ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examines the relationship between organized labor and the mainstream environmental movement in the United States between 1970 and 1985. It explores this relationship through the critical lenses of three issues (economic development, energy, and occupational safety and health), which were central to nearly all interactions between organized labor and environmental organizations in this period. I argue that, contrary to popular belief, the two movements collaborated with one another consistently throughout this period. Their cooperative activity, sustained through considerable effort, was partially responsible for building and maintaining the nation's environmental regulatory framework at the close of the twentieth century.

“THEY REACH AN AUDIENCE WE DO NOT:” LABOR-ENVIRONMENTAL COALITION BUILDING IN THE UNITED STATES, 1970-1985

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Introduction

In 2006, when the state of California announced that a new, $7 billion Bay Bridge connecting the cities of Oakland and San Francisco would be built using steel imported from China, much of the outcry from the United Steelworkers of America (USW) was predictable. The union bemoaned this most recent sign of the loss of American manufacturing business, the effect the decision would have on steel jobs in the United States, the unfairness of having to compete with low-paid Chinese workers, and the inferior quality of Chinese steel. However, in addition to these responses, the USW officials sounded another note in their defense of American steel – a note of environmentalism. "American jobs are at stake and so is the health of the planet," claimed International President Leo Gerard. "Steel-related pollution levels are up to twenty times higher per ton in China than in the U.S., it lacks the infrastructure to enforce the laws on the books, and its air and water standards are much lower than here."[1] Citing a report from the Alliance for American Manufacturing, the Steelworkers' complaints are easily summarized: "China's steel industry is not only harming the health of its own people, but spreading pollution around the world and contributing to global warming. At the same time, China benefits economically from its failure to control pollution, giving it a significant advantage over its foreign competitors."[2]

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[1] The Bay Bridge controversy has been going on for several years, for news coverage, see Richard Gonzales, "California Turns to China for New Bay Bridge, *NPR News* September 16, 2011; "Bridge Comes to San Francisco with a Made-in-China Label," *New York Times* June 26, 2011; "New Report Focuses on Failures of China's Environmental Regulation," *USW News,* March 23, 2009. Quotes come from *USW* article.

Impartial observers can be forgiven for taking the Steelworkers' position with surprise, suspicion, or a little bit of both. Remembering famous instances of conflicts between union workers and environmentalists, such as that over old growth logging in the Pacific Northwest, Americans have come to see the relationship between the two as inherently conflictual. The hostility between the so-called "blues" and "greens" is framed in the popular imagination as a competition between two irreconcilably opposed processes: economic development and natural resource preservation. In this zero-sum game, there is little opportunity for compromise and even less willingness to do so.

Conflicts between environmentalists and unions are real, of course, and at many points over the past forty years they have been substantial. Actors on both sides have made news excoriating the other for years. Decades ago, when Earth First! founder Dave Foreman wrote in his autobiography/manifesto *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior* "it is the sturdy yeoman from the bumpkin proletariat who holds the most violent and destructive attitudes toward the natural world," he drew on a long-standing thread of radical environmental thinking that blamed modern industrial work patterns for much of the world's environmental degradation.[3] And in 2012, when Laborers International Union of North America president Terry O'Sullivan categorized the Sierra Club and Natural Resources Defense Council as "delusional environmental groups which stand in the way of creating good, much needed

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[2] "New Report Focuses on Failures of China's Environmental Regulation," *USW News.*
[3] Dave Foreman, *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior* (New York: Crown Trade, 1991), 31.

American jobs," and as "job killers... out to destroy the lives of working men and women," for their opposition to the Keystone XL pipeline, he was participating in a critique of environmentalism that goes back even further.[4] These heated exchanges reinforce the notion that unionists and environmentalists exist largely, if not exclusively, in a state of mutual antagonism.

This dissertation argues that this cut and dried picture of inter-movement hostility is misguided. Although there are multiple examples of blue-green conflict, particularly on the local level, the interaction between the two social movements on the national level has been far more complex and oftentimes cooperative. There, the relationship between environmental organizations and unions defied easy characterization, rising and falling multiple times between 1970 and 1985. During this period, cooperation was more common than competition, as unions and environmental organizations frequently collaborated with one another for mutual gain and displays of outright hostility were minimal. As importantly, even at times when positive exchanges were limited, there were always individuals within each group that counseled forming stronger bonds and worked to extend the boundaries of labor-environmental mutuality.

This dissertation explores the work that went into forming and maintaining those bonds. For organizations on both sides of the blue-green spectrum, this process was based as much on internal reflection as external negotiation. Establishing cross-movement partnerships meant that labor and environmental leaders had to continually assess their own and their constituents' political priorities. And while finding common cause with potential alliance partners was essential, that process often involved a less delicate balancing act than did managing intra-organization dynamics. Coalition builders were often forced to overcome suspicion and inertia, but by doing so, they brought about sustained contact between workers and environmentalists to the benefit of both.

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[4] O'Sullivan quoted in Jane McAlevey, "Unions and Environmentalists: Get It Together!" *The Nation,* May 7, 2012.

From the early 1970s to the mid-1980s three issues shaped the relationship between organized labor and the environmental movement more than any others: energy, economic development, and occupational safety and health. These three issues were, in one form or another, at the heart of nearly all labor-environmental interaction during the period, and they provide the thematic scaffolding on which this history is built. The first chapter provides an overview of organized labor's relationship to the environment and environmentalism in the postwar period. It argues that the labor movement was a strong proponent of environmentalism in the years prior to Earth Day, and that this pro-environment perspective brought it into positive, if infrequent, contact with the conservation-oriented Sierra Club. Earth Day, the subject of chapter two, brought the two movements even closer together. In the wake of the event, unions and environmental organizations came together to push for strict national pollution control regulation and expanded rights for workers to determine what toxic materials they would come into contact with on the job.

Both energy and economic development became increasingly prominent concerns for the nation in the mid-1970s, and the shifting place those two issues played in labor-environmental relations is explored more deeply in chapters three and four. These chapters argue that, contrary to current historical consensus, the energy crisis of 1973 played a relatively minor role in the weakening of the blue-green alliance at that time. Instead, the decline is primarily attributable to the recession that began at roughly the same time. Employers' ability to use the fear of job loss to forestall environmental reform peaked at that time, and environmental activists struggled to maintain their ties to the labor movement. Ironically, energy provided one of the few continuing avenues of blue-green cooperation, as the two sides worked together to craft a national coal regulatory system that would keep miners safe and the air relatively clear.

The final two chapters examine how the labor and environmental movements rebuilt their coalition beginning in the late 1970s. Chapter five argues that a string of political defeats pushed the progressive wing of the labor movement to seek a broadened base of support, which it attempted to create through a series of mass coalition initiatives with liberal social movement organizations. Though not exclusively aimed at environmentalists, these coalitions brought unions back into contact with organizations such as the Sierra Club and familiarized each with topics of mutual interest, such as occupational safety and health. As chapter six shows, fear of deregulation during the first Reagan administration pushed the two sides even closer, leading to the formation of the OSHA/Environmental Network, a national organization committed to defending OSHA and the Clean Air Act. This organization was very successful over its multi-year run, and inspired similar state-level initiatives that likewise prospered.

Although the popular imagination has it that the relationship between environmentalists and workers has always been dominated by confrontation, in the past twenty-five years, a growing field of academic scholarship has emerged to offer a far more nuanced perspective. The theoretical foundations of the field were laid by environmental historians such as Richard White and William Cronon, who were some of the earliest proponents of integrating working-class and environmental history.[5] These scholars, pointing out the absurdity of disassociating environment and work, inspired generations of scholars to reexamine old events through new interpretive lenses. Since that time, a complicated picture has emerged at the intersections of space, class, landscape, and production. Historians have problematized the conceptual dualities of "natural" and "urban," "leisure" and "work," and "environmentalist" and "worker," demonstrating that the boundaries between these notions are at best ill-defined and are at worst distractions from understanding more fundamental historical processes.[6]

Considering the dominant position that environmental historians enjoyed in driving the development of this literature, there is no small amount of irony in the fact that it is actually quite labor-centric. Much of this scholarship focuses on the landscape-altering experience of extractive work or the ideas and actions of workers, while environmental movement actors have received short shrift. Thus, we understand the choices faced by workers in dealing with pollution of their bodies and communities, and how they have dealt with these problems along a spectrum of reactions between fighting and ignoring them.[7] But we know far less about how and to what extent environmentalists used class to structure their own analyses of environmental threats. We have learned how workers' institutions, including the UAW, were pioneers in calling for federal regulations to control pollution and protect the wilderness, but we know relatively little about the ways in which environmental organizations altered their agendas to appeal more to working people and unions.[8] Scholars have studied the outdoor recreational activity of workers, but none that I am aware of have focused any energy on the work habits of environmental professionals, for whom activism pays their bills.

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[5] Richard White, "'Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?': Work and Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature,* ed. William Cronon (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995): 171-185; William Cronon, "Modes of Prophecy and Production: Placing Nature in History," *Journal of American History* 77 (Winter, 1990).

[6] White himself challenges these distinctions in "Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?" but subsequent scholars have probed the issue even more deeply. Good starting points in this historiography include Maureen A. Flanagan, "Environmental Justice in the City: A Theme for Urban Environmental History," *Environmental History* 5, no. 2 (April 2000): 159-164; Arthur F. McEvoy, "Working Environments: An Ecological Approach to Industrial Health and Safety," *Technology and Culture* 36 (supplement 1995): S145-S172; Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

In this dissertation I attempt to avoid the labor-centric position that has characterized so much of the existing literature. This is not just a history of how workers dealt with environmental problems or how unions demonstrated environmental savvy. It is as much a story of how environmentalists learned to speak the language of the working class and to care about workers' issues. In offering a fuller examination of environmentalist efforts to build bridges with the labor movement, I offer insight into a movement whose motivations in dealing with organized labor have previously been unclear. In particular, I demonstrate that the Sierra Club was a consistent voice for labor-environmental cooperation throughout the 1970s and early 1980s. The Club, more than any other environmental organization, valued collaboration with unions, both for its own sake and for the strategic political benefits that it brought. Although not everyone in the Sierra Club's top echelons prioritized its relationship with labor, those who did were well-placed and numerous enough to maintain the organization's commitment during even the most challenging of times.

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[7] For two prominent examples see Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Race, Class, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Laurie Mercier, *Anaconda: Labor, Community, and Culture in Montana's Smelter City* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

[8] Scott Dewey, "Working for the Environment: Organized Labor and the Origins of Environmentalism in the United States, 1948-1970," *Environmental History* 3, no. 1 (Jan., 1998); Chad Montrie, "A Decent, Wholesome Living for Everyone: Michigan Autoworkers and the Origins of Modern Environmentalism," in *Making a Living: Work and Environment in the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

While historians have grappled with workers' relationship to the environment, they have been less inclined to examine the relationship between workers' institutions and environmental organizations. Those studies that do exist tend to present interaction – especially positive interaction – between the labor and environmental movements as sporadic and short-lived. One of the earliest attempts to engage with the topic was Robert Gordon's 1998 essay in *Environmental History* "'Shell No:' OCAW and the Labor-Environmental Alliance."[9] In it, Gordon describes the 1973 strike against Shell Oil by the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW) over the insertion of a health and safety clause into the union's contract. Gordon argues that an environmentalist boycott of Shell in support of the strike provided common ground on which the two movements organized for a few brief years, until the end of the decade when "confronted by concerted political opposition and economic recession... more conservative elements in both movements revived 'traditional' values, marginalizing the most vocal advocates of continued cooperation."[10] Later scholars, such as Timothy Minchin in the 2003 *Forging a Common Bond: Labor and Environmental Activism during the BASF Lockout,* have examined different incidents but drawn the same conclusions, that potential exists for labor-environmental partnership but that it is difficult to sustain in the long-term.[11]

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[9] Robert Gordon, "'Shell No!': OCAW and the Labor-Environmental Alliance," *Environmental History* 3, No. 4 (October, 1998): 460-187

[10] Gordon, 462.

Political science, sociology, and other social science disciplines have also contributed a great deal to our knowledge of blue-green relations. Scholars such as Brian Obach and Brian Mayer have explored the conditions that allow blue-green coalitions to thrive (or not), noted what kinds of organizations are most likely to seek out inter-movement collaboration, and have explored the social movement theoretical underpinnings of such collaborations.[12] Obach's 2004 *Labor and the Environmental Movement: the Quest for Common Ground* is representative of the best work of this genre. Obach, primarily interested in the relationship between unions and environmental organizations since the 1980s, uses a series of case studies to argue that structural differences in the way that unions and environmental groups are organized (as opposed to inherent class differences between activists or fundamentally oppositional goals) explain the instability of blue-green alliances. Like that of many of the social scientists in the field, Obach's work is well done and informative, but it is not historical. Indeed, Obach condenses four decades of interaction into just over thirty pages. Thus, while his analysis of the present is compelling, his understanding of the ways in which current events relate to earlier eras is somewhat suspect.

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[11] Timothy J. Minchin, *Forging a Common Bond: Labor and Environmental Activism during the BASF Lockout* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003). It is worth noting that the lockout described by Minchin, which also involved the OCAW partnering with environmentalists (this time in Louisiana) took place between 1985 and 1989. So just when Gordon says their partnership collapsed, Minchin shows a new one on the rise.

[12] Brian Obach, *Labor and the Environmental Movement: the Quest for Common Ground* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004); Brian Mayer, *Blue-Green Coalitions: Fighting for Safe Workplaces and Healthy Communities* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008). For other social science engagement with the topic, see Dan Clawson, *The Next Upsurge: Labor and the New Social Movements* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003); Fred Rose, *Coalitions Across the Class Divide: Lessons from the Labor, Peace, and Environmental Movements* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000); John C. Berg, ed. *Teamsters and Turtles? U.S. Progressive Political Movements in the 21st Century* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003); Michael Dreiling, "From Margin to Center: Environmental Justice and Social Unionism as Sites for Intermovement Solidarity," *Race, Gender, and Class* 6, No. 1 (October, 1998): 51:63.

While providing a venue for thorough exploration of individual moments in the relationship between organized labor and the environmental movement, the case-study nature of the literature on this topic has two fundamental flaws. First, because the authors present a series of independent interactions, each case takes on the appearance of an aberration, reinforcing the idea that moments of cooperation between unions and environmental organizations were uncommon. Second, the temporal limits of this literature demonstrate the shallowness of our knowledge of the subject. Because we lack a larger narrative, scholars struggle to judge which events are significant and which are not. The same handful of stories – including the Shell strike in 1973, the founding of the group Environmentalists For Full Employment, and the staging of a couple of different conferences – get told and retold, but no concerted effort has been made to understand how they fit together. Moments of relatively small import take on roughly equal weight to periods of major transition as each get repeated in introductions to the topic. The few detailed studies that exist provide us with signposts, but the road itself is difficult to see.

This dissertation is one attempt to provide that larger narrative. By setting the story on the national level over a fifteen-year period, I have the opportunity to assess the significance of events both as they unfolded and as they echoed through the period. This approach allows me to enter into the major debates of the literature with a fresh perspective. For example, historians who have identified connections between labor and environmentalists in the postwar era claim that those connections collapsed with the recession in the 1970s; others argue that blue-green interactions were just heating up in the 1970s, and only fell apart with in the 1980s.[13] Both perceptions have some degree of merit – the relationship between unions and environmental organizations underwent a substantial shift in the 1970s, one that was accompanied by increasingly unfriendly interactions. But that shift was far from fatal to coalition initiatives, nor was the renewed antagonism of the 1980s. What appears to be the end of labor-environmental interaction from a short temporal approach can be understood as merely the end of a phase within a longer narrative.

A national approach is made particularly valuable by the fact that much of the existing scholarship on this topic studies local interactions. In some instances a combination of local studies can serve as a useful substitute for a national analysis, but that is not the case in this instance. This is because the core issues of blue-green relations resonated differently at local levels than they did at national headquarters. For example, national organizations may have adopted policies about highway construction or toxic waste disposal, but they rarely expressed much concern over specific highway routes or dump sites. However, the planning and development of roads and waste disposal sites caused considerable consternation to the communities that would be directly affected by them – often leading to sustained protest and resistance. Such issues were, in fact, at the heart of urban environmental politics for several generations.[14]

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[13] Chad Montrie is a good example of the former. Robert Gordon is an example of the latter.

[14] Many books have been written on the relationship between urban planning and environmentalism, especially working-class and minority environmentalism. One of the best is Jeffrey Craig Sanders, *Seattle and the Roots of Urban Sustainability* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010).

As importantly, the clash between environmental politics and economic development evoked very different meanings on the local and national levels. In his classic work *Losing Ground: American Environmentalism at the Close of the Twentieth Century,* environmental historian Mark Dowie suggested that "if there is ever to be a rapprochement between labor and environmentalists" it would come at the local level, where the inherent unfairness of pitting jobs against the environment would show itself most starkly when the very people who needed the jobs were the ones being poisoned by pollution.[15] However, this dissertation demonstrates that this was often not the case. National leaders' distance from labor-environmental conflict zones allowed them to take a cooler and more overarching approach to the issues involved. For example, when environmental programs were accused of damaging the nation's economy, national organization leaders could respond that environmental programs actually created more jobs than they destroyed. However, net job gains in the economy were of little consolation to the residents of individual towns that faced high unemployment when local factories closed. For this reason, the bitterest conflicts between workers and environmentalists often played themselves out at the local level, where the conflict was not about "jobs vs. the environment" but about "my job vs. my living conditions."

The differences between local and national organizing were also felt in the ways that groups mobilized politically. Local organizations, particularly environmental organizations, tended to be ad hoc associations that came together to oppose specific threats to their communities. These groups were generally short-lived, but could attract enormous attention during their periods of active existence through direct action tactics. National organizations could, and sometimes did, also use direct action to achieve their aims. But it was a considerably less prominent tool on the national level. Instead, national organizations relied far more heavily on insider approaches to politics based on quiet lobbying. Partially because of their organizations' money and influence, national leaders had more direct access to policymakers and were better positioned to personally affect major debates and legislation. Because of this access, and because their words were disseminated widely on television and in newspapers, national leaders such as American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations President George Meany and Sierra Club Executive Director Michael McCloskey exercised an all together different form of sway over events than did a local union president or a community-based environmental activist.

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[15] Mark Dowie, *Losing Ground: American Environmentalism at the Close of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 159.

Because organizational motivations and methods often differed at different structural levels, the goals of national and local institutions rarely aligned precisely. And yet, the two levels depended on one another for their own success. The political influence that national organizations exercised was premised on the fact that they could motivate thousands of local members across the country to take action for a particular cause. At the same time, local campaigns could be won or lost depending on whether or not a national partner decided to commit resources to them. The combination of these two facts – that national and local organizations depended on each other but often had differing interests – meant that, for both labor and environmental groups, the two structural levels coexisted in tension with one another.

Despite these complications, the actions of the national groups remain an important framework for understanding local level struggles. As far as policymakers and the public were concerned, national labor and environmental leaders determined their movements' agendas. Thus, local leaders often found themselves having to answer for the decisions of their national partners within their communities, whether they agreed with those decisions or not. Moreover, local organizations often made decisions in reference to how those choices would play at national headquarters. Whether or not the locals would be able to expect the support of the national organizations – or if they would have to defend their ideas against a hostile national bureaucracy – influenced local thinking, encouraging local leaders to adopt positions that were in-line with the desires of the national bureaucracy. Of course, rank and file members also exerted pressure upwards, shaping national considerations. But again, in these instances their success or failure is measured by the degree to which local ideas shaped national institutions. Understanding national prerogatives is essential for understanding the context in which local organizers operated and the relationship between the two levels of structure.

Though a national perspective is appropriate for this subject, a study on such a large scale also carries with it some potential problems, the most pressing of which is the tendency to generalize or to collapse distinctions between different groups of actors. This dissertation is framed around the relationship between the labor and environmental movements, but those two groups were not internally united. Each movement was composed of a multifaceted variety of individuals, ad hoc assemblages, and formal organizations, each with its own goals, ideology, and political sensibility. The distinctions between these figures could at times be so great that it would be fair to question whether or not scholars should instead discuss various "labor movements" and "environmental movements" to better account for such discrepancy. However, while the terms "labor movement" and "environmental movement" can be problematic, they are also useful for their ability to easily demarcate between the two kinds of associations that are key to my analysis: those groups that claim to represent working people and those that claim to speak for the good of the environment. Their use in this dissertation is not meant to imply that the actions or beliefs I describe were universal among union members or environmental activists, and should instead be understood as signifying a useful, if flawed, generalization.

In examining the relationship between two of the nation's largest social movements, I focus my attention on the dynamics of organizational interaction. Numerous organizations move in and out of the story where appropriate, including the International Association of Machinists (IAM), International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT), United Steelworkers of America (USW), and OCAW on the union side and the Friends of the Earth (FOE) and Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) among the environmentalists. However, three organizations – the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), the United Auto Workers (UAW), and the Sierra Club – are of particular importance. These organizations were the largest and most politically influential within their respective movements, and their high degree of willingness to seek partnerships across the blue-green divide (particularly the UAW and Sierra Club) make them ideal subjects for a study of this sort. At the same time, the qualities that made these organization exceptional do make their experiences less relatable across other organizations. However, though their responses were sometimes different than those of their union or environmental peers, the issues that confronted the Sierra Club, UAW, and AFL-CIO in forming and maintaining their relationships with each other were the same as those faced by all organizations.

Although the questions at the heart of this dissertation are specific to the labor and environmental movements, the organizational focus of this dissertation also makes it clear that this history plays out in a context that makes its lessons applicable to a variety of social movement groups. As other commentators have asserted, this was a period of professionalization and bureaucratization for most major organizations. It was also a time when the political power of national groups came to be based around asserting certain areas of expertise rather than from the lived experience of workplace exploitation or neighborhood poisoning.[16] My work engages with this process, suggesting that the transition to professional, leadership-driven structures was not always associated with the realignment of institutional priorities in a more conservative direction. In the case of the Sierra Club it was the professional staff that pushed the organization to embrace new issues and reach out to new collaborators.

Moreover, this narrative serves as a reminder of just how important leadership was for U.S. social movements as they underwent large-scale transformation at the end of the twentieth century. While top leaders had to remain responsive to the needs and desires of their membership to some extent, they were often able to chart a course of action for their organizations that pulled members in potentially unwanted directions. The clearest example of this trend came in the late 1970s, when a clique of progressive new voices emerged at the top of several unions and brought those groups back into the fold of inter-movement solidarity. A similar but less sudden pattern was also apparent in the Sierra Club throughout that decade, as the group's professional staff consistently prodded the grassroots to embrace new issues, such as pollution, international environment, and workplace health and safety.

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[16] Such works debate the relative importance of memberships within modern social movement organizations compared to their professional staffs. See Christopher J. Bosso, *Environment, Inc.: From Grassroots to Beltway* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005); Ronald G. Shaiko, *Voices and Echoes for the Environment: Public Interest Representation in the 1990s and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

Unfortunately, my focus on institutional structures and elite decision making has limited the role played by minority and female participants in this dissertation. In part, this absence of diverse voices reflects a bias of sources. Even as the AFL-CIO's and UAW's memberships became increasingly female and African American in the 1970s and 1980s, their top leaders remained mostly white. The leadership of the Sierra Club, while somewhat less male dominated than organized labor's, was even more racially homogenous; Allison Chin, the organization's first non-white president, did not take office until 2008.[17] The limited range of life experiences from which national leaders drew extensively shaped their ideas about social movement organizing. It led them to focus their efforts on certain areas of the country and to discount certain populations as impossible to organize. As importantly, the limited perspectives held by the white male national leaderships of labor and environmental organizations led them to consider some issues to be more worthy of attention than others. For example, the AFL-CIO's firm support for nuclear power throughout the

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[17] "Sierra Club Presidents," Sierra Club. http://www.sierraclub.org/history/presidents/default.aspx

1970s and 1980s largely ignored the dangers nuclear plants and waste disposal sites posed to the communities – primarily communities of color – that lived nearest to those potentially harmful locations. By writing a history that is focused on organizations, I am in some ways writing a history of institutional decision makers. Just as race and sex limited the policy decisions made by these actors, so too do they shape the narrative that follows.

Non-white and female activists, excluded from the power centers in organized labor and mainstream environmental organizations, were often forced to operate outside these established institutions. In so doing, these broader, unorganized or loosely organized parties contributed an important dynamic to labor and environmental politics. They often struck a considerably more radical tone than the leaders of mainstream organizations. By doing so, they pulled the conversation to the left, urging less compromising and more anti-corporate solutions to environmental and labor conflicts. Moreover, they also injected urban environmental concerns firmly into the era's policy debates. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, as the growth of the female and minority memberships transformed mainstream organizations, this influence also grew and helped to reinvigorate blue-green organizing around occupational health and safety and toxic substances control.

Lack of women and minorities in key leadership positions is only one of many criticisms that have been made against the AFL-CIO, UAW, and Sierra Club over the years. Detractors on the right have frequently decried both organized labor and environmentalism as radical movements that are out of step with the American mainstream and as special interests that care little about the good of society as a whole as long as their own narrow causes are serviced. Meanwhile, the left has also been highly critical of many unions and environmental organizations, especially the AFL-CIO and the Sierra Club. Activists have seen these groups as too accommodating of business, too gentle in their dealings with political elites, and too unwilling to innovate new approaches to organizing. The academic left has been no more kind. Scholars have criticized the leaders of both the UAW and the AFL-CIO for being isolated from the needs of their members and for scapegoating immigrants, foreign workers, and non-labor activists to cover up their own failings.[18] In addition, we are told by environmental historians including Dowie, Robert Gottlieb, and William Cronon that the Sierra Club, as well as other mainstream environmental organizations, have failed to demonstrate any concern for the needs of the city, the poor, or the nonwhite.[19] Historian Brian Allen Drake perfectly summarized the impression left by this literature when he wrote "while poor non-whites and working people in the postwar period breathed dirty air, drank dirty water, and were routinely exposed to safety hazards on and off the job, the Sierra Club and others... skipped blithely down the primrose path of national park preservation and white-middle-class escape fantasies of wilderness preservation."[20]

This dissertation suggests that, at least in some cases, the criticism from the academic left goes a little too far. While the Club's main constituency was (and to some extent still is) clearly limited, and while the AFL-CIO was slow to adapt to changing political circumstances, it is incorrect to say that either was incapable of working beyond their narrowly defined boundaries. The sort of cross-movement collaboration that is studied here shows that labor organizations were aware of the need to experiment with new connections and that the environmental movement was open to engaging with the environmental problems faced by the working class. Certainly none of these organizations are perfect exemplars of unfailing progressivism. But, a nuanced examination of their top-level priorities shows that they were also not blind to the issues that historians would raise later.

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[18] Kim Moody, *An Injury to All: the Decline of American Unionism* (New York: Verso, 1988); Dana Frank, *Buy American: the Untold Story of Economic Nationalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999); Aaron Brenner, Robert Brenner, and Cal Winslow, eds., *Rebel Rank and File: Labor Militancy and Revolt from Below in the Long 1970s* (New York: Verso, 2010).

[19] Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: the Transformation of the American Environmental Movement* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1993); William Cronon, "The Trouble With Wilderness: or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature,* ed. William Cronon (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995): 69-90.

[20] Brian Allen Drake, comments for Politics, Energy, and the Environment panel, Atlanta Graduate Student Conference in U.S. History, February 18, 2012.

This work suggests the need for historians to deal more explicitly with the state of American liberalism at the close of the twentieth century. Recent historical scholarship has emphasized the ways in which conservatism shaped the era, through grassroots networking, conservative movement organizing, and high politics – the work of Lisa McGirr, Kevin Kruse, Sean Wilentz, and Matthew Lassiter are just the tip of the iceberg of the new history of conservatism.[21] This interest is reasonable, considering the ascendant position of conservative politics in the United States at the moment. However, such an emphasis is also constraining. Liberals – including the

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[21] Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: the Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism. (*Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan: a History, 1974-2008* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008). See also: William Berman, *America's Right Turn from Nixon to Clinton* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Bruce Schulman and Julian Zelizer, ed *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Gil Troy, *Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Michael Schaller, *Right Turn: American Life in the Reagan-Bush Era, 1980-1992* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); John Ehrman, *The Eighties: America in the Age of Reagan* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005); Joseph McCartin, "'Fire the Hell Out of Them': Sanitation Workers' Struggles and the Normalization of the Striker Replacement Strategy in the 1970s," *Labor* 2 No. 3 (2005): 67-92.

Democratic Party and its main allies in the labor, environmental, women's rights and urban reform movements – have been largely written out of this history or portrayed as demoralized and ineffectual standard bearers for an increasingly unpopular politics.

However, the historiographic emphasis on the rise of conservatism is problematic. The success of conservative efforts to unmake the New Deal order has been overstated, as has standard declension narrative of liberal defeat and retreat. This dissertation seeks to integrate liberal social movements more fully into the story of the twentieth century's final decades by showing that, though a major reorganization of U.S. politics was underway, liberals continued to exercise influence over the shape of emerging social legislation. Liberal movement organizations and their political allies regularly checked Republican ambitions, effectively blocking or redirecting what they felt to be the worst excesses of the conservative platform. And while Republicans were forced to accept a series of half measures on the federal level, liberal activists applied pressure on the states, creating a stronger, if more piecemeal, system of regulation than had ever existed previously. These activists efforts were particularly adept regarding key regulatory provisions protecting workers, consumers, and the environment.

As importantly, belying the image of a movement that had given up, these liberal groups continued to experiment with new forms of organizing. In establishing inter-movement connections, blue-green collaborators not only pushed the boundaries of established institutional norms, they also attempted to devise distinctive political processes in response to evolving social circumstances. As the focus of regulatory champions shifted from expanding the regulatory state to entrenching it, liberal social movement organizations drew upon deep reserves of support and influence to maintain the standards that had been constructed in earlier years. In this way, episodes of blue-green coalition building present historians with an opportunity to explore what allows or prevents political renewal and to sort out the underlying dynamics of organizational change.

Chapter 1: The Golden Post-War Years, 1945-1969

In October, 1946, representatives of American government, business, and conservation interests met in Washington, D.C., to reestablish the nation's forest policy for the postwar period. The American Forest Congress, as these meetings were called, had met periodically at the end of the nineteenth century, but not at all for several decades. The previous event, held in 1905, had been dominated by President Theodore Roosevelt's call to protect the nation's forests in the interests of posterity. "You are mighty poor Americans," he told the assembled crowd, "if your care for the well being of this country is limited to hoping that that well being will last out your own generation. No man here or elsewhere is entitled to call himself a decent citizen if he does not try to do his part toward seeing that our national policies are shaped for the advantage of our children and our children's children." The Congress' aim was not preservation necessarily but conservation, maintaining the forests' existence for the use of future generations, and because, in the words of Roosevelt, "if the forest is destroyed it is only a question of a relatively short time before the business interests suffer in consequence."[22]

At the Congress of 1946 the goal of natural resource conservation remained the same, but much had changed in the intervening years. First, the preservationist instincts of the New Deal's Civilian Conservation Corps influenced the proceedings and contributed to a sense that the nation's forests had value beyond their commercial worth. Second, while Theodore Roosevelt had wanted business interests to preserve the forests themselves, both out of self interest and out of moral obligation, the 1946 Congress was more positive about the role government could play in forest protection. Secretary of Agriculture Clinton Anderson promoted the idea of "government control of cutting and other destructive practices in private forests." Finally, the biggest change apparent at the 1946 Congress was the active role played by representatives of American workers, who now saw a major stake for themselves in the fate of America's forests. The Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) not only accepted the government's requested prohibitions but even asked to strengthen them. Its leaders called for preservation of America's old growth forests through "federal regulation of commercial cutting operations on private timber lands... retention permanently of all government-owned forest land, and expanded appropriations for additional forest land acquisitions by the Federal Government."[23]

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[22] Teddy Roosevelt, "The Forest in the Life of the Nation," January 5, 1905. Published in U.S. Forest Service *Forest Service Circular* 35, http://www.foresthistory.org/ASPNET/Publications/circular_35/sec1.htm.

The CIO's strong stand for environmental protection at the 1946 American Forest Congress exemplifies the growing awareness of environmental issues among American workers in the postwar period. Not only was the loot-and-pillage industrial mentality of some earlier (and later) unions absent, but here was labor calling for federal regulation for the protection, not just the controlled destruction, of the environment. While recognizing that some resources and areas should be conserved for the use of future generations, the postwar labor movement also saw the need to preserve certain places as off-limits to industry. This sort of thinking was especially apparent in the more socially inclined unionism associated with the CIO, but it was not wholly absent from even the more conservative, bread-and-butter unionism of the American Federation of Labor (AFL). After 1955, when the two organizations merged, the former CIO's biggest member unions, such as the United Auto Workers (UAW), remained committed to large chunks of what can be considered a proto-environmentalist agenda, while the newly created AFL-CIO Industrial Union Department (IUD, the successor to the independent CIO) carried the conservation banner in the umbrella organization.

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[23] "Urge Cutting Curb in Private Forests," *NYT,* October 10, 1946.

This chapter explores the origins and development of postwar labor environmentalism. As a growing historical literature on the subject the shows, the distinction between environmentalists on one hand and workers on the other would not have resonated for most laborers in that period. Many of them were sportsmen, campers, or hikers – people who enjoyed the same outdoor recreational pursuits as the conservationists of the day.[24] During a period of rising wages, decreasing hours, and longer vacations for their members, many unions found it important to make sure that workers would continue to have a place to participate in their favorite leisure activities. Union recreation departments moved beyond the simple organizing and promoting of events, and began to lobby for improved access to parks and the protection of other green spaces.

But the postwar labor movement went well beyond that, foreshadowing the shape of modern environmentalism more than a decade before the latter's emergence by joining a desire for wilderness protection with a concern with urban pollution. At that time, unions such as the United Auto Workers began developing an intellectual critique of the industrial world that tied the preservation of the natural world to the cause of urban public health through their shared threat of pollution. Unions lobbied for clean water and clean air laws, and they fought for increased protections for workers' safety and health on the job. According to historian Scott Dewey, "during the stable, prosperous, 'golden years' of the late 1950s and early 1960s... unions were in the unusual position of showing concern about pollution and related threats to human health before most conservation organizations, and expressing interest in wilderness conservation before other pollution fighters and public health advocates."[25]

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[24] Recent works on this theme include Chad Montrie, *Making a Living: Work and Environment in the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Lawrence M. Lipin, *Workers and the Wild: Conservation, Consumerism, and Labor in Oregon, 1910-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007); Scott Dewey, "Working for the Environment: Organized Labor and the Origins of Environmentalism in the United States, 1948-1970," *Environmental History* 3, No. 1 (January, 1998): 45-63.

The labor environmentalism of the postwar era established a foundation on which later labor-environmentalist cooperation could grow. This chapter argues that labor environmentalism in this period was constructed around the tripartite themes of natural resource conservation, wilderness protection, and urban/industrial health. The initiatives that postwar unions engaged in, from wilderness planning to pollution control, mirrored – and sometimes even overshot – the campaigns of contemporary conservationists. These causes, championed by the CIO and United Auto Workers, sometimes brought these groups into contact with organizations such as the Sierra Club, but they more commonly did not. Instead, postwar unions charted an independent course to environmental consciousness that they would later draw on in forming links to the environmental movement in the 1970s. As long as the rising tides of the postwar era appeared to be lifting all American boats, there did not appear to be much cause for conflict when industry and environment were at odds. Chances were good, it was assumed, that a solution could be found. The United States could –

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[25] Dewey, 46.

and should – have high wages, full employment, healthy air, clean water, and green places to play. Nothing less would do.

Natural Resources

The CIO's firmly pro-conservation position at the American Forest Congress grew out of larger historical trends in the first half of the twentieth century. The first centered around ongoing debates about the proper use of public spaces and the federal government's role in maintaining them. For about the first sixty-five years of the twentieth century, public land and resource management policy was at the heart of environmental politics. Conservationists lobbied for the creation of government agencies that would be responsible for overseeing public lands and encouraged those agencies to maintain tight quotas and strict guidelines for resource extraction by private interests. Conservationist goals contrasted sharply with pressures from industry groups concentrated in timber, mining, and ranching that pushed for fewer restrictions and more open use of natural resources. Conflicts between these rival visions resulted in confusion within government agencies such as the Forest Service, who were tasked with maintaining order. "There," to quote environmental policy scholar Jacqueline Vaughn, "competing goals of protection, regulation, and public use... led to decades of conflict within the agency and outside of government."[26]

Debates over the proper role of federal agencies in administering public lands were mapped onto and deeply entangled with changing notions about the ultimate purpose of those lands in Congress and the White House. For most of the nineteenth century the operating assumption had been that it was the government's duty to liquidate those holdings to private or state interests as rapidly as good order would permit. However, by the turn of the twentieth century, many people had come to the realization that long-term federal ownership of public lands might contribute to the common good. Beginning in the Progressive era, and accelerating through the New Deal, the government increasingly worked to manage public lands and the resources they contained, not just possess them. During World War II, the federal government entered a more "intensive" phase of managing public lands and resources; at the same time it placed a diminishing emphasis on extracting resources from publicly-owned areas, stressing more efficient use of what was already available.[27]

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[26] Jacqueline Vaughn, *Conflicts Over Natural Resources* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2007), 21.

Organized labor's postwar opinions on the nation's conservation needs were also shaped by a second, equally important filter: the conservation policies of the New Deal, crafted largely by President Franklin Roosevelt and disseminated to the public through a variety of federal agencies.[28] The most important of these New Deal agencies, in terms of how working people absorbed the message of conservation and natural resource protection, was the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Within a week of taking office in 1933, FDR had proposed a plan devoted to "conservation related employment."[29] That plan would eventually lead to the establishment of rural work camps across the country, where 2.5 million unemployed young men labored on projects planting trees, building infrastructure in state and national parks, clearing waterways, controlling floods and erosion, and the like. The CCC camps also offered classes in landscaping, forestry, and wildlife conservation, among other things, providing skills and knowledge about nature that participants would carry with them even after the Corps closed its doors. During and subsequent to the war, former CCC members became industrial workers and brought their camp-bred environmental concerns with them into their unions. The experience helped breed a fondness for the wild in the camps' workers and also helped to open up natural spaces for visitors when the crisis of the Depression had ended.[30] In these ways, New Deal environmentalism was translated into a postwar labor environmentalism that stressed conserving natural resources and expanding natural areas for recreation.

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[27] Vaughn delineates the periods of 1897-1950 and 1950-1960 as the "Custodial Management" and "Intensive Management" periods respectively, although obviously there is some wiggle room within those temporal parameters. Other studies of resource management in the twentieth-century United States (and there are plenty, from historians as well as social and environmental scientists) include John T. Cumbler, *Reasonable Use: The People, the Environment, and the State, New England, 1790-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Samuel T. Dana and Sally K. Fairfax, *Forest and Range Policy: Its Development in the United States* (New York: MacGraw-Hill, 1980); William Halvorson and Gary E. Davis, eds., *Science and Ecosystem Management in the National Parks* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996); Clayne Jensen, *Outdoor Recreation in America* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 2006); Samuel P. Hays, *A History of Environmental Politics since 1945* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000); Philip D. Brick and R. McGreggor Cawley, eds. *A Wolf in the Garden: The Land Rights Movement and the New Environmental Debate* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996); Arthur H. Chan, "The Changing View of Property Rights in Natural Resource Management," *Journal of Economics and Sociology* 48, No. 2 (April, 1989): 193-201; Norman Henderson, "Wilderness and the Nature Conservation Ideal: Britain, Canada, and the United States Contrasted," *Ambio* 21, No. 6 (September, 1992): 394-399.

[28] Henderson (see footnote 8) argues that British conservationists have traditionally favored an approach to the environment based on "intervention and active manipulation" (394). He does not discuss the New Deal per se, and his focus is on wilderness as opposed to resources, but I think that New Deal environmental interventions were conservationist in a similar way. On New Deal-era environmental policy see Neil M. Maher, *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); David Welky, *The Thousand Year Flood: The Ohio-Mississippi Disaster of 1937* (Chicago: University

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of Chicago Press, 2011); Sarah T. Phillips, *This Land, This Nation: Conservation, Rural America, and the New Deal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Harold L. Platt, "Chicago, the Great Lakes, and the Origins of Federal Urban Environmental Policy," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 1, No. 2 (April, 2002): 122-153.

[29] Tara Mitchell Mielnik, New Deal, New Landscape: The Civilian Conservation Corps and South Carolina's State Parks (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2011), 18.

[30] CCC workers proved to be invaluable assets for the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior in building the nation's park system. According to Mary Wilson, 711 state parks were established and over three million acres of public land was opened to recreational use by the end of the 1930s. Wilson's study, based on oral history interviews of CCC participants conducted by the University of North Texas, also makes clear how much of a lasting impact CCC participation had on interviewees, instilling in them a set of values that lasted a lifetime. Mary L. Wilson, "Texans and the Civilian Conservation Corps: Personal Memories," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 117, No. 2 (October, 2013): 144-163, 155. Also see Renee Corona Kolvet, *From Boys to Men: The Civilian Conservation Corps in Nevada* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2006).

A good example of the ways in which organized labor's thinking on the environment was developing in the postwar period is the CIO-produced pamphlet *Healthy Soil, Healthy People.*[31] Created by the CIO Department of Education and Research in 1948, the pamphlet was designed to instruct members on the union's environmental philosophy. Along with titles including *How Big is Big Business* and *Analysis of the Taft-Hartley Act, Healthy Soil, Healthy People* would have been part of libraries in union halls or available to members by mail-order. The pamphlet series was one piece of the CIO's long-term effort to create knowledgeable and alert unionists. In laying out their environmental priorities, the pamphlet demonstrates an organization that was clear in its analysis of the earth's problems and forward thinking in its recommended solutions.

