall be the shortest period of time, unless amended by mutual agreement of both parties.
6. Women will be employed on jobs that do not affect the seniority set-up. That is, that they will start in a laborer's pay at the bottom of the seniority flow sheet on jobs as vacancies occur.
7. Any controversy [sic] that may arise which is not covered by this agreement shall be taken up and disposed of through the regular grievance procedure.

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<sup>144</sup> Inexplicably, the smeltermen did not believe the Selective Service Act would help these young men.

<sup>145</sup> The agreement was never ratified.

8. In the event the above steps do not correct the manpower shortage the Union and the Company agree to hold further negotiations with the end in view of correcting the shortage.
9. Anaconda women will be given the first preference by the Company in their order of hiring women.<sup>146</sup>

Mitchell immediately refused point one, but said he would be happy to consider the rest of the proposal. The meeting adjourned on this note.<sup>147</sup>

Charles McLean, Walter Dooley, John Donovan, and Owen McNally again met with Mitchell on 18 May. They made the position of the union membership on women's employment as a whole abundantly clear. Donovan spoke first, "We were ordered here this morning to see if we can't get some kind of agreement along the lines of that agreement we presented you some time ago as regards women." McLean then elaborated on one specific reason — the fear that older men who had gained plum jobs through seniority would be replaced by women — for the union's emphasis on a written agreement. Mitchell, who had heard all this before, asked if the union had a new proposal. They offered the original document but allowed that they were willing to strike points one, four, and nine.<sup>148</sup> None of these three points altered the union's basic stance on women working in the smelter. However, it was significant that the membership was willing to back down on their desire for maximum hours, on the guarantee that female employees would have to pay a permit fee, and on the clause ensuring Anaconda women would receive hiring preference. The rest of the agreement, a straight forward proposition, speaks volumes about what the men of Anaconda wanted.

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<sup>146</sup> ASUMGC, 13 April 1944, 11 - appended list.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4, 10.

<sup>148</sup> ASUMGC, 18 May 1944, 1-2.

Their compromise on point 1 was only somewhat surprising in light of Mitchell's statement at the previous negotiating session that due to overtime costs, he would never agree to employing men under such an hour structure. Their acquiescence suggests a number of possibilities. At the base it is apparent the membership was dropping its maximum money at all costs philosophy. Many of the men, as did many Americans, saw the war as an opportunity to put themselves and their families on firm financial footing. For the first time in a generation, they controlled the number one commodity on the market - labor. They intended on capitalizing. Striking point 1 meant that the smeltermen were willing to give a little to gain what they thought of as a lot. They were willing to sacrifice the push for more hours and more money because they hoped it would help sway Mitchell to sign the agreement. They were flush with cash from virtually three years of overtime conditions; excluding women was now more important.

Conversely, it is more difficult to decipher why the union was willing to strike point 4, which was never identified by Mitchell as a sticking point. It either means they thought Mitchell would not buy it and they wanted to make a goodwill offer, or more likely, that since the women would be union members the permit was an unnecessary precaution. Two points, seven and eight, addressed union - management issues, which either directly or tangentially shored up the Union's role in "shopfloor" control by ensuring women would be union members and that Company - union negotiations would precede any changes in the proposed agreement.

Striking point nine of the agreement symbolized the smeltermen's concern for Anaconda's future. One can only conclude that its removal was indicative of the

degree to which the membership's fear of women in the smelter related directly to postwar Anaconda. It patently represents a lack of trust by the working men towards the women of the community. We know that not only did Mitchell approve of this point, but he also noted that he would have it no other way. Perhaps the union, secure in this information, felt it would be a sign of good will to remove such wording from the Supplementary Proposal. In too many ways such reasoning rings hollow. Why remove a mutually agreed upon clause, particularly one which could unite the parties on the basis of community and patriotism? Furthermore, practicality and compassion dictated that Anaconda women, those whose husbands were at war, those who had lost husbands, and those who had families to support for one reason or another, should receive preference. That leaves us with an uncomfortable question — could there have been a more selfish reason for removing point nine?

It is conceivable that the union reasoned women from outside of Anaconda would more easily be seen as a temporary and transitory workforce. Such women would return to their homes when the war ended, and if they did not it would certainly be much easier to argue that they should leave, that they were only hired for the length of the emergency. In addition, single women without community attachments would garner far less support in any plea to keep their jobs when the post-war transition occurred. Whereas local women that had to work to support a family were sure to attract some supporters in any potential quest to continue their employment at the smelter. Therefore, women from outside the region, in this scenario, would fit the requirements of the smeltermen. This is only speculation, but it is a possibility.

This was a group of working class men who were no longer offering *classic* alternatives to the values of capitalism, as had some of their brothers from these very same towns but from an earlier time. This is not meant as a criticism. It is only to say that they did not concentrate on the same concerns as had the Wobblies and socialists who came before them. During the 1940s the smeltermen of Anaconda embraced the values of the capitalist ethic in the most part. (However, the tenet of this ethic which they did not embrace makes their struggle remarkably revealing. They wanted to persist, they wanted to ensure a return to the status quo for themselves and their children. They were not offering radical revisions for the whole nation. They were trying to guarantee an ethos of persistence for their own communities.)<sup>149</sup> Their struggle was to replicate older patterns of sex differentiated work places. They wanted to control who would work and where. Through the power to exclude, they had broken the iron law of wages and wished to continue limiting and shaping who would do the work. It was perhaps the only thing they thought they could master in an age of contingency; in a nation rapidly divorcing itself from an ethic of production and the producers that made it go.<sup>150</sup>

The alternative the smeltermen do present was primarily in contrast to a war-driven social model that they feared was becoming the new accepted norm. Their fight

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<sup>149</sup> See, Henretta, "The Study of Social Mobility: Ideological Assumptions and Conceptual Bias," and Emmons, Butte Irish.

<sup>150</sup> This raises another concern: are we hearing the voices of rank and file workers or the union elite throughout these transcripts? John Bodnar comments that labor historians, including David Montgomery among others, forget the ordinary folks in favor of nationally focused or at least local personality dominated organizations. This is not the case with the membership in Anaconda. They point blank dismiss the international, and the union representatives themselves complain they have no room to maneuver because of the hard line view of an activist rank and file. See John Bodnar, Worker's World, Introduction, 5-9.

was with this constructed world. Owen McNally, interceding in the conversation for the first time on 19 April, helped to explain a new facet of the union's stance (and make this speculation a bit less speculative). McNally asserted, "I believe the men would want a specific agreement in regards to the jobs women take [and] that jobs would not be changed to suit the women. That I believe, [the membership] is watching very closely." Dooley then chimed in, noting, "We would like to see some kind of an agreement that women would be allowed to stay on the job only for the duration [of the war]." Perhaps one of the parties in this agreement had at some point shown itself as untrustworthy. This would explain the need for a written contract. Mitchell arrived at the same conclusion and naturally assumed it was he and the Company that the men distrusted.<sup>151</sup> Defensively he asked, "Aren't we good enough friends that we can sit down here and discuss [any problems with the women] at the time they happen?"<sup>152</sup> Mitchell did not see the possibility that the smeltermen did not trust the women from their own community and reinforced the idea of the bond discussed in the last chapter. The removal of point nine reinforces this interpretation. The union's position that women should work only during the duration of the emergency was an open admission that men had hegemonic control of the workplace, and that women, in truth, would choose to work if given the opportunity. After all, any fear that the women would stay on the job implied an active desire on women's

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<sup>151</sup> ASUMGC, 19 April 1944, 1-7. Mitchell returned to the issue of trust later in the meeting. After again being told the membership wanted something in writing, Mitchell said, "I guess I'm still a liar, then."

