



Cornell University
ILR School

Labor Research Review

Volume 1 | Number 3

*Fighting Rust: Labor-Community Struggles in
Smokestack America*

Article 9

1983

Eminent Domain & Bank Boycotts: The Tri-State Strategy in Pittsburgh

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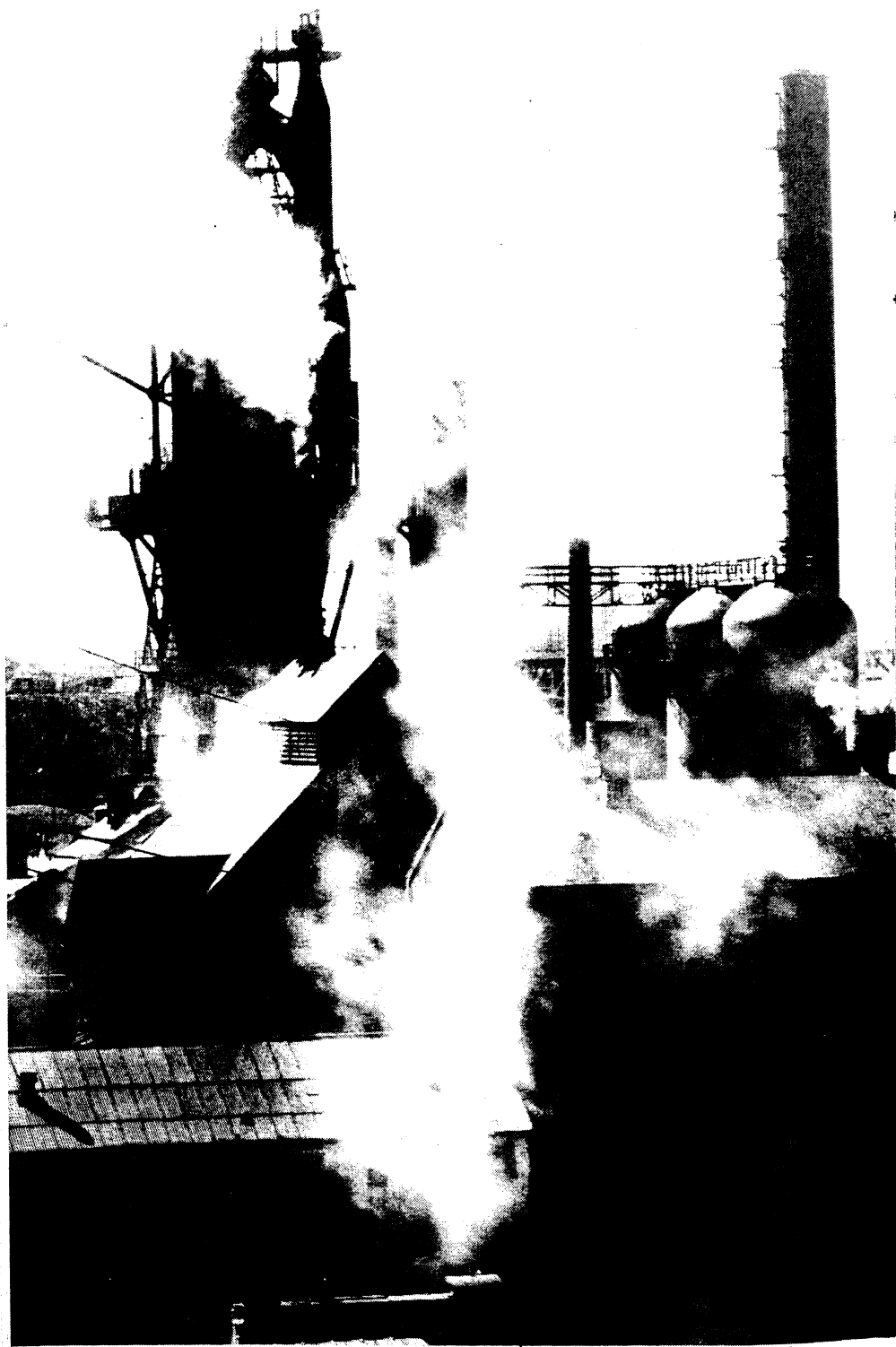
Eminent Domain & Bank Boycotts: The Tri-State Strategy in Pittsburgh

Abstract

[Excerpt] American steel corporations are currently in the process of cutting as much as 20 to 25 per cent of their productive capacity, much of it in the Pittsburgh area. With U.S. Steel's recent move to buy steel slabs from overseas steel companies, the snowball effect on other companies could eliminate more than 50 per cent of the hot-metal producing end of steelmaking in America.