As indicated by the title, *Healthy Soil, Healthy People* was an exploration into "the most basic of our natural resources... [and] the least understood," soil. The pamphlet expressed concern that humanity was on the verge of a great ecological disaster, and if action was not taken soon, catastrophe would be the result. Soil's problems – erosion and falling fertility – were global in scale. But more troublingly, they had been created by mankind's wastefulness and poor stewardship. "Man," the writers cautioned, "has become, to his own final sorrow, a perverter of nature's scheme.... Instead of a healthful harmony between man and nature, a pathological conflict now prevails." They continued, "instead of man's using his limited soil resources rationally, he seems madly bent on destroying them, thus bringing on his own misery."[32] The CIO, through this lesson to its members, stressed that industrial society, if people were not careful, would quite literally sow the seeds of its own demise.

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[31] CIO Department of Education and Research, *Healthy Soil, Healthy People* (Washington, DC: CIO Publications, 1948).

The man-made nature of the problem could be a blessing as well as a curse. Since people were ultimately to blame, they could also put a stop to the destruction. The CIO's proposed solution was three-fold. The first aspect of the solution was "good land use," such as "terracing... crop rotations, and shifts in land use." The second piece of their plan called for the creation of a federal agency to coordinate the conservation efforts of individual farmers and localities, with enough funding to carry out its mission and to subsidize the transition of farmers to better farming methods. Finally, and most straightforwardly, the United States had to stop being "a nation of wasters."[33] Following these steps would give the U.S. the best chance of avoiding the fate of the Roman and Mayan Empires – great societies that toppled after stretching their environments past the breaking point.

Healthy Soil, Healthy People was also important in that it established a firm justification for organized labor to be involved in environmental issues. Posing the rhetorical question "why should the CIO concern itself with the relationship of man to the soil when we have such immediate problems as the high cost of living and the need for wage increases?" the CIO response was firm: "for the same reason that the CIO concerns itself with issues like Federal Aid to Education and the Marshall Plan. Our world is so complex and has so many interrelated problems ... that it is like the intertwining wires of a telephone system. For the best possible service we must do what we can to keep each one at maximum efficiency."[34] But it was not simply the interconnectedness of different issues that spurred the CIO to action. Instead, the CIO recognized that without a safe and clean environment any other gains would be meaningless; "wage increases in themselves mean little," claimed the pamphlet "if they are granted this morning at 10 o'clock and the world we live in is blown to bits at 11 o'clock."[35] The ultimate supremacy of a healthy globe to all people meant that all people and their associations needed to be concerned. This line of reasoning would be repeated frequently in the coming decades by unionists who sought to play a role in environmental causes.

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[32] Ibid, 3, 5, 10.
[33] Ibid, 18-19.

The CIO's commitment to resource conservation continued for the rest of its independent existence. In the early 1950s, it opposed turning federal lands over to the states, in fear that state legislatures would use the opportunity to liquidate natural resources for short-term profits – a fear shared by numerous conservation organizations. In language that would have been appropriate, if unusually aggressive, for an environmentalist of the era, the CIO Industrial Union Councils lambasted the "raid which we know the reactionary interests intend to make on... the public domain," whereby the people's common lands "will fall easy victim to state legislatures controlled by predatory minorities," of industrial interests.[36] In a letter to the councils, the CIO's Assistant Director of Councils, Anthony W. Smith, warned members not to be complacent in the face of threats to "the national forests, and other timber lands owned and operated by the United States government; the grazing lands within those timber lands... the national parks, wilderness areas, and wildlife refuges; the mineral resources of the of the nation," basically all of the "forests, soil, waters, wildlife, scenery and recreation." The council directors were instructed to take action in opposition to endeavors that might endanger these resources.[37]

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[34] Healthy Soil, 4.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Letter from Anthony W. Smith to all Industrial Councils, January 22, 1953, BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 67 folder 20.

In the 1950s, the questions of who would control the earth's limited resources and how they would be used were "of great importance to ... CIO members."[38] The organization weighed in on the side of conservation, arguing that the nation's resources should not be wasted or dealt with lightly. It maintained that protection and long-term planning were the essential elements of good resource policy, and thought that the federal government was in a better position to carry out these tasks than the states or industry. However, the CIO's concerns did not end with extractive resources. As is clear in Smith's letter to the councils, the organization was also apprehensive about the fate of places that existed for the enjoyment benefit they provided: the nation's parks and wilderness.

Parks and Recreation

The concept of the wilderness as a place for relaxation and rejuvenation emerged at the end of the nineteenth century in reaction to what were seen as the ills of modern life. The beauty and authenticity of the natural world created a siren song when juxtaposed against the spreading ugly, stinking, dirty, man-made urban spaces of the nation's big cities. Those who could afford to escape momentarily to wide-open spaces did so to absorb their aesthetic qualities while those wide-open spaces still existed. At the same time, escaping to the wilderness was also seen as a cure for the overly civilized lifestyles of the middle and upper classes. A jaunt of rustic living would help to reintroduce masculine virtues like strength, virility, and self-reliance to men who had been feminized by their overly sophisticated lifestyles. Nature thus came to embody elite ideals about all that was good in life.[39] To protect the rural spaces that provided such refuge, well-to-do Americans persuaded Congress and the state governments to set aside areas for pastoral leisure.

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[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

The same upper-crust vision that inspired the national park system also led to the founding of organizations devoted to protecting specific local natural areas and facilitating their use for the recreation of the wealthy. The late nineteenth century witnessed the founding of a number of these organizations, including the Rocky Mountain Club (1875), Appalachian Mountain Club of Boston (1876), the National Audubon Society (1905), and Theodore Roosevelt's own Boone and Crocket Club (1887), which took a particular interest in Yellowstone National Park. As the park idea spread – stirring the creation of parks, preserves, and reservations at the national and state level – so too did the voluntary associations that both helped to establish the set-off areas, sometimes acquiring and donating the land, and to maintain their undisturbed nature wherever possible.[40]

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[39] One of the fundamental texts for understanding American's sense of the wilderness remains Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967, 2001). For background on national parks see Douglas Brinkley, *The Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Crusade for America* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009); Ethan Carr, *Wilderness By Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Alfred Runte, *National Parks: the American Experience* (Lanham, MD: Taylor Trade, 2010), 4th ed. For working-class issues in early park discussions see Benjamin Heber Johnson, "Conservation, Subsistence, and Class at the Birth of Superior National Forest," Environmental History 4 (1999): 80-99.

[40] Brian Black, *Nature and the Environment in 20th-Century American Life* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 24-32.

The Sierra Club was one of these associations. Founded in 1892 by twenty-seven "solid citizens," the Club's Articles of Incorporation stressed that its goals were to "explore, enjoy, and render accessible the mountain regions of the Pacific Coast... and to enlist the support and cooperation of the people and government in preserving the forests and other natural features of the Sierra Nevada Mountains."[41] The group was the brain child of California naturalist John Muir. Disturbed by continued human encroachment on territory that had supposedly been under protected administration by the state of California since 1864; Muir led the charge for the creation of Yosemite National Park in 1889 and subsequently founded the Sierra Club to protect the integrity of the park from logging or mining interests.

The early years of the Sierra Club were marked by several important legislative battles. It fought successfully to extend the boundaries of Yosemite. It encouraged Congress to turn administration of the parks over to a new National Park Service rather than leave them in the hands of a Forest Service that allowed for resource extraction within their boundaries. Perhaps most famously, the Club worked to prevent the damming of the Hetch Hetchy Valley to provide a water reservoir for San Francisco. However, with the Hetch Hetchy controversy finally settled in favor of the city in 1913, and the Park Service established in 1916, conservation lobbying took a backseat to outings and publishing for the Club in the 1920s.[42] Leading backpacking and mountain climbing expeditions into the wilderness, the Club got the reputation of being little more than "companions on the trail."[43]

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[41] Tom Turner, *The Sierra Club: 100 Years of Protecting Nature* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1991), 48. Those "solid citizens" included notable lawyers, scientists, professors from the University of California, Berkeley and David Starr Jordan, President of Stanford University. When the group opened to membership later that year the new dues payers were drawn heavily from the middle-class professions – banking, law, medicine, etc. Also see Stephen Fox, *John Muir and His Legacy: the American Conservation Movement* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1981).
[42] Turner, 47-139.

In the postwar period, this reputation would rapidly begin to change. In 1951, the Club officially broadened its realm of concern beyond the Sierras to the entire United States; it now intended to be a truly national organization. At the same time, the Sierra Club also reestablished itself as an organization with a concerted political voice. It was led in this effort by "Archdruid of Environmentalism," David Brower.[44] Hired as the Club's first Executive Director in 1952 – a position he would hold for the next seventeen years – Brower began the transition from volunteer leadership to professionalism within the organization. He also brought with him a more aggressive, confrontational style and a desire to insert the Club into any possible conservation debate. During his tenure, the Sierra Club would launch massive, and ultimately successful, campaigns to protect or enlarge protected areas around Dinosaur Canyon, Redwoods Park, and the Grand Canyon.

It was not just the Sierra Club that was changing in the postwar era. By 1950, the idea of parks as playgrounds for the rich had eroded. Historians generally concede that the interwar years were a transformative time in the relationship between working people and outdoor recreation.[45] In *Driven Wild: How the Fight Against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement*, Paul Sutter argues that this transformation was caused by three things: the "rapid proliferation of the automobile," increased government spending on roads and park services, and a "maturing consumer culture," that included "national systems of marketing and distribution, the rise of modern advertising... higher wages, the extension of credit, and a broadening affluence" among Americans.[46] These trends combined to increase both the desire and the ability of workers to pursue leisure outdoors.

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[43] Brower used this phrase in his campaign literature while trying to win a seat on the Board of Directors in 1969. He worried that his opponents wanted to turn away from his more activist version of the Sierra Club and return to a time when the Club's main endeavors were leading camping trips and rock climbing expeditions. Turner, 186.

[44] Press Release, "Sierra Club Mourns Death of David Brower," November 6, 2000. http://kernkaweah.sierraclub.org/press/brower_sc_release_11600.html (accessed Jan. 20, 2012).

[45] Lipin; Paul S. Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight Against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002); Curt Miner, "Hardhat Hunters: the Democratization of Recreational Hunting in Twentieth Century Pennsylvania," *Journal of Sport History* 28 (2001): 41-62.

As more and more workers began to seek non-urban recreation, unions updated their ideas about the proper place for nature in the world. Historian Lawrence Lipin, in his study of Oregon workers, argues that early in the twentieth century "labor leaders resisted the efforts of their social betters to manage nature in a way that some of it, including what might have recreational and inspirational uses, would be preserved from production, particularly when it appeared that such efforts were most likely to improve only the lives of the privileged few."[47] By the 1920s and 1930s, however, they had abandoned this simple producerist rhetoric and set aside their objections to preserving natural enclaves, although the relationship of some unions and workers – particularly in extractive industries – to individual parks would continue to be complicated by the need to have access to resources to extract. Still, by the Second World War, these concerns centered more around specific protected areas rather than the legitimacy of protection itself.

All of the trends that had led to increasing working-class use of national and state parks in the interwar years were even more present after WWII. The National

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[46] Sutter, 23-27.

[47] Lipin, 3.

Park Service lands grew by several million acres between 1940 and 1950.[48] With the United States becoming the world's biggest industrial power, extremely low unemployment and rising wages led to higher living standards for more people than had ever been seen before. As wages rose, so too did working-class consumption, symbolized by the car. As suburbs and car culture grew, so too did the need for roads, which the federal government provided for with the Interstate Highway Act. Along with these earlier stimulants to park usage came fresh reasons to visit the great outdoors. While many workers had been able to secure weekends away from work in the 1920s, by the 1950s growing segments of the workforce were winning contracts that included full vacations. Additionally, during the Great Depression several million young men had gained experience with the park system and the natural world through the Civilian Conservation Corps; many of these people grew fond of the places where they were camped and wanted to revisit them later in life. All of these factors combined to produce an explosion in the number of visitors to parks and other wild areas in the postwar period.

The more workers had access to leisure time, the more their unions had a stake in shaping how they would spend it. By providing union sponsored venues for recreation, union leaders could provide a welcome service while expanding the role their organizations played in workers' lives. Sharing leisure time with one's fellow workers would also be a good way to increase solidarity in the workplace. To this end, many unions experimented with recreation departments or committees at both the local and international level.

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[48] See graph in Resources for the Future Senior Fellow Margaret Walls "Parks and Recreation in the United States," (January, 2009): 6, http://www.rff.org/rff/documents/rff-bck-orrg_national%20park%20system.pdf (accessed Jan. 20, 2012).

The most famous of these experiments was the United Auto Workers' Recreation Department, which was in operation by 1939.[49] UAW officials believed that caring for the recreational needs of members was especially important in their case because of the monotonous nature of production on an auto assembly line. In addition to hosting the standard bowling and horseshoe leagues, ice-skating competitions, and baseball games, the UAW's Recreation Department also devoted considerable time to the outdoor passions of its members. Through the department, according to historian Chad Montrie, "the union encouraged and aided growing concern by autoworker families for enhancing outdoor recreational opportunities, conserving natural resources, and controlling pollution."[50] The success of these endeavors is evidenced by the expansion of the Recreation Department in 1953 and the concurrent decision by delegates at that year's convention to require locals to establish their own recreation committees.[51] The local recreation committees and the larger Recreation Department acted as a vital link between the UAW and its members, encouraging them to make greater use of the outdoors and working with government officials to increase their access to open spaces.

The postwar spike in open-lands use worried a segment of the environmental community, opening a debate that continues into the present. Some, following in the philosophical footsteps of John Muir, thought that the best way to protect natural spaces was to expose people to them. Those who had visited a place and felt kinship with it, they thought, would be more likely to want to defend it. Others, in contrast, argued that there was a limit to the effectiveness of such thinking. Many of the people in this camp were turned off by the growing throngs of visitors to areas that had once offered seclusion and solitude. At a certain point, they reasoned, too many visitors begin to despoil protected areas by littering, trampling the vegetation, and disrupting the wildlife. For this group, roads became the ultimate symbol of humanity's convenience interfering with nature that it supposedly hoped to defend.[52]

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[49] Montrie, 91-112.
[50] Montrie, 92.
[51] Montrie, 103.

Like other conservation groups, the Sierra Club was divided over the issue, and its public activity waffled back and forth between the 1920s and 1950s. On one hand, the Club worked closely with the Park Service to promote the parks as tourist sites, thinking that such use would prove their value to skeptical government officials. It also supported the building of roads and trails to make majestic areas more accessible. On the other hand, it refused to support the establishment of Kings Canyon National Park in California unless it was "devoted to wilderness, with no roads or hotels like those in Yosemite."[53] Some Club members also led a successful initiative to have the phrase "render accessible" removed from the Club's statement of purpose, which had originally stated that the Club was designed to "explore, enjoy, and render accessible," California's mountains.[54] Eventually a compromise position within the Club was achieved, based around the establishment of formal legislative distinctions between parks, which were intended to be accessible to tourists, and wilderness areas, which were intended to remain mostly undisturbed.[55]

Despite the ambivalence toward the explosion of park use among some in the conservationist community, the upsurge in working-class support for the park system made the labor movement relevant to the Sierra Club in a way that it never had been before. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, UAW representatives championed the expansion of the National Park System in Congress, culminating in 1968 with their support for the creation of Redwoods National Park, which was also a top priority for the Club.[56] The CIO, too, was applauded by the small full-time staff of the Sierra Club for its "extremely good and effective conservation program." Club leaders were so enamored of the CIO in the early 1950s that they sought out any excuse to do an article on the union in the Club's official mouthpiece *The Sierra Club Bulletin*.[57] The article idea was eventually scrapped due to the partisan nature of most CIO publications, which would have meant major qualifications if quoted in Sierra Club literature. But the Club remained of the opinion that the CIO was "generally in accord with the recommendations of national conservation organizations."[58]

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[52] These debates are detailed in Hal K. Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998).
[53] Turner, 112-113; 124.
[54] Turner, 128.
[55] Turner, 119-124.

The CIO's biggest plus, from the Sierra Club perspective, was its early opposition to a hydroelectric dam project on the Green River in Dinosaur National Monument, which lies on the border between Colorado and Utah. The CIO's membership may have been more persuaded by the government's claims that the planned dams were needed to provide water and electricity to support the growing western population than was the Club's, but both organizations thought that maintaining the protected national monument should take precedence. The campaign to save Dinosaur was the Club's biggest initiative to that point.[59] Their lobbying effort was intense, including trips down the river for journalists and politicians, challenging government planners' figures in Congress, and a public relations campaign that included the production of two films and the publication of a book about Dinosaur Monument. The CIO, also standing in opposition to a dam in that area, accused President Eisenhower of selecting the location specifically to cause controversy, which it alleged would allow him to scuttle the project entirely.[60] Ultimately, the CIO broke with the Sierra Club's position by acceding to construction at an alternative site a few miles away, after receiving government assurances that the plans would "provide facilities for recreation for those now interested in the scenery and wildlife aspects of this area, as well as ... power needed for the expanding population and industrial growth in the mountain states."[61] However, by that time the CIO's reversal was not terribly troubling to the Sierra Club, whose campaign against the dam was already shaping up to be a success.

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[56] Dewey, 51.
[57] Letter to Dave Foreman, April 17, 1953, BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 67, folder 20.
[58] Ibid.
[59] For background on the Dinosaur Canyon campaign, see Turner, 142-152.

Preservation of wilderness and scenic areas became more controversial among unions in the 1960s, but that goal was not abandoned by the entire labor movement. West Coast loggers, particularly those in the former AFL-affiliated Carpenters and Millworkers unions, would earn a reputation for being among the most militant anti-environmentalists in organized labor when they opposed the creation of Redwood National Park at the end of the decade, citing job concerns. However, the United Auto Workers, not hampered by job concerns and remaining committed to the parks program, supported Redwood. At the same time, it also supported the creation of a National Trails System, National Lakeshores scattered around the Great Lakes, and other preservation initiatives. In 1967, the UAW created a new department – the

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[60] "They'll Bury Dinosaurs With Dam," *Sunday News Journal* (Daytona Beach, FL), March 21, 1954.
[61] CIO Press Release, "CIO Voices Support for Construction of Echo Park Dam in Colorado," March 22, 1955, BANC MSS 71/103 c, Carton 67, Folder 20.

Department of Conservation and Resource Development – to handle the numerous environmental concerns that had been growing within the union. Although the department would focus on more than just land-use issues – indeed by the late 1960s, industrial pollution was becoming a more pressing concern within UAW leadership circles (discussed in more detail below) – it was no coincidence that the person selected to head the new endeavor was also in charge of the newly renamed Recreation and Leisure-Time Activities Department, Olga Madar. Madar would continue to use this post to promote environmentalist causes within the union into the 1970s.[62]

On the issue of wilderness protection, American unions frequently found themselves on the same side as conservation organizations in the postwar period. Although unions felt some need to balance employment concerns with the expansion of protected areas, they seldom came into irreconcilable conflict with environmentalists. The rising popularity of the national parks at the time indicates that this position was generally in line with mainstream American opinion. At the same time, unions were ahead of most conservationists and the population at large in their concern over what would become the other basic tenet of modern environmentalism: industrial pollution.

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[62] Madar had been Recreation Director for UAW Local 50 prior to becoming director of the International union's Recreation Department in 1947. Madar also became the first female International Vice President of the UAW in 1970, and was the first woman to serve on the Executive Board, joining it in 1966. See Dewey, 52. Also see "Olga Madar Papers Collection Guide" and "UAW Conservation and Recreation Departments Collection Guide," Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University.

Pollution and Urban Industrial Health

Organized labor's interest in pollution grew out of a desire for basic standards of health and safety on the job. At the turn of the twentieth century, the American workplace was significantly more likely than its British or German counterparts to kill a worker, either in a sudden accident or through drawn out illness. And, it was getting more dangerous over time. Thus, unions saw the importance in using collective bargaining to create safer spaces of employment. Even the most conservative of bread and butter unions pled their case for the great triumvirate of wages, hours, and conditions.[63] Historian Mark Aldrich has shown that between the end of the nineteenth century and World War II the perception of workplace accidents in the United States shifted from one seeing them as "routine matters of individual carelessness" to one that considered them "reflect[ing] management failure." As responsibility for employee safety got pinned to management, a combination of labor agitation, law, technology, and public shaming combined to create an atmosphere in which businesses were more willing to accept that responsibility and to take action to improve their safety records.[64]

The case for workplace health – as opposed to safety – was slower to develop and union initiatives on that front took longer to become mainstream. Most ailments were hard to classify as originating in poor working conditions rather than unsanitary living conditions; their causes were not obvious, or were, at least, difficult to prove. The extent of industrial diseases was similarly difficult to trace – they often went undiagnosed or misdiagnosed and plant managers frequently stonewalled investigations and denied culpability. The coalescence of the science of industrial hygiene between 1910 and 1930 helped to bring a bit of clarity to the issue, but did not solve it entirely. Even diseases with well known industrial origins such as radium, mercury, or lead poisoning, as well as certain particulate diseases including Black Lung, were frequently thought of as occupational hazards that would be nearly impossible to prevent.

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[63] The last twenty years have seen an explosion of interest in movements for workplace safety and health. Some of the better works include David Rosner and Gerald Markowitz, *Deadly Dust: Silicosis and the On-Going Struggle to Protect Workers' Health,* second ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006) and Rosner and Markowitz, eds. *Dying for Work: Workers' Safety and Health in Twentieth-Century America* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1987); Mark Aldrich, *Safety First: Technology, Labor, and Business in the Building of American Work Safety, 1870-1939* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Alan Derickson, *Black Lung: Anatomy of a Public Health Disaster* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); Christopher C. Sellers, *Hazards of the Job: From Industrial Disease to Environmental Health Science* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997);

[64] Aldrich, 2.

Still, by the end of the Second World War, American business – again prodded by social reformers and organized workers – had made some strides in creating less toxic working environments. In the 1940s there was an explosion in contract clauses in collective bargaining agreements designed to eliminate health hazards for workers. Notably fewer people were hospitalized or killed by diseases contracted at work. And for those who did get sick, the improving system of employer-based health insurance generally provided them with better care than workers would have had one or two generations before.[65]

At the same time, even after industrial hygiene programs were implemented in some industries, others accepted that certain disorders were going to remain occupational hazards. Chemicals, dusts, and gases continued to threaten workers, and the establishment of industrial health programs could sometimes paradoxically make it more difficult to find treatment or compensation. With added expenses figuring into the equation, polluting industries that – for whatever reason – could not or would not improve disease prevention took great pains to cloud the discourse around emerging hazards. Meanwhile, the doctors who treated sick and dying workers were often hampered in recognizing new threats by what industrial disease historian Christopher Sellers refers to as "constricted notions of pathology," meaning that medical professionals tend to assess illnesses and their causes in established patterns.[66] Thus, the fight for safe and healthy workplaces continued throughout the century.

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[65] The note on collective bargaining comes from Sellers, 231. Sellers and Aldrich separately discuss the decline in workplace illnesses and accidents respectively, and both mention that the statistical improvement in the safety of American workplaces can only partially be explained by pointing to improved conditions. These studies indicate that a significant amount of the safety gains in the United States grew out of changing patterns of employment, i.e. that U.S. workers moved into comparatively safe industries rather than seeing wholesale change in the dangerous ones. Coal mining is a perfect example of this trend.

Considering the efforts of working people and unions to maintain healthy standards on the job, it should come as no surprise that they would advocate similar positions off it. Because governmental action to control pollution on the state and federal levels was limited in the early 1950s, and because the press was uninterested in such concerns, it is difficult to document with any certainty what unions were doing at that time. What is certain, though, is that by the end of the decade several important industrial unions, including the United Steel Workers and the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers (OCAW), were dealing intensively with the issue. The UAW led the charge, becoming, to quote Chad Montrie, "among the first organizations, if not the first, to call attention to the contamination of air and water both inside and outside the factory gates."[67] Olga Madar, one of the leading voices in the UAW for pollution control as well as outdoor preservation, echoed the earlier justification of the CIO when she defended the UAW's anti-pollution work in Congress. While testifying on strengthening clean air standards, she noted that "we make little progress when we find that the gains in better health are negated when the worker leaves the plant and finds his community's living environment polluted."[68] Having come out of long struggles with workplace contamination, it made sense for these groups to be early supporters of pollution regulations.

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[66] Sellers, 232.
[67] Montrie, 106.

By 1958, union officials frequently testified before Congress for the establishment of clean water programs. The UAW leadership, in particular President Walter Reuther, made pollution a frequent topic of discussion in the coming years, and the intensity of Reuther and his union's environmental commitment only increased as the 1960s wore on. In 1965, the union hosted a major conference called United Action for Clean Water, which brought union leaders into direct contact with the first-stirrings of pollution minded environmentalists. In 1967, the union's representatives called for tough federal standards to control pollution from vehicle exhaust.[69] By the time he was invited to speak at the yearly meeting of the Water Pollution Control Federation, in 1968, Reuther was seeking to enlist individuals and all levels of government in a "$100 billion ... war on pollution during the next five years."[70] Although it was the federal government whom they expected to foot the bill in that war, Reuther, Madar, and others in the UAW hierarchy had made environmentalism a valued piece of their agenda, and hoped to find allies wherever they could.

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[68] Quoted in Dewey, 52.
[69] Ibid.
[70] "Pollution Funds Urged by Reuther," *WP,* September 27, 1968.

The UAW was operating at the forefront of a movement that had yet to gain widespread support. It was not until the 1960s and early 1970s that concerns over pollution made their way into the consciousness of society at large. Awareness of both pollution's effect on public health and its deleterious impact on nature grew in prominence at that time. Historians have frequently pointed to the 1962 publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* as a turning point for American environmentalism. Published serially in *The New Yorker* and becoming a best-seller in its full form, the book demonstrated the ecological concept of the interrelatedness of all things to a popular audience by showing how overuse of pesticides, particularly DDT, harmed everything from bald eagles to human beings. *Silent Spring*'s publication was called the event of greatest consequence in 1962 by Audobon Society Chairman Irston R. Barnes in his regular *Washington Post* column "The Naturalist."[71]

Public opinion polls support the common contention that Carson's book contributed to an upsurge in American concern with pollution, public health, and the environment. Gallup polls conducted in 1960 and 1961 did not show any respondents listing pollution as a problem, but by late 1964 and early 1965, three-quarters of respondents were familiar with the issue of air pollution and nearly one in five considered it to be one of the problems that Congress should work hardest to fix.[72]

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[71] Barnes editorialized on the importance of *Silent Spring* in "'Silent Spring' Held Top '62 Event," *Washington Post* January 6, 1963.

[72] Gallup Polls 628 (5/24/60), 633 (8/9/60), and 653 (12/5/61) asked the question "What do you think it the most important problem facing this country today?" In none of those polls was clean air, clean water, pollution or other permutation listed as a response. Poll 682 (12/12/63) shows that significantly more people favored federal funding to clean up water pollution than opposed it – 29% were in favor while only 7% were opposed – but most people were unsure. Poll 709 (4/2/65) asked respondents which national problems they would "like to see the government devote most of its attention to in the next year or two?" 16.76% said "trying to reduce pollution of air and water," and 3.17% said "trying to beautify America;" respondents to this question could list more than one. Poll results are collected at the Gallup website Gallup Brain http://institution.gallup.com/home.aspx.

The nation was further galvanized by events later in the decade. The first pictures of the Earth from space taken by NASA in 1966, the devastating effects of the use of defoliant Agent Orange in Vietnam, and the fire on the Cuyahoga River in 1969 all contributed to a growing sense that swift action needed to be taken to protect and clean up the environment in its entirety. As Carson herself reminded readers, "pollutants in air, water, soil and food – consisting of radioactive materials as well as harmful chemicals – all interact to produce serious impact on the living organism. These various problems perhaps need to be attacked separately, but the place of each in the whole must not be forgotten if intelligent and fruitful solutions are to be found."[73] As the 1970s dawned, Americans were more prepared than ever to institute those solutions, and their associations would be asked to help lead the way.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the labor movement expressed concern for the environment in three ways prior to 1970, led by the CIO and industrial unions such as the UAW. It called for the expansion and development of the national park system as well as for increased protection for scenic wilderness areas. It also made the case for conserving natural resources such as forests, mineral reserves, water, and soil. Even though workers in the extractive industries had a clear stake in maintaining access to the materials they were paid to extract, labor had as much interest in conservation as it did in exploitation of these resources. To groups such as the CIO, those resources represented a treasure held in common by all the American people – one that should not, at the very least, be easily and cheaply ceded to the industrial machine. Finally, the labor movement worked to improve the physical condition of its members by reforming the health and safety standards of employers. These concerns quickly transformed into unease about the health of the larger community, inspiring the UAW and others to become early advocates for national pollution standards.

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[73] Rachel Carson quoted in "Cold Silences 'Silent Spring' Author," *Washington Post,* December 12, 1962.

These stances often mirrored those of environmental reformers, even though they did not often bring unions into contact with conservation organizations. Both sides agreed that keeping natural resources in the hands of the federal government rather than the states' would be the best way to protect them for the future, and both sides advocated for new wilderness and park designations. However, the two constituencies generally promoted these causes individually, pursuing similar reforms along separate tracks. Moreover, as will be explored in more depth in the next chapter, the Sierra Club hesitated to embrace the cause of pollution control in the 1950s and 1960s, putting them a step behind the UAW on urban environmental issues. Unions such as the UAW did not share the Sierra Club's apprehension at the prospect of taking on pollution, which it saw as distinct from its members' core interests.

Although the two movements did not regularly associate, this unity of purpose would prove important in the coming years. The labor movement's postwar engagement with conservation, parks, and pollution would provide unions with the expertise needed to become key advocates for expanding environmental regulations in the 1970s. Moreover, when the labor and environmental movements did start to make a concerted effort to work together in the wake of Earth Day, 1970, they found that these common principles bred respect among the organizations and provided a foundation on which cooperation could be built.

Chapter 2: Earth Day and Beyond, 1970-1973

April 22, 1970 – the first Earth Day – has become shrouded in mythology, both positive and negative. A persistent legend on the political far-right has it that the date of the event was selected to honor Russian Revolutionary Vladimir Lenin by marking the centenary anniversary of his birth.[74] A more generous and widely shared belief is that Earth Day was responsible for creating environmentalism as we know it today. Even the website for the Earth Day Network, the modern organization responsible for the event's stewardship, reinforces this belief, saying that April 22 marks the anniversary of what many consider the birth of the modern environmental movement in 1970."[75]

That second myth is not considered to be any more accurate than the first by environmental historians. Robert Gottlieb, for example, rightly points out that Earth Day "was an idea directly tied to the enormous surge of interest in quality-of-life and environmental issues in the late 1960s;" as such the event took advantage of a movement that was already growing rather than serving as its impetus.[76] Still, few would make the mistake of downplaying the cultural significance of Earth Day, 1970. The event's success helped to establish an environmental consciousness in a widely dispersed public, and it reinforced the idea that environmental problems were national, as well as local, in scope. Furthermore, the publicity generated by the event also helped inspire concerted action on the part of state legislatures and Congress to tackle the nation's environmental problems.

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[74] For just one recent example of the perpetuation of this myth, see Paul Kengor, "Happy Earth Day... and Lenin Day," *The American Spectator,* April 22, 2013, (accessed April 1, 2014), http://spectator.org/articles/55727/happy-earth-day%E2%80%A6-and-lenin-day
[75] Earth Day Network, "Earth Day: The History of a Movement," (accessed April 1, 2014), http://www.earthday.org/earth-day-history-movement
[76] Gottlieb, Forcing the Spring, 105.

Although historians have noted the role the labor movement played in Earth Day's success, none have examined the ways that the event reverberated in union circles. Earth Day proved to be a watershed moment in the relationship between labor and environmentalists. Between 1945 and 1969, the two had supported some similar programs but worked together only infrequently, generally on local wilderness protection initiatives. In the wake of Earth Day, however, new horizons for environmental protection seemed reachable, new allies desirable. Building on common ideas that had been developing for decades and the shared experience of promoting and coordinating aspects of the event, the two endeavored to act in a more united fashion; they would no longer just stand on the same side on environmental issues, they would now stand together instead.

Pollution and the Sierra Club

As was explored in the previous chapter, the late 1960s was a period in which U.S. residents began to think more seriously about ecological issues. But ironically, the groups that should have been in the best position to capitalize on Americans' new-found interest in the environment were initially slow to act. Most old-line conservation organizations did not readily adopt pollution-control issues or make the transition to modern environmental organizations, and some never did.

The Sierra Club epitomizes this hesitancy. While its conservation interests grew in size throughout the 1950s and 1960s, it remained almost entirely devoted to matters of public lands management. Former Sierra Club board member and president William Siri later recalled “bits and pieces of other concerns emerging” by the early 1960s, but no major actions were taken.[77] The first and only time that pollution made it onto the Board’s agenda before 1969 was at the end of 1966, when it referred a Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs’ resolution on air pollution to the Club’s Advisory Committee on the Biological Sciences for further review.[78] Even pesticide use, an issue that had stirred significant opposition in the population at large, was slow to gain traction with Club leaders. For a long time, official conversation within the group about pesticides was limited specifically to whether spraying should be done in national parks. The Board of Directors was divided on the issue, concluding initially that more information was needed before they could act. It took a year for the Board to eventually adopt a position against pesticide use in the parks, calling for no “manipulation of habitat within National Parks and Monuments or in Wilderness, Wild, and Primitive Areas of National Forests, except at developed roadside camps and utility areas,” in 1964.[79]

The Sierra Club’s uncertainty in embracing issues like pollution was a reflection of internal splits developing within the organization’s leadership. One of the fault lines was generational: long-tenured members of the Club had defined it as a land preservation organization for so long that it was difficult for them to change with the times. Some members worried about what change would mean for the group and if it would detract from what they saw as their core responsibilities.[80] Moreover, the younger leaders who joined the board in the 1960s, and who tended to be more supportive of expanding the Club's range of causes, also rubbed the older members the wrong way by refusing to abide by the board's established code of polite disagreement. Siri remembers that "board meetings became more acrimonious as the sixties wore on... [in part] because a new breed of somewhat younger person was coming to the board, who held extreme and adamant positions on nearly every issue."[81]

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[77] William E. Siri oral history interview, *Reflections on the Sierra Club, the Environment, and Mountaineering, 1950s-1970s* (Berkeley: University of California, Berkeley, 1979), 32.

[78] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes November 14, 1969, 8, 15, BANC FILM 2945. These items are also available online through the University of California’s Online Archive of California http://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/hb9290139g/

[79] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, September 7-8, 1963, 5-6; September 5-6, 1964, 7; December 10, 1966, 9, BANC FILM 2945.

The other major source of friction within the group was between the volunteer leadership and the professional staff. The Sierra Club was created as a members-led organization, and maintained a strong volunteer leadership structure. The organization is made up of numerous local chapters which are mostly led by volunteers. Above them are state chapters, and at the top of the Sierra Club sits the Board of Directors, a group of fifteen volunteers who are elected by the membership to three-year, re-electable terms.[82] The head of the Board of Directors is the organization's president, who was traditionally the organization's most respected voice. However, by the 1960s, the Sierra Club was also starting to develop a growing professional staff headed by the executive director. The executive director officially answers to the board, but is in actuality responsible for the day to day running of the organization.[83] Today, the executive director is the most influential person in the whole Club leadership structure, but in the 1960s the amount of decision making authority he possessed was still undefined.

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[80] Michael McCloskey, *In the Thick of It: My Life in the Sierra Club* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2005): 53-58.
[81] Siri oral history, 39.
[82] Directors who serve two consecutive terms must take at least one year off before being re-eligible for election. "Roster of Sierra Club Directors," November 28, 2012.
[83] Sierra Club Organizational Structure, n.d. BANC MSS 2002/230, carton 16, folder 18.

As early as 1966, the staff, led in large part by Conservation Director Michael McCloskey, was moving toward seeing the urban environment as valuable and issues such as clean air as important battlegrounds of the future. The volunteer leadership governing the Board of Directors was more cautious about expanding the Club's purview to include these matters. Many of them were also irked by the abrasive leadership style of Executive Director Dave Brower, whose uncompromising positions and refusal to ask for the board's input on major decisions angered the volunteer leaders. The controversy over Brower's management, which "became a question of staff vs. volunteer member," was coming to a head in the late 1960s.[84] The board sought to limit the influence of the professional staff, and the exact opposite would be achieved by allowing the Club to engage with problems that the staff was more expert in than the volunteers. Some of this conflict was smoothed over when McCloskey replaced Brower as Executive Director in 1969 (it is no coincidence that the Club began taking pollution more seriously at that time), but tension between staff and volunteer leaders as well as between old and new members continued to make the group's progress toward fully embracing pollution and other modern environmental issues slow.[85] However, those issues were about to be thrust onto the Club's plate in a way that no one anticipated by the explosive success of Earth Day.

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[84] Siri oral history, 118-136; quote on page 125.

[85] McCloskey, *In the Thick of It,* 53-58; 85-90.

Earth Day, 1970

Earth Day was the brainchild of Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson in the summer of 1969. The event that Nelson originally planned was a national teach-in for the environment, to be modeled on the anti-Vietnam War teach-ins that had been sweeping the nation for several years. Nelson quickly enlisted the help of other legislators, including Maine Senator and former Democratic Vice Presidential candidate Edmund Muskie and California Republican Congressman Pete McCloskey, whose presence as co-chairman of the event was designed to give it an air of non-partisanship.[86] The chairmen hired Denis Hayes, a graduate student activist at Harvard University, to coordinate the planning for the event and set up a non-profit – Environmental Teach-In, Inc. – to accept donations.

Despite the organizers planning for a relatively small event, things rapidly took on a life of their own. Requests for information poured in from students and teachers across the country, and people began organizing local events on their own initiative. Nelson expressed great satisfaction with this turn of events, later remembering that "Earth Day worked because of the spontaneous response at the grassroots level. We had neither the time nor the resources to organize twenty million demonstrators and the thousands of schools and local communities that participated. That was the remarkable thing about Earth Day. It organized itself."[87]

Because there was so much grassroots support for the event's planning, the organizers ended up with little control over the final product. The offices staffed by

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[86] Pete McCloskey shared a last name with the Sierra Club's Executive Director, but they were not related. Bill Christofferson, *The Man from Clear Lake: Earth Day Founder Senator Gaylord Nelson* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 302.

[87] Nelson quoted in Christofferson, 305.

Hayes and others, mostly volunteers, worked to distribute information about the event and attempted to maintain an air about the proceedings that was not too confrontational. They were mainly successful in both efforts, although they could not entirely distance the event from the New Left counterculture for many observers (this despite the fact that the most radical student protestors generally avoided Earth Day celebrations, considering them a facile distraction from the more important issues of civil rights and the Vietnam War). And although Nelson would continue to refer to the occasion as the Environmental Teach-In, the plans quickly ballooned to encompass events far beyond that. April 22 would see parades, picketing, letter-writing, garbage clean-ups, street theater, government proclamations, and direct action against polluters.[88]

Of the wide spectrum of groups that participated in Earth Day – "congressmen, militants, businessmen, housewifes [sic], and hippies," according to one news report – few played a larger role than organized labor.[89] Senator Nelson recounted a few years after the event that "when we organized Earth Day in 1969, contributions in support of the event were made by a broad cross-section of labor unions representing a substantial majority of organized labor in the United States. Among the earliest contributors were Walter Reuther's United Auto Workers and the AFL-CIO through George Meany."[90] Denis Hayes has also asserted that the UAW was among the most important sponsors of the event:

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[88] For descriptions of the day's events, as well as the reaction of New Left activists see Christofferson, 306-311; Gottlieb, 105-107.

[89] "Americans Join in Massive Protest of Earth Pollution," *Traverse City Record Eagle* (MI), April 23, 1970.

[90] Gaylord Nelson, "The Common Roots of Poverty and Pollution," *The Progressive* (February, 1973):33-34, 33.

> Without the UAW, the first Earth Day would likely have flopped.... The UAW was by far the largest contributor to the first Earth Day, and its support went beyond the merely financial. It printed and mailed all our materials at its expense – even those critical of pollution-belching cars. Its organizers turned out workers in every city where it has a presence. And, of course, Walter then endorsed the Clean Air Act that the Big Four were doing their damnedest to kill or gut.[91]

As it turned out, the most valuable service provided by the UAW was its strong advocacy of the event within organized labor circles, with Reuther frequently cajoling or embarrassing other unions into firmer support. Meany, for example, was not terribly excited about the idea of an environmental teach-in, but he felt compelled to match the Auto Workers' early donations to the Earth Day cause so as not to be shown up his rival Reuther.[92]

Although Meany and Reuther had, as the presidents of the AFL and CIO respectively, united the house of labor in 1955, their alliance was rarely easy. While the two men shared certain personality traits – both were brash and not shy about confrontation – they had very different perspectives on labor politics. Meany, although a fierce and unflinching advocate for workers' right to organize, was thoroughly committed to a narrowly defined vision of business unionism.[93] As he saw it, unions' proper concerns, with few exceptions, involved the shop floor and their members' ability to earn a living. Bragging "I never went on strike in my life; I never ran a strike in my life; I never ordered anyone else to run a strike in my life,"

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[91] Denis Hayes quoted in Joe Uehlein, "Earth Day, Labor, and Me," Labor Network for Sustainability, http://www.labor4sustainability.org/post/earth-day-labor-and-me/ (accessed July 29, 2011).
[92] Christofferson, 303.
[93] For more detailed discussion on the feud between Reuther and Meany, see Boyle, *The Heyday of American Liberalism;* Walter Lichtenstein, *Walter Reuther: the Most Dangerous Man in Detroit* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995); Robert Zieger, *The CIO, 1935 – 1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Archie Robinson, *George Meany and His Times: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982).