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

part to do precisely that. It also implied that women workers could perform these tasks in war and in peace time.<sup>153</sup>

Yet, undoubtedly neither Mitchell nor the smeltermen felt that women could perform the most physical jobs in the Reduction Works. One of Mitchell's questions on 19 April made this evident. He asked the union if it "would not be better for a woman to work some place in the Mill than it would for her to work in the Roasters?" Walter Dooley's snide reply which follows was the closest Mitchell was able to get on the union agreeing to this proposition. It also showed that the union believed women needed to be taught a lesson on their proper role and needed to be reminded that their husbands deserved respect for the jobs they did. Coyle Dooley replied to Mitchell, "Maybe it would be a good thing if some of these smeltermen's wives worked there for a while."<sup>154</sup> There was obviously some tension, either real or imagined, between the sexes in Anaconda.

The transcripts make it clear that the smeltermen were unwilling to pitch in if it required working with women. Or, to put it differently, they believed to the end that such a step was unnecessary and harmful. But they knew such a public posture was untenable. They did not want to appear as the villains in this drama. Thus, they settled on an ingenious plan to keep women out of the smelter. They called for true equality, saying women should be treated identically to men in the workplace. It was

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<sup>153</sup> Communication could have been critical to figuring this situation out. Why didn't the men ask the women what they thought? were they afraid that by giving women a voice a signified equality (an age old fear), or did they simply not even think of it?

<sup>154</sup> ASUMGC, 19 April 1944, 7.



a defining moment in the relationship between the sexes in Anaconda, and it made no sense in the context of their long-stated claim that women could not handle men's work. In short, their new position was if a man started at the plant by doing heavy labor then a woman should, too. This was an extraordinary response. Seemingly no other group of male workers did anything like it.

It is pertinent here to call on Ruth Milkman's study, Gender at Work, which concentrates on the construction and maintenance of gender-based job segregation during the war. As such, her conclusions, drawn from the study of men and women in the automobile and electrical appliance industries during the war, are relevant to Anaconda. She argued that sex-labeling of jobs, the practice of assigning a task to workers based on their gender, was fluid from 1941-1945, but sex-typing, which ensured women and men did not perform the same jobs in the workplace, was not. She argued further that the pattern of women being forced out of work altogether or back into female occupations was not a temporary post-war set-back, but a pattern which continues today.<sup>155</sup> For Milkman, this post war relapse defies logic on three different plains: economically, in a capitalist system profitability is of foremost importance and women were considerably cheaper to employ than men; socially, women did not protest this obvious loss of prestige and economic power; and politically, unions failed to protect a constituency which had greatly increased union membership and strength. These three illogical elements match what occurred in Anaconda.

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<sup>155</sup> Ruth Milkman, Gender At Work (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 1. Milkman's study is undoubtedly one of the finest on gender during World War II.

To solve this conundrum, Gender at Work analyzes the reaction of working men in the automobile and electrical manufacturing industries to working women. Milkman rejects a deterministic interpretation of sex-labeling, advocating instead “historically specific economic, political, and social factors that shape patterns of employment by sex.”<sup>156</sup> In her analysis specific industries derive these patterns from localized economic, political, and social constraints during the initial formation of the labor market. This formative archetype is critical, for it quickly gains the weight of tradition and becomes extraordinarily fixed. Even though work demands change, workers see it as the norm, and employers are resistant to tampering with this set model even for the increase of profits.<sup>157</sup> This sort of stasis did not occur in Anaconda. The smelter was a fixed gender workplace prior to the war, but the smeltermen were willing, at least

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<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-8, 157-9. Milkman further argues, sex-typing of jobs can be predicated on entirely different backgrounds, but is always used as a tool for control of workers by management. The automobile industry, for example, has few women workers but uses fear of a decrease in the high wage standard to control male workers. Whereas the electric goods industry has many women, is labor intensive, and uses female laborers’ reliance on piece-work for pay as a control mechanism. Seen in this light, the UAW championed equal pay for women to protect the wage scale for returning veterans and other male workers. The UE also struggled to increase women’s wages basing their hopes on the fact that men, although working different jobs, would increase their wages on the equal pay for equal work rating formula. What is good for male workers then can work for (electrical) or against (auto) women, rather than being a concrete reaction of hegemonic patriarchy. In discussing other theories of how sex-typing is generated Milkman rejects labor market segmentation which presumes male workers have an interest in class unity and thus would support class based gender equality. The Marxist -feminist school, represented by Heidi Hartmann, argues that on the contrary men have a capitalist and patriarchal view. That is an interest in sex segregation and low wages for female workers because it keeps women dependent on men. Milkman also rejects this interpretation because it ignores the interests of individual employer, the class interests of capital, and most critically the conflict between male workers’ class and gender interests. She concedes that the dominant historical pattern is hostility towards women workers on the part of male workers and unions. However, truly penetrating insight on the issue is only gained by analyzing the choice of gender over class interests and vice-versa in specific situations. By so doing, Milkman argues, one avoids the determinism of Marxist-feminists and segmentationists, and thus discovers what motivates sex-typing. Milkman concludes that occupational sex-typing is ubiquitous, but industry specific, and can only be understood historically. She views the experience of women during the war as more of a continuation of the past, then a distinct change for the future. Because of the number of women working today and their rising power she feels the prospects for change are better now than in 1945.

theoretically, to work side by side in the same jobs with women.<sup>158</sup> Examining why they broke from the typical pattern sheds light on another aspect of Anaconda's uncommon history.

The union, of course, did not initially espouse a gender neutral stance. They moved to such a position only after the 19 April meeting and partially in response to the Company's push for action. But on this day, and prior to it, the union acted within the bounds of Milkman's model. Mitchell, again speaking for the Company, returned to his earlier argument. He posited that there was no need for a Supplementary Agreement. "We have a contract with the Mill and Smeltermen's Union, and we expect [women] will be accepted as any other employ." Charles McLean responded with the union's position. He told Mitchell, "I would like to call your attention to the last remark you made: 'You have a contract with the Anaconda Mill and Smeltermen's' Union.' There is no mention of women there. I don't see why we can't come to some agreement on those points at least covering the women question." McLean offered a classic sex determinist view. The key to grasping why the union would flip-flop on this issue only six weeks later is also found, not coincidentally, within the membership's contention that a written agreement was necessary.