Keywords

labor movement, layoffs, steel industry, unemployment, U.S. Steel, eminent domain, Pittsburgh



Eminent Domain & Bank Boycotts:

The Tri-State Strategy in Pittsburgh

by Mike Stout

While plant closings and job loss have plagued the industrial north and midwest for several decades, the disease is now reaching epidemic proportions.

American steel corporations are currently in the process of cutting as much as 20 to 25 per cent of their productive capacity, much of it in the Pittsburgh area. With U.S. Steel's recent move to buy steel slabs from overseas steel companies, the snowball effect on other companies could eliminate more than 50 per cent of the hot-metal producing end of steelmaking in America.

In the four-county Western Pennsylvania area surrounding Pittsburgh, nearly 65,000 of 90,000 basic steel workers remained on indefinite layoff in July. According to even the most conservative estimates, at least half of these people will never see the inside of a mill again. The final body count will, of course, be much higher.

For nearly a century, billowing smokestacks lit the skies along the Monongahela River south of Pittsburgh. As recently as 1980, U.S. Steel's six integrated mills there—Homestead, Edgar Thomson, Duquesne, Irvin, Clairton and National Works—employed more than 28,000 workers. With the formation of the "USS-Mon Valley Works" in late 1982, 15,000 steelworkers were erased with the stroke of a pen, and the death knell was sounded for the Valley. Today, barely 8,000 remain on the job. Surrounding communities, such as Braddock and West Homestead, teeter on the verge of bankruptcy.

Instead of spending the billions needed to modernize its Mon Valley facilities—as it promised to do in the late 1970s—U.S. Steel

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(USS) is now squeezing out the last drops of blood and will soon abandon the Valley altogether, leaving its facilities and dilapidated equipment to be picked apart by Mellon Bank-financed liquidators. If USS is left to its way, by 1986 there will be no steel melted in this Valley, once considered the backbone of American industrial might.

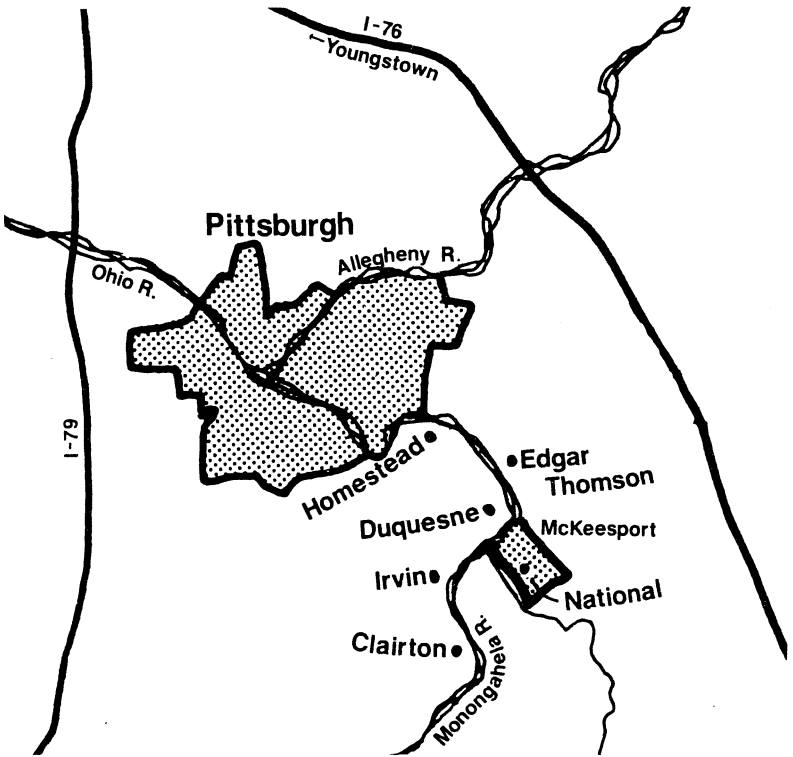
Many people in our unions and communities have simply resigned themselves into thinking that nothing can be done to reverse this industrial holocaust. Unable to tackle this monumental problem, they advocate fleeing the "rust bowl" and retraining steelworkers for some high-tech mecca that doesn't exist and never will.

On the other hand, there are those who know something must be done, and are seeking to find concrete solutions to the problems of disinvestment and capital flight. They see very clearly what's at stake: the survival of basic industry and the industrial worker, the very heart of America's unions.