Meany, more than any other single individual, was responsible for dedicating the AFL-CIO to mainstream social ideas and accord with employers.[94]

Reuther, on the other hand, imagined organized labor's role in the public sphere more broadly. Unions, he thought, should be acting in concert with other civil society organizations to improve the lives of all Americans, not just their members. He actively embraced the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements, and he was highly critical of other AFL-CIO leaders for their hesitation to join "with other community groups to rebuild cities, fight pollution, improve education, improve the security of the aged, extend equal rights and opportunities, insure maximum economic growth, fight poverty and improve communication with 'the liberal intellectual and academic community.'"[95]

Tension between the two over labor's political direction led to the UAW's withdrawal from the AFL-CIO in 1968. Pollution control in and of itself likely played little part in the UAW's split from the AFL-CIO, especially considering that the AFL-CIO supported some pollution control endeavors – though its goals were certainly more cautious than the Auto Workers'. Still, Reuther's desire to work tightly with environmentalists, and Meany's refusal to do so, was part and parcel of the larger dynamics at play between the two in regard to civil rights and the Vietnam War. By aligning himself with the environmental cause, Reuther also encouraged other unionists to support his social unionist vision.

The United Auto Workers provided funds and manpower to the Earth Day events, and Reuther personally worked hard to spread the clean environment message as well. In the days leading up to the event, Reuther shared the stage with congressional leaders of the Earth Day campaign, trying to increase support for the event and, more importantly, for the environmental protection legislation that was to follow. On March 13, he and Edmund Muskie challenged a standing-room only crowd of University of Michigan students to get organized politically on the state and local levels. Reuther took his time with the crowd and in interviews afterward to remind people of his union's commitment to healthy workplaces and healthy communities, and he promised to make pollution control an issue in UAW collective bargaining with auto manufacturers. It became exactly that, as nearly 750 environmental protection demands were made by UAW representatives in contract negotiations that year.[96]

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[94] This quote is widely cited, for one example see Paul Le Blanc, *A Short History of the Working Class from Colonial Times to the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Humanity Books, 1999), 104.
[95] Frank C. Porter, "UAW Scores AFL-CIO in Reform Bid," *WP,* February 10, 1967.

The UAW's support for Earth Day was all the more impressive considering that the product most of its members were paid to assemble – the automobile – was not going to escape its share of condemnation. After all, it was the omnipresent car that belched lead-contaminated fumes and covered American cities in a haze of smog. Sixty percent of air pollution in the United States, the *New York Times* reported two days before Earth Day, came from autos.[97] And when Earth Day arrived, citizens across the nation did indeed seek out ways to symbolically protest the dangerous pollution of the internal combustion engine. Some decided to leave their car in the garage for the day, choosing to walk or bike instead. College students buried cars or their engines on many different campuses, while students at Wayne State University in Detroit planned a more spectacular event – picketing General Motors headquarters. Several big cities, including New York and Philadelphia, cordoned off parts of town from motorized vehicles; meanwhile, New York City Mayor John Lindsay asked municipal services to only use cars for emergencies and trotted out an electric car, which he used in his travels among the city's events.[98]

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[96] George C. Wilson, "Muskie Asks Political Action to Save U.S. Environment," *WP,* March 14, 1970; the number of environmental demands made by the UAW in 1970 comes from Dewey, 56.

[97] Gladwin Hill, "Man and His Environment: Some Basic Facts About a Growing National Problem," *NYT,* April 20, 1970. Hill cited numbers from 1965 on the sources of air pollution.

Rather than being deterred by the targeting of automobiles, the UAW used the opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to the environmental cause. Senator Nelson was invited to speak at the Auto Workers' national convention in Atlantic City on April 21, and he used the opportunity to call for cleaner, emission-free engines. His comments largely echoed those made by Reuther one day earlier when he declared in his presidential address that "the auto industry is one of the worst culprits and has failed to meet its public responsibility."[99] Cleaner engines and a greater emphasis on mass transportation, Reuther claimed, could help solve the environmental crisis while at the same time maintaining high levels of employment for auto workers. The convention delegates, presumably convinced by the arguments of Reuther and Nelson, passed a resolution calling for a national "Environmental Bill of Rights," using the collective bargaining process to fight pollution, and imposing "a rigid timetable ... upon the auto industry to develop an engine that will not pollute the air."[100] As if to reemphasize the sincerity of the resolution, the UAW followed it up by bringing a propane-powered car to lead the Earth Day parade in St. Louis, to demonstrate that automobiles could produce little emissions if the industry took the problem of air pollution seriously.[101]

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[98] Wayne King, "Pollution Protests in April to be Varied in Militance," *NYT,* March 8, 1970; David Bird, "City Announces Earth Day Plan," *NYT,* April 17, 1970; "Anti-Pollution Everyone's Job," *Herald-Press* (St. Joseph, MI), April 23, 1970; "Widely Observe Environment Day," *Daily Globe* (Ironwood, MI), April 22, 1970.

[99] Reuther quoted in Christofferson, 308.

[100] "UAW Asks Cleaner Car Engine," *WP,* April 22, 1970.

If the AFL-CIO did not share the UAW's enthusiasm for Earth Day, it was not alone. With the exceptions of the Wilderness Society and the Conservation Foundation, the major, established conservation groups participated only marginally as well.[102] For many, their hesitation was cultural. Establishment conservationists including Michael McCloskey worried that Earth Day was going to be dominated by New Left radicals and those whose environmental concern "expressed itself through a lifestyle emphasis involving voluntary simplicity, and communes, and things of that sort," i.e. hippies.[103] The older groups also thought that the focus of Earth Day was misplaced and that urban pollution would detract attention from their pet issue of wilderness protection.

Each of these feelings was manifest within the Sierra Club as much as any other organization. The buttoned-down, culturally conservative leadership of the Club was uncomfortable with the long-haired student protestors they imagined at the helm of the new movement, and theses leaders were also unsure of the direct action tactics that were being organized in some quarters. McCloskey later justified the Club's inactivity by claiming that it "wasn't sure it had much expertise when it came to mass demonstrations, and we did not particularly identify with the counterculture that was heavily involved in Earth Day organizing. We believed more in mastering the arts of political persuasion than in demonstrating to show our discontent."[104] The staid Club conservationists clearly worried that their image could be tarnished if the public came to associate their movement with New Left activism.

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[101] "Americans Join in Massive Protest of Earth Pollution," *Traverse City Record Eagle* (MI), April 23, 1970.
[102] Gottlieb, 109
[103] McCloskey oral history, 5.

At the same time, many in the upper echelons of the Club were also concerned that wilderness issues would be left behind with the emergence of new environmental concerns. This fear was especially apparent among the volunteer directors. Ed Wayburn, the Club's president from 1961 to 1964 and again from 1967 to 1969, worried "we cannot afford to let up on the battles for old-fashioned Wilderness Areas, for more National Parks, for preservation of forests and streams and meadows and the earth's beautiful wild places."[105] While it was good that people were paying attention to the environment, the new environmental concerns could prove to be distractions from needed conservation initiatives. The Club's leaders were not yet convinced that these other issues mattered as much as their traditional interests, and they also knew that they lacked expertise in dealing with pollution and urban environmental problems. If new issues came to the fore, the Club risked losing some of the prestige it had acquired through decades of involvement with the wilderness. Any focus on "approaches other than those the traditional movement has pioneered and knows best," noted McCloskey, could mean falling membership, falling donations, or other disasters. He also hoped that "our willingness to learn and to work with others will induce a spirit of cooperation rather than competition," but nothing could be guaranteed.[106]

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[104] McCloskey, *In the Thick of It*, 105.
[105] Wayburn quoted in Gottlieb, 107.
[106] Quotes from Gottlieb, 108.

All these worries combined to make the Sierra Club approach Earth Day with apprehension, but the organization could not avoid it entirely. The national office gave the chapters permission to get involved in whatever way they saw fit, and those that did participated in the same type of locally planned events as the rest of the country. The national office Sierra Club also got its famous books department involved with the publication of an anthology called *Ecotactics.* The book was designed as a primer to help show the newly environmentally-aware ways to get involved; it sold 400,000 copies in the months around the event.[107] McCloskey himself spoke at the University of Minnesota on Earth Day, delivering the keynote address for the day's events, encouraging the audience "to make a lifelong commitment to environmental work."[108]

If the Sierra Club national leaders were hoping that Earth Day would pass without affecting their priorities very much, they were in for a disappointment. Earth Day had an impact on the Club far out of proportion to its moderate involvement, and it ended up reshaping the organization in important ways. Luckily, most of the changes seemed to benefit the group, rather than harming it, as many board members had feared. Rather than being left behind by the emerging "new environmentalism," the Club was able to adapt better than almost any other conservation organization and became the nation's leading voice on environmental matters.

Between 1969 and 1971, the Sierra Club's membership grew from 79,000 to 131,000. McCloskey reasonably surmised that this growth was "caused in large measure by the explosion in media coverage in all things environmental in the months leading up to the first Earth Day." The Club's numbers did not just benefit from increased environmental awareness but also from its preexisting position as the best known conservation group in the country. The "exploding media coverage created a new market for environmentalism," McCloskey explained, "and in this market, the Sierra Club was already a well-established brand."[109] The Club's staff understood that its growing membership had to do with the prominence of the organization in particular as much as it had to do with awareness of the environment generally, and they worked to increase its media exposure whenever possible.

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[107] McCloskey, *In the Thick of It,* 105; *Ecotactics* circulation numbers in Turner, 197.
[108] McCloskey, *In the Thick of It*, 106.

In the end, Earth Day also helped create a more holistic approach to the environment within the Sierra Club – "a new consensus, new agenda, new philosophy, and new approach," in the words of the executive director.[110] Important members of the professional staff were already leaning toward such a position, embracing pollution issues as well as wilderness, at the end of the 1960s, but they had a difficult time convincing the volunteer-led Board of Directors to accept a change in direction. Earth Day helped give the staff the upper hand internally both by increasing the Board's awareness of urban environmental problems and by allowing the staff to argue that if they did not embrace the concerns of the public, the Club would become irrelevant. Also, since a large portion of the Club's new membership was made up of the same young idealists who had turned out to Earth Day events, the elected Board now had a new constituency to worry about pleasing.[111] Within months, pollution issues took on a new life within the group, and they decided to create alliances to further the goals of ending air and water pollution.[112]

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[109] Ibid, 101.

[110] Ibid, 107.

[111] The late 1960s and early 1970s was an incredibly tense time within the Club. Turner describes these conflicts as arising from "relative authority and influence of members and chapter versus the professional staff," as well as "conservation policies and philosophies." Less than a year before Earth Day, in May, 1969, about one-fourth of the staff was fired or resigned in protest over the firing of Dave Brower. Certainly, some of them acted out of personal loyalty, just as some of the anti-Brower people

Labor-Environmental Cooperation After Earth Day

The environmental regulatory system that was built between 1970 and 1975 is testament to the ecological awareness that Earth Day both contributed to and emerged from. Congress passed a series of new federal environmental regulations in that period, including the National Environmental Policy Act (which established the Council on Environmental Quality, 1970), Clean Air Act (1970), the Occupational Safety and Health Act (1970), the Clean Water Act (1972), the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act (1972), the Pesticide Control Act (1972), the Endangered Species Act (1973), the Safe Drinking Water Act (1974), and the Toxic Substances Control Act (1975). Responsibility to enforce these new regulations fell to a handful of similarly newly created federal agencies – including the Environmental Protection Agency, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and the Consumer Product Safety Commission – as well as effected citizens, who could sue polluters for damages. Private watchdog organizations also came to play an important role in enforcing environmental regulations. The Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund became the best known in the late 1960s, when it convinced the court system to grant it standing to sue polluters even though members had not been personally injured by the pollution. These reforms were similar in goals to some that

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were hostile to him out of personal antipathy. Still, much of the Brower conflict ended up being a personification of the larger staff/volunteer, conservation/environmentalism splits the group was experiencing. See Turner, 179-183.

[112] Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, April 6, 1970; Minutes of the Annual Organizational Meeting of the Board of Directors, May 2-3, 1970; Executive Committee of the Board of Directors meeting minutes, June 20, 1970, BANC FILM 2945.

had come before, building on a groundwork that had been laid in the states in previous decades. The major difference between the environmental regulatory system of the early 1970s and its predecessors was its scope; whereas earlier regulative systems targeted particular industries or sources of pollution, these new acts applied to the entire industrial system.[113]

As this new regulatory environment was taking shape, unions and environmental organizations worked together to make sure that the legislation would be strong enough to accomplish the difficult task of cleaning up the American environment. Hoping to capitalize on the success of Earth Day, a strategy conference was organized by Denis Hayes and Environmental Action – the renamed Environmental Teach-In, Inc. – at the UAW's Family Education Center in Black Lake, Michigan in the summer of 1970. Built by the union in the late 1960s to be a place where unionists could come to learn, share tactics, and relax in serene wooded space, Black Lake was, according to Walter Reuther, "a thing of beauty where man and nature can live in harmony."[114] In the summer of 1970, it was also the place where 250 environmental leaders, student Earth Day organizers, and union chiefs came together to network, workshop ideas, and coordinate their efforts for the coming months.

The Black Lake conference included a great deal of spirited spit-balling of ideas, with the national press reporting that discussions "ranged over a wide variety of urban and industrial pollution problems and political, legal and educational methods for forcing reforms."[115] Both sides felt free to raise their favored issues. The unionists hoped to use the opportunity to create more of a groundswell for proposed legislation that would become the Occupational Safety and Health Act. Environmentalists, meanwhile, promoted the idea of "Auto-Free Zones" in cities to alleviate smog.[116]

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[113] The last point was brought to my attention by David Sicilia, "Distant Proximity: Writing the History of American Business since 1945," *Business and Economic History* 26, No. 1 (Fall, 1997): 266-281. See also David Vogel, "'New' Social Regulation in History and Comparative Perspective," in *Regulation in Perspective: Historical Essays,* ed. Thomas McCraw (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

[114] Lichtenstein, *Walter Reuther: the Most Dangerous Man in Detroit*, 436-437.

The subject of the new movement's tactics also attracted a great deal of attention. Participants worried that electoral politics would prove ineffective in a political world where "politicians gave lip service to efforts to solve environmental problems, then emasculated antipollution bills in committee in response to the pressures of industrial lobbies." Surely, holding legislators' feet to the public interest fire would be necessary, but conferees also considered more direct democratic means to produce environmental legislation, such as ballot referendums. Other kinds of direct action tactics, such as creating "proxy fights in stockholders meetings," also received some attention, as did various other ways to pressure polluters.[117]

Although the recently proposed Clean Air Act is not directly mentioned in the reports of the event, it was almost certainly a topic of discussion. After all, it had been Senator Muskie's announcement that he would push clean air legislation, more than anything else, which set the conference planning gears in motion a few short weeks after Earth Day. And the coordinated effort subsequent to the conference smoothed the way for the Clean Air Act's passage considerably. The UAW, along with the Sierra Club and several other environmental organizations, signed a joint statement to Congress calling for "air pollution control standards so tough they would banish the internal combustion engine from autos within five years," and "guarantee every American a safer, cleaner atmosphere by 1975."[118] The union involvement in the lobbying efforts for the Clean Air Act was especially critical. Business spokesmen attempted to defeat the bill by characterizing it as endangering the employment of industrial workers. But when the UAW, OCAW, United Steelworkers, International Association of Machinists, and AFL-CIO (not all of whom were represented at Black Lake) registered their support, it "really muted the jobs issue," according to Dennis Hayes.[119]

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[115] John Kifner, "Earth Day Group Zeros in on Autos," *NYT,* July 20, 1970.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid.

Similar activity characterized the next several years. The Black Lake conference participants scored a second victory when OSHA passed later in 1970, with wide support from the environmental community. "The in-plant environment is merely a concentrated microcosm of the outside environment," Environmental Action reminded its followers, "the environmental health hazards that workers face affect the entire population."[120] Communication between the various organizations was further institutionalized the next year, when the Urban Environment Conference was founded to provide a permanent meeting place for unionists, environmentalists, and consumer advocates. The UAW, OCAW, and United Steelworkers joined with environmental organizations again in 1972 to lobby for that year's environmental initiatives. The combined effort was especially critical in securing the passage of the Clean Water Act, which only became law after overcoming a presidential veto.[121]

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[118] Quoted in Dewey, 56.

[119] Jack Doyle, *Taken for a Ride: Detroit's Big Three and the Politics of Pollution* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2000), 62.

[120] Quoted in Robert Gordon, "'Shell No!': OCAW and the Labor-Environmental Alliance," *Environmental History* 3, No. 4 (October, 1998): 460-487, 466. The newer, younger and more radical environmental groups such as Environmental Action tended to be far more vocal and active in their support for OSHA than established groups including the Sierra Club, whose support was fairly passive. While this less-than-active support certainly frustrated some in the labor camp – OCAW Public Relations Director Ray Davidson described them as "intellectual snobs" – historians would do well to note how far outside their comfort zone the Club was already operating by even mildly throwing their weight behind a workplace initiative.

The era's biggest test for labor-environmental coalition builders came in 1973, when Shell Oil was struck by the OCAW. In the fall of 1972, when the 175,000 member Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers union entered into contract negotiations with the nation's oil refiners, workplace environmental concerns topped their agenda. The union insisted on inserting clauses into the coming contracts that called for employee medical exams, third-party plant inspections by mutually agreeable experts paid for by the companies, and, most importantly, labor-management health and safety committees who could oversee plant safety and make binding decisions regarding safety policies and procedures. Although refiners considered health and safety policies to be exclusively management prerogatives, most did not want to risk a major labor dispute over the issue. So, by January, 1973, the union was able to come to terms with all of the nation's largest oil producers except for two, one of whom was the second largest seller of gasoline and other petroleum products in the United States: Shell Oil.[122]

Shell's intransigence led the members of the eight OCAW locals they employed – among the most militant locals in the union – to walk out at the end of January. However, the union realized that a strike on its own was not likely to have a large enough impact on the company's bottom line to affect the negotiations because most of Shell's American production facilities had been automated by 1973 and "production continue[d] at all struck facilities."[123] So to increase the pressure on Shell, the OCAW called for a national boycott of its products. The work the union had done to establish connections within the environmental community in the years prior paid dividends when eleven environmental groups quickly signed on to the boycott, claiming "this struggle is of historical importance in that it is the first time a major labor union has struck on what is fundamentally an environmental issue."[124]

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[121] Quote from Elsie Carper, "Cost of Clean Water Bill Overstated, Coalition Says," *W P,* March 7, 1972; see also "Clean Water," *WP,* January 30, 1972; "White House Prodded on Clean Water Bill," *WP,* November 12, 1971; "$24 Billion Clean Water Bill Approved by Hill Conferees," *WP,* September 15, 1972.

[122] Gordon, 468-469. Shell Oil (U.S.) was also a subsidiary of Royal Dutch/Shell, the world's second biggest oil company. See Committee to Support the Shell Strike, "A Profile of Shell," BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 190, folder 11.

The question of whether or not to endorse the strike and boycott was a controversial one within the Sierra Club, which did not immediately join in. Although the group had made strides toward embracing a wider range of issues in the previous few years, taking sides in a labor dispute over in-plant conditions went too far for many. Outraged board member Pete Zars fought vociferously against doing so, minimizing the dangers faced by industrial workers. "It is my belief," Zars wrote to his colleagues, "that the Club should have the least to do with the in-plant industrial environment and the most to do with the outdoor recreational environment…. When I accept a job as a dishwasher, I expect to deal with dirty dishes, hot soapy water, and fogged eyeglasses."[125] But at the same time, the OCAW, UAW, Friends of the Earth, Environmental Action, and other groups who were already participating in the boycott encouraged the Club to follow suit as a means of cementing a positive image within labor circles.[126] The question bubbled at various levels of the Club hierarchy for weeks, until the Board of Directors' Executive Committee decided to support the strike in early March.

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[123] Letter from Shell Oil Company to all employees, January 26, 1973, BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 190, folder 11.

[124] Statement in Support of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Environmental Health Struggle, BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 190, folder 11; see also Gordon, 469.

[125] Letter to Executive Committee Members and others from Pete Zars, February 14, 1973, BANC MSS 71/295 c., carton 190, folder 11.

The Sierra Club's association brought the boycott renewed attention and helped justify the strike among a larger segment of the population. Uniting under the auspices of the Committee to Support the Shell Strike, the boycott's labor and environmental planners disseminated ideas for how to conduct the boycott. Individuals could help by not buying Shell products and returning their Shell credit cards, while the more adventurous were encouraged to "Demonstrate at Shell offices... Picket Shell Service Stations... Distribute literature," and try to pressure universities holding Shell stock to sell it.[127] Within a few months the boycott's impact was obvious: sales of Shell gasoline were down by as much as a quarter.[128]

Despite the pressure on Shell, the outcome of the boycott was mixed. The OCAW was in even worse shape than the company, with strike funds dangerously low and one of the biggest striking locals pushing for independent negotiations. The strike ended at the beginning of June with a compromise settlement – Shell allowed the creation of the health and safety committees, but their prescriptions would be nonbinding and the company would not have to pay for outside inspections. Without the strict enforcement mechanisms, the committees in Shell plants were significantly less powerful than their counterparts at other refiners.[129]

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[126] Gordon, 470-472; Letter to Michael McCloskey from A.C. Hogge, January 31, 1971, BANC MSS 71/295 c carton 190, folder 11.

[127] Committee to Support the Shell Strike, "Organizing the Shell Boycott," BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 190, folder 11.

[128] Gordon, 473-475.

[129] Gordon, 474-475.

In addition, in the wake of the boycott the Sierra Club's grassroots members made it clear to their leaders that the directors who pushed to join the boycott had gotten out ahead of the rank and file. Of the letters received by the national office reacting to the Board's decision, only a few were written in support, while ten times as many expressed "doubt, puzzlement, or various degrees of unhappiness."[130] Many thought the decision was "too political" or were hostile to organized labor in general. But most of the hostility toward the decision to support the strikers emanated from the conservation branch of the group, those that thought the Club should stay out of industrial environmental issues and focus on "scenic resources," "outings," or "coyotes and lions."[131]

Even though only eleven members dropped out of the Club in the month after joining the boycott, the grassroots anger that was expressed gave additional leverage to leaders who still felt insecure about embracing an ever-expanding vision of environmentalism. The letters of disapproval that came into the San Francisco headquarters in 1973 expressed a fear that the organization would not be able to reconcile its "historic focus on natural areas" with a new, broader agenda.[132] These letters echoed the fears of Club President Ray Sherwin, who wondered if the "Club's extension of its activities beyond traditional wilderness and resource conservation" would endanger its "credibility" with the public and policymakers.[133] Although it was too late to put the genie back in the bottle entirely, the negative reaction of its membership kept the Sierra Club's efforts for the occupational environment limited to small, symbolic actions for several more years.

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[130] Memo to the Executive Committee from Gene Coan, April 2, 1973, BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 190, folder 11.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ray Sherwin, "A Broader Look at the Environment," *Sierra Club Bulletin* (April 1973), 18.

The outcome of the Shell strike and boycott was not exactly what the labor-environmental organizers would have wanted. The strike ended with partial success at best, and stirred a reaction among Club members that chastened the organization's biggest advocates of workplace environmentalism. Yet, the effort was not a total disappointment. By bringing the forces of organized labor and environmental politics together in strong collaboration, the boycott showed that the two sides could rely on one another for support. Coming as it did during a period of increasing cooperation, the boycott appeared to be the culmination of a long journey towards a firm blue-green alliance.

Conclusion

For decades, there had been considerable overlap in the agendas of organized labor and environmentalists. When the Sierra Club proposed expanding the National Park System or setting aside land as a wilderness preserve, they often found many unions willing to accede to those demands. When they called for the protection of natural resources, unions agreed that using up the nation's supplies of timber, minerals, and soil was a bad idea. And when some of the biggest conservation organizations in the country belatedly recognized that pollution was an issue worthy of their concern, they found that progressive unions such as the UAW had been working for clean air and water for nearly a generation. But while the two sides pursued overlapping goals, they did so independently and only occasionally acknowledged one another's efforts.

Nothing that could fairly be called a coalition, or even a relationship, existed between them.

This chapter has argued that the first Earth Day changed that dynamic by opening a pathway for closer, more sustained interaction. This pathway was laid down by the outpouring of regulatory initiatives that followed in Earth Day's wake, which were instrumental in creating a relationship between organized labor and the environmental movement. Recognizing the need for massive and sustained pressure for a cleaner environment, unions and environmental organizations reached out to one another as they never had before. Instead of independently pushing for the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Occupational Safety and Health Acts, the two sides established a united message: these initiatives are good for all Americans, regardless of their employment. The experience of helping craft the Clean Air and Occupational Safety and Health Acts created a foundation of good communication to draw on, and the new regulations also created a legal framework whose continued monitoring would keep labor and environmentalists in dialogue. During the Shell strike, this cooperation went beyond talk and beyond lobbying. Workers, framing their problems as environmental ones, asserted their rights to control their workplace atmosphere; environmental organizations moved outside of their comfort zones to participate in protest action in support.

However, workplace health and safety issues were controversial within the Club. Although some members supported embracing them and the relationship to labor more extensively, others argued that doing so was a mistake. There was more at stake in this skirmish than a minor tactical point. The early occupational safety and health debate took place at a time of major philosophical transition for the Sierra Club, as the youthful cohort of members who were drawn to the organization in the wake of Earth Day sought to infuse the group with a broader understanding of environmentalism than the more established, traditional membership base was comfortable with. For much of the Club's old guard, taking on urban environmental issues such as occupational health and safety, pollution, and solid waste was an uncomfortable step away from the natural area protection agenda that had initially drawn them to the Sierra Club. "Bit by bit," Will Siri would later recount "the Club's vision broadened to include such things as pesticides, pollution ... energy, and even labor. This at first was not accepted with enthusiasm by all members of the Club. A few argued that the Sierra Club was a wilderness conservation organization, and let's stay in the woods."[134]

Staying in the woods was not an option, however. The flood of young people joining the group in the wake of Earth Day did not just bring new ideas; their sheer numbers also rapidly increased the complexity of managing the organization, which in turn strengthened the hand of the professional staff. Although they backtracked on occupational health, the staff, led by Michael McCloskey, was increasingly moving toward a broader vision of environmentalism. They would not give up on pollution, and they would not willingly give up on the labor alliance. Their commitment to that alliance would be tested even more in the coming years.

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[134] Siri oral history, 33.

Chapter 3: Recession and Green Blackmail, 1972-1976

In recognition of the Sierra Club's support during its 1973 Shell strike, the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers invited Michael McCloskey to speak at its annual convention in August. He was a natural choice. McCloskey had grown up in Oregon in the 1940s, the son of "fervent New Deal Democrats."[135] He had worked in a cannery in high school and college before graduating and serving a tour in the Army. McCloskey later attended law school at the University of Oregon with an eye toward a potential political career. However, that dream rapidly faded in 1961, when McCloskey took a job as the first field organizer in the Sierra Club's history, responsible for managing operations across the Northwestern United States.

By 1969, McCloskey had assumed leadership of the entire Sierra Club and had continued to steer the organization in the general direction that had been laid out by his predecessor, Dave Brower. Like Brower, McCloskey envisioned the Club as an assertive organization that "would not shy away from controversy."[136] He also understood that it was in the Club's best interest to not just be a wilderness organization, but to actively engage with the wider concerns of modern environmentalism. At the same time, the lawyerly McCloskey did not attract the sort of negative attention that the grandstanding Brower sometimes did. McCloskey saw tremendous value in compromise, big-tent environmentalism, and in nurturing political alliances wherever they could be found. He brought to the directorship a history of working with unions and blue-collar workers, and he was one of the leading voices in convincing the Club's Board to support the OCAW strike.[137] He was, and in the coming years would continue to be, one of his group's fiercest proponents of cooperation with organized labor.

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[135] McCloskey, *In the Thick of It,* 13.
[136] Ibid, 102; Turner, 179-190.

McCloskey's convention speech, entitled "Labor and Environmentalism: Two Movements that Should Work Together," outlined an argument for blue-green collaboration that would have been familiar to many in the audience. He noted that the two movements had a great deal in common and shared similar political opponents. "Both of us have learned that a mercenary society that is callous about the fate of workers," he declared, "is apt to be callous about the fate of the public's health and the rights of other living things.... We have both suffered from the callousness of industries that don't care, whose only goal is profit, who fight every reform, who oppose every program, who never stop disparaging us, and who never tire of misleading the public.... With the forces arrayed against us, we need to work together if we are to have any chance of succeeding."[138]

Not only did the two sides face similar obstacles, but they also had recent history on their side. McCloskey recalled a litany of familiar occasions when unions and environmental organizations had collaborated on shared goals, including the creation of OSHA, the passage of the Clean Water Act (along with provisions that would allow workers to call for EPA investigations of plants suspected of endangering their health), and preventing the building of an American supersonic transport aircraft.[139] Given their growing familiarity with one another, McCloskey was hopeful that workers and environmentalists could continue to work together to achieve their overlapping interests.

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[137] Ibid, 14-30.

[138] Michael McCloskey, "Labor and Environmentalism: Two Movements that Should Work Together," Address to the Annual Convention of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union, August 7, 1973, BANC MSS 71/295 c, Carton 174, Folder 18, 4.

At the same time, McCloskey's tone was as much defensive as it was optimistic. He worried that the environmental community was being made into a boogeyman by industrial polluters, and that unions were not doing enough to combat the stereotype of the environmental job killer. "Environmentalists are beginning to feel that they are being singled out for special criticism on the job issue," McCloskey claimed, despite the fact that little hard evidence existed to support the allegation that environmental protection led to plant closures.[140] "It is time for the labor movement to realize that it can't uncritically accept management's word on ecology or environmental matters any more than it can on working conditions and wages and hours.... Any union which looks only to management for word about what the future holds in terms of supplies, raw materials and markets may be dumbly being led to slaughter."[141] Within a very short period of time, McCloskey's fears would prove to be prescient, as the cooperative activity between labor unions and environmental organizations began to falter.

Many scholars have correctly suggested that the mid-1970s was a rocky period for blue-green collaboration. Historians Scott Dewey and Brian Mayer, for example, each individually made that argument more than ten years apart.[142] The same is true for sociologist Michael Dreiling, who posited in his essay "From Margin to Center: Environmental Justice and Social Unionism as Sites for Intermovement Solidarity" that "the labor-environmental alliance that culminated in the passage of the Occupational Safety and Health Act and Clean Air Act amendments had run course by the early 1970s."[143] These scholars and others further suggest that the dual causes of this split were the deep recession and energy crisis that both began in 1973. These two issues, the historical literature insists, were a brutal one-two punch from which coalition builders in the labor and environmental movements struggled to recover.[144]

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[139] Ibid, 2-4. The Super Sonic Transport (SST) had been proposed as a U.S. response to the Anglo-French built Concorde. Environmentalists opposed its construction for a variety of reasons, including concerns that the sonic booms created when an aircraft goes beyond the speed of sound could be harmful to people and disturb the habitats of wildlife in the plane's flight path. This event is an odd one for McCloskey to have included, because while the OCAW joined with environmentalists in trying to block the SST, most unions and the AFL-CIO strongly backed its construction.

[140] Ibid, 10.

[141] Ibid, 12.

Unfortunately, none of these scholars actually investigate this claim of causality. The labor-environmental relationship in the mid- to late-1970s has never been the focus of historical examination; the period has served primarily as either a coda at the end of a postwar study or a brief introductory catch-up leading into an exploration of the 1980s or later.[145] Since the mid-1970s are not the focus of these studies, their presentations of the era tend to be impressionistic, with secondary sources and a dash of common sense taking the place of detailed primary analysis. Taking a deeper look at the period over the next two chapters, I hope to disentangle inherited wisdom from historical reality. This deeper look reinforces the idea that the recession drove a wedge between unions and environmental organizations while calling into question energy issues' role in that break.

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[142] Dewey; Brian Mayer, *Blue-Green Coalitions: Fighting for Safe Workplaces and Healthy Communities* (Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, 2009).
[143] Michael Dreiling, "From Margin to Center: Environmental Justice and Social Unionism as Sites for Intermovement Solidarity," *Race, Gender & Class* 6, No. 1 (October, 1998): 51-62, 52.
[144] See Montrie, 112-114; Gottlieb, 288-292; Dewey, 58-59; Brian K. Obach, *Labor and the Environmental Movement: the Quest for Common Ground* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004): 48.
[145] Montrie and Gordon are both examples of the former, the latter can be seen in Timothy J. Minchin, *Forging a Common Bond: Labor and Environmental Activism during the BASF Lockout* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2003).

This chapter explores the recession's effects on labor-environmental coalition making. It argues that a concerted campaign by the forces of industry designed to weaken and discredit cross-movement collaboration, combined with recessionary economic pressure on workers and their institutions, led to a breakdown in cooperative activity as labor organizations pulled away from environmentalists and reconsidered their previous environmental commitments. The industry's campaign, led after 1972 by the Business Roundtable, struck cultural as well as economic chords, threatening blue-collar workers across the country with the prospect of job loss for the sake of granting a few snobby environmentalists a pristine wilderness in which to play. Green blackmail, the term adopted by unions and environmental organizations alike to describe such threats from business, became an important dynamic in the relationship between workers and environmentalists, as the recession seemed to offer an affirmation of business leaders' claims that the new regulatory system developing in the United States would damage the nation's economy.

Concerned environmentalists, finding themselves on the defensive with their former unionist partners, did whatever they could to win back their erstwhile allies. The Sierra Club struggled to refocus the terms of the economic debate by arguing that environmentalism was a job creator rather than a job destroyer. It proposed legislation to prevent green blackmail and to provide for compensation to any workers who were actually displaced by new environmental policies. The Club even created a committee within its leadership structure devoted to courting back working people. Its efforts, along with those few voices from the labor movement still calling for closer cooperation, had little effect. Coalition builders found themselves forced to adopt a defensive posture, focusing their time on showing that environmentalism did not create problems for working people rather than demonstrating its benefits for them.

The Business Counterattack

From the perspective of environmental movement veterans, industrial polluters appeared to have been caught off guard in 1970 by the rising tide of public support for environmentalism building around Earth Day.[146] As ebullient environmentalists pushed legislation through Congress and state legislatures, and many Americans took it upon themselves to undertake more environmentally conscious lifestyles, industrial polluters scrambled to find a way to stem the movement. But corporate messaging stumbled badly in the months following the event. Presenting Americans with an unfocused and inconsistent series of messages, a normally slick public relations apparatus struggled to paint a picture of the environment that would sway the debate in its favor.

The initial industry response to surging public concern with the environment was to obfuscate the issue. Some polluters kept their emission records secret from investigators, others denied that a problem existed or claimed that even if the environment was polluted, further study was needed to understand the trouble's causes and consequences.[147] When environmental problems ultimately proved too stark to minimize, the industrial response shifted to deflecting blame to the public at large. Chemical manufacturer Hercules Incorporated, for example, admitted that "there is no doubt that the flow of pollutants into the ground, streams and the air we breathe has waxed for many years and it is time to make it wane," but it was not willing to accept what it considered to be undue amounts of responsibility for that problem. "The sources of pollution are multiple," Herculese contended, "the public is so used to using the environment as a sink for its unused and unwanted by-products, that it is hard to get them to realize the true picture or to accept the ultimate responsibility which must rest with the people."[148] In this way, many corporations hoped to avoid public perceptions of their guilt by shaping the nation's understanding of the problem as one of individual responsibility. This line of reasoning suggested that the solution to the pollution issue lay in turning off the lights and properly disposing of household garbage rather than in government regulation.

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[146] McCloskey, *In the Thick of It*, 117.

[147] William Blair, "U.S. and Industry Will Study Smog," *NYT,* February 15, 1968; David Bird, "Pollution Limits Fought in Jersey," *NYT,* December 12, 1968, "Pollution Data Called Lacking: U.S.

Instead of running from the public's new-found environmental outrage, other companies hoped that by greening their image and voluntarily undertaking environmental programs they could avoid mandatory regulations and perhaps even turn that sense of outrage to their advantage. Pepsi Cola President James Sommerall encouraged bottlers of his beverages to take part in anti-litter projects in their home areas because "by doing so, you will win many friends and influence those people

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Aide says Industry Is Hampering a Cleanup," *NYT,* February 19, 1969, "Industry Discount Thermal Pollution," *NYT,* March 4, 1969.

[148] Letter from Robert W. Cairns to Gaylord Nelson and Paul McCloskey, April 2, 1970, . Wisconsin Historical Society, http://www.nelsonearthday.net/collection/earthday-critics/nelson_6-28_business_leaders_ED_letters.pdf, (accessed 7/16/2012); see also Stephen MacDonald, "Air Pollution: The Problem Is You," *WSJ,* January 8, 1970. For a better understanding of the chemical industry, and Hercules in particular, see the section Hercules and the Rise of Environmentalism in Davis Dyer and David B. Sicilia, *Labors of a Modern Hercules: The Evolution of a Chemical Company* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1990).

who might otherwise attempt to push through legislation banning nonreturnables (bottles) and cans." Likewise, the Air Transport Association complained to reporters that "the airlines recognize that contamination of the air through which they fly must be stopped.... We think we have earned the right to do our part ourselves – without being told by the government." Even the chairman of notorious polluter Standard Oil, J.K. Jamieson, boasted of his company's multi-million dollar investments in pollution control research and development.[149]

Generally speaking, these appeals fell on deaf ears in the months surrounding Earth Day. Journalists lambasted greening PR attempts as distractions that detracted from the true meaning of the event and threatened to make it, in the words of *Washington Post* columnist Nicholas von Hoffman, "a muddled media carnival, a paint-up, clean-up, fix-up hoax... an opportunity for institutional advertising, for making us think these companies are friendly corporate neighbors and not a part of a marketing system which pollutes to prosper."[150] The public also refused to accept that regulation put an undue burden on polluting industries. Letters flooded into the nation's major newspapers, challenging the pro-growth assumptions being made by business spokesmen. One typical response argued "the causes of pollution lie not in the accelerating growth of the world economy, but rather in the curious way Americans...have chosen to price our natural resources.... If... the peoples of the world through their governments... would assess a price for an act which results in pollution, the act of polluting would become unprofittable and would be stopped."[151]

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[149] Sommerall and ATA spokesman William Osmun quoted in Carl Bernstein, "Area Industries Jump on Earth Day Bandwagon," *WP,* April 23, 1970; Jamieson in "The Replies: Environment Industry Leaders Look Into Future," *NYT,* January 11, 1970.

[150] Nicholas von Hoffman, "Earth Day: 'A Net Loss,'" *WP,* April 27, 1970.

As ineffectual as corporate America's early environmental campaign was, it had within it seeds of two arguments that would later bear fruit. The first was economic. A clean environment, business leaders were sure to note, could not be achieved without cost. The important question then became who was going to have to pay that cost, with the most likely candidates being consumers and workers. Donald Cook, president of the American Electric Power Company, expressed this view in a letter to the *New York Times*; "it is one thing to say that a utility company must spend $100-million on air-pollution control equipment," he wrote. "It is another for the customers to realize that their electric bills must increase $15-million a year to make this expenditure possible."[152] And if customers would not be footing the bill directly through higher prices, workers would be forced to pay indirectly through lower wages or fewer employment opportunities. Months prior to Earth Day, corporations were already warning of potential job cuts in the event that "the cost of [pollution] control devices was excessive."[153] For these observers, continual growth was both the hallmark of a strong economy and the basis of environmental problems. By putting the two in opposition they told Americans that the country could have one or the other, but not both.

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[151] John E. Groman, Letter to the Editor, *NYT,* May 10, 1970.
[152] "The Replies: Environment Industry Leaders Look Into Future."
[153] Letter from R. D. Kemplin to Gaylord Nelson and Paul McCloskey, April 10, 1970, Wisconsin Historical Society, http://www.nelsonearthday.net/collection/earthday-critics/nelson_6-28_business_leaders_ED_letters.pdf, (accessed 7/16/2012); "The Replies: Environment Industry Leaders Look Into Future;" see also "Conservationists Hit," WSJ, June 18, 1970. The paper company Boise Cascade Corporation claimed in January, 1970 to have already closed one of its mills for that reason.

The cost of environmentalism was explored early and often in the press, reinforcing the idea that difficult choices loomed. *Time* magazine devoted space to the bind that U.S. industry found itself in when confronted by environmental questions. “Industry’s problem,” the magazine claimed “is almost as complex as an ecosystem.... If they close polluting plants... they throw employees out of work, and employment is part of a corporation’s social responsibility. Beyond this is the problem of who shall pay for anti-pollution devices. Ultimately the consumer, of course, but how much will he accept?”[154] In 1970 and 1971, these reports, including the *Time* piece, accepted the main thrust of the anti-environmental argument even as they remained optimistic that environmental problems could be solved for a price that was low enough to bear.