It is worth reiterating that the smeltermen obviously did not believe that women could perform the same jobs as men, as point 2 of the proposed agreement made clear.<sup>159</sup> After all, the masculine work world was by definition not within the grasp or

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<sup>158</sup> Women and men did work next to each other at the Smelter. Vine, Women of the Washoe.

<sup>159</sup> Point 2 reads: The employment of women in jobs their physical capability will permit. (a) Provided, however, said employment of women will not deprive any member of the union of his full seniority rights.

ability of women. The membership told management through the representatives' good offices that women should be required to begin as entry level laborers if they were going to work in the smelter. Mitchell knew this was contrary to local masculine customs which called for chivalric attitudes around women. His surprise at the union's proposal was genuine, "In other words, you men want the women to go to work on Joe Thomas' gang?" His shock was understandable. Joe Thomas's gang had all the newest workers on its rolls. Typically these men were farmed out to the dirtiest and most grueling tasks until a permanent spot could be found for them on a regular work line. When they were not sent out, these workers spent their days cleaning the different sections of the Reduction Works. Such work sent members of Thomas's gang all over the plant; it was a huge place. Yet, the men had to be on their toes because as they said "Smokin' Ankles" Thomas seemed to be everywhere at once. His gang loved him for it and he reflected their respect. "Smokin' Ankles" was equally well known for buying his entire crew a round of drinks each night after their shift.<sup>160</sup> Nonetheless, this was not how Mitchell envisioned women's place in the smelter.

Besides the previously discussed "Meet the Great Falls Girls," a second article in the Commando's first issue showed that Mitchell's attitude toward local women's roles was the norm. The tone of the paper also mirrored what the smeltermen had always seen as ideal female qualities and the ideal womanly role. In, "Thoughts for Food - Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Johnson talk over a common problem: What to put in the lunch bucket?," the primary duty of women was obvious — support their working

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<sup>160</sup> Interview with Jerry Hansen.

men and certainly not displace them. In the article two women exchanged ideas on nutrition. Mrs. Johnson started by noting, “my John won’t eat vegetables. He wants meat.” “That’s just it -” replied Mrs. Smith, “neither will Bill and the boys. But Mrs. Griffith says we can put them in and teach them to like them. They need the energy and the right food so that the extra hours and the extra effort they’re putting out won’t be so hard on them.”<sup>161</sup> She told us some good diets that won’t be so fattening and yet keep all the energy in them too.” The proper place of the wife, the husband, and the boys made clear, the article then tell us what the girls of Anaconda were concerned about during the War. “Well, that’s fine. Mary is forever worrying about getting fat and she absolutely refuses to eat most of what I cook for the boys. She’s looking like a stick and is pale as all get-out.”<sup>162</sup> Mary was just following what culture told her was the standard for beauty.<sup>163</sup>

In addition, both the pages of the Copper Commando, the mouthpiece of capital and labor, and the physical culture of the region also placed mothers squarely in the center of the production drive. They became one more weapon in an escalating propaganda war. Mother’s Day 1943, turned into a pageant like most other holidays in Butte, found Mrs. Ouellette, a local mother, on the stage of the Eagles’ Lodge

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<sup>161</sup> The Copper Commando here acknowledged the extra hours worked by the men. This gives support to the idea that the smeltermen were working for overtime. Newcomb, ed., “Thoughts for Food,” CC 1, No. 1, (22 August 1942): 15.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> Lois Banner says the thin, youthful flapper was the ideal of feminine beauty during the 1920s. During the 1950s the figure and the fashion of women resembled the contours of the late Victorian period. However, there was never one constant of beauty. For example, immigrant women’s ample figures represented a sense of well being and served as the model, in many periods for a different group of women. A young girl like Mary, growing up in an immigrant town would be confused by the mixed message of beauty from popular culture and from ethnic culture. Lois W. Banner. American Beauty: A Social History through Two Centuries of the American Idea, Ideal, and Image of the Beautiful Woman. (New York: Knopf, 1983).

representing all mothers. Her story and the story of other war mothers received full coverage in the Commando. The editors' coverage suggests dual themes. First, that the reality of wartime — the absence and possible loss of loved ones and neighbors and the very real struggle for the democratic ideal — was constantly on the minds of all Americans. And second, that some men and women had misgivings about the devotion to the cause of some workers.

The paper showed Mrs. Ouellette, flanked by three sergeants, each in full uniform and standing at parade rest, seemingly present to protect her from the rude realities of a world strafed by contingency instead of stability. She sat by the hearth in a stage-prop living room surrounded by pictures of her four children. The Commando reported Mrs. Ouellette saying, "I could feel the hearts break in that group of women there before me. Sitting there on the stage I just looked out on them and knew what it meant to them not to have their children with them and not know where they are, or what they need. There's one thing that we all know and that is that the boys in service need copper. That's one need that is well known. We must give it to them. We can't let them down." The Commando continued with its theme of coercing workers into higher output.

With each new mother the pleas for greater production and the maternal credentials increased exponentially. Mrs. Elizabeth Hovan, "a widow, and the mother of three sons," and another of the participants in the day's commemoration, elaborated on Mrs. Ouellette's feelings. "This is the first time we haven't been together on Mother's Day," Hovan noted. "Last year my son took part in this very program on Mother's Day. Tell the men they should hurry up and do all the work they can. It's

up to them to bring our boys back again.” Next, Mrs. Naomi Cline, added her opinion. Mrs. Cline’s message was virtually identical to her two predecessors, but she had them beat on the sympathy and sacrifice vote. Mrs. Cline, the paper informed its readers, was “the mother of four children and the stepmother of three boys in service whom she raised from childhood.” She had no qualms about stepping up the rhetoric a notch. “Copper must be kept rolling, If men don’t want to work on the production line, they should go to the Front. Then they would know the need for copper. I know because of the letters from the boys.”<sup>164</sup>

The arguments over employing women in the smelter continued to reflect workplace concerns throughout April. The rule in these negotiations seemed to be that whenever the management felt they were approaching an agreement the union would find another hurdle. Mitchell’s response on 19 April to what he felt was a proposal by the union to work out having women working in the smelter without seniority problems was a case in point. The men had indicated they liked Mitchell’s idea of taking the youngest men from a section that had jobs women could do, and moving these men to where they were needed, but still guaranteeing these men would not lose their seniority in their sections. Mitchell enthusiastically exclaimed, “We would be willing to agree to that. Now, that is a definite proposal.” But McLean quickly backpedaled, “We can’t agree to that part either - that you move a man out of his department.” Mitchell grew fed up with the union’s attitude. He told the

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<sup>164</sup> Newcomb, ed.. “Mother’s Day.” CC 1, No. 22, (18 June 1943): 3.