Volumes have been written on *what we need*: Massive government-sponsored jobs programs; a national reindustrialization policy; retraining for displaced workers; extended unemployment benefits; union contracts and federal laws that prevent or minimize the cost of plant shutdowns on workers and communities. But tactics, strategies and concrete programs that mobilize masses of people to reach these goals have been few and far between.

The Tri-State Perspective & The Eminent Domain Strategy

With recent advances in technology, the steel industry has become more capital-intensive than ever. The higher and higher rates of profit needed by the banks and corporations to beat out their overseas competition are less and less attainable. This is why USS and other big steel companies have disinvested and opted for more profitable ventures, such as oil, real estate and the ownership of foreign steel-producing facilities. According to the American Iron & Steel Institute, American steel companies would have to *double* their current investment to more than \$6 billion annually, "merely to maintain existing facilities." This is money which they do not have. *Its present owners and overseers will never revitalize the steel industry. It is a stubborn fact. The huge sums necessary to modernize the steel mills can only come from our tax money through the federal government.*



On the other hand, who can imagine a steel industry run by the likes of a Ronald Reagan or a Jimmy Carter? The mere thought is repulsive to most sane people. *The mills must be owned and controlled at the local level*, with workers and communities having a say in the organization of production, as well as other decisions that have such a direct effect on their lives.

The Tri-State Conference on Steel is a group of union, clergy and community activists who organized in 1979 to support Youngstown steelworkers' attempts to save their mills. As the steel corporations in Youngstown (USS and Jones & Laughlin) threw 12,000 steelworkers to the dogs, the courts upheld their right to do it. The U.S. government turned a deaf ear to workers' requests for a \$100 million loan to buy and upgrade the mills, and the International leadership of the USWA stood on the sidelines blindly defending the free-enterprise system.

Tri-State saw the writing on the wall for the aging mills of the Mon Valley. Learning the lessons of Youngstown, we saw that

only if everyone affected—workers and their unions, the unemployed, churches, small businesses, borough councils or other forms of local government—pulled together in a common front, would we have a chance of survival.

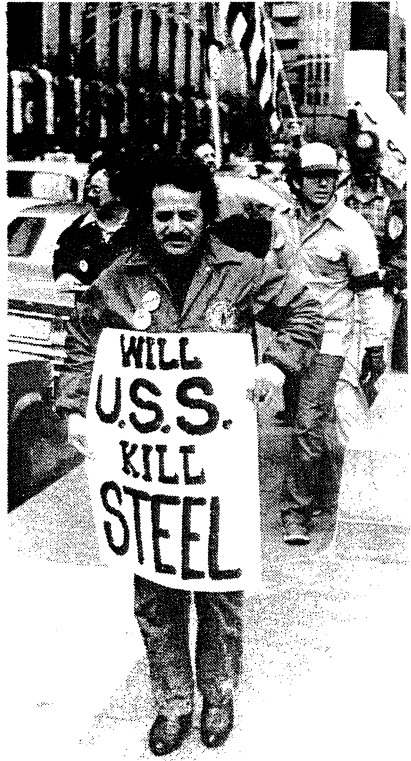
As USS quickened the pace of liquidating the steel industry in this area, Tri-State Conference on Steel and its allies stepped up the search for a strategy and concrete tactics to take over and operate the mills. The legal basis for our plan was found in a little-known Pennsylvania law called The Municipal Authorities Act of 1945.

According to Section 306 of this law, a “public authority” (similar to a port authority or the Tennessee Valley Authority) could be established by any number of government entities, including a borough or town council:

for the purpose of acquiring, holding, constructing, improving, maintaining and operating, owning, leasing ... projects of the following kind and character: ... industrial development projects, including but not limited to projects *to retain or develop existing industries and the development of new industries.* [Italics added.]

Under this law, such an authority could acquire “existing industrial facilities” through the use of eminent domain.

Eminent domain is the power, inherent in our federal and state governments, to seize or authorize the taking of private property for public use, conditioned upon payment of just compensation to the owner. Private property may be taken under eminent domain laws whenever it is required for



Paul Comstock

USWA demonstrators at US Steel stockholders' meeting.

the public's safety, health, interest or convenience, as determined by whatever government body is using it. During the early years of World War II, the U.S. government took over USS Homestead Works and other mills and modernized them in order to expand production for the war effort.