The second tactic that industry apologists experimented with in 1970 was to present environmentalists as unreasonable or uninformed zealots. This cultural challenge to environmentalism sought to associate environmental reform with the youth/hippy counterculture that was so shocking to middle-class American sensibilities. The warning offered by Urban T. Kuechle, president of a major appliance manufacturer, to Gaylord Nelson during the planning stages of Earth Day struck that familiar chord. “Too often programs of this type,” he wrote the Senator, “are infiltrated by irresponsible and radical persons who seek to turn noble programs into platforms for preaching hate and violence. Certain militants... seem more interested in espousing... the total overthrow of the business community, than they do in working toward sensible and acceptable solutions."[155] Two months before Earth Day conservative commentator David Anderson made a similar case in the *Wall Street Journal*, where he characterized environmental philosophy as being dominated by no-growth, primitivist hippies who had little concept of what their "oversimplified assessments of the future" would mean for the nation's economy.[156]

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[154] “Issue of the Year: The Environment,” *Time,* January 4, 1971, online archive http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,942377-4,00.html (accessed March 3, 2012).

For the time being these assertions failed to connect with either Americans in general or with union leaders in particular. Environmentally inclined laborites saw pollution as a threat equal to job loss. To those leaders, as well as to their environmental allies, maintaining strong links with one another was assumed to be the best way to fight green blackmail. "This relationship is a very basic prerequisite to achieving meaningful anti-pollution legislation-enforcement as well as obtaining economic protection for industrial workers threatened with job-loss 'for environmental reasons,'" UAW President Leonard Woodcock wrote to Michael McCloskey in 1972, as the two planned the next steps for their organizational cooperation. "This factor in itself further mandates the formation of closer working relationships between our organizations on a foundation that can assure its ever-increasing productivity on a long-term continuing basis."[157] McCloskey agreed with that assessment, and he gave his union colleagues a great deal of credit for their early efforts in constraining the growth of anti-environmental sentiment in their organizations, telling George Meany that "this effort by industry has been largely unsuccessful because the leadership of the labor movement has seen through this ploy and recognized the necessity to protect the environment in which all workers live."[158]

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[155] Letter from Urban T. Kuechle to Gaylord Nelson and Paul McCloskey, March 31, 1970, Wisconsin Historical Society, http://www.nelsonearthday.net/collection/earthday-critics/nelson_6-28_business_leaders_ED_letters.pdf, (accessed 7/16/2012).

[156] David C. Anderson, "Policy Riddle: Ecology vs. the Economy," *WSJ,* February 2, 1970.

[157] Letter from Leonard Woodcock to Michael McCloskey, January 10, 1972, BANC MSS 71/295 c carton 174, folder 18.

Even unions that were less committed to the environmental program than the UAW could find a reason not to publicly break with environmentalists early in the 1970s. The nature of green blackmail made it easy to stand against on principle. The practice clearly echoed anti-union drives, where employers illegally claimed that if the union came in, the plant would be forced to shut down. At the same time, environmental activism was putting new demands on industry, which, some union leaders happily noted, was taking some pressure off of their organizations. The International Brotherhood of Teamsters gleefully reported to its members that "increased militancy of consumers and increased public awareness of industry's pollution guilt have placed the corporate giants on the defensive in an area unrelated to corporate bargaining. Big business is reeling daily under the shock of new attacks upon it."[159] The hope was that business would not have the time or energy to fight unionization if it was busy fighting environmental battles. Even if environmentalists were not their friends, some unions figured being their enemy's enemy was good enough.

In 1972, two fundamental changes occurred that would make the industry opposition to environmentalism more effective, especially in regard to breaking the alliance between organized labor and environmental organizations. First, the founding of the Business Roundtable that year helped to consolidate corporate messaging. The brainchild of the heads of Alcoa Aluminum and General Electric, the

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[158] Letter from Michael McCloskey to George Meany, November 12, 1971, BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 174, folder 18.
[159] "Labor's Place in History," *International Teamster,* July, 1971, 1.

Roundtable grew out of a more informal assemblage of CEOs called the March Group, which met regularly to discuss public policy issues. Deciding that the new, non-industry specific environmental regulations of the 1970s made relying on their time-tested, industry by industry lobbying methods obsolete, the CEOs of about 200 of the largest companies in the United States came together under the auspices of the Roundtable in an effort to give big businesses a united front in their lobbying efforts in Congress. Later combining with the Construction Users Anti-Inflation Roundtable and the anti-union Labor Law Study Committee, the Roundtable formed itself into one of the most influential lobbying organizations in Washington. Organized primarily to fight "government regulation of the workplace and environment," by the mid-1970s, the Business Roundtable was the leading actor in the corporate green blackmail campaign.[160]

Second, led by the Roundtable, the business community also honed its messaging in a way that cut environmentalists more sharply than before. McCloskey later remembered that "the environmental movement was attacked for ostensibly promoting a 'no growth' agenda that, it charged, would stunt the economy and dry up jobs."[161] The content of such attacks was nothing new – corporate America had complained for years about the expense of complying with environmental regulation – but they were now newly focused and much more targeted. Consumers were no longer central to the anti-environmental drive; instead workers and labor unions became the focus of a campaign meant to convince them that environmentalists "were a threat to their employment and their well-being." The more politically conservative building trades unions were especially targeted by the employer offensive aimed at driving a wedge between environmental organizations and the working class.[162]

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[160] John B. Judis, "The Most Powerful Lobby," *In These Times,* February 21, 1994; Business Roundtable, "History of Business Roundtable," http://businessroundtable.org/studies-and-reports/history-of-business-roundtable (accessed July 20, 2012).
[161] McCloskey, *In the Thick of It*, 118.

This contention became especially effective when paired with a change in the cultural messaging on environmentalists. Instead of being hippies, environmentalists were now charged with being elitists. One of the first to make this critique appears to have been Lutheran pastor Richard Neuhaus, whose 1971 book *In Defense of People: Ecology and the Seduction of Radicalism* argued that environmentalists pursued narrow class interests that were diversions from the needs of the poor. [163] But following the onset of the recession, the argument gained salience after being picked up by the business press. The *Wall Street Journal* became a frequent proponent of the idea that environmentalists were "well-to-do elitists trying to deny the poor what they themselves already enjoy."[164] The concept ultimately even made its way into soft news sources such as *Harpers Magazine,* which in 1977 published a lengthy article by conservative columnist William Tucker that compared environmentalists to the English gentry as "members of the local aristocracy, often living at the end of long, winding country roads."[165]

Although this conceptualization of the environmental movement would later become highly racialized, for the moment it remained primarily a class-based attack. Labor and civil rights activist Bayard Rustin was one of few observers in the mid-

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[162] Ibid.

[163] Richard Neuhaus, *In Defense of People: Ecology and the Seduction of Radicalism* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1971).

[164] Alan Otten, "Politics and People," *WSJ,* August 2, 1973.

[165] William Tucker, "Environmentalism and the Leisure Class," *Harpers Magazine* (December, 1977): 49-80, 49.

1970s to inject race into the discussion, arguing in the *New York Times* that an environmentalism that limited growth would "measurably worsen the nation's ... economic plight. And its promoters would bear the responsibility for having shattered the hopes of those who have never had a normal role in the world economy, among whom the darker-skinned people of the world rank most prominently."[166] Still, even Rustin's analysis focused mostly on class, and the accusations of racism that would haunt environmentalists in the 1980s were almost wholly absent from the discussion in the 1970s. However, that it was being circulated by a well-respected liberal activist such as Rustin demonstrates how quickly the idea spread that environmental organizations were willing to sacrifice the economic well being of the nation's most vulnerable populations for the select few backpackers and naturalists they represented.

By the eve of the recession, the corporate anti-environmental campaign was already starting to score some victories. Growing numbers of union leaders, while not quite ready to dismiss the environmental cause entirely, were becoming anxious about what it could mean for their members' livelihoods. Association of Western Pulp and Paper Workers President Hugh Bannister demonstrated this internal conflict on the subject of ecology in correspondence with Michael McCloskey. Bannister expressed sympathy for the Sierra Club's cause "as an outdoors man" interested in more National Parks and wild areas. He told McCloskey that the latter did not have to fear Bannister's organization playing the game of "labor environmental backlash" because, despite what industry may want, "we don't intend to be cast in a mold of always being against."[167] However, the letter also makes it plain how much the threat of job loss weighed on Bannister's mind. Further regulation of his industry, he worried, "will probably force the closure of several of our plants with a job loss of more than 2000 people.... It's very difficult to receive a guaranteed annual income from an industry that has been closed down."[168] Bannister refused to play the role of stooge for the paper industry, but even as he recognized the possibility that he was being manipulated, he had to take the threat of plant closure seriously.

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[166] Bayard Rustin, "No Growth Has to Mean Less is Less," *NYT,* May 2, 1976.

The growing tension within the labor movement was also clearly evident at the California Labor Federation's statewide convention in 1972. As the delegates attempted to draft a policy statement on the environment that would be acceptable to a majority of those in attendance, the difficulty in balancing the convention's pro- and anti-environmental forces became manifest. The resulting statement turned out to be the type of muddled document that only a committee could love. In it, the Federation criticized "employers [who] often try to exploit the job insecurity of workers in order to get worker support for their efforts... to recruit organized labor as an ally in [their] struggle to avoid environmental responsibilities."[169] At the same time, it devoted equal space to, and displayed equal anger at, those who "would sacrifice someone else's job for environmental purity." The delegates' prescriptions for future action – including mass transit building and long-term environmental and economic planning – were the sort of state endeavors that labor-environmental coalition builders continued to stress, but the language of the backlash was sneaking in.

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[167] Letter from Hugh D. Bannister to Michael McCloskey, December 10, 1971, BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 174, folder 18.
[168] Ibid.
[169] "Statement of Policy on Environment," adopted by the Ninth Convention, California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, August 21-24, 1972, BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 174, folder 18.

Environmentalists were framed as “affluent suburbanites” and as people with “a callous disregard for the legitimate needs and aspirations of workers.”[170] The statement demonstrates the awkward position that organized workers were starting to find themselves in, recognizing the need for clean air and open spaces, but worrying that those things took precedence over their immediate needs in the minds of elite environmental leaders.

Despite some defections, blue-green alliance builders still thought they had a workable program. Major pieces of environmental legislation, including the Clean Water Act, continued to draw significant support from organized labor. More importantly, environmental blackmail had been identified as a threat by both sides, and alliance builders were moving forward with efforts to curb it. To that end, they helped guide legislation through Congress in the form of the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1972. The act would have fought green blackmail by helping workers who were legitimately displaced by environmental improvements find new work, and by paying for their housing for a year and unemployment for seventy-eight weeks. The bill was vetoed by Nixon, but its proponents persisted in trying to achieve its goals. By 1973, the corporate counterattack had some workers – especially those in the most unstable and environmentally harmful industries – rethinking their commitment to environmentalism, but few were sure that they should totally throw their lot in with industry just yet. The recession would help to convince them.

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[170] Ibid.

Recessionary Backlash

The recession of 1973, which officially lasted until 1975 but continued to reverberate through the economy long after, shocked a nation that had lived through a generation of generalized prosperity and years of a booming job market, fed by government spending on the Vietnam War and the War on Poverty. To quote economic historian David Sicilia, in 1973 "the United States economy shifted abruptly from growth to stasis."[171] Losses in productivity were mirrored by rising unemployment – the national unemployment rate would hit 9.2 percent by June of 1975, and it was even higher (13 percent) for blue-collar workers. Factoring in the underemployed, those too discouraged to look for work, and those working jobs for which they were overqualified, labor economist David Gordon has figured that the true unemployment rate was closer to 17 percent.[172] As Americans watched their take-home pay fall by almost 10 percent in two years, their real wages were in even worse shape, since a double-digit inflation rate ate away at what they were still able to earn. The situation appeared "unreal" for those struggling through it, or, as one laid-off auto worker put it, "things have got to get better, because they can't hardly get no worse."[173]

The evaporation of the "labor market bonanza" of the 1960s and early 1970s added fuel to the corporate anti-regulatory campaign, as industry leaders acted quickly to capitalize on the recession by linking the tough economic times to their environmental burdens.[174] Corporate leaders staged a dozen conferences on inflation in cities across the country in the early months of 1974. The conferences promoted the idea that government regulations had cost industry billions of dollars over the preceding few years, and in so doing had raised production costs and lowered factory investments. Their prescribed solutions to the nation's economic woes called for no new environmental regulations for three years and end to "overzealous enforcement" of existing ones.[175] Ford Motor Company's Henry Ford II agreed with those suggestions. Before a congressional Joint Economic Committee meeting the next year, he testified that he had "never before felt so uncertain and so troubled about the future of both my country and my company.... I think the economy is more important in the short run than clean air."[176] Throughout the recession the business lobby made its claim plain to all who would listen: environmental controls were nonproductive costs that the struggling economy could no longer afford to bear.

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[171] Sicilia, "Distant Proximity," 269.

[172] Arnold Weber, "Labor: Hard Times, Little Radicalism," *NYT,* June 15, 1975; David M. Gordon, *The Working Poor: Towards a State Agenda* (Washington, D.C.: Council of State Planning Agencies, 1980): 8-9.

[173] Weber; Inflation for the fiscal year ending in June, 1974 was fourteen percent, this figure as well as the quotes that follow it come from Carroll, 132.

Predictably, the recession and concurrent energy crisis sapped a considerable amount of the nation's interest in environmental reform. Public opinion polling conducted by Gallup in 1974 showed ecological problems to be a very low priority for Americans, and their concern for such issues was continuing to fall. Meanwhile, more than seven in ten thought the most important problem facing the nation was the economy.[177]

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[174] "Labor market bonanza" was a term used by occupational health scholar James Robinson in describing the economic conditions at the end of the 1960s. Robinson quoted in Gottlieb, 289.
[175] James L. Rowe, Jr. "Executives Oppose Any New Pollution Rules," *WP,* September 20, 1974.
[176] "Joint Economic Panel Gets Gloomy View of Economy From Labor, Management," *WSJ,* February 20, 1975.
[177] Gallup Poll #906, May 28, 1974; Gallup Poll #915, September 24, 1974. Each of these polls asked respondents to say what they thought the most important problem facing the country was. In May, 1.87% replied ecology/environment and 43.04% responded high cost of living/economic situation. By

However, any sense that the nation was ready to turn against ecology in the name of energy or economics was illusory. The environment fell in relative importance in many people's minds, but environmentalism was not itself blamed for the recession. Americans remained supportive of existing environmental regulations even as new issues became predominant in their minds. As a widely circulated Opinion Research Corporation study concluded, "even during a time of recession, high unemployment, and rising fuel costs, the public does not voice a readiness to cut back on environmental control programs to solve economic and energy problems."[178] By late in 1976, public concern about pollution had even rebounded, as two-thirds of those surveyed that year said air and water pollution were "very serious" problems. People reported thinking that government and industry were doing a poor job of controlling pollution, and a large majority favored punishing continuously polluting industries by taxing them for their emissions.[179] Despite the corporate world's best efforts to take advantage of the situation, neither the energy crisis nor the recession ultimately made for the massive public relations triumph that businessmen had hoped for.

Still, although the jobs argument was not effective in deterring Americans in general from backing environmental reform, it hit home with one audience: blue-

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September those numbers had changed to 0.55% saying the environment and 72.78% saying the economy.

[178] Opinion Research Corporation, "Public Attitudes Toward Environmental Tradeoffs," August, 1975, BANC MSS 71/289 c, carton 82, folder 7. As a testament to how widely this study circulated, I also found it in the AFL-CIO archives. It is also worth noting that this support was not limited strictly to existing regulation, as several pieces of important environmental legislation rolled out of Congress with strong public support during the recession and early recovery years. These laws include the Endangered Species Act (1973), the Safe Drinking Water Act (1974), and the Toxic Substances Control Act (1976).

[179] Louis Harris, "Pollution Concern in U.S. Reaches Record Levels," *WP,* November 29, 1976. 82% of respondents favored levying taxes on consistent polluters; 74% opposed corporations being able to pass the cost of their pollution on to the consumer through higher prices.

collar workers. High national levels of support for environmental regulations obscured the fact that working-class endorsement of environmental reform was waning. The same Opinion Research Corporation survey that demonstrated continued environmentalist sentiment in the U.S. also showed that such sentiment was significantly lower in blue-collar households than in their white-collar and unemployed counterparts. Occupation was even a stronger predictor for low environmental support than income level, with blue-collar respondents slightly less supportive than those in the lowest income bracket.[180] Many workers grew hostile toward an environmental movement that they believed would sacrifice their well-being for environmental purity. Soon, bumper stickers with the slogan "No Work, No Food – Eat an Environmentalist" became popular in steel regions such as the Mahoning Valley in eastern Ohio, where mill operators claimed EPA air and water regulations would force them to close plants.[181] Workers had been cautious in the face of threatened job loss previously, but as the recession wore on those threats became increasingly convincing.

Support for environmentalists and environmental programs within organized labor fell. Unions that had never been particularly inclined toward environmentalism took the opportunity to lash out at those they accused of attacking their standard of living. "Have the excesses of environmental extremists in attempting to block construction projects vital to the nation's growth, economic health, and even our basic national security aroused such serious doubts that a major anti-environmental backlash is sweeping the country?" asked an editorial in the journal of the International Union of Operating Engineers.[182] Even in friendly unions, an important shift in thinking was underway. While the UAW and AFL-CIO continued to express a theoretical desire to work with environmentalists, they were concurrently walking back the strongest language of a couple years prior. Thus, in the mid-1970s, the labor position evolved from calling for a clean environment even at the cost of jobs, to claiming that environmental regulations need not conflict with job interests, but should be opposed whenever they do.

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[180] ORC, "Public Attitudes Toward Environmental Tradeoffs." 14% fewer blue-collar than white-collar respondents said they thought it was important to pay higher prices/taxes to clean up pollution, preferring instead more pollution and lower prices; those with family incomes under $10,000 with 3% more likely than blue-collar workers to support higher prices. The same pattern holds true when asked about cars specifically. 40% of blue-collar workers said it was more important to have pollution control devices than lower car prices, while 52% of white-collar respondents and 47% of those with family incomes under $10,000 agreed. 39% of blue-collar workers, 49% of white collar workers, and 42% of people with incomes under $10,000 said cleaning the environment should take precedence even if it meant closing some old plants and throwing some people out of work, although almost everyone agreed that it was important to at least try to maintain a balance between a clean environment and keeping people working.

[181] Gottlieb, 289; Gar Alperovitz and Jeff Faux, "Youngstown Lessons," *NYT,* June 14, 1974; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "Economic Impact of Pollution Control Regulations on Steel Plants in the Mahoning River Valley," (Washington, D.C., 1976).

The shift was especially notable in the United Auto Workers. With the unexpected death of Walter Reuther in 1970, leadership of the UAW fell to the more conservative and pragmatic Leonard Woodcock, who had been serving as the union's Vice President in charge of the General Motors division. For several years Woodcock worked to continue the environmental policies of his predecessor, remaining in contact with the Sierra Club and other environmental organizations through the efforts of Vice President Olga Madar.[183] But by the middle of the decade, approximately 100,000 auto workers had been laid off, and rebuilding employment opportunities in that industry became the UAW leader's primary concern. At one time Woodcock had derided green blackmail as "the old politics of corporate irresponsibility," and cautioned that "growth, given the way it has been and is being achieved, can no longer be defined optimistically as simply a higher standard of living; it must also be defined as a deterioration of the quality of life."[184] Now, although he maintained that the Big Three automakers should face legal requirements regarding emissions and fuel economy standards, he adopted the industry's call for lowering those standards. He repeated GM's claim that the company would have to totally shut down production if it did not get an extension in meeting carbon monoxide and hydrocarbon emission standards, and he warned in a public letter to the EPA that "a decision which would compel the automotive industry to close down would bring chaos not only upon the workers and their families but upon the total economy of the nation."[185]

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[182] "Loss of U.S. Jobs vs. Ecological Overkill," *The International Operating Engineer,* October, 1973: 4-6, 4, AFL-CIO RG98-002, box 14, folder 9.

[183] William Serrin, "Leonard Woodcock, 89, Ex-U.A.W. Chief Who Was an Ambassador to China, Is Dead," *New York Times Online,* January 18, 2001, http://www.nytimes.com/2001/01/18/us/leonard-woodcock-89-ex-uaw-chief-who-was-an-ambassador-to-china-is-dead.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm (accessed 7/30/12); Woodcock to McCloskey, January 10, 1972. Ironically, the plane crash that killed Reuther nearly also took the life of a prominent environmentalist: Dave Brower. Brower was scheduled to fly to Black Lake with Reuther but missed the flight. David Brower oral history

Woodcock's response was representative of the positions staked by other national labor leaders previously involved with environmental politics, who found themselves pressed between the hope of preserving a fruitful alliance and the needs or wishes of their members. Even as they suspected that the dire environmental pronouncements of industry groups such as the Business Roundtable were more manipulations than honest assessments of risk, these leaders also recognized the

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interview, *Reflections on the Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth, and Earth Island Institute,* (Berkeley: University of California, Berkeley, 2012), 222.

[184] Carroll, 132; Leonard Woodcock, Statement before the U.S. Senate Committee on Public Works Subcommittee on Air and Water Pollution, June 28, 1971, BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 174, folder 18, 4, 2.

[185] Leonard Woodcock, Statement before the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, March 13, 1975 BANC MSS 71/289 c, carton 30, folder 20; Richard Witkin, "U.A.W. Asks Delay on Exhaust Curbs," *NYT,* April 10, 1973.

power such declarations could have over threatened members' opinions. The sensible position, it seemed, was to try to stake a middle ground. Woodcock's pronouncements on the issue tended to lay the blame for the "delicate relationship" between environmentalists and workers partially at the feet of "major corporations [that] have tried to hold workers, or at least their jobs, hostage against the application of environmental regulations," and partially with "very real disagreements," between the two sides "not so much over goals, but over how rapidly it is possible and feasible to reach them."[186] That balancing act was never particularly easy, and as the recession ran its course, these leaders tended to drift further away from the environmental camp.

As difficult as it was for major international unions to maintain their environmental commitments during the recession, the situation was even worse at the state and local levels. State labor federations found themselves in the unenviable position of having to deal with concentrated unemployment problems stretching over numerous industries. Frequently, they also decided that environmental priorities had fallen out of balance with the stability of the economy. In New Jersey, for example, the unemployment problem facing blue-collar workers was severe; the state's overall unemployment by the summer of 1974 was a relatively mild 7 percent, but that figure grew to 18 percent when considering just the industrial trades and included a staggering thirty percent of construction workers. Unionists in the state believed that its "tough antipollution standards" were to blame for their state's high unemployment rate compared to its neighbors. The state AFL-CIO suggested fighting unemployment by lowering environmental standards in the state and reconsidering dam and highway projects that had previously been ruled too environmentally destructive. [187] In that organization's judgment, ecologists "pushed a 'no growth' philosophy that has crippled construction and development through excessively strict environmental legislation." Whenever the forces of organized labor in New Jersey assessed their state's economic problems during the mid-1970s recession, they consistently diagnosed their problem as a lack of competitiveness born out of over-done environmentalism.[188]

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[186] Woodcock quoted in "Woodcock Sees No Ecology/Jobs Conflict," *Environmentalists For Full Employment Newsletter,* (Spring 1976).

The situation was even more tense when it involved labor groups that had mixed or hostile feelings toward environmentalism to begin with. Such was the case in California. The home of the Sierra Club had been the scene of repeated clashes between environmentalists and unions (particularly those involved in the construction trades) around development issues in 1971 and 1972. Labor beat back a San Francisco ordinance that would have limited buildings to a height of seventy-two feet, but lost a ballot initiative that imposed strict planning requirements for construction along the coast. These proposals led California Labor Federation Executive Secretary-Treasurer Jack Henning to denounce environmentalists as "socialite liberals" who "want to turn cities into villages and stop any highway or dam construction that would displace a flower or tree."[189] The tension between the state's blue-collar and green forces intensified when the economy started to slump. A

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[187] Joseph F. Sullivan, "The Lines Are Longest in Jersey: the Region's Jobless," *NYT,* September 16, 1973; Labor Seeks to Ease Ecology Rules in a Bid to Increase Jobs," *NYT,* July 7, 1974; "Jobs and Environment," *NYT,* August 3, 1974.

[188] "Labor Group Scores Environmental Code," *NYT,* June 10, 1975.

[189] Henning editorial from the *California AFL-CIO News* quoted in "Labor Attacks the 'Conservation Caper,'" *San Francisco Chronicle,* January 18, 1972; "Saving the California Coast," *WP,* September 9, 1976.

Federation hosted conference on jobs and the environment the next year devolved into name-calling directed toward Ray Sherwin, the Sierra Club's president who was there representing his group. He was told that the environmental movement was full of "kooks," by the president of the California State Building and Construction Trades Council, who also described the Club's agenda as "the green grass and the posies grow, but to hell with human beings."[190]

The arguments being made by the New Jersey and California labor federations highlight an important dynamic of the jobs versus environment conversation that was growing in the mid-1970s. While workers in many localities worried about plants closing and jobs disappearing, the fear of jobs not being created was equally strong. Workers in places such as New Jersey worried that their state's environmental regulations put them at a disadvantage in attracting capital investment, and California builders looked at delayed highways and cancelled nuclear plants and saw opportunities lost. This aspect of the jobs/environment conflict could be even more insidious than job loss because evidence of its impact was so difficult to come by; how many of the jobs predicted to be needed for a site would have actually materialized if construction progressed was impossible to know, but that did not stop affected industries, unions, and workers from asserting economic harm. For example, Laborers International Union research director James Sheets was willing to blame nuclear power construction cancellations for the loss of twenty thousand jobs for his union's members, apparently without any statistical justification for that number.[191]

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[190] Norm Hannon, "Reagan, Labor Leaders in Rare Agreement," *Oakland (CA) Tribune,* March 8, 1973, BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 174, folder 19.

[191] Richard Kazis and Richard L. Grossman, *Fear at Work: Job Blackmail, Labor and the Environment,* New Ed. (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1991), 31. When asked about the

Once the idea that jobs were being lost to the environment took hold, jobs that never existed could carry as much weight as those that had been lost.

The Sierra Club Response

The growing, publicly apparent break between environmentalists and organized labor was a source of consternation for the major environmental organizations, whose leaders never wanted to make an enemy of organized labor. The Sierra Club in particular moved swiftly to try to ease blue-green tensions. One of the Club's first initiatives to that end was to formalize a structure within the organization to manage and maintain its relations with unions. Born of a "long standing conviction that organized labor and conservation organizations... should work together to define and then achieve common goals," the Sierra Club's Labor Liaison Committee (SCLLC) replaced the group's earlier, ad hoc communication with labor.[192] The committee's goals were small: contact unions the Club had no connections with, engage those it already knew in dialogue "to find issues of common interest," and make sure that Club members at the grassroots level were not unintentionally exacerbating tensions with workers by "sensitiz[ing] our members to understand the economic impact of environmental proposals."[193]

The committee's members hoped early on that they could also inspire the creation of similar committees in local chapters, but their success in that area was

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source that helped him arrive at that number, Sheets reportedly replied, "just quote me." Kazis and Grossman also discuss the problem of plant cancellations and delays in more detail, 28-34.

[192] Letter from Will Siri to John F. Henning, March 20, 1973, BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 190, folder 11.

[193] "Notes of the Meeting of the Labor Committee," November 9, 1973, BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 190, folder 11.

limited. Most importantly, the SCLLC initiated a discussion within the organization about how environmental a question had to be before the Club could be comfortable weighing in on it. Where should the organization's boundaries be set, and would it be alright to politically horse trade with organized labor – "how many labor issues can we support in response to environmental issues we ask them to support," they asked.[194] This conversation was especially important in light of the recent backlash from the organization's members over the Club's participation in the Shell boycott. By putting such issues on the Club's agenda, the Labor Liaison Committee helped to set the stage for the Club to promote non-environmental endeavors in the name of nurturing good will from unions.

Smoothing the channels of communication between their group and unions was a start, but Sierra Club staffers understood that diffusing the jobs issue was the real key to maintaining a strong relationship with organized labor. Initially, they hoped to do so by building legal protections for employment into environmental legislation. Having failed in their earliest attempt with the Public Works and Economic Development Act because of a presidential veto, environmentalists continued to inject the concept into all sorts of environmental bills. For example, during hearings for the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1977, environmentalists who hoped to shore up flagging labor support called for a federal compensation program for workers who lost their job to environmental plant closure. The environmental community, they insisted, "recognizes there may be instances where a plant is forced to close down in an area where alternative employment is unavailable.... In those instances we think the country as a whole should share the burdens imposed by the national air pollution control policy."[195]

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[194] Ibid.

In addition to working to get employment protections included in major environmental legislation, the Sierra Club took the unusual step of supporting employment legislation that had no environmental component to speak of. Club members, including the organization's chief lobbyist Brock Evans, helped to found Environmentalists For Full Employment (EFFE) in 1975, with the goal of "publiciz[ing] the fact that it is possible simultaneously to create jobs, conserve energy and natural resources, and protect the environment."[196] The Club itself came out in favor of the full employment legislation known colloquially as the Humphrey-Hawkins Act. When the bill started being debated in Congress in 1976, the Club's Labor Liaison Committee pushed for a statement of support from the Board of Directors. Advising the Board that the group had been getting "a lot of 'flak' about the effect of environmental protection on jobs," LLC members argued that supporting a bill that was a high priority for the labor movement would help bridge the growing gap between the two movements.[197] With the Board's blessing, Evans pressured his contacts in Congress to vote for the full employment enterprise, and Club President Bill Futrell publicly committed his organization to supporting the bill. When the bill finally made it through the legislature in 1978 – albeit in a disappointingly watered down form – it owed its existence, at least in some small measure, to the efforts of environmentalists.[198]

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[195] Ayres testimony, House Commerce Committee, 1338-1339.

[196] Obach, 50.

[197] Board of Directors meeting minutes (5/1-2/76), 24-28, BANC FILM 2945, http://www.oac.cdlib.org/ark:/28722/bk0007f7d9b/?order=99&brand=oac4

As the Club worked to make the jobs issue less contentious by legislating employment protections, it also devoted considerable resources to showing that the choice between jobs and the environment was a false one. It did its best to publicize studies by the EPA or Council on Environmental Quality that supported the idea that environmental regulation was not a drag on the economy – which those studies consistently did. The claim that pollution controls caused plant closures could not be fully substantiated, as the CEQ found in 1975 when it reported "to date there is no evidence that 1) plant closings are important in terms of total unemployment or 2) that pollution control regulations have been a prime cause of a significant number of closings."[199]

Even assuming that employers were always honest when they claimed a plant was closed for environmental reasons, studies rarely found that environmental regulation was a significant contributor to the unemployment rate. For example, the EPA reported in 1981 that just over 32,000 workers had lost their jobs to environmental plant closures since 1971 – less than one half of one percent of the American workforce.[200] On the other hand, the CEQ and EPA consistently found that "environmental programs are stimulating construction, equipment, and research expenditures that would not otherwise be undertaken"; in other words, that environmental regulations were net job creators. Environmentalist defenders could and did frequently cite such reports as evidence that they were not callously disregarding the needs of workers, but were in fact benefitting them by pushing green programs.

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[198] Full Employment Action Council, "83 National Organizations Urge Passage of Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment Bill," 1978, BANC MSS 71/289 c carton 30, folder 6; Letter to Brock Evans from Austing J. Murphy, April 5, 1978, BANC MSS 71/289c carton 30, folder 6 (this letter is one of many to Evans noting to him their vote for the act). For a good exploration of the politics behind the forging of the Humphrey-Hawkins Act, see Cowie, *Stayin' Alive,* 266-288.

[199] Council on Environmental Quality, "Environmental Programs and Employment," April, 1975, BANC MSS 71/289 c, carton 30, folder 8.

[200] EPA Economic Dislocation Early Warning System study cited in Kazis and Grossman, 19.

As it worked to show that environmental regulations did not lead to job losses, the Sierra Club also tried hard to confront the idea that they were obstructionists standing in the way of new job creation. The facts, Michael McCloskey contended, were that the Club only rarely opposed construction projects. "90% of the dams, and the freeways, and the factories of the United States have been built without any objection from environmentalists," he told an assembly of unionists. "We have objected to the few that have been ill-conceived, poorly located, or that are unnecessary."[201]

But since mere assertions of this point appeared to be ringing hollow, the Club set out to develop some statistics to corroborate the point. In 1975, the task was undertaken by Brock Evans, who designed what he came to call the Sierra Club Jobs Program. The program consisted of assembling and disseminating a list of construction projects that the Club supported, and was intended to show how few building projects were being held up by environmentalists. The program got a mixed response from the group's state chapters which were supposed to designate the different projects as "controversial" or "non-controversial." The respondents from California supported only one in seven. North Carolina's reply included a tongue-in-cheek suggestion that the shape of their list "makes me wonder if we shouldn't just oppose any federal project and be done with it," while at the same time only disapproving of six out of thirty-one projects. Still, Club leaders would find the list useful in combating the label of obstructionist by having the ready ability to show that that accusation was often not fair.[202]

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[201] McCloskey, "Two Movements that Should Work Together," 13.

Environmentalists asserted instead that the wasteful practices of industrial polluters constituted the real threat to employment. Recognizing that, in the name of efficiency, businesses had been substituting machines for people for over a century, environmentalists argued that reversing that trend would be both environmentally beneficial and a boost to employment.[203] In a charge that harkened back to the days of Progressive Era conservation, the Club alleged that U.S. industry was destroying natural resources at an unsustainable pace without regard for the future. As it did so, it destroyed jobs as well. Overcutting forests, McCloskey argued, would eventually lead to a collapse in employment in the timber industry; where was the outcry over these jobs? "The salmon industry in the Northwest has been decimated by pollution and too many dams on the rivers leading to spawning streams," he pointed out in his speech to the OCAW, but neither industrialists nor unions had done much "to save the jobs of all those once employed in the packing and fishing industries. Conservationists carried the load in trying to save the salmon."[204] In making the point that environmental stewardship was necessary to control the destructive impulses of modern industry, environmentalists hoped to turn the tables on the business community by claiming for themselves the mantle of job protector.

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[202] Letter from Brock Evans to Sierra Club Leader, May 20, 1975, BANC MSS 71/289 c, carton 30, folder 8; California, North Carolina, and Oregon Jobs Program response spreadsheets, BANC MSS 71/289 c, carton 30, folder 8.

[203] EFFE, whose main area of interest was energy policy throughout most of its existence, found considerable motivation in this premise. The second of four planks outlined in its founding statement of principles stated that "U.S. economic history is a parade of innovations using more and more capital, energy, and resources. In a world of increasing population and diminishing resources, it is more efficient to fully employ human resources while conserving capital and natural resources." Environmentalists For Full Employment, "policy Statement," BANC MSS 71/289 c, carton 30, folder 8.

[204] McCloskey, "Two Movements That Should Work Together," 10-11.

They also wanted to show that they could be job creators. It was an article of faith within the environmental community – substantiated by the findings of the EPA – that far from hurting workers' employment chances, environmentalism created jobs. Depending on whom one asked, it did so in many ways. Some, including the Wilderness Society's Sally Ranney, contended that a clean environment allowed certain kinds of jobs to flourish. "Clean air is a big industry," she testified in support of the 1977 Clean Air Act amendments. "Five million people took advantage of Colorado's ski slopes in 1976, spending hundreds of millions of dollars. Overall, the backpacking equipment and related industries sales were a $300 million industry in the United States last year. Those who bought and used this equipment went to the clean air regions of the country."[205] Others, sensing that focusing on the value of the tourism industry would only reinforce charges of environmental elitism, preferred to focus on the jobs that environmentalism could provide within more traditional industrial venues like manufacturing and construction. Not counting the hundreds of thousands employed by the Park Service and Forest Service in conservation work, the Sierra Club estimated in 1973 "that 650,000 jobs have been created by modern environmental protection and pollution control programs," in such sectors as construction and transportation.[206] Retrofitting houses for better energy efficiency, constructing mass transit and water treatment facilities, and designing and building cleaner engines and sources of energy all held the potential for green blue-collar employment. Even non-environmental work would require more manpower when done in an environmentally sound way.[207]

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[205] Statement of Sally Ranney, Resource Policy Analyst on Behalf of the Wilderness Society, Hearing before the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Environmental Pollution, February 15, 1977, 159; Water Projects Now Get Priority," *NYT,* February 22, 1975; Claire Stern, "To Save the Economy Must we Spoil the Environment?" *NYT,* March 7, 1976.

[206] McCloskey, "Two Movements that Should Work Together," 7.

The Sierra Club's campaign was mostly, but not completely, unsuccessful. Some labor groups, primarily those most concerned with industrial hygiene, also recognized green blackmail as a problem and worried that the discrediting of environmentalists within union circles hindered cooperative efforts between the two groups and made it harder to push for environmental improvements within plants. Concerned unionists continued to push back against the perceptions engendered by green blackmail where they could. The AFL-CIO's Industrial Union Department conducted its own investigation of the issue and concluded that none of the thirty-nine plant closings alleged to have been caused by increased environmental regulation between 1970 and 1974 actually had been.[208] The United Steelworkers framed the issue around OSHA, arguing that similar pressure was being exerted by industry to scale back worker-protective regulations as well. USW Legislative Director John Sheehan claimed that the industry position was suspect: "When [enforcement] occurs we begin to realize that most of the times the threats don't really materialize.... Unfortunately, I think there are many who think the labor movement is automatically antienvironment. I am afraid that impression both ignores the fact and could become a self-fulfilling prophecy.[209] However, the union people who carried on with the environmental mantle had largely been marginalized within the movement as a whole. Environmentalism had come to be seen as a threat in many important state labor bodies as well as the building trades international unions, which were highly influential with George Meany and others in the AFL-CIO brass.

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[207] Internally, many Club activists worried that not enough was being done to broadcast those facts. "The SC does endorse a number of labor-intensive projects, and it could and should phrase its endorsement of those projects in economic as well as environmental terms. For example, many kinds of water pollution controls projects provide large numbers of jobs. Strip mine reclamation, deep mining as opposed to strip mining, reforestation, rehabilitation of over-grazed lands, and mass transit projects are all labor-intensive. The point is that SC spokespersons should be sensitive to opportunities to endorse projects on economic grounds, attempting to use their endorsements whenever possible to show how healthy economic activity can be consistent with environmental protection." Memo from Rhea and John to Brock [Evans], "Jobs Project," BANC MSS 71/289 c, carton 30, folder 8.
[208] Kazis and Grossman, 23.

Conclusion

In the mid-1970s, American industry sought to discredit environmentalism in the eyes of workers by convincing them that environmental reforms would endanger many jobs and that the proponents of such reforms were wealthy snobs who had the luxury to privilege their own comfort over other people's standards of living. With help from the recession, the campaign did just that, and it succeeded in separating environmental organizations from their labor allies. Organized labor's support for environmentalism declined, although it did not do so in a uniform manner. Some leaders lashed out at environmentalists and participated fully in the environmental backlash, while others – mostly from industrial unions – considered the idea of environmental job loss to be a manipulative concoction, either wholly or in part. The heads of unions such as the UAW and USW attempted to convince their members of that idea, and may have been inclined to fight harder were it not for the fact that blue-collar workers often did not have the privilege of such perspective. In the end, most union heads who had at one time been pro-environment followed the path of least resistance away from pushing for environmental regulation.

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[209] John Sheehan, Environment and Public Works Committee Statement, February 10, 1977, 6.

Environmentalists responded to the corporate onslaught and labor's declining support with frustration rather than acceptance. They knew they could not idly sit by and watch as they were portrayed as out-of-touch elitists, as their relationships with labor unions fell apart, and as working-class support for their programs evaporated. In an effort to regain their footing, groups including the Sierra Club argued at various times that environmentalism created new jobs, protected those already in existence, or at the very least did not lead to major losses of employment for American workers. Club leaders went out of their way to maintain a dialogue with the labor movement, designing and implementing a program dedicated to that very thing. The work of the group's Labor Liaison Committee helped to pave the way for the organization's participation in a variety of conferences and legislative initiatives aimed at disarming the jobs issue and smoothing out the wrinkles that had emerged between workers and environmentalists.

Part of the Club's desire to maintain good relations with organized labor arose from hard-nosed political calculation – unions had pulled considerable weight in getting early environmental legislation passed, and they could likely pull votes away from environmental programs in the future, if they decided to try. But Club leaders such as Michael McCloskey and Brock Evans also genuinely believed that the two movements were appropriate and rightful partners. Their goals were rooted in similar notions of the importance of widespread high living standards and they shared the same opponents in laissez-faire corporate America. As later chapters will show, attempting to undo the damage that charges of class bias had done to their relationship would bring the Sierra Club more vocally and persistently into the fight for unpolluted cities and workplaces. Even still, they had to be prepared to face the enduring legacy of suspicion among workers that sometimes accompanied environmentalist initiatives in the urban industrial world. As it turned out, events would bring organized labor back to the table sooner than expected. By the early 1980s, the two sides would find themselves engaged in an alliance that was at once more official and more delicate than what had existed in the previous decade.