representatives, “Then give me a letter to the effect that you don’t agree to the employment of women.” McLean dogmatically asserted, “We are quite agreeable to the employment of women. We are trying to get about it so that the Union will be satisfied.”<sup>165</sup>

Mitchell was not the only person among the negotiators who was confused and concerned. Apparently Representative McCarthy also knew the smeltermen’s position was problematic. He put into words the bind he experienced as a man and as a representative of the union, “It is kind of hard to say to put the women out handling these heavy liners, at the same time it is pretty hard to see a man who has worked two or three years and worked on a job on which he was satisfied, and the boss was satisfied with him and have the boss come and say - ‘you go down there’ [because] a woman will have to take his place.” (Interestingly enough, for this reason minority men would have seemed preferable.) Mitchell, shocked at the inflexibility and irrationality of the membership’s position, asked, “Why don’t you say you don’t want women in the Mill.”<sup>166</sup> McCarthy lamely argued that was not the men’s contention, but it was exactly their point. They, too, knew that the country was operating under emergency conditions. They, too, knew men and women were making sacrifices every day in the Armed Forces, and that male production workers across the country were working next to women. Yet, the smeltermen of Anaconda plainly were unwilling to make these sacrifices. They thought their position was too important to compromise. At wit’s end, Mitchell and the Company brought the issue into the public arena.

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<sup>165</sup> ASUMGC, 19 April 1944, 7.

<sup>166</sup> ASUMGC, 6 June 1944, 2.



The managers of the smelter at least partially understood the union's ruse, and while trying to convince them during negotiating sessions to stop stalling, Mitchell and his cohorts also decided that community pressure might be helpful. They knew they had to keep the public discussion within the bounds of the region. They thought they could do it. Allusions to patriotism and accusations of selfishness played a major part in their strategy. Inferred in these accusations was the idea that the workers were not behaving as real men because of their opposition to women workers and thus to increased production. They were not "producing" like soldiers of the homefront. The second reason behind these accusations was to focus on absenteeism and slacker work attitude during what was genuinely an emergency time.

In May, McLean reiterated the membership's concern that Anaconda boys who recently completed high school would not have the opportunity to take jobs when they returned from the Service because women were in those jobs.<sup>167</sup> The mill and smeltermen "won't want to see women holding jobs, and possibly where two or more are working in the same family keeping these young fellows out of work because they have no rights. Of course, that situation was here before — after the last war."<sup>168</sup> McLean elaborated on how the membership saw postwar Anaconda taking shape. Not only did these men want their sons to work in the same place as they did, but they also

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<sup>167</sup> A fascinating sidebar to this story was that Charles McLean's mom was one of the women working in the smelter. I have not had the opportunity to fully explore the implications of this. Interview with Margaret McLean [Charles McLean's wife].

<sup>168</sup> Mitchell also said: "Well, I think we should mutually agree that these women are being employed during the emergency." ... "I am not going to agree to write it down - that Anaconda women will be given first preference by the company, although that is what I intend to do. I am not going to set it down that way and have the United States Employment tell me that that can't be done." ASUMGC, 2 June 1944. 2.

wanted their sons to have the same lives they did. Furthermore, they believed that local girls did not need jobs because local men would care for them. In theory this had always been the case in the community. The details of this social blueprint became more apparent as the meetings continued. When E.A. "Barney" Barnard asked, "Can we legally draw up an agreement that has prejudice against women?" Donovan shot back that the proposed agreement was not prejudiced towards women, it simply protected the men who are currently employed. This then was the smeltermen's short term project. Mitchell, making reference to the smeltermen's concerns for their son's working futures, asked whether Donovan meant "protection for the man who never saw the plant?" "Well, we aren't drawing up an agreement for men who have never seen the plant," replied Donovan who obviously knew the illegality of such a contract. Mitchell rejoined, "That's the idea behind the 18 year old boy situation." McNally interceded to point out that such a setup was the idea of the boy's parents. Mitchell asked, "What about the parents of the girls?" "Well, some of these girls may have some other means of income such as two, three, or four in the family working, and they may have other means of income but they may decide to stay on those jobs after the war is over," explained McNally.<sup>169</sup> And, so the union admitted that they did have a long term project as well.

McNally had flatly admitted that some of the working girls might want to stay on, but more telling was the social construction implied by his comment that these girls did

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<sup>169</sup> The family wage, long a bone of contention between union and management - and always a labor goal - had become reality by the 1940s for the working men of Anaconda. Thus, terms like working class and middle class become clouded during this time. Are the smeltermen fighting for the ideal American middle-class life?

not need the jobs because there might be others in their family working. It was a straight forward proposition to him and the other mill and smeltermen that women would depend on men (fathers, husbands, even brothers) for income. On the other hand, a man had to be a breadwinner. It was an essential element of how he defined his masculinity. A man's son must also be given the chance to fulfill his manhood. Yet, McNally recognized the problems in this schema. His grasp of the reality for some women who must work is obvious in the modifier "some" for girls. What the rest of the women should do who must work was not clear. Apparently such uncomfortable questions were best left undiscussed.

Bob Lemmon, the Assistant Manager of the Anaconda smelter, tired of the conversation, said he felt they were wasting time going into a lengthy exchange over a matter best left for future discussion. McNally's response illuminates the importance of this issue to the working class. "That's what the membership wants - they feel it is easier to do it now then argue about it years from now."<sup>170</sup> Lemmon did not comprehend the smeltermen's mindset on this issue. His bafflement only made sense. After all, there were no women working in management during the war who threatened to continue working at a job Lemmon hoped his son would someday have. Lemmon could not relate to their concern.

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<sup>170</sup>ASUMGC, 18 May 1944, 3-5. See also, Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg. Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life. (New York: Free Press, 1988). Mintz and Kellogg describe the 50s as "the great exception" (178) a time when marriage and birth rates rose and divorce rates and the age of marriage dropped. This is, indeed, what the men of Anaconda were working for. But, their conservative reform model was based more on the family values of their ethnic cultures, not on the American family. Kellogg and Mintz make it clear that the American family from the mid-19th century on was built on shifting sands, its forms changing and fragile. Mintz and Kellogg do not address these families of Anaconda with their ethnic roots or any like model.

In late June the parties returned to what had clearly emerged as the critical facet of the union's differences with management — the argument over the smelter's future workforce and over the future of Anaconda. Mitchell, in an attempt to end the now routine parley, made it clear that the mill and smelter would remain a male domain. "We ought to get the confusion out of the men's head, - that we aren't trying to make a women's job out of the Mill here."<sup>171</sup> He confirmed that "Any boy who worked at this plant and went into the Armed Forces, as far as I am concerned, all he will have to do is present himself and he will go back to work when he comes back. That not only means the women who will have been employed, but some men who have been employed since will have to find someplace else [to work]." He continued, "The main idea is only to put a woman on a job that she can do and hope that the boys come back so that we won't have to have her at all." He could have been no more straight forward.<sup>172</sup>

Likely in an effort to pacify his own subconscious fears that women might indeed fight for their jobs after the war, and to address the second half of the unions' major social concerns, Mitchell added "I think the women here have grown up in an atmosphere where I don't know very many would care for these operating jobs around here permanently."<sup>173</sup> The women of Anaconda had received an education in values that told them their place in society. But the smeltermen were still very concerned that women in the Smelter would mean radical changes to Anaconda's postwar value

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<sup>171</sup> Susan Ware believes women emerged from the 30s with their status intact and in some cases improved. If men sensed this, and they surely did, there is more reason for a backlash. Susan Ware. Holding Their Own: American Women in the 1930s. (Boston: Twayne, 1982).