Traditionally, eminent domain has mostly been used on behalf of railroads, utilities and other powerful corporations, at the expense of individual homeowners and workers. Whether it was taking land from the Indians for building railroads, taking bodies of water for producing power and electricity, or knocking down a whole neighborhood to build a plant, it seems that for years the public interest and "common good" have been identified with that of the rich and powerful. Since most federal and state lawmakers are controlled by the corporate class, eminent domain has been used primarily as a vehicle for their benefit.

But there have been occasions (usually after some form of mass pressure) when eminent domain has been used by the government to build new roads and bridges, construct sanitary sewer systems, preserve forests, create national parks, build new schools and public housing and for other uses beneficial to the people as a whole.

Because eminent domain has been used so extensively in the past to benefit private interests, some progressives have opposed its use in the fight against plant shutdowns. We have been accused of "leading people down a dead-end road." Our critics claim it's "too heavy" for the ordinary person to understand. But Tri-State has faith in the ability of the "ordinary person" to understand what is good for him. It was inevitable that the robber barons who ruled the new and growing industrial society would use eminent domain for their ends. But eminent domain is not merely a tool for the exclusive use of the rich and powerful. It is a weapon that can also be used to defend the people's interests, when put in the hands of political forces acting on their behalf.

Eminent domain was never simply an abstract concept for Tri-State, something tossed around in words but left in the meeting hall when we returned to the real world. One of our members, Frank O'Brien, past president of USWA Local 1843 at J & L in Pittsburgh and a former Pennsylvania state legislator, had witnessed its use first hand. He had seen Jones & Laughlin use it to forcibly evict more than 500 residents of the Scotchbottom neighborhood in Hazelwood; the company had said it needed the land to expand productive capacity, but ended up using it to store

coke. O'Brien also remembered how the Municipal Authorities Act of 1945 and its eminent domain power was used to raze the triangular "point" area in downtown Pittsburgh, uprooting dozens of small businesses, and to form the Port Authority from 32 formerly independent bus companies.

While it was too late to use eminent domain in Youngstown (due to the lack of support for the idea by local political leaders, as well as the rapid development of the crisis), the appropriate lessons were drawn and actions taken. Within a year several steelworkers, including Tri-State member and USWA Local 1397 President Ron Weisen, were elected to the Borough Council of West Homestead, where Mesta Machine Co. and part of USS Homestead Works are located.

Around this same period, several other developments caught the eye of Tri-State members. In the battle by the City of Oakland, California, to keep the Raiders football team from leaving the city, the California Supreme Court ruled that eminent domain could be used to acquire *any kind of property*. Shortly thereafter, the Michigan Supreme Court ruled that Detroit had a right to condemn a major part of the Poletown section of the city so that General Motors could expand its plant. The Michigan Court ruled, definitively, that expansion of industry to *retain* or create jobs is a public purpose for which eminent domain can be used.

During the latter part of 1981 and early 1982, Tri-State mounted an educational campaign in the Pittsburgh area about eminent domain and its possible use in condemning and seizing local steel mills.

Midland-Crucible: The First Test

The initial opportunity to use eminent domain came with the announcement, in the summer of 1982, of a shutdown of the Crucible Steel Co. mill in Midland, Pennsylvania, northwest of Pittsburgh. 5,000 jobs would be lost if the Crucible mill were shut down.

According to newspaper reports at the time, the Cyclops Steel Co. wanted to buy the Crucible mill and had negotiated a contract with the local union, but Crucible would not sell the facility. A Tri-State member, Monsignor Charles Owen Rice, was invited by the local clergy to present our plan to the Midland local government.

In Midland there were several factors which favored the use of eminent domain. First, a municipal authority with the power to invoke eminent domain already existed, so the time needed to



create such an authority was avoided. Secondly, Cyclops appeared to be a sure source of funding for the takeover, as well as the operator of the facility. Finally, since Crucible is a relatively modern facility, there would be no additional financial burden for immediate modernization.

The eminent domain "weapon" received extensive media exposure after several Tri-State members, including attorney Jay Hornack and Monsignor Rice, explained how to use it at a mass town meeting in Midland. After a closed-door session of the Midland Borough Council one week later, however, it was officially announced that the eminent domain gun would not be fired.

Apparently, the idea was too big and scary for the local leaders.

For sure, one factor in the failure of Midland to pursue the eminent domain strategy was that Tri-State was viewed by some as an outsider in that tight-knit community (several Midland borough officials even accused us of being front-runners for Cyclops). A related factor in Midland's decision was the lack of time they had to seriously consider our plan. Finally, Tri-State did not have time to develop the active support of the Crucible steelworkers' union, which was extremely worried about what effect a takeover would have on their pensions.