Chapter 4: Blue-Green Energy Organizing, 1973-1978

Just as the recession was starting to make itself felt in early 1973, observers were also beginning to notice that the United States was in the grip of a fuel shortage. The shortage had already driven up energy prices and forced the closure of hundreds of gas stations, increasing, in many quarters, concerns of a disaster by the fall.[210] In October, the already strained energy resources of the United States were further depleted, when the Middle Eastern member states of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) announced that they would be cutting off sales of oil to the U.S. in protest of American support for Israel in the Yom Kippur War. By early November, the oil shortage had reached crisis levels, globally and in the United States. Despite skyrocketing gas prices, drivers queued for miles hoping for the opportunity to fill their tanks. Schools, unable to heat their buildings during the winter, closed their doors; factories found it too expensive to power their machines and cut production. President Nixon estimated that petroleum supplies that winter would fall between 10 percent and 17 percent short of demand. The *New York Times'* glum assessment of the situation came as a warning to readers that "Things Will Get Worse Before They Get Worse."[211]

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[210] Congressman Les Aspin (D-WI) publicized figures gleaned from Office of Emergency Preparedness reports that attributed 342 gas station closures to the oil shortage by May, 1973. The report warned that about 1000 more were in jeopardy. See "Aspin Says Fuel Shortage Closed 342 Gas Stations," *NYT,* May 7, 1973. Concerns about the state of the American energy system before the Yom Kippur War and the onset of the embargo can be found in a wide spectrum of publications, a small sample includes: "Railroads Wary of Fuel Shortage," *NYT,* January 13, 1973; "Midwest Governors Meet on Price Freeze and Fuel," *NYT,* July 9, 1973; Jack Egan, "Fuel Shortage Seen," *WP,* April 19, 1973; Thomas O'Toole, "Fuel Lack May Force Transport Cuts," *WP,* January 19, 1973; James L. Buckley, Washington, *National Review Bulletin,* June 29, 1973, B94; "Energy: And Now, the Chillout," *Time,* January 22, 1973.

[211] Linda Charlton, "Things Will Get Worse Before They Get Worse," *NYT,* November 11, 1973.

The government struggled to find an answer to the problem. Proposed solutions, such as instituting a daylight savings time and lowering the national speed limit, appeared to be short-term band aids at best, while more extensive conservation policies were anathema to Republican administration officials.[212] Price controls would ease the financial strains created by the crisis, but they would do nothing to ease the lack of supply that was the root of the problem. Meanwhile, the public searched for a responsible party on whom they could vent their anger – the petroleum cartel, oil companies, government officials, and occasionally environmentalists all took their turn as scapegoat. Even as the crisis subsided the following year, memories of a narrowly avoided total disaster lingered and kept the national debate on energy policy alive.

The energy crisis seemed to create a ripe opportunity for those who wanted to deepen the tension between environmentalists and their working-class allies. The pro-business, conservative press warned that "the developing fuel shortage and the consequent 'energy crisis' will have a profound effect on the American standard of living. The hell-bent environmentalists, once again, are not helping matters."[213] To protect that standard of living, the country would have to turn away from a regulatory system that had been created in better days "by demagogues, radicals, and self-appointed elitists... [and] entrusted to bureaucrats watched over by fanatics."[214] Although more restrained in their language, official industry spokespeople, especially those from utility companies, were equally excited at the prospect that the time had finally come to start rolling back their regulatory burden. Proposals for off-shore and Alaskan oil drilling, suspension of air quality standards, and relaxation of nuclear power regulations flooded out of boardrooms, while California dam supporters wrote smugly of an ongoing conflict with the Sierra Club, "perhaps Mr. McCloskey hasn't noted a new legislative climate since the energy shortage."[215]

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[212] White House advisor John Ehrlichman, for example, had long dismissed such plans as "not in the Republican ethic." Exceptions could be made in a crisis, but extensive conservation was an unacceptable solution in the Nixon White House. Ehrlichman quoted in Peter N. Carroll, *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened: America in the 1970s* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 120.
[213] Richard B. Carroll, "Leaping before Looking," *National Review,* May 25, 1973, 577-578, 577.
[214] Ibid.

The environmental community itself feared that industry's push would make deep inroads among an American public that was staring down potential disaster. Sierra Club leaders thought with pessimism about their potential to continue making progress with environmental initiatives, and even to protect the gains that they had already made. "Boy what a field day the oil companies and everybody else were having with us," Brock Evans remembers about representing the Club in Washington, D.C. during the early days of the energy crisis. "Finally after four or five years on the defensive they could come back and they were the good people, honest people trying to provide energy supplies, and we were the bad people, extremists.... We were just sort of cowering in the trenches while the artillery thundered overhead, and there wasn't a thing we could do about it."[216] Dour observations such as these have been accepted by historians, leading scholars to believe that the energy policy debate engendered by the 1973 oil crisis played a central role in the souring of labor-environmental relations in the mid-1970s.

However, that perception is inaccurate. This chapter argues that, regardless of the fears of contemporary coalition builders and the musings of modern scholars, the energy crisis itself did not severely damage labor-environmental relations in the mid-1970s. Although the two sides had very different visions for the United States' energy future, those differences did not manifest themselves in outright hostility. Instead, the period was characterized by blue-green agreement on specific policies – often motivated by different rationales – grudging acceptance of less-than-ideal energy decisions, and intra-movement conflict. Ironically, even as blue-green relations soured in other areas, cooperation on energy continued. Energy would become a third-rail in labor-environmental relations only in the 1980s as the problems of acid rain and global warming made themselves known. In the mid-1970s, energy flexibility ruled the day.

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[215] F.W. Russell, President of the California Water Resources Association, quoted in "New Dam Idea Stirs Controversy," *WP,* May 19, 1974.
[216] Evans quoted in Wellock, 109.

Short-term Solutions in the Midst of a Crisis

The nation's energy consumption had been a concern for the Sierra Club for several years by the time the energy crisis hit. The thinking of the Club's leadership, summarized best by Michael McCloskey in a 1971 address to the American Nuclear Society, was that the problems Americans experienced with energy availability were largely either manufactured or self-inflicted.[217] The problem was not so much that there were not enough energy resources, but instead that those resources were squandered. The worst of the shortages, McCloskey asserted, were fabricated by the energy industry to draw higher prices from consumers and wring concessions from Congress in the form of subsidies, tax breaks, or drilling permits. "We face cries of immediate energy shortages because the energy industry has contrived crisis situations," the Sierra Club president said in an address to the American Nuclear Society. "We have experienced all sorts of sudden fuel and power shortages... None of these so-called crises is very plausible."[218]

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[217] Michael McCloskey, "An Environmentalist Views the Energy Crisis," (Address to the American Nuclear Society, Boston, MA, June 15, 1971), BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 174, folder 1.

As pernicious as these contrived crises could be, they were far less dangerous than the mentality that energy companies had fostered in the American public. Decades of advertising and artificially low prices created through government subsidies had led to a "pro-growth bias toward energy use," both in public policy and the public mind, according the McCloskey.[219] Americans had developed expectations for energy use and its continued growth that were unrealistic and that carried environmentally destructive risks. In one hundred years, McCloskey reminded his audience, the U.S. population had tripled while power usage had grown by fifteen times; even given limitless fuel resources such usage trends could not continue – the country would be physically overrun by power plants within two centuries. And that was not even factoring in the frightening consequences for the planet of such energy use. "At every stage of energy production and use," McCloskey argued, "unacceptable environmental degradation occurs." Strip mining, uranium milling, oil spills, wildlife habitat disruption, air pollution, and thermal contamination of water and air were but a few of the consequences that could be expected to grow apace with American energy consumption.[220]

Thus, the real energy crisis, as defined by the Club, was too much energy use. Its leaders' solution followed easily from such an understanding: put "constraints on energy growth." Remove government subsidies that increase demand, conserve the resources at the country's disposal, develop more efficient patterns of use, and control industries that use an inordinate amount of energy.[221] The ideas McCloskey sketched out in his address became official Club policy the next year.

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[218] McCloskey, "Environmentalist Views the Energy Crisis," 11.
[219] Ibid, 12.
[220] Ibid, 1-9; quote, 5.

The Club's energy policy, adopted by the Board of Directors and announced in pieces between the fall of 1972 and the winter of 1973, reiterated the call for "the use of energy in a manner more consistent with the prudent use of the world's natural resources and the restoration and preservation of environmental quality."[222] With a goal of maintaining a healthy environment, the Sierra Club energy policy called for a two-pronged approach to the nation's energy system. The first prong was a strengthened set of government regulations to control "extraction, transport, and storage of fuels," as well as land use and the design of energy facilities. The second prong was the heart of the plan: fuel and energy conservation. The conservation component of the proposal included provisions for more efficient use of available resources and called for an education program to teach the country how and why to use less energy. However, volunteerism was only half of the plan. The other half was removing "economic incentives" for wasteful use and making "the prices of all forms of energy ... cover [that] energy's true cost."[223] The hope was that if higher prices better reflected the real expense in creating the American energy network, it would encourage people to scale back their usage.

The Club had developed these ideas before the worst impact of the energy crunch was being felt. Still, the Board of Directors saw little reason to dramatically alter their proposal in response to the new crisis. They had established provisions that "those of low income do not suffer from the generally higher levels of energy prices which can be expected to result from having the user of energy pay energy's true costs," and highlighted that idea more as conditions worsened.[224] Otherwise, the Club's leaders saw little reason to concede portions of the policy as lost. If anything, the earlier conservation prescriptions were even more practical now.

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[221] Ibid, 13.

[222] Sierra Club, "Energy Policy," adopted by the Board of Directors October 21-22, 1972, p.1 BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 174, folder 2. The official Energy Policy adopted in October was augmented in January by a clarifying Energy and Economic statement.

[223] Sierra Club, "Energy Policy," 2-3.

Solving the energy crisis by promoting a policy that explicitly called for increasing fuel costs put the Sierra Club in stark opposition to many labor unions, for whom rising costs were emblematic of the problem. The AFL-CIO adopted a position in the worst days of the crisis that criticized solutions "which would allow those who can afford it to purchase scarce supplies while those who need it but are less affluent would be deprived."[225] The AFL-CIO's plans could not brook permanently more expensive energy prices because the labor federation had come to associate growing energy use with rising economic standards. AFL-CIO Research Director Nat Goldfinger summarized the sentiment in 1976, when he wrote "unless the energy sources are available in sufficient quantities, industries will be unable to expand to meet the needs of a growing population. That means jobs will not increase either."[226]

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[224] Ibid, 4. The Club was not very specific about what was to be done to make sure that the poor did not suffer from higher energy prices, other than to claim that it was really only the highest users of energy – who were generally more well-off, who had the most to lose.

[225] Letter from Andrew Biemiller to Harley O. Staggers, quoted in "Tax on Energy Industry Asked," *Washington Post,* November 25, 1973.

[226] Goldfinger quoted in Logan and Nelkin, 11. As Logan and Nelkin rightly point out, there were also alternative voices within the labor movement that argued against the belief in such a tight causal relationship. IAM President William Winpisinger, for example, offered his thoughts in Congressional testimony that "Industry has historically substituted energy for labor. After substitution for labor in each process of the production chain, the total number of workers decreases. This fact alone seems to

So the AFL-CIO's energy policy was premised on the idea that all available resources should be used to produce as much energy as possible as cheaply as possible. Conservation had its place; as far as turning off lights, lowering thermostats, and driving more slowly were seen as part of a short-term national plan of sacrifice to get energy usage under control, the AFL-CIO generally accepted them. However, few within the organization's leadership hierarchy believed that would be enough. "Conservation," the AFL-CIO's Energy program read, "while indispensible, is not The Solution."[227] Although the Federation did not criticize the Sierra Club's energy program specifically, its position was indicative of the sort of differences in perception of the energy crisis that threatened to disrupt the relationship between labor and environmentalists.

That disruption was avoided in the short term because neither side acted intractably on their positions. A perfect example of this flexibility involved President Nixon's energy proposals, which included a plan to roll back portions of the Clean Air Act. The environmental community was predictably unsupportive of such a plan, fearing that it would lead to "massive destruction of the land and pollution of the land and water." At the same time, the Sierra Club's Washington Office Director, Brock Evans, allowed that limited exemptions to air quality standards on "a case by case basis" might be necessary, and would be acceptable to his organization as a temporary measure.[228] Likewise, many labor unions also questioned the wisdom of

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contradict the current industrial management argument ... that 'more energy leads to more jobs.'" Winpisinger also quoted in Logan and Nelkin, 12.

[227] "Energy: The AFL-CIO Program," statement adopted by the AFL-CIO Executive Council, February, 1975, GMMA RG 98, Box 14, Folder 3

[228] Brock Evans quoted in Ben A. Franklin, "Conservation Groups React Cautiously to Nixon's Bid to Ease Pollution Curbs," *NYT,* November 9, 1973.

the president's approach. Even the International Brotherhood of Teamsters – Nixon's biggest supporters within organized labor and perhaps the union that expressed the biggest concern over gas prices – challenged the White House's prescriptions, quoting an EPA analyst's claim that the environmental contribution to the fuel crisis "has been relatively minor," in their official organ, the *International Teamster.*[229]

The crisis itself also opened a few avenues of opportunistic cooperation between unions and the Sierra Club, where both acted for the passage of the same policies but for different reasons. One example of such strange bedfellow making arose when the two sides lobbied Congress to allow states to use money from the Highway Trust Fund for mass transit projects, in particular subways and light rail systems.[230] The Sierra Club's leaders liked the idea of promoting mass transit programs for several reasons, but in the energy-conscious climate of 1973 they and their congressional allies including Edmund Muskie were able to make a compelling case for the fuel efficient nature of busses and trains as opposed to highways.[231] Labor's position was equally calculated. Obviously any such shift in spending could be injurious to highway workers, but the added investment in rail cars and busses would likely mean more work for members of major industrial unions such as the UAW and International Association of Machinists (IAM). And because a lot of the highway money was being held up by local planning controversies, the shift to mass transit would result in more transportation money being spent overall. The position voiced by the Teamsters was again representative of much of the labor community. His union, General President Frank Fitzsimmons asserted, "always supported building a good national highway system, and we continue this support. But we have come to the conclusion that freeways alone cannot resolve the transportation needs of America's metropolitan areas."[232]

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[229] "The Energy Crisis," *International Teamster,* February, 1974, 17-21. 19.

[230] Peter Braestrup, "Road, Mass Transit Struggle Is Begun," *WP* February 8, 1973 and "Senate Unit Defeats Dip into Road Fund," *WP* March 2, 1973; Mary Russell, "Conferees Approve Highway Fund Bill," *WP* July 21, 1973.

[231] Shifting funds from highways to mass transportation remained a goal of the Sierra Club for at least the next decade. While they stressed the energy savings during the 1973 debate – it took less fuel to move a passenger a set distance on a train than in a car – the Club's Transportation Committee also saw additional environmental benefits to be had by spending more on mass transit. These benefits included the fact that the infrastructure lasted longer, it used less land along its path, and encourages less sprawling living patterns. See Christopher Wasiutynski, "The Energy Dimension," *Sierra* (March/April, 1982), 30.

An even better example of the unusual outcomes of the energy situation can be seen in regard to oil industry regulation. Both the Sierra Club and the AFL-CIO supported measures proposed by Congress in late 1973 and early 1974 to restrict oil producers' ability to use the crisis to reap excessive rewards. These restrictions included limits on the ability of U.S. companies to export energy fuels, a windfall profits tax, and the eradication of the oil industry's depletion allowance from the tax code – a move that would amount to a $3 billion increase in taxation.[233] Congress was motivated by the idea that the oil companies had not done everything in their power to mitigate the impact of the oil embargo on the American public. House Ways and Means Chairman Wilbur Mills alluded to the punitive nature of the policies when he told reporters his thought that "with the price of oil where it is today, there is no need for a depletion allowance."[234]

The AFL-CIO agreed with the Congressional assessment. It "urge[d] immediate consideration of an excess profits tax" in order to "make it clear... that the

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[232] Frank Fitzsimmons, "Observations of the General President," *International Teamster* (April, 1973), 4.

[233] "Early Action on Excess Oil Prices Seen," *WP,* January 13, 1974; "Hill Unit Votes to End Depletion Allowance," *WP,* May 1, 1974; also see Jacobs, 200-202.

[234] Peter Milius, "House Unit Switches on Oil Tax," *WP,* April 2, 1974.

Congress and the American people will not tolerate industry making huge windfall profits from an emergency."[235] The Federation also supported Congress' attempt to eliminate the oil companies' depletion allowances, especially in relation to their overseas operations. Both Congress and the AFL-CIO hoped that by eliminating the oil companies' ability to reap excessive profits, the new laws would also strip them of any impetus to maintain policies that had helped create high prices. The Sierra Club's support for such policies grew from a totally different impulse, and the Club's directors were banking on the opposite result. From the Club's perspective, the tax code was just one of many ways in which the government coddled oil producers. Stripping the oil industry of its depletion allowances or its ability to export fuel oil, Club leaders hoped, would raise the artificially low price of oil in the U.S. and would discourage excess oil production.[236]

The Divisiveness of Nuclear Power

In the short-run, the labor movement and the environmental movement were able to come to terms with one another reasonably well in regards to the energy emergency. Both were willing to make temporary accommodations of principle in the name of solving the larger problem, and they ultimately found themselves supporting several of the same congressional initiatives. However, the crisis also prompted the country to examine its potential long-term energy shortfalls, and the dialogue between the labor and environmentalist camps was more complicated when it came to confronting this issue.

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[235] "Tax on Energy Industry Asked."

[236] McCloskey later said that this revelation came to him as a result of his participation on the Ford Foundation's Energy Policy Project, a roundtable of representatives from the industry and environmental communities, McCloskey, *In the Thick of It,* 142.

The development of a renewable energy infrastructure seemed to offer an obvious bit of common ground. Not only would solar and wind power provide the country with clean alternatives to oil, but the massive construction projects that would be required to create the new generators appealed to building trades unions that were well placed in the AFL-CIO hierarchy. But that technology was still in its infancy and would require immense investments in research and development to be made dependable. Even the Sierra Club paid little attention to renewable sources in this period.[237] With this primary avenue for cooperation closed, both sides charted independent paths instead.

In general, those paths mirrored short-term priorities. The labor movement favored high energy solutions, such as speeding up the building of nuclear power plants and tapping new reserves of oil, coal, and natural gas. Official Sierra Club policy, meanwhile, remained committed to energy conservation. However, Club leaders also recognized that they could not maintain their legitimacy in the world of public policy with a conservation-only strategy. Instead, they sought to mitigate the damage of a high-energy world until more environmentally friendly alternatives were workable.[238]

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[237] For example, in the four page energy policy adopted by the Board of Directors at the end of 1972, only one sentence was given to support for "the use of renewable energy sources, such as solar energy, wind power, and geothermal power." The Club tended to see such methods of energy creation as a good hypothetical goal, but not as a reasonable alternative to fossil fuels and nuclear power for the foreseeable future. Sierra Club, "Energy Policy."

[238] McCloskey later said that this revelation came to him as a result of his participation on the Ford Foundation's Energy Policy Project, a roundtable of representatives from the industry and environmental communities, McCloskey, *In the Thick of It,* 142.

The Club's acknowledgment of the need for a "bridging fuel" to smooth the transition from petroleum to a renewable energy system raised at least an implicit question of what that fuel would be.[239] Oil was clearly not going to work, since its problems were creating the necessity for a transition in the first place. The Club had also been fighting against the expansion of hydro-electric damming for decades, so that was off limits too. Ultimately, the most acceptable transition energy sources for the Club were coal and nuclear power. Neither was without problems, and each had proponents and detractors throughout the organization's hierarchy.

Nuclear energy had the force of momentum behind it; only twenty-two commercial nuclear power plants were built between 1955 and 1965, but new plant construction exploded in the late 1960s and early 1970s, with forty-four nuclear units established in 1973 alone. Nuclear power promised power without air pollution, but at the same time concerns were already surfacing about exposure to nuclear radiation or the possibility of a core meltdown.[240] Alternatively, coal – especially coal with high sulfur content – was thought to be an even bigger air polluter than oil and posed numerous environmental risks between mining and burning.[241] Still, it was a well-established energy resource that seemed to promise energy independence through its massive domestic supplies and that could claim technological improvements on the horizon that would make burning cleaner.[242]

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[239] "Bridging fuel" was the way McCloskey described his own personal understanding, but the concept had many adherents within the Sierra Club hierarchy, ibid.

[240] J. Samuel Walker, *Three Mile Island: A Nuclear Crisis in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 3-9.

[241] This understanding was fairly accurate. Many urban centers had switched from coal to oil in electricity production in an effort to curb smog and other air pollution even by the early 1970s, and had seen their surrounding air quality improve. A move to coal in many places would therefore have been a move back to coal. Richard J. Gonzalez, "The Possible Impact of Environmental Standards on the Availability and Cost of Petroleum," in *Energy, Economic Growth, and the Environment: Papers Presented at a Forum conducted by Resources for the Future, Inc. in Washington, D.C., 20-21 April 1971,* ed. Sam H. Schurr (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), 89-99.

Nuclear power promised to divide organized labor and environmentalists like no other form of energy could. Major environmental protests against nuclear power became common in the late 1970s, and by the early 1980s opposition to nuclear power became a fundamental tenet of environmental politics.[243] Alternatively, almost no organization in the United States has supported nuclear power as persistently and – to quote Canadian labor scholars Larry Savage and Dennis Soron – "largely uncritical[ly]" as the American Federation of Labor.[244] The AFL-CIO's commitment to nuclear energy remained as strong in the 1970s as it had been in the two previous decades, when it championed the cause that "the non-military use of the atom be realized as rapidly, as equitably, and as fully as possible."[245]

However, these seemingly stark divisions belie a far more complicated picture. A deeper look at the internal politics of the Sierra Club and AFL-CIO in the early to mid-1970s shows that nuclear power had committed proponents and devoted opponents in each. For that reason nuclear energy created as much division within labor and environmental circles in that era as it did between them. The potential for conflict between labor and environmentalists existed in the mid-1970s, but it was, for the time being, unclear where or how the battle lines would be drawn.

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[242] For a better understanding of the way many people in the 1970s were thinking about coal's availability and its ability to be used cleanly, see George R. Hill, "Can Fossil Fuels Be Cleaned Up?" in *Energy and Environment: A Collision of Crisis,* ed. Irwin Goodwin (Acton, MA: Publishing Sciences Group, 1974), 129-140. Hill's estimate was that the U.S. was "at the halfway mark... for the cleaner uses of coal," 131.

[243] Barbara Epstein, *Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Thomas Raymond Wellock, *Critical Masses: Opposition to Nuclear Power in California, 1958-1978* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998); Jennifer Smith, *The Antinuclear Movement* (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 2003).

[244] Larry Savage and Dennis Soron, "Organized Labor, Nuclear Power, and Environmental Justice: A Comparative Analysis of the Canadian and U.S. Labor Movements," *Labor Studies Journal* 36, No. 1 (March, 2011): 37-57, quote from 38.

[245] AFL-CIO statement before the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, February 9, 1955, quoted in Savage and Soron, 46.

The AFL-CIO's dedication to nuclear energy was built on the idea that the nuclear industry would provide good, union jobs. The industry was densely organized, and construction requirements were high; it required about 1,000 more man-years to build a nuclear energy facility than a coal or oil burning one.[246] Not surprisingly, support for nuclear power was especially high in the Federation's powerful Building and Construction Trades Department, and among affiliates such as the International Union of Operating Engineers, since their members could get the economic benefit of constructing the plants while generally avoiding the worry of exposure to radiation. Unions that were more directly involved in generating electricity from nuclear reactions – such as OCAW or the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) – were somewhat more wary of nuclear power than the construction trades, but they understandably focused their attention on campaigning for higher safety standards rather than eliminating the industry entirely.[247]

The AFL-CIO also saw nuclear power as a legitimate potential source of large quantities of energy. Throughout the mid-1970s, the Federation maintained that "rapid development of nuclear power is a 'must' without which the nation's economy would falter."[248] This argument dominated AFL-CIO energy policy throughout the decade, and was most clearly stated in a set of policy prescriptions created in the wake of renewed energy chaos in 1979. There, in calling for "alternate forms of energy to replace specific amounts of oil and natural gas," the labor organization declared that "the nation cannot afford to ignore coal and nuclear energy, despite environmental dangers. Both sources will play an important role in reducing U.S. dependence on imported oil."[249]

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[246] The public interest research firm New Directions estimated that it would take about 5295 man-years to build a 1000 megawatt nuclear plant, while a similarly sized coal plant would take 4337 man-years. This study was cited in Rebecca Logan and Dorothy Nelkin, "Labor and Nuclear Power," *Environment* 22, No. 2 (March, 1980): 6-13, 34.
[247] Savage and Soron, 41-46; Logan and Nelkin, 10.
[248] *AFL-CIO News,* March 27, 1976; also quoted in Logan and Nelkin, 6.

Despite the AFL-CIO's overarching support for nuclear power, the industry was still pointedly criticized in some labor circles throughout its first decades of existence. Presaging much of the anti-nuclear environmentalism of the 1980s, many unions worked to undercut nuclear plants being constructed in their backyards. As early as 1956, the UAW was among the first in the nation to challenge the construction of a nuclear power plant when it led the charge to have public hearings on siting a nuclear reactor near Detroit, eventually taking its fight all the way to the Supreme Court.[250] Following their international's lead, a number of UAW locals later came out against nuclear power plants proposed near them. From North Carolina to New York, nuclear power protests involving local unions flared up throughout the middle of the decade. At the same time, California IBEW Local 1969 supported an antinuclear state ballot initiative (Proposition 15), and Steelworkers District 31 opposed construction of the Bailey nuclear plant in Indiana.[251]

International union bodies also joined the locals in protest, often questioning the wisdom of nuclear power in general, rather than just the siting of particular plants.

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[249] "Policy Resolution on Energy," adopted November, 1979 by the AFL-CIO 13th Constitutional Convention, GMMA RG20-003, box 44, folder 4.

[250] The UAW lost the court battle in 1961 and the Fermi plant was built only to be closed in 1966 after an accident. Logan and Nelkin, 8; http://curiouserblog.blogspot.com/2011/11/timeline-of-labor-environmental.html.

[251] Logan and Nelkin, 7-8.

The United Mine Workers, for example, foresaw the cratering of the coal industry in increased nuclear generation. It opposed nuclear power from its inception and continued to do so throughout the 1970s.[252] In 1976 the UAW's national convention passed a resolution that recommitted the union to nuclear skepticism, and in the wake of the Three Mile Island nuclear disaster, the union called for a moratorium on further nuclear development. The International Association of Machinists, under the progressive leadership of William Winpisinger, also publicly called for a moratorium on nuclear plant construction a few months after Three Mile Island.[253] Thus, organized labor was not able to present a united front in support of nuclear power in the 1970s.

By the same token, the environmental movement was unable to present a united front against nuclear power in the 1970s, at least not until the end of the decade. Disputes over nuclear power created dissention in the ranks of many environmental groups, but none would have an experience that was in any way comparable to the roiling mess that the issue created within the Sierra Club. As discussed previously, the Club was an organization in transition when the nuclear power debate broke upon its shores. As the group struggled to fashion a policy regarding atomic power, the bitterness from other internal issues continually crept into their decisions. These internal disputes helped make the Sierra Club's overall position on nuclear power a cautious one, and they were eventually left behind by other environmental organizations with more radical anti-nuclear critiques.[254]

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[252] Ibid.

[253] Ibid; Savage and Soron, 46.

The Club's understanding of nuclear power generation was marked by early enthusiasm – or, at the very least, ambivalence – which only slowly gave way to concern, with consensus for opposition building slowly through the 1970s. In the early 1960s, many in the Sierra Club's leadership were excited by the prospect of nuclear power and promoted it as the responsible alternative to their biggest enemy: hydro-electric dams. That faith in nuclear power was due, in part, to a large contingent of scientists and academics from Berkeley and other nearby universities, who had confidence in technological solutions to mankind's problems. Board member, future President, and biophysicist William Siri, spoke for many when he asked "The rest of the universe runs on nuclear energy, why not us?"[255]

Throughout the 1960s the primary concern of the Club's Board of Directors in regard to nuclear power was siting; the potential health dangers arising from nuclear fission were a nonissue. The conservation minded directors would accede to plant construction if they believed the location of the facility did not endanger "ocean and natural lake shores of high scenic value."[256] Such was the case in 1962, when Pacific Gas and Electric Company unveiled plans to construct a nuclear power plant at Bodega Bay, California. PG&E's proposal raised the hackles of nearby conservationists but provoked no response from the Club, which failed to even attend hearings on the issue in San Francisco.[257] Alternatively, if the Club's volunteer leadership did worry about the location of a utility, they would attempt to negotiate an alternative site where nuclear power could be produced without endangering a scenic wild area. An example of this course of action came later in the decade when PG&E proposed the construction of another California nuclear plant, this one at the Nipomo Dunes in San Luis Obispo County. The Club objected, and Siri (now the Club's president) entered into discussions with the company and other nuclear power supporters that resulted in the construction being moved from the scenic Nipomo Dunes to Diablo Canyon. By a nine to one vote, the Board of Directors ratified the agreement.[258]

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[254] The best study of the Sierra Club and its nuclear policy is Thomas Raymond Wellock, *Critical Masses: Opposition to Nuclear Power in California, 1958-1978* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998).

[255] Siri was a Sierra Club Director from 1956 to 1974; he served as President 1964-1966. Siri quoted in Wellock, 74.

[256] Quoted in Wellock, 37.

The Diablo Canyon decision – which initially seemed to offer a very reasonable conservationist settlement – became an unexpected turning point in the organization's relationship to nuclear power. A cadre of more radical staff and board members led by Executive Director Dave Brower grew to regret the agreement, framing their argument around broader issues than the appearance of a wilderness area. Instead, they argued that nuclear power was inherently dangerous – nuclear plants disturbed the ecology of nearby bodies of water by discharging hot water into them, and the nuclear process created radioactive wastes that would be inherited by future generations.[259] Member referenda would twice uphold the decision to accept the Diablo Canyon plant site, but the issue also contributed to the controversy that ultimately led to Brower's resignation in 1969.[260]

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[257] Wellock, 24-30, 33-37. The plant at Bodega Bay was later canceled when the site was discovered to be sitting almost directly on top of the San Andreas Fault.
[258] Wellock, 75-80.
[259] Wellock, 82-90.

The Club's members had signaled their willingness to support nuclear power and the conservative cadre on the board that championed it. However, the ground on which the Club stood had shifted. By the early 1970s the power held by the volunteer leaders on the Board of Directors was waning in relation to the organization's professional staff, which was less supportive of nuclear power and more inclined to take a broad view of the organization's mission. The rise of environmentalism around Earth Day, as described in chapter two, further reinforced this shift. However, the traditions of volunteer leadership and support for nuclear power were not easily uprooted. Thus, the Sierra Club's conversion to nuclear opposition continued slowly and with much debate.

The first signal of a shifting of the winds came toward the end of 1971 when the Sierra Club publicly opposed a nuclear plant that it had earlier supported at Point Arena, California. The focus of its opposition there remained on the scenic qualities of the area that were going to be destroyed, but a noticeable undercurrent of nuclear toxicity imbued the arguments with environmentalist flair. In this way, the Club was part of a growing trend among those Americans who were coming to doubt the possibilities of a nuclear powered world. By the 1970s, more people than ever had come to fear nuclear accidents, and finding a place to dispose of radioactive waste had become a problem that was too obvious to ignore. These trepidations were supplemented by scientific studies in the late 1960s and early 1970s that demonstrated the dangers that even low-level radiation exposure could pose to a community.[261]

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[260] "Sierra Club Backs Nuclear Plant Site," *NYT,* April 16, 1967; Wellock, 91.

In 1974, debate erupted within the Club over whether or not to make the organization officially anti-nuclear by calling for a moratorium on the building of nuclear plants. It was not a policy that was easily arrived at, as the board split on the issue and a technical committee designed to study it also returned divided.[262] By that time there was a great deal of consensus on siting issues; it was agreed that nuclear plants should be kept "out of proposed state parks and wildlife refuges, away from scenic and wild coastlines, off of earthquake faults, and to keep their thermal effluent out of our rivers." That policy, McCloskey would tell the American Nuclear Society later in the year, did not single out nuclear plants, for the Club was "anxious to keep other large industrial facilities out of these places and away from these things too."[263]

Pro-nuclear veterans of the Club's previous conflicts, such as director Will Siri and new president Laurence I. Moss (who was himself a nuclear engineer and had been a director for six years prior to his presidency), contended that it was sufficient to continue opposing individual plants. They argued that nuclear power did not pollute the air as did fossil fuels, that uranium mining was less destructive than coal mining or oil drilling, and that, while nuclear power generation was not perfect, nothing was. A blanket condemnation of nuclear power, they felt, would rob the Club of the moral authority to propose less harmful alternatives to proposed nuclear plants. Siri and Moss were joined in their analysis by local chapters throughout the Midwest and the Club's national Energy Committee, which supported some limited continuation of nuclear licensing.[264]

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[261] Most famously, John Gofman and Arthur Tamplin at the Lawrence Livermore national laboratory near San Francisco warned of cancer and genetic mutation from low-level radiation exposure. Wellock, 106-107, 105.

[262] McCloskey, *In the Thick of It,* 126; Michael McCloskey, "A Skeptical View of Nuclear Power," (speech, American Nuclear Society, Portland, OR, August 26, 1974), 2, BANC MSS 71/290 carton 10, folder 2.

[263] This quote and the previous on come from McCloskey, "A Skeptical View of Nuclear Power," 3.

The nuclear opponents parried these ideas with a host of reasons why nuclear power generation was not an industrial process like any other. Their focus was on safety and the relatively unknown and untested dangers presented by the nuclear industry. Although a core meltdown or other catastrophic event was clearly the biggest threat, an equally big problem was posed by the fact that, even if everything was functioning properly, the hazards posed by living near nuclear plants had mostly been unexplored by industry regulators. "It is difficult for the public to know what risk it is accepting," the argument went. "Experts differ over whether there is any safe threshold level [for exposure to radiation], and agencies differ over whether the limits on exposure are stringent enough."[265] In the end, the most convincing argument against nuclear power rested on the long-term impact that it would have on the planet and the morality of leaving future generations with a nuclear burden. "In building up our radioactive inventory," McCloskey cautioned listeners:

> we are creating obligations, manufacturing hazards, and developing risks that envelop our biosphere and transcend time in a way that no generation of man has ever before had the effrontery to imagine. In doing this, we are not merely saying that we here and now accept the risk; we are also forcing the words of acceptance upon the lips of the unborn, of all species, in all places, for nearly all time – for our benefit alone.[266]

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[264] Wellock, 102, 111, 280; McCloskey, "A Skeptical View of Nuclear Power," 2.

[265] McCloskey, "A Skeptical View of Nuclear Power," 4, 6.

[266] Ibid, 4.

Director Edgar Wayburn was perhaps less poetic, but was no less clear in summarizing his feelings as “I’m afraid for my children’s children.”[267]

The moratorium passed in 1974, and as the decade wore on, the Club’s officials became increasingly opposed to nuclear energy. By the end of the decade nuclear power had become public enemy number one for many of them. One of their early concerns with the Carter Administration, for example, was its “strongly pro-nuclear policy” as evidenced by the president’s support for nuclear licensing reform and his appointment of nuclear power proponents Joseph Hendrie and Kent Hansen to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Despite generally positive assessments of Carter’s first year in the White House, McCloskey and Evans also reminded readers of their “1977 Washington Wrap Up” that the president’s pro-nuclear Department of Energy remained a major problem.[268]

Nuclear power’s fall from grace within the Sierra Club – a fall that was still incomplete in the mid- to late 1970s – opened a space within that organization to reconsider the potential of coal. Nuclear power failed to divide the labor and environmental movements from one another in the early and mid-1970s because it divided each internally. Coal, on the other hand, was not simply a non-issue. Instead, the Club’s serious engagement with the possibilities of coal power helped sustain good relations with organized labor, particularly the AFL-CIO and the United Mine Workers, through the crafting of a regulatory framework that would benefit workers while minimizing harm to the environment. Although these alliances were marriages of convenience, where the two sides cooperated with different ends in mind, they kept the Club in positive contact with the labor movement and minimized energy policy conflict between the two.

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[267] Wayburn quoted in Wellock, 111.

[268] “Is Carter Going Nuclear?” *Sierra* (October, 1977): 58; McCloskey and Evans, “The Sierra Club’s 1977 Washington Wrap Up.” McCloskey was the primary author of the White House segment of the article, while Evans focused on Congress

Coal Cooperation

By the 1970s, coal's position in the U.S. energy system had declined precipitously from its 1910 high when it provided 76.8 percent of all fuel consumed in the country. In the postwar period oil had slowly but surely cut coal out of both the transportation and household energy sectors. Although coal use had waned significantly in the total U.S. energy system between 1947 and 1970, its decline was less marked in the field of electricity generation. While down from a postwar high of 52.8 percent, coal still remained an important factor in that field, providing just under 45 percent of the nation's total electrical generation fuel in 1970.[269]

The energy crisis inspired the nation to take a second look at coal for two main reasons. High oil prices made people enthusiastic about coal's potential to provide continued cheap electricity while freeing up petroleum supplies for gasoline and other uses. As important, coal was also domestically producible in quantities that would last for centuries. The U.S. Geological Survey estimated in 1974 that 3 trillion tons of coal existed under the United States – 79 percent of the total fossil fuel resources of the country, and, as many labor commenters were quick to point out, of more value in terms of BTUs than all the oil in the Middle East.[270] Also, as industrial economist Richard L. Gordon wrote in 1978, "until the 1970s, coal was by far the least regulated of the U.S. energy industries."[271] That lack of regulation may have been seen as a positive in some quarters, but for groups like the Sierra Club it was one of the biggest drawbacks to coal usage – a drawback that would need to be remedied by more firmly pulling coal into the system of new social regulation. It was in the building of the parameters of this regulatory system that environmentalists and miners would most often find themselves in conversation.

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[269] See Richard L. Gordon, *Coal in the U.S. Energy Market: History and Prospects* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1978), 21-36; in particular 22 (table 2-1), 23 (table 2-2).

[270] Ibid, 64 (table 4-1), and 74 (table 4-4). The claim about BTUs may not be factually accurate, but it was commonly repeated, both in the labor press and by the coal industry itself, for example, the National Coal Association's President, Carl E. Bagge was fond of saying that "We are the Saudi

Prior to the energy crisis, the Sierra Club had dismissed coal as too dirty to be a workable energy source. Coal's return to preeminence among the nation's energy resources had even been one of the bogeymen raised by the pro-nuclear faction of the Club during the 1974 moratorium debates. But it was a specter that had lost some of its potency. Wayburn remembered a moment where "the argument [was] made that it's much more dangerous to breathe in the effects of coal. Perhaps it is, in the short haul.... But burning coal as far as we know, is not going to affect future generations the way nuclear can."[272] McCloskey has written of a similar moment of personal realization, when he came to favor coal as the "bridging fuel" that would carry the United States until renewable energy resources were viable economically and technologically. While recognizing that coal was dirty, McCloskey also noted that "in general its conservation impetus makes some sense (substituting relatively abundant resources for resources which will be increasingly scarce)," and that "the

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Arabia of coal," see Ben A. Franklin, "Coal Men Hedge Hopes on Output," *NYT,* December 21, 1973; "Coal: It's Cheap but Dirty and Hard to Dig," June 16, 1974; "Why Not Coal?" *International Teamster* (November, 1979): 18-19.

[271] Gordon, 5. Gordon's assessment is seconded by Walter A. Rosenbaum, *Coal and Crisis: the Political Dilemmas of Energy Management* (New York: Praeger, 1978).

[272] Wellock, 111.

tradeoffs that would ensue from it are difficult to trace from an environmental point of view."[273]

The conversation about coal occurred at a time when the most dangerous aspects of its burning were only just starting to be understood. Awareness of acid rain was beginning to slowly work its way into the national consciousness, but it was far from being considered a critical threat, and the connection between acid rain and sulfur dioxide (SO_2) from burning carbon had yet to be fully elaborated.[274] The science behind global warming and its connection to carbon dioxide (CO_2) was even newer and more ambiguous. There was, as yet, no consensus that the climate was changing or what was causing it if it was. Sierra Club publications warned of the dangers of putting heat into the environment, but CO_2's roll in that process was not well known.[275] As it stood, carbon dioxide was not thought to be particularly dangerous, nor was it even one of the pollutants that the Clean Air Act air quality standards sought to control.[276]

Because the long-term effects of coal burning were so poorly understood, the environmental imperative in the mid-1970s was to fix the immediate problems caused by air pollution.[277] Visibility remained central to the Sierra Club's concerns, especially those of the rank and file. While smog clouded the nation's cities, Club members worried that the haze of air pollution would diminish the grandeur of natural spaces as well. Letters from members to the EPA, including that of Hugh Church, cried out that they had "viewed with alarm the continuing visibility degradation of the Middle and Upper Rio Grande Valley," and other local scenic areas. Such letters promoted the use of technological fixes such as SO_2 scrubbers to clean the air. "While costs and inflationary impacts are indeed a serious concern of such implementation," Church and those like him argued, "the alternatives of further visibility impairment and increased health costs to the nation is simply untenable."[278]

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[273] McCloskey, *In the Thick of It,* 142; Michael McCloskey to Mr. Greg Thomas, December 28, 1976, BANC MSS 71/289 c, carton 31, folder 16.

[274] Gene E. Likens and F. Herbert Bormann, "Acid Rain: A Serious Regional Environmental Problem," *Science* 184, No. 4142 (June 14, 1974): 1176-1179. The conclusions reached by Likens and Bormann and other scientists – that acid rain was caused by man-made injections of sulfur into the atmosphere through the burning of fossil fuels – were accurate. But it seems that the regional nature of the problem, among other things, helped to keep concern with the problem of acid rain lower than it would be in the 1980s.