<sup>172</sup> ASUMGC, 21 June 1944, 14, 21.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

system. Even one woman would provide a toehold for unwanted changes in local social codes. This is where the working men differed with Mitchell until the end. They had, in their opinion, good reason to fear new gender standards.

On 18 May, Mitchell countered the union's typical stalling maneuver by asserting that the women would be under union control and the union could thus enforce seniority and any other rules. The union's reply added further detail to their stance on women and work. McNally conceded that women workers were under the jurisdiction of the union, "but the men feel that as long as they are working with them and they are new on the jobs they have to go out of their way and help them on their jobs, that way they are more or less taking care of two jobs." Barney Barnard, part of the management team replied, "Isn't that true of all new men, that the old hands have to carry the load until the new men get acquainted with the work?" McNally agreed, but said, "The Mill and Smeltermen will help out all new men, but they feel that as long as the women will be on those jobs they will be doing that all the time - not only when the women are being broken in, but they will be doing it all the time."<sup>174</sup> The membership still saw women as homemakers, incapable of performing men's work. National culture did not directly oppose such an idea, but rather supported such postwar role reform for women.<sup>175</sup> However, during the war the nation as a whole was able to expand its idea of womanhood; the men of Anaconda purposely chose not to expand theirs.

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<sup>174</sup> ASUMGC, 18 May 1944, 2.

<sup>175</sup> On this topic see: Rupp, Anderson, Chafe, Hartmann, and Nancy Gabin. "Women Workers and the UAW in the Post-World War II Period: 1945-1954," in *The Labor History Reader*, ed. Daniel J. Leab, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985,) 407-432.

The June 13th meeting between the union and management was a watershed moment. It exploded the myth of a possible agreement and clarified the unions hard-line stance. The smeltermen's unwillingness to be good soldiers of production quickly became evident. After questioning Donovan and McCarthy, Mitchell learned that the membership really *did* want him to fire women if they could not handle the job assigned to them. emboldened by their success so far in securing a white male dominated future, the smeltermen seemingly decided to push also for a more appetizing present. Mitchell was startled at the men's brash demand. Barely under control, Mitchell said to Donovan, "What, John? They want their jobs back on the screens and the mills, if their seniority entitles them to it and let the women take whatever is left until a vacancy occurs and the women can be moved on the screens? And if the women can't do the work -- then God help the women!"<sup>176</sup> "I can't make it any plainer than that," replied Donovan. At this point E.S. McGlone, the normally restrained Manager of the Company's Butte Operations, blew-up at the union representatives. "God help the women! God help production! God help everything! In other words you don't want women employed here is that it, John?" "I wouldn't say that, Ed," Donovan replied. But, "If she can't do the work it looks like she is out in the cold."<sup>177</sup> McGlone regained his composure and asked the representatives to use a little common sense. He said he felt it was not a real sacrifice for the men to "rustle around" a little bit from one plant to another in order to allow women to work and

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<sup>176</sup> The screens were used to sort debris from the ore before the ore went into the mill. It was not hard work and thus it was a coveted job especially by older workers.

<sup>177</sup> The repeated use of first names between the men of management and the union men is remarkable. It confirms the sense of friendship between these men.

thereby keep production high. But Donovan could only reply, "I will admit I have gone as far as I can in this thing. I'm at the end of my rope." The working men had no intention of rustling around to accommodate women. As with the case of exclusion based on race, we must ask why these men took such a hard-line. What made Anaconda so different? Why were they such staunch opponents of wartime gender role flexibility?

Certainly the rigidity of the union men's arguments regarding seniority had started to sound empty even to their own ears. It was now apparent to virtually all observers that the membership was fighting for more than work place control. The evidence overwhelmingly supports two conclusions: that the union wanted to ensure that current and former employees of the smelter and their male children would have jobs when the war was over, and that women would remain in their fixed roles as mother, wife, and homemaker.

There were, in fact, readily apparent hints of the men's philosophy before 13 June. Mitchell addressed this first subject — the future role of current and former employees — male and female, during the 18 May meeting. Interestingly, this suggests that he knew, or at least had an inclination, that there was more to the union's complaints than a weakened seniority system. "One of the Company's problems is that the Union membership is never properly informed. If they know what the law was they would have no worries," Mitchell argued on that day. He added that the 900 men who had left the smelter for the service "have a right to come back [to their jobs.]" Sensing that he had not made his point nor alleviated the membership's worries, Mitchell

continued, “If the war was over today there would not be a woman on the plant. Now do you think we are going to employ 900 women?”<sup>178</sup>

Mitchell’s observations did not reassure the smeltermen. Supplementing their earlier position on why women should not be employed in the Reduction Works, Owen McNally asserted that returning servicemen warranted some consideration, including those “who never had a chance to work on the Hill.” He added that the membership felt strongly that the Company should grant preference to these men over any woman who was already working. No clearer indication could be made that the Smelter was a male world, and that women — whether they were from Anaconda itself and whether they truly needed the “living wage” provided by such work — were only welcome in emergency times, and then just barely.

In light of the perceived threat to the social order, the membership did not think that management showed the proper amount of concern about what women would mean to postwar gender relations in Anaconda. The men might very well have thought there was one overriding explanation for management’s lackadaisical attitude: blue collar workers, not white collar, were in danger of losing employment. Mitchell had already noted that local men in the armed services were protected by law. But for McLean and the rest of the membership this was not enough. The men’s fixation on an associated problem throughout the summer illuminates their fundamental concern.

McLean responded to Mitchell’s assertion that the Company would protect the jobs of

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<sup>178</sup> Alice Kessler-Harris has much to say on this topic. In short, she notes that women have been the victims of labor market segmentation and confining social ideologies, but when women have fought their second class work status their efforts have run head on into ethnic and class divisions and the insidious force of dominant social values. Alice Kessler-Harris. Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.



all Anaconda men by stating: “That’s true to a certain extent, for men that have worked in this plant before, but you take where a fellow who has never worked before, like boys graduating out of High School this year who are 18 - maybe will be in service for four or five years - they will have no rights. We don’t want this situation to exist. Kids coming back with nothing for them in this town.” Mitchell, who increasingly seemed upset that he was losing his bond with the workers — that they did not see him as an ally in assuring Anaconda’s future — responded, “Do you think you have to talk to me about it?” “Absolutely not,” McLean reassured him. But he added that the membership was not assuaged by Mitchell’s words.<sup>179</sup>

The men of Anaconda were now specifying that they wanted to protect the male workplace for their male progeny. Mitchell noted forcefully that he agreed that these boys should be the future workforce for the smelter.<sup>180</sup> Yet, such words were still not enough assurance for the workingmen. These were inherently anxious men living in an age of anxiety. It is possible that nothing Mitchell could have said would have stopped this drama from playing itself out. He did not know how to effectively convince the men that the postwar would be exactly how they hoped.