The Nabisco Victory

The second opportunity for using eminent domain came in late 1982 when the Nabisco plant in Pittsburgh announced it was permanently closing its doors. 650 workers would lose their jobs.

Immediately some 30 religious, labor and civic groups (including

Tri-State) joined forces and formed the Save Nabisco Action Coalition (SNAC). At Tri-State's suggestion, the idea of using eminent domain to take over the plant was proposed to the Pittsburgh City Council. At the same time, a boycott of Nabisco *and of Equibank* was launched. Why Equibank? Because the chairman of the board of Nabisco is also a Director of Equibank, which controls most of the plant's money and credit.

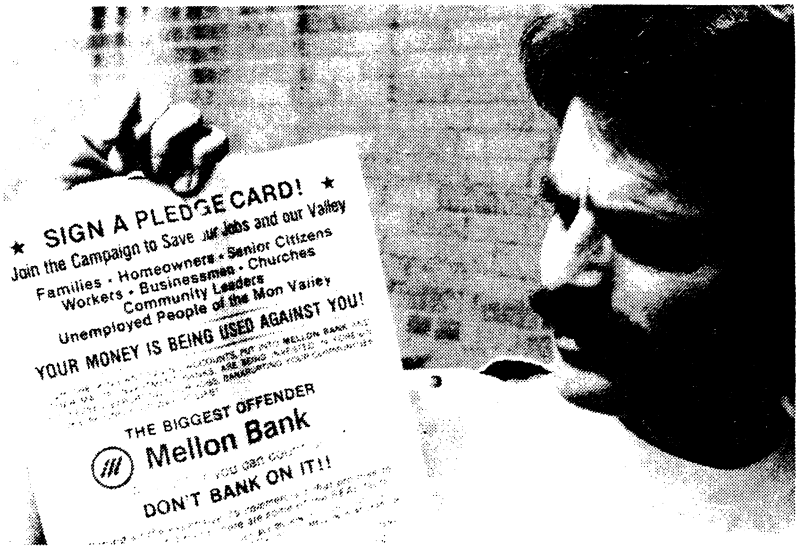
More than 1,500 people immediately pledged to withdraw their checking and savings accounts from Equibank. Within a week members of the Pittsburgh City Council were threatening to use eminent domain, through the city's Urban Redevelopment Authority. Even Pittsburgh Mayor Richard Caliguirri jumped on the bandwagon, publicly vowing to do "whatever it takes," including using eminent domain and suspending his "midnight cookie snacks."

Looking down the double barrel of the threat of eminent domain and a boycott of their product as well as of a prominent bank, the Nabisco management backed off less than a week later, publicly announcing they had dropped their plans to close the plant. According to one reporter, "they not only had to deal with the workers, but with their neighbors who are the consumers, their churches—who raised problems with the justice of the situation—and 20 other local unions." With the addition of the city's political representatives, "Nabisco obviously decided they could not deal with such strength." While it is unclear exactly what prompted Nabisco to change its mind so quickly, Councilman Tom Flaherty reasoned, "I don't find it coincidental that they announced this right after Council took them to the wall on the issue."

Coming off this victory for the Nabisco workers, their union and community, Tri-State was more convinced than ever that eminent domain was a viable weapon for fighting disinvestment and stopping plant shutdowns.

Bank Boycotting

Meanwhile, across the Monongehela River a group of more than 30 Protestant ministers from five denominations, calling themselves the Denominational Mission Strategy (DMS), was launching a campaign to pressure politicians into helping the unemployed and giving "disaster aid" to the depressed communities of the Valley. The seemingly effective threat of money movement out of Equibank caught their attention.



Jim Dougherty

Mike Stout shows organizing flyer for the campaign against Mellon Bank.

Less than one month after the Nabisco victory, Tri-State, DMS and a half dozen USWA locals and other community people, as if drawn by a magnet, began meeting weekly and working together to fight the abandonment of the Mon Valley. Intensive research into the disinvestment-plant shutdown process quickly revealed the role of the banks:

- By 1980 a consortium of 15 American banks, including our own Mellon Bank, had invested more than \$2 billion overseas modernizing and building foreign steel mills, while at the same time severely restricting local credit and refusing to invest in American steel companies.
- Pittsburgh's Mellon Bank, 12th largest in the country, had over \$6 billion in foreign loans and deposits in 1982—nearly 30 per cent of its assets.
- While USS Chairman David M. Roderick was publicly complaining that he could not get the capital to modernize Mon Valley mills because bank interest rates were too exorbitant, Mellon Bank was investing \$50 million in Kobe Steel of Japan and \$50 million more in China Steel of Taiwan.