[275] Spencer Weart, *The Discovery of Global Warming: Revised and Expanded Edition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); John Holdren and Philip Herrera, *Energy: A Crisis in Power* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1971).

[276] The controlled pollutants were sulfur oxides, nitrogen oxides, oxidants, carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, and particulates.

In also raising the issue of public health, Church's letter makes it clear that pollution's impact on the human body remained a growing concern within Club circles as well. Don Fausett, of the Club's Rocky Mountain Chapter, expressed similar sentiments in congressional testimony on the Clean Air Act amendments of 1977. His local group's concern for clean air, he said, came from the fact that "in the Denver area in particular [air pollution] is a daily nuisance and health hazard we have to contend with.... It is a clear and present danger to good health."[279] These dual concerns with visibility reduction and the health impact of air pollution were big enough to guarantee that the Club would never actively promote coal, but they were also limited enough to allow the group to accept coal use for the time being.

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[277] Again, coal was not alone in producing SO_2, CO_2, or any of the other particulate matter that constituted air pollution as it was understood in the 1970s. Coal merely stood out as the worst offender among the various fossil fuel options.

[278] Letter from Hugh Church to Doug Costle, May 14, 1979, BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 142, folder 2.

[279] Testimony of Donald Fausett, Rocky Mountain Chapter, Sierra Club before the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Environmental Pollution, February 15,1977, 161-162.

Even a limited alliance between environmentalists and the United Mine Workers would have been practically unimaginable only a few years prior. However, by the early 1970s the mine workers union was in the midst of a rank-and-file rebellion against the autocratic and corrupt management of its president, Tony Boyle.[280] Rising concerns with Black Lung disease, combined with Boyle's easy dismissal of safety violations that had led to a serious mine explosion in Farmington, West Virginia, had made it, to quote historian of the UMW Alan Derickson, "inescapably clear that two decades of cozy accommodation with corporate management had left the top leadership of the Mine Workers hopelessly out of touch with the on-the-job experience of its members."[281] In a federally supervised election at the end of 1972, rank-and-file forces led by Arnold Miller defeated the Boyle machine. Miller became president of the union, and the newly restructured Mine Workers plunged into the politics of workplace health and safety guidelines with a vigor that had been missing for many years prior.

While health and safety concerns had led to labor-environmental collaboration in the past and had inspired UMW members to seek new leadership, they were not the basis of blue-green cooperation on coal. Environmentalists, for example, did not play a major role in securing the passage of the 1977 Federal Mine Safety and Health Act.[282] Instead, the relationship between the Sierra Club and the UMW was dominated by a series of reforms involving land use and power plant emissions control. These reforms were expected to appreciably limit the environmental harm of coal burning and mining while at the same time shift the economics of coal production to privilege areas of the country where the mining union's presence was strongest.

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[280] George W. Hopkins, "Union Reform and Labor Law: Miners for Democracy and the Use of the Landrum-Griffin Act," *Journal of Labor Research* 31, No. 4 (2010):348-364, 351.

[281] Derickson, 150.

[282] Some environmentalists, under the auspices of the organization Environmentalists For Full Employment offered support to mine workers striking for better conditions in the mines in 1978. In an open letter to President Carter, the group, which included Sierra Club President William Futrell, wrote that "the conditions under which Americans miners work are deplorable. Coal mining is the most dangerous industrial occupation in the country today. Miners are injured with each passing hour, and killed every other day. Inhalation of unnecessarily-high levels of coal dust has caused tens of

The piece of public policy that had the greatest impact on coal burning in the mid-1970s was the 1977 Clean Air Act amendments. The amendments, complicated pieces of legislation that they were, would prove to be divisive to blue-green unity on certain issues. For example, the UAW, once a strong environmental advocate within organized labor, would work to delay the implementation of standards related to mobile sources of air pollution such as cars. However, in the discussion of stationary source standards – the category into which electric power plants fell – unions and environmental organizations both pushed for the same objectives.[283]

The most important changes being discussed for the stationary source standards concerned the goal labeled prevention of significant deterioration (PSD). The original Clean Air Act contained ambiguous language that granted a great deal of latitude to the states and to the Environmental Protection Agency in carrying out the mandates of the law, which only required states to meet minimum overall standards of air quality within their borders. When several states submitted proposals that

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thousands of cases of black lung disease.... We therefore support the mineworkers' insistence on their right to strike over dangerous and unhealthy conditions. No workers should ever be forced to enter a dangerous or unhealthy workplace, or face the threat of job loss or fines for refusing to do so." The letter was part of a rising concern with dangerous workplaces in environmental circles at the time, but was not instrumental in the resolution of this particular conflict. Letter to President Jimmy Carter from Richard Grossman, et al. March 22, 1978, BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 226, folder 3.

[283] One of the most competent explorations of this piece of legislation is Andrew P. Morriss, "The Politics of the Clean Air Act," in Terry L. Anderson, ed. *Political Environmentalism: Going Behind the Green Curtain* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2000), 263-318.

would have led to areas of very high air quality being lowered to the national ambient air quality standard, the Sierra Club sued EPA Administrator William Ruckelshaus to prevent the approval of those plans. The Club won a District Court ruling that concluded that allowing the quality of any air to decline, even if the resulting atmosphere would still meet national standards, violated the "'protect and enhance' language of the Clean Air Act."[284] The EPA appealed the decision, but the Supreme Court upheld it in 1973.

One of the primary goals of the Club and other environmental organizations in 1977 was to legislate these deterioration limits instead of relying on the court system or the EPA.[285] The Sierra Club – along with the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Wilderness Society, and Friends of the Earth (the organization that Dave Brower founded after leaving the Sierra Club) – took the lead in pushing for strong language on the prevention of significant deterioration. Beyond the general goal of enshrining the court's decision regarding PSD in the text of the law, which they got, environmentalists also hoped to expand the concept's parameters in numerous ways. National parks and wilderness areas had previously been granted the highest designation for air quality standards, and environmentalists now argued that a broader set of recreational areas – including national monuments, historic sites, scenic rivers, and the like – should be accorded the same protections. Also, arguing that "the federal government deserves the right to protect their own land," the environmental community encouraged Congress to grant the federal government, rather than states, the power to clear new power plant construction near to those areas.[286]

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[284] *Sierra Club v. Ruckelshaus,* 344 F. Supp. 253 (D.D.C. 1972).

[285] *Fri V. Sierra Club,* 412 U.S. 541 (1973); Warren Weaver, "Protection is Part of the Cure: the Environment," *NYT,* June 17, 1973; Morriss, 294.

The last major reform that environmentalists sought called for mandating the expanded use of emissions-control technology. Prior to 1977, the Clean Air Act only required that pollution control equipment be installed in coal burning plants in the parts of the country with the worst quality air. All other plants could satisfy the sulfur dioxide limitations imposed by the law in one of two ways: install a device, such as a flue gas scrubber, to capture the pollutant before its emission into the atmosphere, or switch to burning a coal that was lower in sulfur to begin with. Utilities usually opted for the second choice because it was cheaper; it also had the unintended consequence of giving a market advantage to coal mined in the West, which was lower in sulfur content than that mined in the East. Environmental organizations preferred the first alternative, both because they supported the principal of encouraging utilities to use advanced environmental protections and because they did not want to encourage the use of western coal, which was more likely than eastern to be strip-mined or to have been extracted from public lands. In 1977, environmentalists sought to expand the existing requirements by making sure that existing plants near sensitive areas such as parks and wilderness preserves had to use the most advanced available emissions control technology. And, any major stationary source that was built or modified – not just those near parks – would have to incorporate this technology as well.[287]

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[286] See Morriss, 296-297; testimonies of Rafe Pomerance, Legislative Director, Friends of the Earth and Richard Ayres before the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Environmental Pollution, February 10, 1977, 21-24; testimonies of John Krautkramer, Colorado Open Space Council and Environmental Defense Fund and Donald Fausett, Rocky Mountain Chapter, Sierra Club before the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Environmental Pollution, February 15,1977, 118-123, 161-162. Quote from Pomerance, 22.

It was in their assertion that power producers should have to use the most advanced available technology that the interests of environmentalists lined up with coal miners'. The United Mine Workers had little concern for emissions-control in and of itself, but the union was interested in eliminating the market advantage enjoyed by western coal. The union's strongest base of support came from states whose coal was high in sulfur content: Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Ohio. The union believed that eliminating the incentives for purchasing low sulfur coal would help bring jobs back to the heavily unionized east.

The testimony of Charlie Grimm, a representative from UMW District 6 in Ohio, before the Senate Subcommittee on Environmental Pollution demonstrates how central jobs were to the Mine Workers' calculations. Reminding the panel that he spoke for 14,000 Ohio coal miners, he noted "the jobs being discussed are their jobs. The economy being discussed is their paychecks."[288] More coal use, he proposed, would not only help those miners but would relieve the nation's dependence on foreign oil. But a commitment to coal also had to mean a commitment to "the development and use of a variety of pollution control technologies," because "if rigid and arbitrary emission standards continue to be the sole permissible approach to compliance with ambient standards, a significant portion of our domestic supply of coal simply cannot be used for the production of electricity." Grimm's testimony betrays more bitterness toward "elitist" environmentalists than that of the higher-ups in the UMW hierarchy – he partly blamed the EPA "for this disaster to the economy of Ohio" – but otherwise it is fairly representative of the union's position in the congressional hearings on the amendments.[289]

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[287] Testimony by Richard E. Ayres, Washington Representative, Natural Resources Defense Council before the U.S. House of Representatives Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee Subcommittee on Health and the Environment, March 11, 1977,1334-1355, 1336; Ben A. Franklin, "Use of Scrubbers With Coal Boiler Pushed by Carter," *NYT,* May 31, 1977.

[288] Statement of Charlie Grimm, COMPAC Representative, United Mine Workers District 6, before the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Environmental Pollution, February 10, 1977, 113.

Environmental organizations and unions also came together in arguing that new stationary sources of air pollution should be held to higher standards than old ones. This argument went beyond utilities to include other types of industrial air polluters, especially steel mills. Major industrial unions such as the United Steelworkers hoped that by maintaining tough PSD standards and by holding new polluters to a higher standard, they could keep industrial production in the already organized Northeast and Midwest. Otherwise, steel or other industrial producers would have the ability to move to the comparatively unorganized South or West, where the relatively cleaner air would allow them the ability to pollute on the same scale without running afoul of the law.[290] "It is important that the concept of preventing significant deterioration be firmly enunciated by the Congress," contended USW Legislative Director John Sheehan. "Rather than harming economic growth, the provisions will channel growth into areas that will not require after-the-fact regulation at some future time. Corrective regulation is where job loss becomes a problem. Preventive regulation promotes job stability."[291] Sequestering polluting industries to already polluted areas as much as possible also fit the environmental agenda. After all, preserving lands that had not yet been polluted was the Sierra Club's goal in raising the PSD issue in the first place.

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[289] Grimm, 114, 115.

[290] For more, see Obach, 58.

[291] Statement of John J. Sheehan, Legislative Director, United Steelworkers of America, before the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Environmental Pollution, February 10, 1977, 4. Sheehan also urged "absolute minimum" delay in implementing auto emissions standards because his union worried that stationary sources would have to be controlled more to make up for the air quality loss that allowing continued auto pollution would create.

While the problem of air pollution created by burning coal was a problem, for many environmentalists – the Sierra Club foremost among them – the questions of land use raised by coal mining were equally troubling. Coal industry representatives threatened the country that without preferential government treatment, more access to federally owned land, and relaxed (or at least not strengthened) regulations, coal production could not keep pace with demand, resulting in price increases and rolling blackouts.[292] Against such threats, the Club countered that the areas already in production were sufficient, that land that had already been leased for coal production was going unused, and that any decisions regarding new mining should be carefully considered and subject to strict public oversight. The deliberations of Club leaders on the subject were sometimes dominated by the specific location of a proposed mine, such as the scenic Kaiparowits Plateau in Utah.[293] At other times, the Club favored more sweeping limitations on coal mine operators. For example, the group supported the 1976 congressional amendments to the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, which were designed to restrict the length of time that coal companies could hold leases without producing coal and would also have limited the acreage they could lease at any given time.[294]

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[292] For a small sampling see Ben A. Franklin, "Coal Men Hedge Hopes on Output," *NYT,* December 21, 1973; "Peabody Is Leading Fight Against Strip-Mining Law," April 30, 1978; "Enforcement of Strip-Mine Rules Yields Little Effect on Production," June 12, 1978.

[293] Steven Rattner, "Utilities Continue Fight for Utah Coal Project," *NYT,* November 26, 1976.

[294] Dave Sheridan, "Mining the Public Weath," *Sierra* (April, 1978): 10-13.

Throughout the mid-1970s, the UMW seconded the Sierra Club's main assertion: that increasing coal production need not be tied to lowering mining standards. Fearing for the health of their members as much as for environmental degradation, UMW leaders noted that as soon as the energy pinch began in 1973, coal companies "attempted to create something approaching a national panic on the subject" of whether or not enough coal could be mined to fill the nation's energy needs. In such an atmosphere, health, safety, and environmental standards could easily be shunted aside. But, UMW officials argued, regulations were not the problem. "We face an emergency crisis today," they insisted "because government has... allowed corporate interests to develop and supply the nation's energy in accordance with their instincts for profit alone."[295] The UMW leadership also agreed with the Club that opening new leases would be an especially ineffective way to stimulate production, since the coal companies were not mining to capacity the leases they already held, indeed sometimes were not mining those lands at all. Arnold Miller elaborated on the point in a *New York Times* editorial toward the end of his first term in the union's top post. Signaling his support for the environmentalists' position, he opened with a quote by Sierra Club founder John Muir: "'When I try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.' I think that is about as true as any idea I ever heard."[296] Making his perspective even more clear for those who had missed it the first time, he alerted readers that if they were confused or angered by what he had to say, they could "blame it on the Sierra

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[295] Miller quoted in Ben A. Franklin, "U.M.W. Chief Assails Policies on Energy," *NYT,* April 17, 1973.

[296] Arnold Miller, "Coal is the Answer to the Energy Problem... But the Industry is Neither Accountable to the Nation Nor Fully Competitive," *NYT,* June 6, 1976.

Club. That is what the coal industry does." Kidding aside, Arnold elaborated a strong case that the nation was being misled in its understanding of how the coal industry worked and where predicted shortfalls might originate. The coal industry's claim that it was made up of over 1200 mining companies buffeted by the winds of regulatory reform was misleading; most production was actually controlled by fifteen companies "that are so big they can give half a million dollars to a politician without its even showing up on their books."[297] And those companies, Miller insisted, were only fabricating allegations of hardship in pulling profits from their mines.

> The bigger companies, with effective control of their market, have no incentive to expand except when they are absolutely certain in advance of selling every ton of coal at acceptable prices.... The biggest... combines are sitting on vast reserves of readily recoverable coal. But the coal will come out of the ground only when the men who own it can be sure of the price they will get for it.[298]

The industry's predicted shortage, Miller and the Sierra Club agreed, was merely a ploy to steer governmental policy in a manner that would inflate their profits by improving the terms of their land leases or by lowering labor costs through decreased health and safety regulations.

Perhaps the most effective way for mine operators to lower costs was to mine from an open pit. Taking coal from the surface meant less up-front capital was needed to sink a mine shaft; plus a higher percentage of the coal in a given deposit was recoverable from a surface mine.[299] Surface mines were also more automated, which lowered labor costs by employing fewer workers. It was that final point that eventually brought a divided UMW leadership out in opposition to the growth of surface mining, despite the fact that nearly one in six of its members were employed in such workplaces.[300] Michael McCloskey liked to highlight this point when he described his organization's relationship with the UMW, telling audiences that stripmining "is nearly completely automated... the real job opportunities lie in underground mining."[301]

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[297] Ibid.

[298] Ibid.

[299] Report to Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, 1974, cited in Richard A. Harris, *Coal Firms Under the New Social Regulation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985).

Of course, it was not the lack of job opportunities that made surface mines – or strip mines, as their opponents called them – the particular bane of the environmental movement in regard to coal mining. Instead, the environmental community worried about the "legacy of brutality to the land," as a 1974 newspaper exposé termed it.[302] Unreclaimed mines left behind massive, gaping holes in the earth – covering two million acres in the mid-1970s – and the destruction was compounded by literal tons of "spoil" – unused rock blasted from the top of the coal seam and left in piles around the site. Even when mine operators tried to reclaim the land, they had to admit that they were unsure that the top soil could be replaced in a way that it would not erode and would bring the land back to its former state, especially with agricultural land, where the prospects were "chancy at best." And it was not just the land; strip mining required titanic amounts of water while at the same time potentially poisoning groundwater reserves with acidifying agents. As McCloskey explained to a labor audience in 1973, the process "devastates the land for short-term profit," a devastation that was totally unnecessary because "we have enough underground coal reserves to last 200 years or more yet." It was these factors that moved environmentalists to join the UMW in supporting strip mining controls throughout the middle of the decade, and to call for an outright ban on the practice early in 1975.[303]

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[300] Ben A. Franklin, "U.M.W. Backs Strict Strip Mining Curb," *NYT,* July 10, 1974. Of 120,000 active UMW members in 1974, about 20,000 worked in surface mines. It should be noted too that despite surface miners being a large percentage of the UMW, the majority of miners in surface operations, especially in the western states, were unorganized, another reason for the UMW's opposition.

[301] McCloskey, "Two Movements That Should Work Together," 11.

[302] Ben A. Franklin, "At What Price Coal?" *NYT,* September 29, 1974.

A total ban on surface mining was an unlikely course for the country to take, so, as they did throughout the 1970s, environmentalists looked to the federal government to establish a regulatory system that would control the practice and make it less harmful. However, the process was fought tooth and nail by the mining industry, whose spokespeople claimed it would completely "prohibit mining in the west."[304] Thus, the legislative process dragged on for six years. At least twenty-five bills were introduced in that time, meeting with varying levels of success. The Sierra Club consistently fought for strict regulations, including restoration requirements and taxes or other fees to reclaim older mined areas. They were joined by the UMW in support of Gaylord Nelson's amendments to the 1973 strip mining bill, which would have done exactly that. That bill was pocket-vetoed by Gerald Ford in 1974, and another strip mining bill was also vetoed by the president the next year. It was not until Jimmy Carter signed the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act in 1977 that tough stripmining controls found their way into federal law.[305]

Opponents of the environmental movement could argue that the Sierra Club's work in passing legislation including the Clean Air Act amendments and the Surface

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[303] Ibid; McCloskey, "Two Movements That Should Work Together," 11; "Strip-Mining Ban Urged by Groups," *WP,* January 21, 1975.
[304] Ben A. Franklin, "Coal: It's Cheap, but Dirty and Hard to Dig," *NYT,* June 16, 1974.
[305] Christofferson, 335; Harris, 4-6.

Mining Control and Reclamation Act hampered the growth of coal use in the United States in the 1970s. The point is debatable, but even if it were indisputably true it would not be very telling. It was not the Club's intention to impede coal use or to destroy its marketability. Instead, by creating a regulatory regime that could curb environmentally irresponsible coal use, the Club hoped to get the safest use possible out of coal until the day that it could be replaced by practical, large-scale renewable energy sources. As the long-term consequences of fossil fuel use came to be better understood in the coming years, the Sierra Club would become more hostile toward coal, eventually driving a wedge between themselves and the United Mine Workers that has yet to be fully removed. However, in the middle of the 1970s, coal appeared to be the least-bad option available to generate power, if it could be sensibly regulated. Far from creating antagonism with organized labor, the regulatory system sought by mainstream environmental organizations was supported by many unions, and openly cheered by the one closest to the controversy, as the UMW participated in the system's creation.

Conclusion

Historians have previously asserted that the energy crisis of 1973 was one of the primary causes of the declining relationship between labor and environmentalists in the middle of the 1970s. This chapter has argued that this common idea misunderstands the dynamics at play between the two movements, at least one the national level. While the AFL-CIO's stated goals of more and cheaper energy were antithetical to the Sierra Club's conservation ideal, the potential of energy policy to create friction between the two was never realized. Instead, energy remained one of the few areas of national importance in which the two sides continued to cooperate. The short-term emergency engendered by the oil crisis led to a series of compromises that saw the Club and unions undertaking a common agenda. At the same time, while creating its long-term energy plans, the Club considered the potential of nuclear power and coal in the absence of compelling renewable alternatives. Although much of the blue-green energy cooperation in this period involved pursuing the same means for different ends, it was cooperation nonetheless.

This alliance of convenience had major repercussions, both for blue-green coalition building and for national politics. In the first case, maintaining open lines of communication between the Sierra Club and the labor movement at a time when their relationship on other issues was rocky allowed both to continue to see the other as multidimensional. This continued dialogue would later provide an invaluable advanced starting position to activists seeking to fully reengage in coalition politics. In the second case, the energy debates of the mid-1970s extended the conversation about broadening the parameters of the regulatory state by several years. In trying to craft a system that would provide energy at acceptable levels while at the same time being as environmentally friendly as possible, blue-green collaborators continued to flesh out environmental and labor protections that had ceased to be raised in other areas of national politics. Energy policy reverberated throughout all areas of public life, and in so doing, its regulatory infrastructure touched workplace health, clean air, clean water, land use, finance, trade and a series of other areas.

Chapter 5: An Alliance Renewed, 1978-1980

"Country is moving heavily to the right," Stephen Schlossberg, director of the United Auto Workers Washington Office advised his boss, UAW President Doug Fraser in 1979. Conservatives, he warned, were gathering strength and "making the country, both parties and almost all politicians fight on their turf."[306] Schlossberg's assessment of the political atmosphere facing organized labor at the end of the 1970s was common among union leaders. As the recession and energy crisis continued to play themselves out across the country, the attention of the labor movement turned toward its stalled political agenda, which was being held up, in labor's own estimation, by a Congress and White House that had turned their backs on the unions that had helped to elect them. Labor's most progressive leaders, including Fraser, William Winpisinger of the International Association of Machinists, and Jerry Wurf of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, believed that their movement's declining political fortunes arose from having cut itself off from potential social movement allies. This group began to imagine the solution to this problem could be found in a more broadly-based form of organizing that would reconnect their organizations to their social movement roots. Their campaign would be constructed on the back of "a completely new type of progressive organization for the 1980s," a massive coalition encompassing elements from all across the "sane left," that would stem the rising tide of conservatism, recapture the fading importance of liberalism, and revive the union movement as the new decade dawned.[307]

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[306] Memo to Doug Fraser from Stephen Schlossberg, March 9, 1979, WRA Stephen Scholssberg Collection, box 5, folder 20.

This ambitious thinking led to the development of a variety of coalition organizations including the Progressive Alliance, the Citizen/Labor Energy Coalition, Jobs with Justice, and Democratic Agenda, all of which were led by labor's liberal wing. The UAW, IAM, and AFSCME were particularly active in reaching out to traditional allies as well as to some organizations, such as the Sierra Club, that had previously butted heads with workers. The mass coalitions that were created in the late 1970s were unlike the alliances that unions had been pursuing for many years. Rather than being temporary associations that were designed to sustain one campaign or win one election, these groups were instead thought of as permanent fixtures in liberal politics, meant to fundamentally alter the political dynamics of social movement organizing for American liberals.

These mass movement coalition groups were of particular importance in reviving the relationship between unions and environmental organizations. After years of limited positive contact between the two, progressive unions – chastened by recent political defeats and unhappy with the direction of the AFL-CIO – sought to mend fences with environmentalists by inviting them to participate in partnerships that included a wide assortment of groups on the political left. Two organizations – the UAW-led Progressive Alliance (PA) and the Citizen/Labor Energy Coalition (CLEC) – were especially important. Although the interaction of unionists and environmentalists within these two organizations was short-lived, it provided a foundation on which later organizing could build. Through their participation in large-scale coalitions, the two sides defined the parameters of their later teamwork by establishing commonalities as well as exposing some potential barriers to cooperation that would be best to avoid. In this way, the Alliance and Coalition were important transitional false starts that led to growing cross-movement collaboration in the 1980s.

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[307] Memo to Doug Fraser from Steve Schlossberg, Bill Dodds, and Ed James, September 5, 1979, WRA Acc#1116, box 3, folder 12; to Fraser from Schlossberg.

The mass liberal coalitions that were developed in the late 1970s were designed to recall and recreate a time when unions understood their place in U.S. politics broadly and took their social responsibilities seriously. Rather than working primarily for the narrow job interests of their members – primarily higher wages and shorter hours – as business unions did, social unions worked for the betterment of society as a whole. They saw themselves as members of the broader community, and they encouraged and participated in community action for racial and gender equality, free speech, immigrant rights, and various other causes.

Historians would rarely consider the American Federation of Labor to have been involved in anything but business unionism, or reject the idea that the UAW began its life in the 1930 as a social union. But when and if the auto workers' union abandoned its social unionist ethics has been the subject of considerable historical debate. For many historians, including Nelson Lichtenstein, the union has come to symbolize the overall narrowing of organized labor's social agenda in the postwar period. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, this argument goes, the leaders of the UAW and many other formerly progressive unions in the CIO sacrificed their social democratic principles by abandoning their unions' radicals in the name of anticommunism. In the process, those leaders gained political respectability and consolidated their positions as the well-compensated heads of narrowly tailored collective bargaining machines.[308] Others have contended that the UAW remained a potent force for social justice well into the 1960s. Kevin Boyle, for example, argues "the UAW leadership did not abandon its social democratic agenda in the late 1940s." [309] Instead, Boyle contends that Walter Reuther and the union he led remained committed to large-scale racial and economic reform until at least the 1960s, when it joined with civil rights activists, local politicians, and academics to push for the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, War on Poverty programs, and housing reform.

More broadly, scholars have only just begun to assess the significance for liberalism in the 1980s of labor-led mass coalitions such as the Progressive Alliance and Jobs With Justice. The current general consensus is that their success was mixed at best. Certainly they were unable to stop the rightward drift of U.S. politics. Jefferson Cowie, who gives the Progressive Alliance a passing nod in his book *Stayin' Alive: the 1970s and the Last Decade of the Working Class,* says the Alliance was "at least a decade too late" to achieve the encompassing results its founders hoped for.[310] In more limited respects, however, the activities of the coalitions led to some victories, including the Citizen/Labor energy Coalition's successful stalling of natural gas price deregulation. One could also argue, as does Andrew Battista, the historian who has studied these organizations most deeply, that the mass labor-liberal coalitions of the late 1970s and early 1980s were more important for what they represented than for what they accomplished. From this perspective, their existence alone was an achievement; it signaled a recognition on the part of the labor movement that it had become dangerously isolated, and continued a tradition of organizing that had nearly been abandoned.[311]

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[308] Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit;* A.C. Jones, "Rank and File Opposition in the UAW in the Long 1970s," in *Rebel Rank and File: Labor Militancy and Revolt from Below during the Long 1970s,* eds. Aaron Brenner, Robert Brenner and Cal Winslow (New York: Verso, 2010): 281-308.

[309] Kevin Boyle, *The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism, 1945-1968* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995): 4. Also see John Barnard, *American Vanguard: the United Auto Workers in the Reuther Years, 1935-1970* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004).

[310] Cowie, *Stayin' Alive,* 299.

This chapter engages both of these conversations from the perspective of labor-environmental relations. It suggests that Boyle's understanding of the UAW and its leaders is an accurate representation. If anything, Boyle's analysis does not go far enough because one of Reuther's deputies, Doug Fraser, continued to pursue a widespread social reform program into the 1980s. Additionally, this chapter asserts that, although these mass movement coalitions failed to achieve their farthest reaching goal of setting the nation back on a leftward trajectory, they still played an important role in the era's politics. By establishing the shape of future blue-green cooperation, these coalitions inadvertently helped to create an important bulwark against deregulation in the early 1980s.

Labor's Disappointment

The idea of rebuilding the alliance with environmentalists grew from a crisis of confidence within the liberal quarters of the labor movement. That crisis was partially inspired by problems growing for the labor movement in its core functions:

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[311] Andrew Battista, *The Revival of Labor Liberalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008). Another book worth reading, that approaches the issue of the labor movement's relationship to mainstream liberalism and the Democratic Party from a slightly different perspective is Taylor E. Dark, *The Unions and the Democrats: An Enduring Alliance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

organizing and collective bargaining. Although union membership was steady in terms of raw numbers, the long, slow slide in terms of the percentage of the working population covered by union contracts had begun.[312] Even as the 1973 recession became a memory, demographic changes continued to hurt unions' growth potential, as Americans moved from the industrialized Northeast and Midwest to the right-to-work Sunbelt states and from the manufacturing to the service sectors of the economy. Organizing in the private sector was increasingly difficult, and that trend was made worse by a resurgence of anti-unionism within the business world. Suddenly, labor found itself faced with a more ferocious opposition than it had seen in decades. As early as 1973, big businesses began more actively hiring anti-labor lawyers and PR firms, more aggressively opposing organizing campaigns, and more frequently requesting decertification elections from the National Labor Relations Board. In the wake of such activity, complaints of unfair labor practices to the NLRB spiked, from 13,601 in 1970 to 29,026 in 1979.[313]

Fractures in the labor movement's preferred response to this situation re-exposed internal divisions that had temporarily been buried just below the surface. The AFL-CIO, under the commanding presence of George Meany, favored a cautious approach. Meany had guided the labor movement through a period of massive postwar expansion and into a position of power within Democratic Party politics, and he was not ready to concede that his ideas no longer fit with the changing situation in which organized labor found itself. The Federation continued to emphasize the importance of political influence and policy expertise, hoping to sway lawmakers' decisions and build a favorable legal environment for union activity. It took little action to increase organizing capacity or improve the success rates of member unions' organizing drives.[314] "The individual unions have to do the organizing," said one Meany defender when the AFL-CIO president was re-elected in 1977, insisting the AFL-CIO's role was "zeroing in on the legislative process of the United States."[315] AFL-CIO leaders tried to frame their staying the course as pragmatism, arguing that it made little sense to abandon strategies that had long proven successful simply because they had hit a small rough patch.

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[312] "Union Membership, Coverage, Density, and Employment Among All Wage and Salary Workers, 1973-2011," http://unionstats.com/ (accessed September 11, 2012).

[313] Such complaints peaked in 1981 at 31, 273. See table Ba4950-4953, "Complaints of Unfair Practices Received and Remedial Actions Taken by the National Labor Relations Board: 1936-1998," Historical Statistics of the United States Millennial Online Edition, http://hsus.cambridge.org.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/HSUSWeb/toc/tableToc.do?id=Ba4950-4953 (accessed September 6, 2012); Robert Smith, *From Blackjacks to Briefcases: A History of Commercialized Strikebreaking and Unionbusting in the United States* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003).

By the late 1970s, Meany's version of pragmatism felt increasingly like complacence to a block of more liberal and assertive figures who were taking over the leadership of several prominent industrial unions. Coalescing around Fraser, the IAM's William Winpisinger, and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Workers' Jerry Wurf, these progressive unionists charged that the AFL-CIO hierarchy had become insulated from the problems facing the union movement.[316] They argued that the elderly Meany, who had once been able to more or less dictate policy for the federation, was now incapable of taking effective action and was leaving the organization rudderless.[317] But most importantly, they asserted that if American unions were to return to their former glory, they would have to do so by organizing and reaching out with renewed vigor to new and traditional allies.[318]

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[314] B.J. Widick, "The AFL-CIO Adrift," *The Nation,* September 8, 1979, 167-169; Helen Dewar, "AFL-CIO Closes Listless Convention," *WP,* December 14, 1977.

[315] Jerry Flint, "Meany is Re-elected A.F.L.-C.I.O. President," *NYT,* December 13, 1977.

[316] Battista, 67-74.

[317] The organization's Secretary-Treasurer, Lane Kirkland, had in fact already assumed the day to day management tasks that the frequently ill Meany could no longer do. But while Kirkland shared his boss' more conservative outlook, he inspired neither the fear nor the loyalty that Meany did, and was

With the AFL-CIO still focused heavily on electoral politics, moderates and liberals in the labor movement alike were excited by the sweeping Democratic victories in the elections of 1976. With control of the White House as well as both houses of Congress, including a supermajority in the Senate, the time seemed right to push back against the business-first policies that had dominated the Nixon and Ford eras. When the congressional session opened in 1977, labor seemed poised to make major advances in its legislative agenda. However, the easy success that labor leaders anticipated failed to materialize.

The labor program's progress was excruciatingly slow from the outset, which disappointed and frustrated union leaders on both sides of the divide. Major pieces of social legislation that they had been waiting for years to see passed, such as a national health insurance system and a higher minimum wage, stalled in committee. Meanwhile, the Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment Act struggled to find support until it was eventually gutted and passed as a shell of a bill that neither committed the nation to numerical employment goals nor guaranteed the government as an employer of last resort. More importantly, the most critical pieces of their platform – those designed to improve conditions for union organizing – also floundered. For example,

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not able to quiet the growing criticism from within and outside the Federation's ranks. Patrick Owens, "President for Life," *The Nation,* September 8, 1979, 169-170; "Meany, 85, in Office for Day," *NYT,* August 16, 1979; William Serrin, "In Many Crucial Ways, Labor Will Miss Meany's Iron Hand," *NYT,* September 30, 1979.

[318] "Dissatisfaction with the Meany policies on organizing the unorganized" and the belief that Kirkland would continue those policies were reportedly at fault for postponing the UAW's reaffiliation with the AFL-CIO in the late 1970s. See "U.A.W. Delays Federation Return," *NYT,* January 12, 1977. See also Flint; Helen Dewar, "Change Intrudes on AFL-CIO: Meany's Departure Apt to Bring Union More into Step with Times," *WP,* November 15, 1979; "Newest, Biggest Union in the AFL-CIO Reflects Labor Trend," *WP,* June 7, 1979.

a common situs picketing bill, which would enable construction unions to picket an entire job site because of a dispute with one subcontractor there, was a highly valued prize for most of the nation's building trades unions. After Gerald Ford vetoed the 1975 version of the bill, many expected the 1977 version to become law easily. Instead, it never made it out of the House of Representatives.[319]

Similarly, in the summer of 1978, labor's top legislative priority for the 95th Congress – labor law reform – also died ignominiously. The goal of labor law reform was to ease the process of workplace organizing, but the AFL-CIO's representatives in Washington anticipated that a complete overhaul of the existing system would result in a burdensome political fight against a massive corporate lobbying campaign. For that reason, the Labor Law Reform bill that the AFL-CIO supported in 1977-1978 did not include such major changes to labor law as repealing section 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley Act or card check union certification. Instead, the federation accepted a package of minimal reforms that would have allowed the existing system to operate more effectually, mostly by punishing rule breaking companies more severely. The bill easily passed in the House, but in the Senate it unexpectedly encountered a $5 million opposition effort from business groups, despite its limited ambition. Ultimately, with the White House unwilling to exert much pressure on undecided senators in support of the bill, labor law reform fell two votes shy of breaking a Republican filibuster.[320]

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[319] Helen Dewar, "Organized Labor's Loss on Picketing," *WP,* April 10, 1977.

[320] The $5 million figure was reported in *Business Week,* November 22, 1978 and cited by "Corporate Power: a Clear and Present Danger," WRA Acc#108, box 28, folder 24; For a good summary exploration of the Labor Law Reform bill's creation and defeat, see Cowie, *Stayin' Alive,* 288-301.

Many unionists laid their legislative defeats at the feet of the new U.S. president, who they felt was not willing to advance labor's agenda strongly enough from the White House. Jimmy Carter's relationship to the AFL-CIO had begun cautiously. During the 1976 Democratic primary campaign, the federation brass favored either labor stalwart Hubert Humphrey or Washington Senator "Scoop" Jackson. Carter was viewed with suspicion as an unknown quantity emerging from a right-to-work state in the Deep South. Meany's early comments on the Georgian were not encouraging; he told reporters early in 1976 that he was unsure about the prospects of a Carter candidacy and that he had "heard [Carter's record on labor] wasn't any too great when he was governor."[321] On the other hand, labor's more liberal block was more optimistic than Meany about the prospects of a Carter presidency. Progressive unions including the UAW and AFSCME became early Carter supporters, and reports surfaced that Auto Workers' president Leonard Woodcock was being considered for a position in a theoretical Carter Administration.[322] Regardless of whether or not the AFL-CIO was thrilled with the idea of a Carter White House, once his nomination was assured, the union federation, chastened by the disastrous results of having sat out the 1972 election, threw its resources behind Carter. When the Democrat narrowly came out on top, labor's forces would claim that their huge get-out-the-vote efforts had been decisive in his victory.

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[321] "Candidate Carter and the Labor Coalition," *WP,* July 19, 1976; Transcript of Meany Press Conference, February 16, 1976, 3, GMMA RG1-038, box 100, folder 10.

[322] Peter Milius, "Labor Leaders Divided on '76 Candidates," *WP,* April 18, 1976; Robert Kaiser, "Meany, Carter Will Meet," *WP,* May 12, 1976; Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, John Herling, "Leonard Woodcock: A Role in a Carter Administration?" *WP,* July 28, 1976. Also see Cowie, *Stayin' Alive,* 262-265.

However, the AFL-CIO's honeymoon period with the Carter Administration lasted less than four months. In May, at a routine press conference following a meeting of the AFL-CIO Executive Council, Meany – who friends claimed was trying to restrain himself in the name of "maintaining a good relationship with Carter" – expressed a lack of confidence in the administration's performance, said Carter's proposed economic stimulus plan was "inadequate," and editorialized that the president spent too much time "working on his image... he has done a lot of talking about a number of things, but so far very little action." When asked directly if labor had anything to be happy about from Carter's first months in the White House, Meany grumbled a monosyllabic "no."[323]

The disagreement between labor and the White House stemmed largely from conflicting economic philosophies. Labor's overarching goal was economic stimulus; it wanted a fiscal policy that would put money in workers' pockets, expand the economy, and bring down the still high unemployment rate. Specifically, the AFL-CIO called for increased social spending, a working-class tax cut, and a raise in the minimum wage from $2.30 per hour to $3.00, considering the president's proposed $2.50 per hour rate far too parsimonious.[324] Labor leaders thought the administration's decision to let inflation dominate the nation's economic discourse was a mistake, and accused the president and his Council on Wage and Price Stability of fighting inflation on the backs of working people. The AFL-CIO rejected the White House's proposed wage and price controls outright, having learned from similar programs during the Nixon era that wages were far easier to keep down than prices. The Council on Wage and Price Stability, George Meany fumed in 1978, was "trying to jawbone wages and wages alone... let them put pressure on the corporations to keep prices down."[325] Carter's people, the AFL-CIO president believed, had their economic priorities totally upside down.

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[323] "Carter and the Union Chiefs," *U.S. News and World Report,* June 6, 1977, 54; Transcript of Meany Press Conference, May 4, 1977, GMMA RG1-038, box 100, folder 11.

[324] Arnold R. Weber, "What Labor Expected of Jimmy Carter," *Across the Board,* May 1978, 56-61; "Carter and the Union Chiefs."

The nation's top labor officials were not off base in their understanding of the president's main concerns. Carter did equate labor's desired social spending with inflation, and he considered inflation to be his number one policy problem. For his part, President Carter thought labor's preferred economic system drew upon a financial orthodoxy that was out of step with the times.[326] Instead of the stimulus programs they wanted, labor leaders got lectured by administration officials about the need for restraint in the name of cooling inflation. Labor Secretary Ray Marshall, one of the few people in the Carter Administration who Meany genuinely liked, tried to communicate the administration's point of view to the AFL-CIO president, arguing that inflation, not unemployment, was the real threat to the economic recovery, and that many people blamed unions for the problem.[327] Not surprisingly, Marshall's overture did little to convince Meany, who remained thoroughly committed to opposing the government's anti-inflation plan.

The AFL-CIO's relationship to the White House remained tense throughout Carter's time in office, and the president rapidly found himself on equally cool terms with the more liberal wing of the labor movement. Leonard Woodcock, who had pushed the UAW into the Carter camp early in 1976, retired from the union and was named U.S. envoy to China in 1977.[328] He was replaced at the top of the UAW hierarchy by Doug Fraser, who sympathized with Carter's politics more than Meany did, but still complained that the nation's chief executive was an "ineffective" leader for liberal reforms.[329] Fraser was one of several progressive union heads who were put in "a pessimistic mood" when their expectations of success in negotiating with the White House and Congress fell short. But the UAW president was more reserved in his criticism than some of his colleagues, who, like International Association of Machinists president William Winpisinger, occasionally let their unhappiness become personal. Winpisinger did just that near the end of Carter's first term, when he famously reflected to journalists that the only thing the President could do to make labor happy in his next term would be to "die."[330]

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[325] Transcript of Meany Press Conference, August 7, 1978, 1, GMMA RG1-038, box 100, folder 12.
[326] Cowie, *Stayin' Alive,* 288, 301; For more on Carter's economic priorities see W. Carl Biven, *Jimmy Carter's Economy: Policy in an Age of Limits* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).
[327] Letter from Ray [Marshall] to George Meany, April 26, 1978, GMMA RG1-038, box 100, folder 12.

Organized labor's problems were deftly summarized by a columnist in *The Nation,* who described the movement as "punch drunk and programless, at war with the President and the Democratic Congressional majority it helped to elect and reeling from repeated defeats by the well-heeled, increasingly sophisticated forces of industry."[331] Disgusted by what they saw as the AFL-CIO's doubling down on failed policies, the dissident union leaders argued for a fresh approach. The keys to revitalizing the labor movement, they insisted, were reinvigorating organizing and reviving labor's social movement traditions by reaching out to other interest groups.

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[328] "Carter and the Union Chiefs," 53.

[329] "Why Carter Is Losing Support From Organized Labor," *U.S. News and World Report,* September 11, 1978.