On 19 April, Dooley had bluntly conceded the fear that drove the majority of the membership, “Yes, we are starting to think if you took a survey of the whole country, I think you would find that women who will want to work after the war is around 65 to 85 percent. We know the women’s place is in the home but in times like this it is

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<sup>179</sup>ASUMGC, 19 April 1944, 2-4.

<sup>180</sup>Historically it was capital’s responsibility to replace the workforce, the smeltermen of Anaconda put a completely different wrinkle on this idea. See James Henretta, “The Study of Social Mobility: Ideological Assumptions and Conceptual Bias.”

different.”<sup>181</sup> In startling and perhaps unintentional candor, therein lies each component of the reasoning behind the Union’s fight. Every word of this confession is revealing. First, Dooley’s statement made it clear that this is a group position, not his just his personal opinion. It is uncertain when the men “[started] to think” this way, but all the available evidence indicates early 1944 at the latest.

Second, Dooley specified that the men saw the issue as national in scope. They were then following the breakdown of the masculine working world as it spread across the country.<sup>182</sup> They were attuned to national trends and opinion, and it is probable that they feared the spread of what they saw as a crisis in community values to their region. They were well aware of national culture, they knew that the women of their community had seen the magazines and newsreels and heard the radio shows that discussed such homefront issues.<sup>183</sup> Some of them at least must have been aware that they, the citizens of Anaconda, could find themselves in the spotlight because of the exclusion of women workers from the Reduction Works. Such an event would surely propel the struggle into the national spotlight in ways that would be embarrassing to the smeltermen. Thus they had to keep their struggle low profile.

Third, Dooley indicated that the leadership of the working men had, like field captains during war or revolutionaries weighing the odds, carefully studied the terrain of the battlefield. Much as the tacticians of war consider “the people” as the critical element in the arena of conflict, so too did these men understand that numbers and

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<sup>181</sup> ASUMGC, 19 April 1944, 9.

<sup>182</sup> The auto industry is an interesting wartime comparison. See Milkman, Gender At Work, and Gabin, “Women Workers and the UAW in the Post-World War II Period: 1945-1954.”

<sup>183</sup> See Blum, V is for Victory, Lichtenstein, The CIO’s War at Home, and Graebner, The Age of Doubt, on war culture in general.

allegiance were absolutely critical to the outcome. Sixty-five to eighty-five percent were unfavorable figures indeed. They could only have decided that a movement of such perceived strength must be prevented from entering their communities.

Fourth, and perhaps most worrisome, the men had deduced that the women of America wanted such a change. The “enemy” was strong in numbers and spirit. They were spoiling for a fight. National level propagandists had already sensed the same thing. Campaigns in the print and oral media were attempting to sway women from such beliefs, but this provided little comfort to the men of Anaconda; it only reinforced the problem.<sup>184</sup> Fifth, the proper place, the correct sphere for women — home — was obviously in the minds of these men. In Anaconda, this truth was not under debate. Nor did the smeltermen think it should be. Sixth, reason told the millers and smeltermen of Anaconda that they were being illogical. “Times like this” required sacrifice and exceptional codes of behavior. The way of life so treasured by millions of Americans, but particularly by the immigrants who now called America home, was in danger. Yet, there seemed little doubt to these men that America and her allies would triumph over the Axis threat. The “different” times would soon end; the battle had already shifted for these men. Their concession of emergency measures across the country did not represent their own willingness to follow a like model. The men of Anaconda might have chosen an extreme path in waging their fight to control their future, but they were certain that they were right. And, within the community they had the authority to fight hard and to fight long.

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<sup>184</sup> See Rupp, Mobilizing Women for War.

In an article on 18 August 1944, strangely titled, "Ladies' Day," the Commando finally focused on the women who had been working in the Anaconda Smelter for over six months. The article is another rich source regarding what the union leadership and the Company wanted the men and women of the smelter to think about the situation. It is in fact the final word on what comprise had to be struck to put the issue of women in the smelter behind them. In short, the article shows that while women were indeed a fact of life in the smelter and would be so until the war ended, these were the right sort of women, women who would not threaten the postwar gender structure.

From the beginning of the article, Anaconda's men were meant to feel a bit selfish about their resistance to these patriotic women. The Commando announced, "In war production factories from coast to coast, women have been freeing men for more strenuous production jobs and for the Armed Forces." Subtly the article mentions that the threat of other male workers coming to Anaconda was still legitimate, "Imported male labor has been available, and still is, but the prevailing sentiment among both members of labor and management is that preference should be given to local people." The use of this phrase suggests the paper's editorial board hoped that this would be a case of 'if we say it then it will become true.' This was a bold faced public relations ploy in the face of evidence contrary to any such conclusion, or an indication that one of the problems in the negotiating sessions was the two sides did not understand each other. The next line of the article seems to argue against the last of these possible interpretations. "The Usual grumbling over the advent of women into industry was heard to some extent at the Smelter, just as it always is when women

move in on men's jobs, but the men at the Smelter were smart enough to know that this was an emergency measure, that Uncle Sam needs every able-bodied person to help win the war and that the admission of women into labor ranks means no threat to organized labor.”

Apparently the Commando was going to both soft sell the conflict between labor and management and use this opportunity — they probably anticipated that an unusually high percentage of their audience would read this article because of the sensational topic — to soothe the somewhat frayed relations between the two parties. It did not hurt that in the process the paper chose to not demonize the workers and in fact labeled them “smart.” Mitchell could not have written a more conciliatory and constructive beginning to an article himself. This constructive tone did not end there.

There was also plenty in this account of what the smeltermen wanted to hear about the women who had entered their domain. Mary Blaz, who had one of the more strenuous jobs in the plant, shoveling grinding balls into the mill, said she liked “the idea of finding out for herself just how things are done, for when her boyfriend and brother get back she figures she’ll be a lot more interesting to them and will know what they’re talking about.” This sort of innocuous rationale for working in traditionally masculine jobs took the sting out of the smeltermen’s prophecies of doom. It certainly did not spell doom for future society. Lola Harrington, a “tank man” at the smelter, had worked in a restaurant in Anaconda, but when she heard the Smelter was hiring women “she felt that she’d be doing a lot more toward winning the war by changing work even though, as she said, ‘I always felt that feeding war workers was helping, too.’”