- As U.S. Steel went public with its proposal to import steel slabs from Great Britain, it was discovered that Mellon Bank's biggest overseas investment in 1982 was \$941 million in Great Britain, whose government is undoubtedly using a portion of this money to subsidize its steel industry.

With each new discovery it became increasingly clear that the big banks are the major institutions greasing the flight of capital out of America and exporting our jobs overseas. It is equally clear that any strategy or program to stop disinvestment will be futile without taking on the banks.

After several mass meetings in the Valley—one in February and the other in April, each attended by well over 500

people—a massive "Pledge Card Campaign" was launched to educate the public about the role of banks and to engage people *directly* in the struggle against disinvestment. The Network to Save the Mon Valley, as the group is now called, hopes to secure pledges from 25,000 Valley residents to move their bank deposits from the disinvestors and to a bank or group of banks which the Network will certify as having made a commitment to invest in local industry. Over \$30 million has already been pledged.

Even in tight-knit communities like Homestead, the population is fragmented and divided. The difficulty of finding tactics and practical activities that directly engage widely diverse sectors of the people in struggles against such a seemingly insurmountable problem as disinvestment or such a powerful institution as a bank, has understandably frustrated union and community activists.

But everyone has a checking or savings account, and it is the sum total of all these accounts which provides the "cash flow" for the



banks' overseas investment. Whether old or young, radical or mild-mannered, employed or unemployed, a union, a church, a small business or a borough council—*everyone* can walk into the bank, withdraw their money, close their account, and take their money to a bank that is more susceptible to the needs of the community. It is something all of us can do together, against disinvestment, in a concrete way.

The bank boycott, or movement of money, is the perfect marriage to the eminent domain strategy.

The Mesta Battle

For more than half a century, Mesta Machine Co. in West Homestead was the leading producer of steel mill equipment and machinery in the world.

The rapid decline of Mesta Machine in the space of only a few years is a classic example of corporate disinvestment and community abandonment. The role played by Mellon clearly shows to what degree the banks orchestrate the whole disinvestment process.

On February 9 of this year Mellon Bank, acting in concert with Pittsburgh National and Union National banks, foreclosed on Mesta Machine. Unable to meet its payments on some \$20 million in loans (\$13 million of which is owed to Mellon), Mesta was forced to close its doors and declare bankruptcy.

Meanwhile, Mellon—whose PR slogan tells Pittsburghers that it is "*a neighbor you can count on*"—was busy making a mint selling our jobs overseas.

Beginning in the mid-1970s, Mellon has poured more than \$25 million into Sumitomo Industries of Japan, a company that has the same product line as Mesta. To add insult to injury, both USS and J & L are currently in the process of purchasing and installing brand new continuous casters in mills in Alabama and Indiana. These new casters are being bought from and constructed by none other than Sumitomo Industries of Japan.

At the time of the Mesta foreclosure, Tri-State was concentrating its efforts on preparing a plan for concretely rebuilding the area's steel mills. The implications of the Mesta loss were all too obvious. If Mesta were allowed to die, we would lose a large part of our capacity to rebuild the local steel industry. We quickly shifted our efforts to the battle to save Mesta.

Tri-State immediately initiated the formation of a "Save Mesta Committee," composed of Mesta workers (both union and

management); West Homestead Borough Council members, West Homestead residents and Tri-State activists. Despite the looseness and often antagonistic relationship of some members, the immediate crisis and urgency for action kept the group together.

Spearheaded by USWA Local 1397 President and West Homestead Borough Council Member Ron Weisen, the Borough Council passed by a 4-3 margin successive resolutions to establish a "feasibility study" for saving Mesta through the use of eminent domain and to call a town meeting to set up a municipal authority. This was accomplished despite the active opposition of a minority on the Borough Council.

At the same time as the eminent domain battle was unfolding in West Homestead, a coalition headed by DMS and Tri-State launched a Pittsburgh-area publicity campaign against Mellon for its role in dismantling Mesta. We began getting thousands of pledge cards signed by individuals willing to pull their money out of Mellon and other banks who are disinvesting out of the Valley. By Easter, Local 1397 had more than \$12 million pledged to be moved, and the campaign as a whole, at least \$30 million.