[330] Fraser quoted in A.H. Raskin, "It Isn't Labor's Day," *The Nation,* September 9, 1978, 201; Winpisinger story related in Alexander Cockburn, "Clinton, Labor and free Trade," *The Nation,* November 2, 1992, 1.

[331] Raskin, "It Isn't Labor's Day," 197.

The Progressive Alliance

For the new generation of progressive union leaders, the key to understanding labor's decline in the 1970s could be found by studying its opponents. The political right, as they understood it, was becoming more powerful as its elements became more cohesive. Conservative interests were uniting in lobbying organizations such as the Business Roundtable, and conservative think-tanks such as the American Enterprise Institute provided a common frame of reference for rightist politicos of all stripes. Meanwhile, American liberalism had become fragmented, and its strength was being drained into a variety of competing interests. The UAW's Fraser summarized the situation thusly: "lacking an integrating mechanism, liberal organizations and unions inevitably wind up fighting each other (directly or indirectly) in zero-sum conflicts, dissipate resources and influences, produce frustration and privatism rather than hope and cooperation for the common good."[332] If the labor movement were to make a comeback, it would have to do it as a part of a broader movement of liberal organizations united in the common causes of fairness and social equity. Followers of this line of thinking soon began to work to construct the united liberal movement they envisioned through a variety of large-scale coalition initiatives.

It was in the name of rekindling its past success that progressive unionists sought to build new labor-liberal coalitions in the late 1970s. The biggest of these was the Progressive Alliance (PA). [333] Formed in 1978, the Alliance pulled more than 100 different organizations – ranging from unions and environmentalists to civil rights, religious, urban, academic, and women's groups – into one large "coalition of coalitions."[334] The PA's diversity was initially seen as its biggest strength. In the name of getting as many of its member organizations involved as possible, the Alliance's organizational structure ballooned in size and complexity, with multiple levels of decision-making layered on top of one another. In theory, policy decisions had to be approved by a General Assembly, consisting of representatives from all of the member organizations, but Assembly meetings were infrequent and most decisions were instead made by a sixteen-person Executive Committee chaired by Doug Fraser. Below that was a national board made up of thirty different organizations as well as a professional staff that handled daily operations and planning. The Alliance also maintained two permanent Commissions, along with "various sub-commissions and subpanels which serv[ed] as permanent work and study groups," responsible for developing policy prescriptions on large public issues.[335]

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[332] Letter to the Officers of the Progressive Alliance from Doug Fraser, May 3, 1979, WRA Acc#108, box 28, folder 6.

[333] This quite apt phrase was coined by Andrew Battista, Battista, 83-102.

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[334] Alliance planners invited 98 non-labor groups and 36 union groups to the initial conference, which took place in Detroit on October 17, 1978. Invitees included the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, American Association of University Professors, American Civil Liberties Union, American Federation of Teachers, American Indian Movement, American Jewish Congress, ACORN, Communication Workers of America, Common Cause, Consumer Federation of America, Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, Environmental Action, Inc., Environmentalists for Full Employment, Friends of the Earth, Gray Panthers, IAM, International Ladies Garment Workers Union, Laborers' International Union of North America, League of Women Voters, NAACP, National Consumers League, National Council of La Raza, National Council of Negro Women, National Council of Senior Citizens, National Organization of Women, National Urban League, New American Movement, OCAW, SANE, Service Employees International Union, Sierra Club, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Unitarian Universalist Association, United States Youth Council, USW, Urban Bishops Coalition, Urban Environment Conference, and the Women's Action Alliance, among others. Of those groups, 30, including the AFL-CIO and the AFL-CIO Building Trades Department, did not send representatives. B.J. Widdick, "Fraser's Game," *The Nation,* November 11, 1978, 492-493; delegate list dated 10/16/78, WRA Acc#1116, box 68, folder 20.

[335] The Public Process Commission, which was focused on making the government more directly accountable to the public, had four different subcommittees; the Issues Commission, which was focused on social equity concerns, had seven. See "Instructions for the Commissions," January 14, 1979, WRA Acc# 1219, box 5, folder 23 and Progressive Alliance newsletter, March, 1980, WRA Acc# 1116, box 3, folder 14. Above quote from Letter to Fellow Alliance Member[s] from Mark Raskin and Jacob Clayman, August 8, 1979, WRA Acc# 1219, box 5, folder 23.

The Progressive Alliance's creator, and the person who was unquestionably at its helm, was UAW President Douglas Fraser. Fraser was a product of the Depression-era auto worker struggles. Coming to the U.S. from Scotland as a child, he had risen through the union's ranks, starting work at Chrysler in the 1930s, and signing his first UAW card along with thousands of others in 1936. At twenty-eight he became president of his local, and shortly thereafter became an International representative. He was soon noticed by Walter Reuther, who asked Fraser to be his administrative assistant in 1950. From there, Fraser rose to become one of the union's vice presidents and the head of its Chrysler Department before finally being elected UAW President in 1977.[336] Fraser came to the presidency as a popular and respected leader among the UAW's rank and file; as a *Time* profile pointed out, "he is among the most admired men ever to serve the U.A.W. Rank-and-filers have never considered him a 'pork-chopper,'.... They like his unpretentious ways ... and candid talk."[337] Fraser had been a favorite of Reuther's, and considered himself to be carrying on his predecessor's social unionist mantle.

It was in that capacity that, after the failure of the Labor Law Reform bill, Fraser began contemplating the organization that would become the Progressive Alliance. The concerted effort made by big business to secure the bill's defeat, and the Senate filibuster that made it a reality, convinced Fraser that systemic problems existed in the American political process. In his now famous 1978 letter of resignation from the Labor-Management Group – a roundtable meant to foster cooperation among leaders of business and unions – Fraser laid out the fundamental arguments that would shape the PA. The most critical piece of Fraser's political analysis was that the wealthy had unilaterally abandoned the postwar social compact. "I believe the leaders of the business community, with few exceptions, have chosen to wage a one-sided class war today in this country," he wrote. "The leaders of industry, commerce and finance in the United States have broken and discarded the fragile, unwritten compact previously existing during a past period of growth and progress."[338] Even more troubling was that the nation's democratic institutions were being subverted to make the upper-crust assault on the poor and working class easier. Fraser asserted that "even the very foundations of America's democratic process are threatened by the new approach of the business elite. No democratic country in the world has lower rates of voter participation than the U.S., except Botswana.... Yet business groups regularly finance politicians, referenda and legislative battles to continue barriers to citizen participation in elections." As voting participation became more "class-skewed," and corporate campaign donations became more important, the Democratic Party abandoned its former constituents and became more "heavily influenced by business interests," moving to the right in the process.[339]

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[336] "UAW Mourns Passing of Doug Fraser," February 24, 2008, http://www.uaw.org/articles/uaw-mourns-passing-doug-fraser (accessed, October 3, 2012); David C. Smith, "At 90, UAW's Doug Fraser Sizes Up Industry Crisis, December 19, 2006, Ward's Auto, http://wardsauto.com/ar/doug_fraser_crisis (accessed, October 17, 2012).
[337] "Business: Fraser's a Shoo-In," *Time,* January 17, 1977.

The Alliance's goals were as diverse as its membership, but the concerns that Fraser articulated in his letter were apparent in all of them. The PA was expected, at a minimum, to fulfill the basic goal of creating comity among its members. However the PA's early planners, who were mostly drawn from the UAW – including Fraser, Government and Public Affairs division Director Stephen Schlossberg, and staffer

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[338] Letter to Labor-Management Group Member[s] from Douglas Fraser, July 17, 1978, WRA Acc#1219 box 5, folder 23.
[339] Ibid.

Bill Dodds – felt that creating an atmosphere of good feelings among liberal organizations was not enough. “Liberals need an organization that functions as a facilitator and clearing house,” Dodds, who would soon become the PA’s executive director, advised Fraser, “but they also want an organization that joins the battle, that creates movement where none exists.”[340]

So on top of bringing liberal groups together in the name of good will, the organization was supposed to function in three additional capacities, each addressing a presumed need of liberal social activists. First, it would operate as a grassroots mobilization force, or, in the words of the Alliance’s planners, “the permanent organizational structure for a progressive reserve army.”[341] The forces that they could thus rapidly muster would be useful both in applying political pressure in the PA’s own interests and in support to member organizations involved in popular struggles. Second, to counter the growing prominence of right-wing ideas originating in think tanks such as the American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation, the PA would serve as a progressive brain trust, funding research and publications designed to “reorient the debate by forcing the corporate/conservative world to respond to progressive initiatives rather than the other way around.”[342]

Finally, the Alliance’s planners hoped that it would be able to reform the political system and bring about the return of “responsibility and accountability in the political process.”[343] To leaders of the Alliance, reforming the system meant making it more responsive to the popular will and eliminating the hurdles that held up progressive reform. Accordingly, it issued calls for lobbying restrictions and campaign finance reform, hoping to eliminate some of the influence that corporate money had on politics. It encouraged the Senate to end the filibuster, which had so recently cost organized labor its coveted Labor Law Reform. It also sought ways to increase political participation among underrepresented groups.

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[340] Memo to Doug Fraser from Steve Schlossberg, Bill Dodds, and Ed James, September 5, 1979, WRA Acc#1116, box 3, folder 12.

[341] Ibid.

[342] Memo to Doug Fraser from Ed James, September 25, 1979, WRA ACC# 1116, box 3, folder 12.

[343] Memo to Doug Fraser from Steve Schlossberg, November 27, 1979, WRA Acc#1219, box 5, folder 23.

This last effort partially consisted of finding ways to remove legal barriers to voting, but it was equally about making people feel included in or connected to electoral politics. Bringing the disconnected back to the polls would mean convincing them that elections mattered by introducing a greater measure of accountability to the party system. To this end, the Alliance acted as a caucus on the Democratic Party's left-wing, hoping to compel the party to live up to its campaign promises by framing the platform as a binding agreement with the public. It tried unsuccessfully to get the party to hold a midterm convention, where the progress of elected officials in meeting the party's stated goals would be assessed. Even so, the Alliance enjoyed a small victory at the 1980 Democratic National convention, when it persuaded the party to create a Platform Accountability Commission to study ways to make party officials more committed to achieving its stated agenda.[344]

The nature of the PA's involvement with the Democratic Party has been misunderstood in the past. Andrew Battista argues that the Alliance was meant to "reform or transform the Democratic Party... in order to contest for power in it," and make it more liberal. However, I believe its goal was not necessarily to make the party more liberal, but was instead to make it more regimented. Alliance leaders wanted simply to bring more clarity and predictability to an electoral/legislative process in which its members were already confident they could regularly succeed. The organization's early statements make it clear that it would have approved of the Republican Party also instituting a binding platform, even though that would have potentially made it more difficult for GOP officials to break ranks and support Democratic initiatives. PA leaders believed that having an ideologically coherent Republican Party to match the Democrats would be positive for the American political system because it would crystallize the differences between the two and demonstrate the need for widespread political participation.[345]

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[344] Battista agrees with the assessment that the PA was designed to serve the three functions of "a) party caucus or faction, b) think tank, and c) mass mobilization." He asserts that this division of the PA's attention hampered its overall effectiveness, which seems likely to me as well, see Battista, 99.

Although the Alliance was designed to emphasize its mass appeal and diverse constituency, it was dominated by its union members. The Alliance was inspired by the falling status of organized labor, and nearly all of the early planning was conducted by Fraser and his UAW staff. Fraser went out of his way early in the process to court the participation of "union heavy hitters" with dinners and meetings attended only by labor representatives, and he assured those union leaders that the PA would maintain an "informal trade union advisory committee to meet as necessary to guide the organization."[346] The PA drew its professional staff from the ranks of labor, and had office and meeting space donated by major unions.[347] As expected by the Alliance's planners, the unions also contributed the majority of the organization's monetary funding. All the PA's top financial backers were unions, as Fraser noted in one funding appeal: "we have received substantial monetary commitments... I must say basically from the labor movement."[348]

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[345] See Battista, 87-90; "Toward a Progressive Alliance," January 15, 1979, WRA Acc#1116, box 3, folder 12.

[346] Memo to Several from Schlossberg; Memo to Mary Wensel from Steve Schlossberg, March 14, 1979, WRA Acc# 1219, box 5, folder 20.

[347] The Alliance's most senior staffer, Executive Director Bill Dodds, had worked for UAW. The other paid staff included Frank Cowan, who was assistant to AFSCME President Jerry Wurf; Stephen Schlossberg, who had been UAW General Council for fifteen years before becoming the Director of the union's Government and Public Affairs Division; Don Stillman, who was a UAW staffer who would go on to be the union's Director of Governmental and International Affairs; and Ed James, who

The heavy involvement of union forces in the PA's management assured stability in the organization's infrastructure, but it also carried the potential downside of making the group appear to be just an extension of the labor movement. Fraser and his associates worried that if the Alliance was too devoted to labor's causes, it would alienate potential allies and undercut the stated goals of the group. For that reason, they sincerely wanted to make the organization's official leadership diverse. Beginning with the initial planning meeting with break-out discussions led by "a woman, a black, and a young activist," and continuing as the organizing committees took nominees for the Executive Board anticipating "UAW, one other liberal union... Jay Turner [the President of the International Union of Operating Engineers], 2 blacks (one a woman), 1 white woman and one young person from a non labor background," every effort was made to ensure that outcome.[349] As much as racial and gender balance was sought, it was equally important to the PA's founders that they involved

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was a Harvard Law student who had previously been an organizer and staff member for the United Mine Workers. There was some discussion of adding an additional, female staff person, but I am not able to confirm if that hire was ever made. The PA also employed A.L. Zwerdling as its General Council; he had also previously worked for AFSCME. The PA was headquartered in the AFSCME building at 1625 L St. NW, Washington D.C. Committee meetings were held at a variety of DC area union headquarters, including those of the International Union of Operating Engineers, UAW, and AFSCME. Progressive Alliance Executive Board Meeting minutes, June 29, 1979, WRA Acc# 1116 box 3, folder 13; Progressive Alliance newsletter, March 1980, WRA Acc# 1116 box 3, folder14.

[348] In 1980, for example, the UAW was the top monetary contributor to the Alliance, providing it with $50,000; the NEA, CWA, UFCW, and IAM rounded out the top five. See memo to Steven Schlossberg from Bill Dodds, July 24, 1981, WRA Acc.#1116, box 3, folder 14; Letter from Doug Fraser to union heads, April 25, 1979, WRA Acc# 1116, box 3, folder 13.

[349] Memo to Doug Fraser from Steve Schlossberg, October 4, 1978, WRA Acc# 1116, box 68, folder 20; Memo to Doug Fraser from Steve Scholssberg and Howard Paster, January 11, 1979, WRA Acc# 1116, box 68, folder 22.

a cross-section of the interests involved in their group, with civic, aged, and church groups all represented.

The growing prominence of environmentalists in American politics meant that their participation in the Progressive Alliance would be invaluable to the new coalition. At the same time, their presence in the organization worried some key union leaders, who still considered environmentalists to be antagonistic to working-class economic priorities. Fraser and Schlossberg addressed the issue at a private meeting they hosted for the group's biggest labor supporters, acknowledging that the environment – along with foreign policy and national defense – was an "area of deep ideological division" that could potentially divide the caucus before it even got started.[350] The UAW members reassured their suspicious counterparts that they had no intention "to turn this over to the activists and street people," but, at the same time, they cautioned that "this Alliance cannot exclude groups. We cannot... carry prejudices from the past." Fraser's position ultimately prevailed, and an environmentalist was even elected to the Alliance's sixteen-member Executive Committee.[351]

Environmentalist participation in the Progressive Alliance may have created a minor stir among some of the organization's union backers, but for the leaders of the Sierra Club, the decision of whether or not to join the Alliance caused little dissension. Their choice was easy for a couple of reasons. First, joining the Alliance would help the Club in its continuing efforts to fight the charges of classism that had left it uncomfortably isolated from non-environmentalist allies. For the past year, Club leaders had been thinking, in the words of President William Futrell, that "a basic change in our strategy should be an increased effort to engage those who have not marched with us in the past," and to remake the organization's image as more open and concerned with urban issues.[352] Part of that policy was trying to reconnect with the labor movement, which influential Club officials including Michael McCloskey still hoped to do. But the Club's broader goal was to develop links to non-environmentalist allies more generally. As part of that effort, in late 1977 and early 1978, it had begun outreach programs to build bridges with urban, civil rights, and women's organizations, and had rebranded its in-house newsletter, *The Sierra Club Bulletin,* as the glossy and inviting magazine *Sierra.* Joining the Alliance was a low-risk, low-cost way to further the goal of establishing relationships with interests outside of environmentalism.[353]

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[350] Memo to Doug Fraser from Steve Schlossberg, March 9, 1979, WRA Acc#1219, box 5, folder 20.

[351] Ibid; Memo to Doug Fraser and William Winpisinger from Frank Cowan, March 20, 1979, WRA Acc#1116, box 3, folder 12. The selection of Richard Grossman of Environmentalists For Full Employment to fill this spot may have itself been a bit of a compromise, as his organization was considered more labor friendly than those of his two main competitors, Dave Brower (Friends of the Earth) and Mariane Eddy (League of Conservation Voters).

More importantly, in late 1978 and early 1979 the Sierra Club was experiencing pangs of panic similar to the labor movement's at the unredeemed political potential of the previous few years. Although the shock was more palpable for labor, environmentalists had also been left feeling as if they had received a series of half measures from a supposedly friendly political structure. After a fairly successful 1977, the Club met with stiff resistance on its biggest initiatives in its core organizing area – wilderness protection – in 1978. That year the Club's highest priority was getting over 100 million acres of land in Alaska protected from development through Wilderness or other public lands designation. The Club's Washington Office took the lead in lobbying for multiple environmental organizations and devoted most of its energy to the effort through the spring and summer. Despite the Club's best efforts, the process ended in failure, as the House version of the bill protected significantly less than the Club had wanted, and the Senate version was unceremoniously tabled under the threat of a filibuster by both of Alaska's Senators.[354]

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[352] William Futrell, "The Inner-City Frontier," *Sierra,* February/March, 1978, 5.
[353] Ibid; "From the Editor: Sierra Looks Ahead," *Sierra,* October, 1977, 4-5; Robert A. Irwin, "The Observer," *Sierra,* April, 1978, 43-44.

The second major Sierra Club wilderness protection disappointment involved the Forest Service's Roadless Area Review Evaluation, or RARE II. Like the first RARE survey, which had been conducted in the late 1960s, RARE II was a study conducted by the Forest Service to determine which of the nation's 62 million acres of roadless public land would be appropriate to designate as wilderness areas and which would be better given over to multiple use, including mining and timbering.[355] Environmentalists charged from early on that the RARE process was not being undertaken as a fair and impartial accounting of public lands, but was instead being conducted with "a serious anti-wilderness slant."[356] The process was done "as quickly as possible" with limited and inconvenient opportunities for the public to comment or ask questions about the proceedings. In a major defeat for the Club and other environmental organizations that had participated in the RARE II negotiations, the Forest Service ultimately recommended that only 15 million acres of the land be protected. In April, 1979, President Carter accepted the Forest Service proposals, excising 36 million controversial acres from a wilderness designation.[357] "RARE II is a failure," the Club concluded in its report to *Sierra* readers; "it was biased toward industry... and it did not permit enough public participation.... It is clear that the RARE II process was intended to *not* designate areas as wilderness."[358]

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[354] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes (5/6-7/78), 14-16; (6/26/78), 4-5; (11/10-12/78), 41.
[355] Molly Ivins, "The Forest Service Opens 36 Million Acres and a Can of Worms," *NYT,* January 7, 1979.
[356] "RARE II: Time for Comment," *Sierra,* September, 1978, 42.

Michael McCloskey would later call RARE II "our first down note in our relations with Carter," but that is not entirely accurate. While the president's relationship to the environmentalist community was not as troubled as his interactions with organized labor, it was far rockier than his environmentalist image would indicate. Although the president was personally popular among environmentalists, who enjoyed the access to the White House that they and their ideas were given, many in the green movement found Carter to be nearly as ineffective a champion for their goals as he was for labor's. "As far as his environmental ideas and philosophy go, Jimmy Carter is probably the best President this country ever had," Brock Evans told reporters at the end of Carter's first year in office. "But in terms of executing those ideas, his performance has not been outstanding."[359] Time and again – whether environmentalists were trying to convince Congress to curb controversial dam projects or to pass strengthening amendments to the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts – the White House's application of pressure on the legislature was too late and too light to make a difference.[360] Carter sympathized with environmentalists' goals, but too often seemed unwilling to do the political work to make them reality.

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[357] Ivins. RARE II's eventual settlement proved to be so disappointing to environmentalists that it helped to inspire the creation of Earth First! by dissatisfied Wilderness Society Washington Issues Coordinator Dave Foreman. For what it is worth, the AFL-CIO was happy with the outcome of RARE II.

[358] BOD 11/10-12/78, 41; Huey Johnson, "The Flaws of RARE II," *Sierra,* May/June, 1979, 8-10, quote from 9.

[359] Evans quoted in Philip Shabecoff, "Carter Record Mixed on the Environment," *NYT,* January 3, 1978.

Also, like organized labor, many environmental organizations chaffed when Carter's anti-inflation measures threatened the funding of programs they supported. For example, when the president proposed abolishing the Council on Environmental Quality in the name of streamlining the functions of the Executive branch, nearly every environmental organization in the country opposed the idea and forced the White House to backtrack.[361] Likewise, the president's call for a freeze on federal hiring told the environmental community that he was not serious about ecological preservation because the already understaffed EPA would not be able to bring in enough specialists to detect environmental problems or enough lawyers to prosecute polluters. That led many, including Environmental Defense Fund attorney Robert Ruach, to lambast the president's pollution control plans as empty rhetoric. "Carter makes sweeping statements," Rauch told reporters, "but he is not putting his money where his mouth is."[362] Clearly, environmentalists felt that Carter was being parsimonious with resources – both political and financial – almost from the outset of his administration.

Thus, the Club's leaders were not only attracted to the PA's potential to connect them with other organizations, they were also sympathetic to the Alliance's politics. When Brock Evans warned Club members that "the tone of the

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[360] Ibid; Gaylord Shaw and Paul E. Steiger, "Carter Will Ask Hill to Halt Aid for 18 Major Water Projects," *WP,* February 20, 1977.

[361] Gail Chapman, "The CEQ Unleashed," *Sierra,* October, 1977, 44-46; David Broder, "Carter Will Not Transfer Environmental Council," *WP,* July 14, 1977.

[362] Rauch quoted in Margot Hornblower, "Carter's Message on Pollution Draws Praise, Skepticism," *WP,* May 24, 1977; Edward Walsh, "Carter's Freeze on Federal Jobs Irks Environmentalists," *WP,* October 31, 1978.

Administration has developed an anti-environmental ring – perhaps in anticipation of the 1980 elections and the allegedly more 'conservative' political climate," he unknowingly echoed the very fears that had motivated Fraser to found the Alliance in the first place.[363] At the same time, joining a self-described "liberal" organization, especially one that was asserting itself in Democratic Party politics, was an odd choice for the Sierra Club. For decades the organization had prided itself on being agnostic in terms of party alignment, and it had avoided electoral politics entirely until 1976. The fact that joining the PA provoked so little debate within the Club's leadership – despite the objections of a few Club members to the organization's new political orientation in the late 1970s and early 1980s – was both an indication of the organization's leftward drift and an acknowledgement that the Democratic Party had become not just the nation's de facto labor party, but its green party as well.[364]

The Alliance's most successful endeavors primarily involved publicizing issues. The organization financed several independent academic research projects in the late 1970s. Most notably, its funding contributed to the publication of Barry Blueston and Bennett Harrison's seminal early study of U.S. manufacturing decline *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (1982). Beyond that, the group sponsored a series of well-attended meetings and conferences on a variety of topics, including plant closings, political process, and controversy over labor and environmental regulation. These events served dual purposes, allowing representatives from member organizations to get to know one another personally while at the same time spreading awareness of issues that were of interest to the Alliance's constituents.[365]

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[363] Brock Evans, "A New Decade – Dawn or Dusk?" *Sierra,* January/February, 1980, 8-10, 8.

[364] Various letters from members between 1979 and 1983 complained that the organization had become too liberal or that it was more focused on opposing the Reagan Administration or Republican Party than with conservation, BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 95, folder 98.

Despite enthusiasm for its activities within many liberal organizations, the Progressive Alliance proved to be short lived, officially shuttering operations in the early spring of 1981. Battista attributes the end of the Progressive Alliance to the fact that its component pieces "never really gelled."[366] The coalition's tremendous size made it unwieldy – too many organizations wanted too much attention given to their own issues to truly work together. The Alliance's leaders struggled to clearly define the group's goals or develop its priorities in a way that would involve and satisfy every member organization; it was ultimately an impossible choice: divide the group's resources in a way that could make everyone happy, or concentrate them in a way that could maximize their effectiveness and risk ostracizing some members. Even Fraser, who had originally seen the Alliance's size as its best feature, came to see it as a flaw. "You had so many groups with so many different interests, and that complicated the matter," he later relayed to Battista in an interview. "You're dealing with fifty-five issues and that's really never a good way to advance a program. That was very troublesome to me."[367]

The Alliance's short lifespan and unfocused plan of action meant that it achieved few of its stated goals, but it would be a mistake to entirely dismiss it. Despite its organizational problems, the PA actually remained popular with most its members until the end, and it functioned quite well as an avenue for bringing progressive unions into contact with potential allies from outside the labor movement.[368] The connections the PA helped to establish and the example that it set would live on in future coalitions between labor and non-labor groups. Most notably, the lessons learned in the building of the Alliance would influence blue-green organizing in the coming decade in several important ways.

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[365] Letter to Alliance Members and Interested Parties from Jerry Wurf and Douglas A. Fraser, March 1980, WRA Acc# 1116, box 3, folder 14.

[366] Battista, 97.

[367] Ibid, 98.

The most obvious lesson that subsequent coalition organizers drew from the dilemmas that had hampered the PA was that bigger was not necessarily better. Post-Alliance labor-liberal associations would pursue narrower forms of coalition activity, either restricting the size of newly formed organizations or controlling their scope by, in the words of Battista, "limit[ing] and more clearly defin[ing] their issue agendas, and develop[ing] more specialized political roles or functions."[369] The blue-green coalition builders of the 1980s would do both. That era's most durable alliance between unions and environmental organizations – the OSHA/Environmental Network – would combine a tightly focused campaign to maintain occupational health and clean air standards with an association limited to labor and environmental organizations.

More importantly, the failure the Progressive Alliance helped to establish the agenda that would guide labor-environmental coalition builders in the 1980s and beyond. Two general campaign themes drew the most attention: deindustrialization, which was a favored topic for both labor and inner-city organizations, and environmental health and safety, which was pushed by many non-labor groups, including environmentalists. "Plant closings and health and safety," (a term favored over “environment” within the PA in order to “differentiate ourselves from the older clean-air consumerist elite types”) the Alliance’s staff advised Fraser after months of discussion, were “issues that could create a movement.”[370] The benefits of focusing on these two points were clear, “[they] unite rather than factionalize our constituency... they have immediate appeal to our trade union founders; they create momentum and press which lay bare.”[371] Fraser agreed with that assessment and encouraged his organization especially to embrace health and safety issues in the workplace and beyond. “Cancer is a magic word,” he informed the PA Executive Committee. “We can organize around it.”[372] The Alliance never got the opportunity to do much organizing around either issue, but the next generation of labor-environmental coalition builders would forcefully take up the call for cooperation around health and safety issues.

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[368] Battista, 95-98.
[369] Battista, 101-102.

The Citizen/Labor Energy Coalition

As was the case with the Progressive Alliance, the Citizen/Labor Energy Coalition (CLEC) helped to define the parameters of later blue-green alliance building. However, whereas the PA demonstrated which areas of cooperation would be most fruitful, the CLEC did the opposite. The failure of the labor-backed CLEC to attract the support of the nation’s biggest environmental organizations demonstrated that the two sides’ energy priorities were diverging rather than meeting as the 1980s dawned.

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[370] Memo to Doug Fraser from, Steve Schlossberg, Bill Dodds, and Ed James, September 5, 1979, WRA Acc # 1116, box 3, folder 12.
[371] Memo to Fraser from James, September 25, 1979.
[372] Memo to Progressive Alliance Executive Committee from Douglas A. Fraser, May 7, 1979, WRA Acc# 1116, box 68, folder 23.

After the energy crisis flared in 1974, the issue continued to smolder in the United States for the next several years. The gas lines of 1973 disappeared, but the basic discrepancies between supply and demand that had caused them remained. During the election of 1976, Jimmy Carter hoped to reignite the public's attention, running with the goal of creating a functional national energy policy that would put the nation on a path toward energy self-sufficiency. Almost immediately upon entering the White House, the president set to work, bringing the numerous federal agencies involved in energy policy together in a new Department of Energy. He also began trying to sell to the American people a plan to fight the nation's reliance on imported oil – a problem that he famously referred to as "the moral equivalent of war."[373]

The president's new energy plan, which he developed between 1977 and 1979, involved more than one hundred provisions, but three major policy initiatives made up its core. The first core initiative was conservation, which Carter considered to be "the cornerstone" of his policy.[374] Calling for smarter energy use all around, the president promised federal investment in public transportation and programs to reduce energy waste in buildings. "Conservation," he told the American public, "is the quickest, cheapest, most practical source of energy."[375] To go along with lowering consumption, Carter also proposed several strategies to increase U.S. energy production. The second core piece of Carter's energy program sought to encourage domestic petroleum producers to pump and refine more oil. The administration thought that the best way to provide this encouragement was by deregulating oil prices, which it assumed would cause the price of the commodity to rise and bring with it producers' desire to increase capacity. Rising prices would bring with them the added benefit of helping conserve energy by potentially lowering demand, but to ensure that prices did not rise too precipitously the president also proposed imposing a windfall profits tax on energy suppliers who went too far. The tax, which the White House expected to produce at least $146 billion in revenue over ten years, also became the starting point for the third core aspect of Carter's energy program. The president planned to increase American energy production by diversifying its sources. While nuclear power, coal, and natural gas all had their places, the money raised from the windfall profits tax was to help speed the transition away from foreign oil by being invested in alternative energy technologies including solar power, synthetic fuels, and oil shale.[376]

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[373] Eric R.A. N. Smith, *Energy, the Environment, and Public Opinion* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), 28-29; Jimmy Carter, "Address to the Nation on Energy," April 18, 1977.
[374] Carter, "Address to the Nation on Energy."
[375] "Carter's Strategy for Energy Independence," *Science News,* July 21, 1979, 38.

Aside from George Meany, who unexpectedly lauded the president's vision in trying "to bring [the crisis in energy] home to the American people," the White House's energy proposals were a flop with large segments of the country.[377] The oil industry, along with electrical utilities, the auto industry, and other powerful business interests chaffed at the proposed windfall profits tax and at new regulations and standards. The public, meanwhile, stood unwilling to make major sacrifices in the name of energy conservation, and feared the rising prices that the administration's plan seemed to invite. Worse, most even remained unconvinced that the energy crisis was real; as late as the spring of 1979 – with oil prices climbing rapidly in the wake of supply disruptions caused by the Iranian Revolution – polling done by CBS/*New York Times* showed that sixty-nine percent of Americans thought reported oil shortages were fabricated to allow energy providers to boost profits.[378]

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[376] Ibid; Simth, 28.

[377] Meany press conference, August 29, 1977.

It was in this atmosphere of skepticism that the Citizen/Labor Energy Coalition was founded in April, 1978, almost a year to the day after President Carter's first National Address on Energy. The idea for a coalition to bring community and public interest groups together with unions to seek equitable solutions to the nation's energy woes came from Heather Booth, a former New Left activist and founder of a Chicago-based school for community organizers. In 1977, Booth reached out to the newly elected president of the International Association of Machinists, William Winpisinger.[379]

"Wimpy" as Winpisinger was known to friends, was a well-known and respected progressive unionist figure. Like his close ally Doug Fraser, Winpisinger had risen through the ranks of his union, of which he was elected president in 1977. Also like Fraser, Winpisinger believed that the AFL-CIO had made a mistake in distancing itself from non-labor interest groups, and he was one of the leading voices within the Federation calling for Meany's retirement in the late 1970s. The IAM chief was also a harsh critic of President Carter and a self-described socialist who favored a national takeover of the oil industry and electric utilities.[380] When approached by Booth about creating an organization devoted to progressive energy politics, Winpisinger excitedly accepted her offer, and the two began the long process of planning the new organization.

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[378] Smith, 29-31; CBS/*NYT* poll cited by Smith, 30.

[379] Battista, 103-104; David Stout, "William Winpisinger, 73, Machinists' Chief," *NYT,* December 13, 1997.

[380] The most complete biography of Winpisinger is a non-academic treatment, see Patrick S. Halley, *Wimpy* (Charleston, SC: Booksurge Publishing, 2008).

Unlike with the PA, the basic outline of the CLEC's program was clear from the beginning: unions, senior citizens, and public interest and community groups would stand united both in opposition to the president's energy plan, and in promotion of their own, which would put the rights of energy workers and consumers front and center. Guided by the dual assumptions that, in the words of Booth, "1. The energy crisis is primarily a political and economic question [and] 2. The energy companies and their corporate and political allies are organized effectively to use the crisis to promote their own policies and interests," the CLEC struck an immediate tone of anti-corporate populism.[381] The nation's energy problems, as defined by the CLEC, had less to do with the foreign or domestic origin of the nation's energy supplies than with cartelized nature of the American energy industry. The group's thinking, according to Battista, was that "a small group of giant, integrated oil and gas firms owned and controlled most of the energy resources and deeply influenced public energy policy, enabling them to supply and price energy to their advantage." This price gouging by energy suppliers not only made it more difficult for consumers to pay their bills, but also drove inflation and endangered the national economy. Thus, the CLEC sought "to develop and implement a national energy policy which will benefit all Americans by: providing adequate energy to consumers at reasonable prices; providing increased employment opportunities; and Stabilizing the national economy by developing energy self-sufficiency thru (sic) conservation and safe, non-inflationary, environmentally sound, alternative energy technologies."[382]

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[381] Update: National Energy Coalition from Bob Lawson and Heather Booth, December 20, 1977, BANC MSS 71/289 c, carton 31, folder 3.

In order to reach these goals, the CLEC developed a thorough program of action and began promoting it on both the federal and state levels by 1979. In order to keep energy costs low, the CLEC called for the reregulation of prices for oil and natural gas which Congress had only recently deregulated and successfully lobbied states and localities to reform utility rate structures. The organization also called on Congress to create federal subsidies for low-income people who were suffering from high energy costs. But easing access to energy for working people was only one half of the CLEC's program; the other half sought tighter public control and scrutiny over energy providers. To that end, the organization advocated a law that would fight long lines at the gasoline pump by mandating that oil firms run at full capacity in times of public need. It sought to break the trend of oil company conglomeration by legally prohibiting their mergers. And, finally, the Coalition strove to punish oil companies for their alleged profiteering by rolling back their tax subsidies.[383]

Getting support for such an agenda was fairly easy – dozens of community and public interest groups expressed early support, and Winpisinger's pull within the labor movement helped to guarantee strong union backing as well.[384] CLEC leaders thought that environmentalists were also a natural constituency for their organization, but attracting the major green groups proved to be a difficult task. Environmental organizations, including the Sierra Club, were involved in the early planning talks, and contributed time and ideas to the organizational process in 1977. But the Coalition lost much of its environmentalist support at its official founding convention in 1978, when it refused to take a strong stand against nuclear power. Although most of the organizations that participated in the group were against the expanded use of nuclear power as a solution to the United States' energy crisis, in order to ensure the participation of the OCAW, and to limit potential hostility directed its way by the AFL-CIO, the CLEC decided at its inaugural convention not to take a position on the issue.[385] In 1978 and 1979, partially in an effort to win back the support of the environmentalists it had lost, the CLEC began working for such environmentally sound initiatives as a solar-energy development bank, energy conservation laws, and increased federal subsidies for energy efficient building practices, but these initiatives remained secondary concerns for the group. In the spring and summer of 1978, with an open spot reserved for an environmental group on the Coalition's Executive Committee, and with a standing invitation to join, the Sierra Club's leaders debated the merits of affiliating their group with the CLEC.[386]

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[382] Battista, 108; Citizen Labor Energy Coalition, Proposed Statement of Purpose and Structure, April 19, 1978, BANC MSS 71/289 c, carton 31, folder 3.

[383] Battista, 109-111.

[384] Ultimately twenty-one international unions joined the CLEC, as did the AFL-CIO a few years later. As with the PA, the unions would provide a great deal of the CLEC's funding, both through monetary dues payments and in-kind donations. The most important union members of the group also tended to be among the biggest participants in the PA, including the IAM, UAW, and AFSCME. At the same time, unlike the PA, the CLEC was able to avoid being dominated by its union contributors by evenly apportioning seats among the different organizational types and drawing important staff positions – including Executive Director Heather Booth – from the non-union ranks. Battista, 104-105, 107; Proposed Statement of Purpose and Structure, April 19, 1978, BANC MSS 71/289 c, carton 31, folder

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3; See also Letter from Lane Kirkland to William Winpisinger, September 4, 1985, GMMA Unprocessed Files 87-0003, BO3/F/09.

[385] Update: National Energy Coalition; Battista, 104.

[386] The CLEC was not wholly without environmentalist support, the Environmental Policy Center was not only a member organization, but was represented on the Executive Committee as well. The open spot was meant for either the Sierra Club or Friends of the Earth, although neither was quick to accept the offer. Battista, 109-111; Sierra Club BOD Executive Committee meeting minutes, May 6, 1978, 14-15; Letter to Mike McCloskey, Ted Snyder, Susan Steigerwalt, Ellen Winchester from Brock Evans, June 13, 1978, BANC MSS 71/289 c, carton 31, folder 5.

Environmentalists had been no less disappointed by the president's energy proposals than the population at large, although they were initially enthusiastic about the administration's program when it was announced. To the delight of environmentalists across the nation, Carter said the right things on the campaign trail and in his earliest days in office – he supported conservation efforts, believed in the potential of solar power, and opposed fast breeder reactors to produce nuclear energy. All of these goals appeared to be confirmed by the president's April, 1977 national energy address. With its attention to conservation and renewable energy sources, Brock Evans happily told reporters, "the energy message sounded like we wrote it ourselves."[387]

However, as they began to digest the actual policy prescriptions being proffered by the administration, environmentalists absorbed them with a mixture of skepticism and disappointment. The Sierra Club's leaders worried that Carter's energy plans were too pro-nuclear, as evidenced by his appointment of two nuclear energy advocates to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the pro-nuclear emphasis of the newly established Department of Energy under James Schlesinger, who had chaired the Atomic Energy Commission in the early 1970s.[388] Others complained that the president's plans called for heavy investment in the production of untried synthetic fuels and would increase fossil fuel usage for the foreseeable future – including a doubling of the nation's coal consumption by the middle of the 1980s – rather than scaling back that usage as the nation transitioned to renewable energy sources. Meanwhile, contrary to promised investments in renewable energy, federal spending for solar power faced threatened cuts. Within a short time, the consensus had developed within the nation's major environmental organizations that Carter's energy policy was "disappointing on all fronts."[389]

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[387] Evans quoted in Margot Hornblower, "Environmentalists Like Most of Carter's Plan," *WP,* April 22, 1977.

[388] "Is Carter Going Nuclear?" *Sierra,* October, 1977, 58; Richard T. Cooper, "Schlesinger Attempts to Allay Environmentalists' Concerns," *WP,* January 14, 1977.

Even though they were dissatisfied by the solutions emerging from the White House, Club leaders' still had mixed emotions about throwing their support behind the Citizen/Labor Energy Coalition. The deal's biggest proponent, Evans, stressed that it would provide yet another useful opportunity for dialogue with outside interests, especially those in the labor movement, which could prove useful in the future. "Building bridges, networks, and mutual trust on many issues can have a long-term pay-off," he stressed, especially when they are being made with "a 'comer' in the labor movement" like Winpisinger.[390] But that argument did little to satisfy the forces arrayed in opposition, which included the imposing presence of future Club presidents Richard Cellarius and Denny Shaffer as well as the organization's chief Washington Representative on energy matters, Greg Thomas. Evans' opponents questioned the value of joining the CLEC simply with the goal of creating good will with the labor movement. Left-wing unionists, they noted, were the ones that were most active in the Coalition, and they also made up the part of the movement that the Club already had its strongest connections to. Joining the CLEC was not only unlikely to improve the Club's relationship with the IAM or UAW, they argued, but working with these dissident unionists also risked the wrath of the "stronger" part of labor in Meany and the AFL-CIO.[391]

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[389] Environmental Defense Fund Executive Director Arlie Schardt quoted in Shabecoff, "Carter Record Mixed on the Environment;" Gladwin Hill, "Battle Over Synthetic Fuels," *NYT,* July 7, 1979; "Carter Energy, Conservation Action Assailed, *WP,* April 25, 1978; Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "The Coming Out Party That Bombed," *WP,* June 1, 1977.

[390] Letter to Mike McCloskey and Paul Swatek from Brock Evans, May 1, 1978, BANC MSS 71/289 c, carton 31, folder 5.