The Commando also seems to have gone out of its way to chose language and context the article in a way that the smeltermen would appreciate. Of the more than ten women interviewed only two were not initially defined by their relationship to a man. For example, Zita Robinson was introduced by noting that her “husband worked in the Zinc plant before he was transferred to the timekeeper’s office. He was sent to Europe in September, 1943, and now has fifty-one missions to his credit.” Only Ruth McEachran and Erma Crom were defined in terms of their own individuality. Ruth, a college student at St. Mary’s in Kansas, was “doing her bit while on summer vacation,” and thus presented no real threat to the masculine value system because her work was couched in patriotic and very temporary terms.

On the surface, however, another worker, Erma Crom, represented exactly what these men feared. She was a single female teacher who moved to the copper industry because it offered higher pay, and she said she hoped to stay on after the war. It seems extraordinary that such self conscious editorial board would leave Crom’s profile in the story. After all there were many other women whose stories could have been told. There are two possibilities for this: either parts of Crom’s history and connections to the plant’s previous male workers was omitted, or the editors felt Crom was both not dangerous and representative of a particular group of workers in the smelter and thus deserved to be included. The second option is certainly possible, as we are given a full account of Crom’s past. Crom, as noted, was a single woman with apparently no connection to a male worker nor loved one off at war, was a former school teacher who “really likes this new work of hers.”

If this one blip on the screen upset the readers, the Commando closed with a thoroughly noncontroversial image. It focused on the good citizenship model these women presented. Viola Malone, whose husband Bill — or as the Commando tells its readers “Duke” as he’s affectionately known — was in the South Pacific, said she was just doing her part. Mary Stinger, backed up Viola’s words, but added that she also works to stop herself from worrying.<sup>185</sup> The Commando summed up, “The seventy or so gals working at the Smelter in Anaconda are doing a fine job and here’s hats off to all of them who have shouldered their war responsibility by joining the workers at the Reduction Works.”<sup>186</sup> And so the wartime story of the fight to exclude women by Anaconda’s smeltermen ended. A compromise had finally been struck. the employment of women in the Anaconda Reduction Works lasted to the end of the war. It was not raised as a controversial topic again, until the women were summarily fired. but, that is another story.

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<sup>185</sup> As Susan Hartmann notes propaganda from employers, the government, and in the print, aural, and visual media pushed women toward renewing traditional roles in postwar society. Susan M. Hartmann. The Home Front and Beyond.

<sup>186</sup> Newcomb, ed., “Ladies Day,” CC 2, No. 26, (18 August 1944): 4-5.

## **Conclusion**

### **The Postwar Ideal**

The smeltermen in the spring and summer of 1944 were dealing with what they perceived to be a siege on masculine values and especially on the ideology of persistence. They behaved the way they thought they had to behave. They fought back. To some their actions and decisions may seem rooted entirely in sexism and perhaps racism, but in the confusing world of 1944, the fight to keep women out of the smelter — to maintain the masculine work culture that had defined them as men in this particular western town for more than half a century — was of crucial importance. The men's actions were not always unified. Some doubted the efficacy and wisdom of their fight, but these factors simply add nuance to what it meant to be a man and a worker then and there.

The 30 March 1945 edition of the Copper Commando, published just days before VE day, goes a long way in elucidating what type of society these men wanted to live in, and in further explaining masculinity in Montana's copper belt during World War II. As such it serves as a fitting conclusion to this story. The entire — issue seven chapters — is devoted to the American working man, especially "Joe Copper," and the essential job he was doing. Chapter One of Joe's story is called, "This Is What We Had." It starts by telling the reader, "This is the story of a guy we shall call Joe. Joe isn't anybody in particular; he is every American in general. He is the miner from Butte, the smeltermen from Anaconda or Great Falls . . . He is the office executive, the



engineer, the chemist. He is the soldier, the sailor, the flier, the Marine Joe is really America itself. And this is the story about him and what has happened to him. This is the story about what he hopes for and what he is willing to do to gain it.” At least in the eyes of the Copper Commando, all men, no matter their station, wanted the same thing, and as became evident later in the article, traditional gender roles were a fundamental part of these aspirations.

Before tackling these issues the paper set the background. The Copper Commando explained that Joe was living in an unstable time characterized by a World War over what values would define the second half of the twentieth-century. The editors had no trouble naming the enemy who was responsible for this world of uncertainty, and tangentially for the growth of ideas distasteful to Joe. It was not other Americans who had pushed for a different value system, the editors implied, but “A paperhanger named Hitler” who was trying to change Joe’s thinking, just as he “Turned to the working man [in Germany] and told him sharply that he would work so many hours at so much pay, that he had no right to appeal. He told him that if he made too much fuss about it , he would face the firing squad.” The smeltermen, then, were fighting as soldiers of production for worker’s freedom and against tyranny. The Commando posited that just as importantly they were also fighting for the future of their society, for the things that were Joe’s American birthright. “He looked at his home, which he had built for himself out of his own earnings. He looked at his garden and his car and the playthings his children had strewn in the yard. These were the things that he had provided out of a system of government in which every man has the right to a living.”

The men of Anaconda understood this language, this was exactly what they wanted postwar America to look like. They were the producers; and they, the copper men of Montana, and their sons had a right to a good living. This was the very reason the union built and exercised its power to exclude. But the list of what Americans were fighting for did not stop there. Under the rubric of peace, the Commando said Joe wanted some specific rights: “the right to hunt and fish and sit around a campfire,” the right to “[raise] a few chickens and [plant] a garden.” Interestingly, these “rights,” and the others listed by the Commando, conjured up contrasting ideas of home production, leisure, and consumption that suggest an alternative to mainstream culture and its notions of corporate production and expensive leisure.

The War had put all these things in jeopardy, the paper reminded the smeltermen. They were encouraged to remember that prior to Pearl Harbor, they “had suspected for a long time that there was no turning back, that the die had long since been cast.” “Joe knows that the attack at Pearl Harbor represented the greatest slur ever cast upon his country.” “It made him fighting mad. He probably glanced back through his photo album and saw pictures of himself and his friends fishing or riding or hunting or just enjoying themselves. When he shut his album he must have known that all of us needed at that time to turn our backs upon peace and go to war. Because the peace he knew was worth fighting to regain.” Again, the references to manly pursuits and western freedoms were conspicuous. Joe was meant to understand that he was fighting for his old way of life. From the smeltermen’s struggle to persist we know what the meant to the men of Anaconda.

Chapter Three, “This Is What We Did,” returned to the now ubiquitous theme that the men of Montana’s copper communities were special, and especially manly. The Commando also felt this was also an appropriate time to reinforce the union - management bond. “Joe started to see an industrial miracle. He saw the ranks of industry and the ranks of organized labor say to themselves: ‘Let’s put our shoulders together and get this war won.’” The spirit of unity did not stop at the negotiating table, the Commando pushed for inter- and intra-class cooperation. “Every American, native or foreign born, worker or executive, became overnight a part of this struggle.” This national unity aside, the chapter concluded by again stressing that the copper workers were neither ordinary men nor ordinary workers. “The miner and the smeltermen went to the forefront of the production line and they are still there,” wrote the Commando. The men of Anaconda also went to the forefront of the effort to ensure traditional gender roles would be a part of postwar America.