Because Mesta owed Mellon \$13 million, Mellon had frozen the more than \$1 million remaining in Mesta's account when it filed for bankruptcy. This made it impossible for Mesta to pay some \$430,000 it owed to its hourly and salaried workers for work done before the shutdown. Mellon shunned appeals from the USWA to release this money, as the banks laid claim to all Mesta assets. Back wages were merely the tip of the iceberg: Mesta also owes some \$35 million in benefits to workers and retirees.

Focusing on this issue, the USWA International leadership joined our bank boycott in late May, mailing a letter to more than 120,000 union members in the area, urging them to withdraw their money from Mellon to protest the bank's treatment of Mesta workers. Within a few days others joined the call to withdraw funds from Mellon—the United Mine Workers International, militant UE Local 610, the entire 11-member Pittsburgh City Council, the Allegheny County Commissioners, and even several state legislators.

In early June Mellon caved in, allowing the release of the money for back wages. The \$35 million in pensions and benefits is still in dispute.

Business Week commented, "Mellon's handling of [the] bankruptcy case at Mesta...seriously damaged the bank's local image." An official at another Pittsburgh bank said: "The whole 'good

neighbor' slogan will have to be rethought. Mellon has got a hell of a job to figure out how to get back in the graces of the public."

Building on this victory, Tri-State, DMS and the Save Mesta Committee have continued our campaign against Mellon and have laid the groundwork for an eminent domain takeover. On June 21 at a town meeting in West Homestead, the Borough Council set up the municipal authority needed to invoke eminent domain, and it called for the Allegheny County Commissioners to put up the funds necessary to pay "just compensation" for the Mesta plant.

As *Labor Research Review* goes to press, the struggle at Mesta continues and the outcome is still uncertain. But the effectiveness of combining the eminent domain strategy with a bank boycott has already been proven. With Mellon on the defensive, the threat of eminent domain (with all its legal complications for the banks) not only advances the Mesta workers' long-term interests, it gives them leverage in advancing their rights to contractual benefits and pensions in the bankruptcy proceedings.

And the \$430,000 in back pay would probably not have been wrenched from Mellon without our mobilization around the larger issues. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the USWA International "had dropped its request" for the release of funds to pay Mesta workers. The *Journal* credits "pressure from dissident local union leaders and radical clergy" with regaining the USWA's attention.

Toward Big Steel

Recently, West Homestead Mayor John Dindak vetoed the establishment of a municipal authority. This is a setback, but the big leap has already been taken: Steelworkers and a tiny borough council dared to use the eminent domain weapon against a giant bank. And while we failed, failure is sometimes the midwife to success. Mesta can still be saved, but only in the context of a struggle to save the Mon Valley steel industry.

The ease with which the bank boycott and actual withdrawal of millions of dollars forced Mellon to give in and grant Mesta workers nearly a half a million in back pay, shows the potential power behind this 'movement of money.' (Braniff Airlines, which declared bankruptcy 2 years ago under circumstances similar to Mesta, still has not given its workers the back pay owed to them!)

But time is running out for workers, their families and the communities of the Monongahela Valley. Disinvestment in the local steel industry has kicked into "hyper-mobility." When construction is completed within a few years on the 5 new office

towers and the financial corporate fortress in downtown Pittsburgh, the banks and financial community will move swiftly to replace the Valley's rusty, gigantic mills with hotels, plush condominiums, small 'high-tech' industrial parks, and gambling casinos to entertain the new corporate clientele.

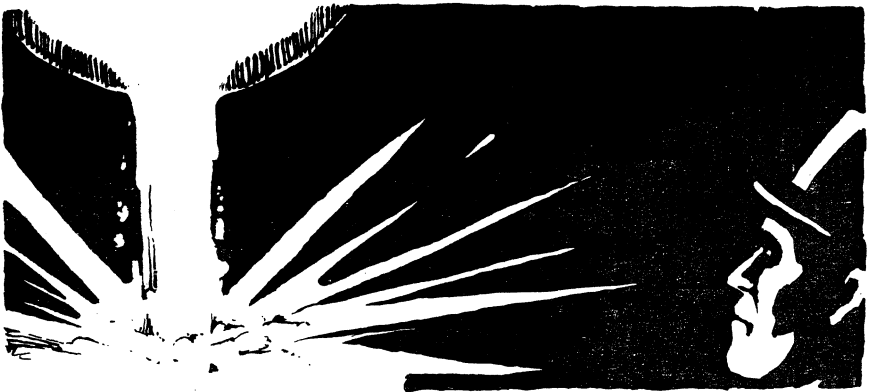
As for Reagan and the federal government, they literally could care less what happens to our mills and communities. And, as U.S. Steel Chairman David M. Roderick declared recently, "if the government has no desire to have a viable, strong steel industry ... then we will not have one."

Over the next several months, drawing from the experiences and knowledge of local industrial workers, as well as the expertise of lawyers and members of the academic community, the Tri-State Conference On Steel will put most of its efforts into pulling together a full-blown program for saving and revitalizing steel and other related industries in this area.

Based on real conditions locally—such as make-up and skills of the local workforce; types of existing facilities, machinery and equipment; the products now produced or which could be produced through modernizing these facilities—the Tri-State conference program will include specific proposals concerning:

- ✓ **POTENTIAL MARKETS** for the products; specific needs for steel—both locally and nationally, based on numerous government and private studies made recently for rebuilding our roads, bridges, mass-transit systems, and the rapidly deteriorating infrastructures of our major cities.
- ✓ **CAPITAL INVESTMENT SOURCES**; realistic channels through which federal funds or other sources of financing can be obtained for upgrading facilities and financing continued operations.
- ✓ **NEW TYPES OF ORGANIZATION & RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION**, detailing the role of worker and community in running plants through local 'municipal authorities,' as well as altogether different relations between workers and management.

Through our initial investigation of different plants and resources in the area, the Mon Valley and tri-state area seems perfectly suited to becoming a major center for the production of light rail, mass-transit systems for our cities, as well as structural products for bridges, roads, etc.



Having put together a program on paper, we will then attempt to educate, organize and mobilize the people of the Mon Valley to fight for its implementation. Our dreams will only become reality with bitter struggle. Either we do what's *really* necessary to save the industry and the very heart of our industrial unions, or we let them kill us. There is no half-way or in-between. Doing what's *really* necessary means unions, churches, community and local government banding together to *wrest control* of the "Mon Valley Steel Works" away from the banks and corporations, and completely redefining its organization and relations of production, before they abandon and totally destroy it.

Beginning this fall, the Tri-State Conference will intensify an educational campaign at the grass-roots level. We will hold meetings and forums and will go door-to-door in the community to talk about the situation, present our alternative program, and explain how eminent domain can be used to stop plant shutdowns and open the doors to attaining our goals. Crucial to this campaign will be convincing at least some local borough and government officials to use eminent domain, set up municipal authorities, as well as organizing public support for the eventual showdown with the corporate community. We will build a movement to take control of the enormous amount of "social capital" that has evolved—including union and worker pension funds, checking and savings accounts in internationalized banks such as Mellon, as well as our own tax money which is being wasted on the military and/or corrupt, repressive governments around the world.

Radical problems require radical solutions. When the showdown comes here in the Mon Valley, we must be ready to move effectively, which will most probably involve actually seizing buildings or certain facilities, in order to turn the tide and stop the exodus of jobs. What-

ever it takes, we better get on it. The only alternative most of us face is eternal damnation amidst the flames below a Wendy's or Burger King, where minimum wage is the order every day.

Conclusion

Today we are witnessing sharp clashes between the American working people and forces represented by giant banks and corporations who are attempting to smoothly transfer entire sections of our basic industries overseas. Hard-working people and their families are being thrown to the dogs by the thousands. Labor unions are losing members by the hundreds of thousands. In the face of this desperate situation, heads are turning around and minds opening up as people search for solutions.

Using a powerful weapon such as eminent domain certainly poses many problems and will be no piece of cake. For instance, without a thorough educational effort among the people, the mass backing needed to use it at the appropriate time will not be there. Also, once it is used, getting the funds to pay the former owner "just compensation" for a plant will be a whole battle in itself, and certainly a difficult one. And, without some public officials who are not only sympathetic to the idea but are also willing to take on giant banks and corporations, it cannot happen.

We in the Tri-State Conference do not believe that victory against plant shutdowns and disinvestment will come in one big bang at the national level, but through a series of small local battles building up to a big one.

Eminent domain opens up the door to the political stage for working people and their allies in the community and churches. It allows them to stand squarely on center stage and become active participants, instead of passive bystanders.

Working people must be informed that there already exists the means legally, on the books under the right of eminent domain, to protect their jobs, their communities, and their right to a decent way of life. Once they understand this fact, and see that their Congressmen and other political representatives refuse to use this weapon on their behalf, the type of pressures they put on our political bodies will radically change.

Eminent domain in conjunction with powerful mass actions like bank boycotts provide a powerful one-two punch for the blighted industrial communities of the north and midwest.