Chapter Five of Joe’s story discussed “What We Face.” If by 1945 the copper worker was not sobered to the harsh realities of wartime and the potentially harsher realities of postwar society, the Commando ensured he knew at least some of the score.<sup>187</sup> The paper framed its message by looking in on “Joe, the middle-aged civilian with a son or two in the war.” All the men reading this account must have either been able to relate directly or knew such a man. And they would indeed “[wonder] just how soon he is going to see his boys again. He wonders too how they will be, how they will look and feel, and what they will think about.” The Commando plainly felt

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<sup>187</sup> An intensive nationwide propaganda campaign stressing that the problems of war were not past was a mainstay of print media throughout 1944 and 1945.

“the veteran himself” concerned people the most. “War may have done much to him,” noted the editors. Much “to make him mentally mature and perhaps to make him less physically capable. For the wounded are coming back to us, to seek to fit themselves into a normal peacetime life.”

The Commando drummed home what role Joe as a civilian would play in this equation. “It is the part of every civilian Joe, and Joe knows it, to make sure that all these men figure the costs of war were not too great for the comforts of peace they will have won for us.” The smeltermen, if they needed any prompting to continue their efforts toward reforming postwar society toward a conservative gender model, found all the support they needed in these few critical lines. But, just in case Joe did not understand his mission, nor “What We Face,” he heard the message one more time in the chapter’s conclusion. “Joe, being an American, is smart enough to know that once the war is over great changes face us all.” Joe “knows that many of [the veterans] have matured under fire, that they have grown older under the pressure of war. He wants them to have the full fruits of peacetime when they return from the battle fronts where they fought for him. That means no pity, no stupid or maudlin tears.” But most important, and this is what the smeltermen heard loudest, “It means that our fighting men must have an honest chance at good jobs, assuring them of security and their own self-respect.” Exactly why we acted the way we did in April of 1944, the smeltermen might have thought to themselves. They were protecting their friends’ interests and their own.

The Copper Commando used Chapter Six of Joe’s Story to remind the workers of “What It Takes” to win the war, namely production via diligence. “[B]efore Joe is

ready to talk peace” with the authors of Lidice and the Death March from Bataan, “he knows he must see an end to the war. He knows what that involves. Whether he is Joe, the employer, or Joe, the employee, he knows that this country cannot even start to rebuild itself until the war is finished.” Thus, citizen Joe “is determined not to plan for tomorrow until he is through with today.” The men of Anaconda saw such single-mindedness as idealistic. Certainly, the war effort came first, but they were not about to wait until the last shot was fired to secure a postwar society that promoted and exemplified the values in which they believed. They had live through what they perceived as a state of siege and thus they had fought. In fact, the Commando alluded to this very idea on the same page. “So what Joe, the soldier, and Joe, the civilian, are really fighting for is a return to the peace we used to know, broadened perhaps by the great human experiences of the last few years.”

The final chapter concluded by assuring Joe that Uncle Sam (also known as the Victory Labor-Management Production Committee) was not giving him a production pep talk. Such a statement was in truth necessary for everything pointed to that conclusion. No, the paper argued, this was not simple production boosterism, Joe was “bright enough to understand that we can’t count the score until the game is over.” But just in case the message was missed, the Commando decided that Uncle Sam would want Joe to feel a little guilt if had either slacked off or was considering doing so. “Of course, you don’t need to tell the father or the mother or the wife of a service man any of this,” wrote the editors. “They understand it. They are constantly reminded by the flag in the window, the empty chair at the kitchen table, and the bed upstairs that’s never slept in.”

The last page of this special issue nominally devoted to Joe, graphically answered any doubts among the smeltermen that theirs was a good cause, one that needed to be fought using all the weapons at their disposal, particularly the power to exclude. Simply titled, "This Is Why," and adorned with four short paragraphs summing up the Commando's message in basic platitudes like, "Yes, peace is worth fighting for," the real message lay in the large photo across the top of the page. In it a young man and young woman are pictured in idyllic bliss, taking a canoe ride over a pristine lake. Both are attractive and clean cut, and while the young woman reclines on pillows in the front of the canoe and smiles at her beau, he pulls the paddle through the lake's waters.<sup>188</sup> The message such an image suggested was clear. This is what men were meant to do, whether at leisure or in the workplace, men worked and provided. Women's responsibility was to depend upon, be guided by, and care for men (although not pictured, readers would certainly assume that somewhere in the canoe there was a picnic basket containing a meal lovingly created by the young woman.) But, the covert part of the message insisted that if the smeltermen were not careful women would want to do the paddling. That sort of thing might happen in the rest of America, but it was not about to happen in Anaconda. Not on the smeltermen's watch.

There is no smoking gun here. I cannot prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the copper men of Anaconda were primarily concerned with protecting their white patriarchal world (and, of course, in ensuring their own economic well being). By

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<sup>188</sup> Newcomb, "Joe Copper," CC 3, No. 16, (30 March 1945): 1-16.

isolating any of the major arguments in this thesis, someone could reasonably argue that these men were only trying to assert control of their workplace during a period that did not permit normal types of workplace protest. Perhaps the working men only felt threatened that new wartime workers would remain after the war to compete for jobs and drive wages down, possibly putting union men out of work. There is little doubt that the membership harbored such fears. However, taken together the motivations of Anaconda's working men for excluding Mexican and black men and local women from the smelter signal a broader conclusion.

Look again at the following statements made from April to July of 1944. "I don't want to see [Mexican and black men] in Anaconda." "We only want to employ these women because of the manpower shortage and we prefer to employ them on jobs they can do rather than open ourselves up - you fellows and the management - to the possible influx of minority groups." "We are starting to think if you took a survey of the whole country, I think you would find that women who will want to work after the war is around 65 to 85 percent. We know the women's place is in the home but in times like this it is different." "If she can't do the work it looks like she is out in the cold." "The main idea is only to put a woman on a job that she can do and hope that the boys come back so that we won't have to have her at all." And, "You take where a fellow who has never worked before, like boys graduating out of High School this year who are 18 - maybe will be in service for four or five years - they will have no rights. We don't want this situation to exist. Kids coming back with nothing for them in this town."

True, the gun is not smoking, but the powder-burns are everywhere. Plainly the smeltermen and managers of the Anaconda Smelter indicated their belief that postwar Anaconda should be defined by conservative race and gender values. I have asked throughout this essay why they thought so. I have concluded time and again that their desire to persist and to provide a postwar atmosphere where their sons could persist was the underlying reason. The smeltermen rejected different models of social organization. They simply liked their own.