Participation in the Coalition thus guaranteed no positive benefits, but promised some very real conflicts of interest. The Club leaders opposed to joining the CLEC frequently highlighted these potential conflicts during the debate, often framing the issue around the fear that the Sierra Club could be forced to go along with CLEC policies even if those went against the Club's own principles. Evans tried to soothe these fears by pointing out that the Coalition's policy statements would be made only in the names of organizations that expressly agreed to their provisions. "If they take policy in favor of opening up the National Parks to oil drilling," Evans advised McCloskey, "we simply don't sign on it, and are not identified as supporting it."[392] But that explanation did not sit well with his adversaries, who insisted that the Club's presence within the CLEC would imply its support for the Coalition's policies. Richard Cellarius, for example, grimly argued to the Board of Directors "by joining, one endorsed the basic policy statement regardless of the individual endorsement of each issue."[393]

Such an implication would be bad enough if it was over an issue on which the Sierra Club had no stated policy, or if, as in the case of the Coalition's advocacy of "the break up of concentrated economic power," it would pull the Club into policy territory it would rather avoid.[394] But the suggestion of Club support for policies with which it had a fundamental disagreement would be unbearable. The argument that the Club had previously undertaken such risks in joining other coalitions fell flat because, as one anti-CLEC voice pointed out, "we have not joined coalitions that were dedicated to a stance that we considered wrong on a key policy."[395] Such was the case, claimed those opposed to aligning with the CLEC, with the Coalition's policy on energy pricing, which rapidly became the most contentious issue under discussion.

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[391] Ibid.
[392] Ibid.
[393] Ibid; BOD Ex Com, May, 1978, 14.
[394] Letter from Gene Coan to Paul Swatek and Michael McCloskey, August 29, 1978, BANC MSS 71/103c, carton 21, folder 5.

By 1978, the Sierra Club had a standing policy that fossil fuel energy should be priced at its "true cost" – a measure of production costs that takes into account the limited nature of the resource – while the CLEC seemed to endorse an older model of energy pricing which stood below the true cost, and, from the Club's perspective, encouraged wasteful usage. The debate among the Club's leaders revolved around what exactly the CLEC's position was, how compatible it was with the Club's, and how firmly it was set. Evans, after multiple long conversations with CLEC leaders, was convinced that the conflict was really a non-issue; the Coalition's position was poorly stated, but could easily be read to agree with the principles of the Club's policy. The Coalition, he wrote to Club leaders, was worried about price gouging more than high prices per se; they had "no inherent objection to paying the real price of the resource... there is only a question over what the 'real' price is."[396] More importantly, he did not think that the CLEC position was set. Evans believed that because many of the Coalition's member organizations were fairly new to energy issues, they would be easy for experts from the Club to influence. Their attitude, he reported, was "soft... to say the least.... We would be able, on either most or all selected issues, to get them to adopt the bulk of our position."[397]

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[395] Margin notes of a copy of the May 1 letter from Evans to McCloskey and Swatek.
[396] Letter to McCloskey and Swatek from Brock Evans.

Evans' reasoning failed to impress the other side, which was dubious that an organization devoted to energy policy was "not sophisticated on these issues." Thomas, one of the Club's most trusted voices in regards to energy policy, battled hard against joining the CLEC. He argued that whatever ambiguity existed in the language of the CLEC's policy statements "it is clear... that the chief concern of the pricing formula is... to reduce consumer costs and constrain industry revenues." It was not justified to read them any other way. Joining the Coalition would be a mistake because its policies on energy pricing "would undermine the credibility of our energy conservation work for no apparent countervailing benefit. Presumably, the Sierra Club does not join coalitions simply for the sake of joining coalitions, but only to promote a common viewpoint. In this case, it is not at all clear that we share a common viewpoint."[398]

The debate played out within the Club's leadership circles over the course of months, with those opposing affiliation generally having the upper hand. When the issue was first raised on the Board of Directors Executive Committee, a few weeks after the CLEC's founding, the concerns with the Coalition's energy pricing policy were immediately apparent. A final decision was postponed when the opponents of affiliation decided to allow Evans and McCloskey to continue to negotiate a solution with the Coalition before further action was taken. In September, the issue was back on the agenda, with Cellarius proposing that the committee refuse membership.

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[397] Letter to McCloskey, Snyder, et al. from Brock Evans.

[398] Letter to Mike McCloskey, Ted Snyder, Susan Steigerwalt, Ellen Winchester from Greg Thomas, June 30, 1978, BANC MSS 71/289 c, carton 31, folder 5.

McCloskey and Evans, sensing that support for joining the group was lacking, asked to postpone the decision once again.[399] The second postponement was granted, but by that point any momentum in the direction of joining the CLEC that had existed was clearly gone. The question effectively died, as the Board never took it up again, and the Sierra Club remained outside the Coalition.

The Club had an opportunity to reevaluate its decision the next year, as the energy situation returned to crisis levels in 1979. With oil prices once again skyrocketing and gas station lines once again snaking for miles, the Carter Administration stepped up its pressure on Congress to act. In particular, the president now called for bigger subsidies for a crash production program for synthetic fuels, as well as the creation of a federal Energy Mobilization Board, which would have the power to act to suspend environmental regulations to hasten energy production in the event of an emergency like the one the nation now faced.[400] Evans aptly characterized the reaction of the environmentalist community to Carter's new proposals as "a shiver of fear." Worried that "the Carter proposal as a package would nearly obliterate the successful accomplishments of the environmental movement in the last decade," and that Congress would act hastily so that it could show an aggravated public that it was doing something to fight the energy crisis, the Sierra Club scrambled to stop the passage of rushed legislation and to pull as many allies as possible into the fight alongside them.[401]

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[399] BOD Ex Com, May, 1978, 14-15; Sierra Club BOD Executive Committee meeting minutes, September 11, 1978, 17-18.

[400] Smith, 30.

[401] Letter to Mike, Ted, Board of Directors from Brock Evans, July 23, 1979, BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 143, folder 1; Draft Letter to Club Leaders from Ted Snyder and Mike McCloskey, BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 143, folder 1.

"Energy... has now been temporarily pushed to the forefront of our efforts," the Club's national governors wrote to local leaders in the summer of 1979.[402] They were not exaggerating; the next several months saw an "all-out effort" by the Club against the president's new plan, with both staff and volunteer resources being shifted from other areas to focus on the emergency energy campaign. The Club's national efforts were a two-pronged affair. In Washington, D.C., a six person lobbying team coordinated a legislative campaign focused especially on draining congressional support for the Energy Mobilization Board.[403] At the same time, the organization's San Francisco headquarters organized a publicity campaign designed primarily "to continue the process of eroding the public credibility of the synfuels option" by painting synthetics as polluting, expensive, and untested. These two national efforts were combined with a simultaneous massive grassroots mobilization of local Club leaders and members. The Club encouraged its local affiliates to have representatives meet with all of the congressmen and senators in their localities during the August congressional break. It also mobilized a frenzied phone calling and letter writing campaign which resulted in, by Club estimates, several hundred letters reaching Congress in the first week of September alone.[404]

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[402] Draft Letter to Club Leaders.

[403] Quote from Draft Letter to Club Leaders; Memo to John McComb from Carl Pope, "Responses – Meaningful Variety – from non-Commerce, non-Interior House Members," BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 143, folder 3. The comments on this document suggest that the EMB was the focus of the Club's legislative efforts, since they all relate to government bureaucracy as opposed to synthetic fuels. The Club's lobbyists may have thought that this approach would be likely to win Republican support

[404] Letter to Mike, Ted, Board of Directors from Brock Evans; Letter to All Sierra Club RCC & Chapter Chairs from Mike McCloskey, August 16, 1979, BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 143, folder 2; "Proposed Sierra Club Campaign Plan: Project Mirage," BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 143, folder 3; Draft Letter to Club Leaders; Report as of 9/7/79, "Returns on Energy Appeals," to PS, GC, CP, DS, JM, JG, SS, Doc from Ciel [Giudicci], BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 143, folder 2.

The Sierra Club also sought to build coalitions with other groups, on both the national and local levels, to stifle the dangerous aspects of the White House energy plan. Predictably, the Club was able to rapidly join with other environmental organizations, and before long daily meetings were being held at the Club's Washington office. "Just about the whole environmental community has become mobilized in the past week," Evans relayed to his superiors back in California.[405] But the group's leaders strategizing in San Francisco thought that environmentalists would struggle if they tried to go it alone on this matter. They recognized that "it is a basic fact of political life that members of Congress expect to hear from the Sierra Club on this and other environmental issues." Additional environmentalist's presence might make legislators begin to pay more attention to the issue, but they were unlikely to add much in the way of swaying undecided votes. "But," they all noted, "[Congressmen] really begin to sit up and take notice when they start to hear from labor unions, farmers, consumer groups.... It is important to find other groups to lend support to the Club position."[406]

Sierra Club staffers Gene Coan and Ceil Giudicci, who were put in charge of directing the Club's outreach efforts, actively set about trying to construct "an informal coalition of other environmental and public interest groups, unions, and as wide an array of organizations as we can get involved."[407] In deliberating on which organizations to reach out to, the two examined a variety of interest groups that they thought would be negatively affected by the president's plan. Those devoted to environmentally inclined causes such as the anti-nuclear and public health movements held some real promise, and some unconventional thinking led to the consideration of banking, financial, and church groups. In the end though, most of the Sierra Club's energy went into working with labor, good government, agricultural, and consumer groups. Many of the organizations targeted by the Club were among those that figured most heavily in the CLEC.[408]

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[405] Letter to Mike, Ted, Board of Directors from Brock Evans.
[406] Sierra Club, "Constituencies that Could be Mobilized to Help on Energy Campaign," August, 1979, BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 143, folder 2.
[407] Letter to All Sierra Club RCC & Chapter Chairs.

Even as the Sierra Club hotly endeavored to work with the unions and consumer groups that made up the Citizen/Labor Energy Coalition to defeat the Carter energy program, the issue of the Club's officially joining the CLEC remained a non-starter. Temporary alliances between the two on particular energy issues were feasible, but it was clear that a permanent coalition would not be. The CLEC would press forward with its ambitious energy program until the mid-1980s, when funding problems and internal conflicts over the political direction of the group forced it to be rolled into a larger organization, Citizen Action.[409] Both the Club and the Coalition recognized the other's goals as legitimate, and there is no evidence that the relationship between the two was ever hostile. The Sierra Club understood the need for fairness in energy distribution and supported programs to protect the poor from unique levels of suffering from rising energy prices, while the CLEC conceded that conservation and "environmentally sound alternative energy technologies" were needed.[410] At the same time, the two organizations found their energy priorities to be fundamentally incompatible, which made permanent cooperation on anything but secondary goals impossible.

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[408] Memo to Paul Swatek from Ceil [Giudicci]/Gene [Coan], July 19, 1979, BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton143, folder 1.

[409] Battista, 115.

[410] Sierra Club, "Energy and the Sierra Club: A Summary of Energy Policy Established by the Board of Directors," April, 1980, 4, BANC MSS 71/290 c, carton 10, folder 2; Citizen/Labor Energy Coalition "Proposed Statement of Purpose and Structure," April 19, 1978, BANC MSS 71/289 c, carton 31, folder 3; Battista, 110.

Conclusion

The last two years of the 1970s were a transitional moment in the relationship between environmental organizations and the labor movement. At that time, progressive unionists in the UAW, IAM, and other unions felt compelled by political necessity to rebuild the connections between themselves and other social movement organizations that had lapsed in the preceding years. Unions eased back into the partnership with environmentalists by inviting environmental organizations to take part in larger coalitions that labor leaders were organizing. These groups were designed to revive American liberalism – and through it the labor movement – by energizing its base and giving common form and function to previously disjointed activities. While they never reached that level of success, they drew attention to issues from deindustrialization to energy rate discrimination. Moreover, they served as a public sphere of sorts, allowing organizers from diverse social movement organizations to meet, learn from one another, and debate issues.

The potential for blue-green collaboration embodied by the Progressive Alliance and Citizen/Labor Energy Coalition was short-lived, as the Alliance quickly ceased to function and the biggest environmental organizations opted out of the Coalition after months of indecision. Rather than signaling the final end of cooperative efforts between the labor and environmental movements, these exploits instead proved to be false-starts that helped to pave the way for a more enduring alliance in the form of the OSHA/Environment Network in the 1980s. The mass coalitions of the late 1970s brought the leaders of unions and environmental organizations back together and asked each side to probe the limits of their willingness to engage the other. In so doing, they gave shape and definition to the blue-green alliance by establishing the bounds of future collaboration. The Progressive Alliance showed the need for a clear and definite program, while at the same time bringing the themes of occupational safety and health to the forefront of the conversation. Meanwhile, the Citizen/Labor Energy Coalition excised energy issues from the discussion – or, at the very least, previewed how risky debating such issues could be.

Chapter 6: The Right to Know About Occupational Safety and Health, 1980-1985

"There is... a new energy pulsating in the country on behalf of environmental protection.... Its elitist content is dissolving as environmentalists, labor leaders, and occasionally business envoys bury old hatchets and explore new partnerships. Underlying this coalition of interests is the spreading perception that distinctions between the 'natural' and workplace environment are in many ways artificial."[411] In authoring those words in 1984, Environmental Sociologists Frederick Buttel, Charles Geisler, and Irving Wiswall noted a trend that had by that point been growing for several years. The first half of the 1980s was an era of labor-environmental partnership on a scale not seen since the heady period following Earth Day, 1970. After years of tumult featuring everything from limited cooperation to aborted coalitions to outright hostility, the blue-green relationship stabilized in the early 1980s and fell into a pattern marked by more frequent collaboration, increased awareness, and the institutionalization of a permanent partnership under leadership of the OSHA/Environmental Network.

In the twenty months between September 1978 and April 1980, two trends coalesced and shifted the ground on which organized labor and environmental organizations found themselves, reopening a space for sustained cooperation for shared goals. The first of these trends, discussed in the previous chapter, was the independent desire of both sides to revive American liberalism through a broad-based, progressive coalition. Although efforts such as the Progressive Alliance stumbled, they also suggested that occupational safety and health was an issue that could sustain mutual organizing.

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[411] Frederick H. Buttel, Charles C. Geisler, and Irving W. Wiswall, *Labor and the Environment: An Analysis of and Annotated Bibliography on Workplace Environmental Quality in the United States* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984): vii.

Where the PA showed the two sides that occupational safety and health could breed collaboration, a series of environmental disasters in the late 1970s – symbolized most powerfully by the chemical leak at Love Canal and the partial nuclear meltdown at Three Mile Island – demonstrated the issue's urgency. Concern over toxic production and waste had been growing within the two movements for some time, but it was sent into overdrive by these disasters, which distinctly showed the potential dangers faced by workers laboring in and people living in toxic environments. In this way, occupational safety and health became what sociologists refer to as a "bridge issue" – a concern that allows for the linkage of two otherwise disparate groups. The occupational safety and health bridge opened a space for unions and environmental organizations to continually cooperate on shared goals and provided a chance to "neutralize [the other] a little bit" where they disagreed.[412]

That bridge was constructed in 1980, when Senator Richard Schweiker proposed the near total elimination of routine OSHA workplace inspections. An outraged labor movement made defeating the effort its top priority, and found environmentalists to be willing and capable partners in the effort. This chapter argues that the Schweiker Bill marked a decisive turning point in the relationship between organized labor and the environmental movement. Building on links established previously, this bill solidified occupational safety and health as an organizing principle and brought the AFL-CIO back to the table through its Industrial Union Department. In its wake, the OSHA-Environmental Network was created to provide an official framework for continued cooperation around issues that were essential to the environmental safety of the working class, in particular occupational safety and health. The elaboration of recognized organizational links between the movements meant that their cooperative activity was more frequent, more predictable, and often, more useful than in the past.

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[412] Jay Power memo to Contacts File/Labor, May 27, 1980, BANC MSS 71/103, carton 254, folder 26.

This chapter works to fill the space between two areas of scholarship that are not currently in conversation. There is a well-developed historical scholarship focused on occupational safety and health and the labor movement's efforts to establish, consolidate, and improve upon those standards.[413] Unfortunately that literature focuses mostly on the early portion of the century, often leaving largely unexplored the story after the establishment of OSHA or the Mine Safety and Health Administration. These historians also often miss the opportunity to use OSH efforts as a window through which to explore larger themes of labor outreach and coalition politics. Meanwhile, although historians have not explored the ways that safety and health politics acted to bind the unions to other social movements, sociologists have. A small but strong literature in that discipline that examines the role OSH played in the relationship between labor and the environmental movement in the 1980s and

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[413] Some of the better works include David Rosner and Gerald Markowitz, *Deadly Dust: Silicosis and the On-Going Struggle to Protect Workers' Health,* second ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006) and Rosner and Markowitz, eds. *Dying for Work: Workers' Safety and Health in Twentieth-Century America* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1987); Mark Aldrich, *Safety First: Technology, Labor, and Business in the Building of American Work Safety, 1870-1939* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Alan Derickson, *Black Lung: Anatomy of a Public Health Disaster* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); Christopher C. Sellers, *Hazards of the Job: From Industrial Disease to Environmental Health Science* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

1990s has emerged in recent years.[414] However, as insightful as these scholars are, their projects are most often highly theoretical; what examples of on-the-ground organizing they offer are geared primarily toward showing how blue-green activity did or did not fit within a preexisting analytical framework. They also tend to give short shrift to the historical context in which coalition building was happening, portraying it in a vacuum that sucks out a lot of its larger significance.

In bridging these two sets of scholarship, I hope to illuminate the processes that under laid the era's events. I demonstrate that the making of the blue-green occupational safety and health work of the early 1980s was a historically grounded development that drew on existing precedents and at the same time expanded the parameters of cooperative possibility. Moreover, I explore the importance of the larger political context in which these events occurred. Calling it an occupational safety and health alliance is, to some extent, a misnomer because OSH protection, although the inspiration behind this reemerging alliance, ultimately became a stand-in for the defense of a broader set of environmental and labor regulations.

Health and Safety

Although the possibility of blue-green collaboration over occupational safety and health had been explored several times in the 1970s, it had never proven to be capable of sustaining a long-term alliance. It was passed up on because neither movement defined OSH issues as a central concern for most of the decade. The alliance would have remained undeveloped if occupational health remained peripheral for the AFL-CIO and the industrial environment stayed controversial within the Sierra Club. However, by the late 1970s, the issue was simultaneously growing in importance within each of the individual movements.

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[414] Brian Mayer, Phil Brown, and Rachel Morello-Frosch, "Labor-Environment Coalition Formation: Framng the Right to Know," *Sociological Forum* 25, no. 4 (December 2010): 746-768; Brian Mayer, *Blue-Green Coalitions: Fighting for Safe Workplaces and Healthy Communities* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008); Brian K. Obach, "The Wisconsin Labor-Environmental Network: a Case Study of Coalition Formation Among Organized Labor and the Environmental Movement," *Organization and Environment* 12, vol. 1 (1999): 45-74 and *Labor and the Environmental Movement: The Quest for Common Ground* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004).

As demonstrated in chapter one, American unions – particularly industrial unions – have a long history of concern for the health and safety of their members, stretching back to at least the early twentieth century. American industry traditionally maintained a similarly longstanding claim that the safety of conditions in the workplace fell exclusively within the parameters of managerial concern. Each individual worker was responsible for protecting himself from injury, and there was little place for collective bargaining on the issue.[415] This position softened in the late 1950s and early 1960s, as employers accepted an increased role for unions in policing industrial safety. Although they retained their focus on individual worker responsibility and the "voluntary" nature of safety reform, employers became more willing to work with unions to promote the cause of employee safety, as long as the measures being considered fell within parameters set by employers.

Symbolizing labor's new status, the AFL-CIO and several of its member unions helped to charter a Labor Conference of the National Safety Council in 1956.[416] The National Safety Council had been formed during the Progressive Era to facilitate businessmen's efforts to limit the scope of industrial safety and health regulation by making its members seem proactive while at the same time defining public health as an arena for professional expertise rather than public debate. By the late 1950s, the Council was a massive operation that offered policy makers advice not just on industrial safety and health policy, but on home, highway, and other public health issues as well.[417] The Council's 1962 *Safety Guide for Unions,* a manual geared toward union members and representatives, clearly demonstrated the role in safety programming that industry imagined unions assuming. The guide stressed that unions should focus their efforts on preventing workplace accidents and injuries by training their members in safe practices, disciplining them for dangerous rule violations, and using the labor press to "interest… members in safety, convince them of its merits, and inform them on how to avoid the hazards of everyday living."[418]

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[415] Rosner and Markowitz, *Dying for Work,* xii-xix.
[416] Commemorative letter from George Meany, April 30, 1962, reproduced in National Safety Council, *Safety Guide for Unions* (Chicago, 1962), ii.

Workers' health and the danger of long-term exposure to toxic substances were almost completely absent from the employer-dominated workplace safety discussion, but as the short comings of the safety-first approach became increasingly obvious in the 1960s, unions increasingly pursued a broader agenda. Their realization that more comprehensive protections were needed to guard against latent health risks emerged from a growing awareness of the dangers posed by prolonged exposure to lead, cotton and coal dust, and asbestos.[419] New levels of alertness toward health issues among workers, combined with anger at the frequent lapses of state-level regulations and enforcement, helped to inspire organized labor to push for the creation of a new federal regulatory system. The fruits of that effort – the Mine Safety and Health Act of 1969, the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 (which established the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health to study occupational diseases as well as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to set standards and enforce regulations) and the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976 – paved the way for organized labor to increase pressure on employers to provide not just safe but healthful working environments.[420]

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[417] Rosner and Markowitz, *Dying for Work,* xv; Foster C. Rinefort and David D. Van Fleet, "The United States Safety Movement and Howard Pyle," *Journal of Management History* 6, no. 3 (2000): 127-137. Employers new found interest in working with unions to improve the injury rates in their plants arose from a combination of factors, including the rise of workers' compensation laws, which made on the job injuries more expensive for employers, and the larger trend toward cooperation between industry and labor that existed at the time, symbolized by the Treaty of Detroit.

[418] National Safety Council, *Safety Guide for Unions* (Chicago, 1962), 9.

[419] These substances, except for cotton dust, are effectively covered in Rosner and Markowitz, *Dying for Work* and Ronald Bayer, ed. *The Health and Safety of Workers: Case Studies in the Politics of Professional Responsibility* New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). As the essays in Bayer show, all three of these elements had been known to be hazardous for considerable amounts of time – centuries in the case of lead. But despite this established knowledge of the dangers posed by lead, coal dust, and asbestos, effectively regulating them to prevent occupational disease remained a problem throughout most of the twentieth century. Historians have pointed to employer intransigence, the

One of the clearest indications that unions in the 1970s were approaching the workplace health concerns of their members with increased urgency is the rise of negotiated health and safety protocols in union contracts throughout the decade. After a 1966 NLRB ruling established that health conditions were mandatory bargaining subjects, the number of union contracts that addressed such issues rose steadily.[421] Studies done by the Bureau of National Affairs and the Bureau of Labor Statistics demonstrate the trend lines for specific types of health and safety protections. For example, in 1970 31 percent of union contracts in the U.S. ensured

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hesitation of doctors (especially company doctors, who often were in the best position to notice illness trends among workers) to call attention to certain illnesses, and a degree of fatalism among workers and their institutions as the reasons why the regulatory system took so long to evolve.

[420] Respected environmental historian Robert Gottlieb's assertion that "passage of the OSH Act… helped to stimulate the budding workplace environment movements that had emerged during the middle to late 1960s," remains as accurate an understanding of the period as it was when it was written. Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring,* 283. The Toxic Substances Control Act was partially inspired by lung cancer deaths associated with the Rohm and Haas chemical plant in Philadelphia, which became symbolic of employer attempts to downplay health risks and mask production dangers from employees and their communities. See Willard Sterne Randall and Stephn D. Solomon, *Building 6: the Tragedy at Bridesburg* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977).

[421] James C. Robinson, *Toil and Toxics: Workplace Struggles and Political Strategies for Occupational Health* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 51; Walter Mossberg, "More Unions Devote Efforts to Eliminating Hazards in Workplace," *Wall St. Journal* [?] clipping, August 19, 1974, BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 189, folder 3.

the creation of plant health and safety committees; by 1978, 43 percent did.[422] In 1979, almost all manufacturing contracts (87 percent) contained some health and safety clauses and by 1980, nearly one in four union contracts allowed workers to refuse assignments that they felt were abnormally or needlessly hazardous.[423] Some of the most comprehensive contract language emerged from UAW contract negotiations with GM in 1973. The deal, later incorporated into the Auto Workers' contracts with the rest of the Big Three automakers, contained eight health and safety provisions, including full-time health and safety union representatives paid for by the company, the guaranteed right to strike over health and safety issues, and union access to data on employee exposure to dangerous materials.[424]

In addition to negotiating specific protections into contracts, in the late 1970s organized labor also started to devote new resources to researching occupational diseases and educating workers about them. The AFL-CIO started a new Department of Occupational Safety and Health devoted to those goals in 1978, and many of the Federation's constituent unions followed suit, either rededicating or opening new workplace safety and health departments of their own.[425] But by far the biggest effort for increased health awareness was made by the AFL-CIO's newly revitalized Industrial Union Department (IUD). The department's new president, Howard Samuel, set workplace health as one of his top personal priorities and pushed the IUD to increase its OSH efforts throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s.[426] To that end, the IUD established an International Commission on Occupational and Environmental Health at the end of 1978 to chart global industrial hygiene practices, and the next year it chartered the Workers Institute for Safety and Health, chaired by Samuel himself, which pursued "a wide ranging program of scientific research, education and community activities." The IUD also helped the Pacific Northwest Labor College – the nation's premier center for labor education at the time – to start an Environmental Affairs Program in 1979 by helping it secure a grant from the EPA to fund the venture.[427]

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[422] Report cited in P.B. Beaumont, *Safety at Work and the Unions,* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), 157. The unions most likely to be involved in such bargaining included the UAW, IAM, UMW, OCAW, and USW.

[423] Safety clauses in Bureau of National Affairs study, cited in Robinson, Table 12, page 53; one in four statistic cited in Robinson, 48.

[424] Beaumont, 157-159.

[425] Meany Press conference, August 7, 1978, 4.

Like that of the labor movement, the Sierra Club's interest in occupational safety and health in the early 1980s was built on a foundation that had been laid in the previous decade. In 1970, the Club applauded the passage of the Occupational Safety and Health Act. A few years later the group attempted to expand its OSH activity beyond cheerleading by joining the ongoing boycott of Shell, which was being conducted in support of an ongoing strike by the OCAW over plant health standards. The action drew positive attention from organized labor, but was an unusual step for an organization that had been hesitant to embrace industrial environment issues.

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[426] In addition to the work Samuel did on OSH issues within the IUD, he also took a seat on the AFL-CIO Standing Committee on Safety and Occupational Health in 1981. Letter to Howard D. Samuel from President [Lane Kirkland?], April 20, 1981, GMMA Unprocessed files, ACC# 82-0151, BO3/A/13. Samuel explained his department's priorities to Doug Fraser when the UAW reaffiliated with the AFL (and IUD) in 1981. "Currently," he wrote to the UAW President "much of our energies and resources are devoted to organizing, coordinated bargaining, safety, health and environment matters, international trade, legislation and pension investment policies." That list seems to have been in order of importance for Samuel, and it remained more or less in tact throughout his tenure at the IUD. Letter from Howard Samuel to Doug Fraser, November 23, 1981, WRA Douglas Fraser Collection, Box 48, Folder 11.

[427] IUD Executive Council Report, January 11, 1980, GMMA Unprocessed files, ACC# 82-0151, BO3/A/13; Letter from Roy Ockert, Executive Director of Pacific Northwest Labor College to Lane Kirkland, November 29, 1979, GMMA Unprocessed files, ACC# 82-0151, BO3/A/13.

As it turned out, this expansion of Club interests was a controversial one among its members. As described more fully in Chapter 2, a sizable portion of the Club's supporters balked at the adoption of this particular cause, preferring instead to remain entirely committed to traditional Club goals such as national parks and wilderness protection. Thus, the decade began with a long way to go before occupational health issues would be fully accepted by a majority within the organization.

More than that, the incorporation of such subjects into the Club's repertoire happened gradually. The earliest urban environmental priorities to be incorporated into the Club were those that mirrored its more traditional efforts. For example, beginning with the San Francisco Bay Chapter in 1971, local Club chapters around the country began to create Inner City Outings programs: events designed to introduce minority youth populations to the great outdoors and instill in them a love of nature.[428] And when the Club developed positions on urban public works, they almost always had an obvious conservation or wilderness protection slant; public transportation projects would preserve more land than highway construction, while building municipal parks and green spaces would bring a bit of the natural world into the city.[429] Even its entrance into energy politics was initially structured around the aesthetic impact of power plant siting and emissions.[430]

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[428] Turner, 228

[429] William Futrell, "The Inner-City Frontier," *Sierra* (February/March, 1978): 5.

[430] I have previously discussed example involving Dinosaur Canyon (Chapter 1) and several nuclear plant locations in California, most importantly at Nipomo Dunes. For more on this issue, see Byron E. Pearson, *Still the Wild River Runs: Congress, the Sierra Club, and the Fight to Save the Grand Canyon* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2002).

Club leaders – especially those on the volunteer side of the organization – continued to frame the expanding interests of the organization as a defense of tradition late into the decade. In 1978, Sierra Club President Will Futrell finally recognized publicly that the growing position of non-traditional environmental efforts on his organization's agenda was not only proper, but necessary. Editorializing in the Club's mouthpiece *Sierra,* Futrell argued to members that "it's time the Sierra Club acknowledged that the environment doesn't end at the city limits... the urban environment must be high on the environmental movement's agenda for the 1980s if the movement is to survive."[431] But at the same time he was forced to defend this position as an outgrowth of existing conservation priorities; "the future of places like Yellowstone Park," he observed, "is going to depend on the future of places like Watts and Harlem."[432]

Still, even as the Club continued to cater to tradition, an increasing number of its members were devoting their attention to new environmental concerns, such as municipal pollution and toxic waste. A survey taken in 1978 that asked members to rank twenty-three different environmental issues in order of importance demonstrated this growing concern over urban environmental problems within the group's grassroots. The traditional Club concerns of wilderness and natural area protection remained top priorities for members. But they were joined at the head of the list by the more urban issues of air and water pollution, which ranked third and fourth in importance, respectively, and toxic substances, which ranked seventh.[433]

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[431] Ibid.
[432] William Futrell, quoted in "From Wilderness to Slums," *Evening Globe,* August 11, 1977 clipping in BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 214, folder 29.

As Club members came to care more about urban environmental issues, they did more than just encourage the national organization to act; by the late 1970s, there were also numerous local Club activists working for improved pollution and toxic waste control regimes in their states and communities. The efforts of one such member, Doris Cellarius, are instructive. As a Michigan resident in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Cellarius was an early proponent of urban environmental initiatives, inspired by fear for her personal health as well as her community's. She was told by environmentalist friends that she "worrie[d] too much" about health dangers, and although her Club chapter in Michigan was "supportive" of her pursuing pollution control, its members were not devoted to effecting change in that area, focusing instead on "natural history and urban planning."[434] After leaving Michigan for Washington State, Cellarius became involved in solid and toxic waste issues through working with government agencies at the county level. She found that she quickly became one of the most knowledgeable and committed citizens in the area. In the mid to late 1970s, it became easier to get Club members involved, making calls to lobby for strong state hazardous waste laws and pollution controls.[435] As it was on the national level so it was in the local chapters: during the 1970s Sierra Clubbers slowly recognized the need to incorporate urban spaces into their priorities, gradually establishing a much broader definition of "environment" than the one that had guided their organization's early years.

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[433] Kathryn Ann Utrup, "How Sierra Club Members See Environmental Issues," *Sierra* (March/April 1979): 14-18. The survey indicated that 53% of respondents considered "toxic substances" to be "personally very important" (good for 7th overall on the list), but only 49% thought it should be a "high priority for the Sierra Club" (8th overall). Although specific urban environmental issues rated highly, "urban environment" as a subject did not rank in the top ten of member concern.

[434] Cellarius was married to Club director Richard Cellarius, so her experience is likely not totally representative, but it is still a strong indication of how early isolation for people concerned with toxic waste as other "urban" issues slowly gave way to inclusion. Doris Cellarius, "Sierra Club Volunteer Leader: Grassroots Activist and Organizer on Hazardous Waste Issues," an oral history conducted in 2001-2002 by Ann Lage, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2005, 19-21. Quotes on 20 and 21.

Clearly the labor and environmental movements shared a set of interests in occupational safety and health, toxics exposure, and community protection that was growing in the late 1970s. The Sierra Club gradually incorporated "urban environmentalism" throughout the decade, first tackling pollution and other threats to nature, then turning to more fundamentally people-based threats such as toxic waste and industrial hygiene. Meanwhile, organized labor plowed ahead with an industrial health and safety program of its own, negotiating workplace protections into union contracts and reassembling OSH divisions that had been allowed to lapse into disuse. The AFL-CIO Industrial Union Department created a national niche for itself by leading the way in research and programming on the in-plant environment.

At the same time, although activists from both sides were approaching these concerns with new energy, they were largely pursuing them in isolation from one another. The labor movement and the environmental movement were moving in the same direction on occupational safety and health, but along separate tracks. It was not until OSHA came under serious threat that they were able to build serious collective action.

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[435] D. Cellarius oral history, 22-27, 38-43.

The Schweiker Bill

As the labor and environmental movements' commitment to protecting the health of workers deepened, the federal government's interest in doing so was repeatedly called into question. All three branches of the federal government had taken their turn chipping away at the Occupational Safety and Health Act – the primary legal vehicle for protecting workers at the federal level – since its passage in 1970. President Gerald Ford struck the first blow in restraining OSHA in 1974. That year, in the name of cooling inflation, he issued Executive Order 11821, which required the nation's regulatory programs to conduct "Inflation Impact Statements" – basically, cost-benefit analyses – to ensure that each agency's regulatory demands could be financially justified. The program was especially difficult for OHSA, which struggled, as it would in later years to attach a monetary value to the healthy lives of working people.[436] And when the president assembled a committee to study the possibility of regulatory reform, OSHA was one of the first agencies examined. In 1978, the Supreme Court limited OSHA's inspection authority when it ruled in *Marshall v. Barlow* that the agency's inspectors had to obtain a search warrant before executing on-site investigations. Putting an end to inspections without prior notice made it considerably more difficult for inspectors to catch violations, which could be cleaned up or swept under the rug in the sometimes months-long court battles that employers waged against the warrants. Throughout the decade Congress also pressured OSHA to act more efficiently in designing and implementing its standards, and by 1979 an effort was underway, led by Republican Orrin Hatch, to kill the agency outright.[437]

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[436] Buttel, Geisler, and Wiswall, 98.

All of these changes were made in response to an anti-regulatory political outcry that gained steam among business interests and those on the political right in the mid-1970s. Arguing that "freedom can be suffocated by the bureaucrat" just as easily as "squashed by the tyrant," anti-regulatory crusaders first started gaining attention when they blamed the 1973 recession on overly burdensome government.[438] These critics – including the Business Roundtable, Chamber of Commerce, and American Conservative Union – ascribed a host of negative attributes to regulation: it made American businesses less productive, lowered profits, and created inflation by adding costs to manufacturing. "It has been well documented," Federal Trade Commission executive director R.T. McNamar editorialized in the pages of the *Wall Street Journal* in 1976, "that many types of government regulations fuel inflation, promote inefficiency, discourage innovation and generally reduce competition."[439] The opponents of regulation found a sympathetic audience among Republican politicians and bureaucrats, who used anti-regulatory rhetoric to justify gutting the labor, environmental, and consumer protections that were created in previous decades. "With a spirit of almost eager feistiness," *Business Week* reported in 1980,

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[437] "OSHA: An Agency that is Ripe for an Overhall," *Las Vegas Sun* (online ed.), November 30, 2008; Alan S. Miller, "Towards an Environmental/Labor Coalition," *Environment* 22, no. 5 (June, 1980): 32-39, 37; *Reflections on OSHA's History,* 25.

[438] William F. Rickenbacker, "Freedom v. Suffocation," *National Review,* (September 26, 1975): 1056.

[439] For example, one study funded by the Business Roundtable estimated that the nation's 48 biggest companies alone spent $2.6 billion complying with federal regulations in 1977. Ralph E. Winter, "Paper Weight: Many Businesses Blame Government Policies for Productivity Lag," *WSJ,* October 28, 1980; R.T. McNamar, "Regulation Versus Competition," *WSJ,* August 9, 1976. See also U.S. Department of Labor, *Reflections on OSHA's History* (Washington, D.C., 2009), 14.

“companies are taking off the gloves and attacking, raising novel legal arguments to block regulatory attempts."[440]

Regulatory reformers saw federal regulations in general as a nuisance, but they saved their deepest vitriol for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. By the late 1970s, the safety agency had become “probably the most despised federal agency in existence," according to Pennsylvania Senator Richard Schweiker. That assessment arose from a belief among industrialists and conservatives that OSHA was especially “adversarial,” overly concerned with trivial issues, and unwilling to adjust its standards based on industry input.[441] In the late 1970s, OSHA faced a concerted effort led by conservative groups including the American Conservative Union to stymie its enforcement abilities. Inspectors suddenly found business owners refusing to allow them entrance without a warrant (ultimately leading to the 1978 Supreme Court decision that warrants were in fact required), challenging the validity of warrants that had been obtained, and choosing to shutter their doors “rather than dicker with OSHA” over regulatory compliance. The agency also saw employers begin to challenge its enforcement decisions with increasing frequency, with about one in five cases being contested in 1979.[442] By the time Ronald Reagan was elected in 1980, OSHA had inspired such widespread industry resistance that Dr. Bruce Karh, one of the leading candidates to head the agency, worried that it was "in danger of becoming a paper tiger."[443]

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[440] "Business Comes Out Swinging at Regulators," *Business Week,* April 7, 1980, 112.

[441] Ibid; Joann S. Lublin, “OSHA Should be Less Harsh on Business, Contenders for Head the Agency Believe,” *WSJ,* December 26, 1980.

[442] For example, one inspection was delayed for 32 months when an employer challenged the inspection warrant. “Warrant Still Valid After 32 Months,” *Labor Law Journal* (December, 1982), 814. 21% of OSHA cases were contested in 1979, compared with 12% in 1977. *Reflections on OSHA’s History,* 12; Sanford L. Jacobs, “Rather than Dicker with OSHA, ‘Model’ Foundry Closes Up Shop,” *WSJ,* September 15, 1980; Urban C. Lehner, “OSHA Resisters May Suffer from Bad Advice,” *WSJ,* October 18, 1979.

OSHA still maintained a cadre of committed defenders, but they were far less active in protecting the agency than its opponents were in attacking it. The nation's unions, among OSHA's chief supporters, recognized that the safety agency was being targeted, but did not take the threat to it very seriously. The International Brotherhood of Teamsters, for example, outlined the problem quite clearly to its members, noting that "the Occupational Safety and Health Act… is under constant attack from those who would weaken or modify it."[444] But despite declaring OSHA to be a legislative priority, Teamsters lobbyists appear to have taken little action to strengthen its standing with Congress. Likewise, in 1978, the Sierra Club's Board of directors unanimously (with one abstention) passed a resolution reaffirming their organization's support for OSHA, condemning proposed "weakening amendments that would exclude workers or otherwise reduce coverage," and calling for increased funding and enforcement.[445] But although OSHA had the Club's sympathy, its distress did not inspire environmentalist action, and the Club's commitment remained primarily on the page.

All of this would change with the proposal of the OSHA Improvements Act of 1980, which finally forced the agency's friends to recognize that it was in dire straits and compelled them to pool their resources in an all-out defense of workplace health and safety regulation. The OSHA Improvements Act was the unexpected brainchild of Richard Schweiker, the senior Senator from Pennsylvania and ranking Republican on the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee. Schweiker, a former business executive, had entered the Senate in 1969. He was known as a moderate and fairly union friendly politician, and although his politics had trended more conservative of late, he was not considered a rabid regulatory reformer. He supported the Occupational Safety and Health Act when it was originally debated in Congress, but had grown disillusioned with the OSH Administration as it had taken shape in the decade since. So, with the stated goal of moving OSHA "away from the regulatory policeman's role toward [being a] cooperative partner in worker safety and health," Schweiker created the most substantial revision to the agency's operating principles that had ever been suggested.[446]

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[443] Lublin, "OSHA Should be Less Harsh...;" Urban C. Lehner, "Senate Gets Bill aimed at Curbing of OSHA Rules," *WSJ,* December 20, 1979.
[444] "As Congress Reconvenes: An Agenda for Action," *International Teamster* (January, 1979): 10-13.
[445] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, January 14-15, 1978, p. 29, BANC MSS 71/103 c box 18, folder 12.

At the end of 1979, Schwekier authored an amendment to the agency's appropriations package that exempted small businesses in safe industries – a total of about 1.5 million workplaces – from routine OSHA inspections. Having moved the appropriations amendment through Congress easily and relatively quietly, Schweiker introduced the more ambitious S.2153, also known as the "OSHA Improvements Act," or Schweiker Bill, in February, 1980. The bill sought to change OSHA in several ways. Most fundamentally, it called for all workplaces that had not been subject to workmen's compensation claims in the previous year to be exempt from routine inspections. Since it was estimated that about ninety percent of employers fit this category, the bill would practically eliminate OSHA's routine inspection authority, although it would still investigate major accidents and habitual rule breakers.

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[446] B*iographical Directory of the United States Congress,* http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=S000159 (accessed July 19, 2013); *Reflections on OSHA's History,* 15; "OSHA: Reform or Emasculation?" *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* January 14, 1980. Schweiker would go on to become Regan's Secretary of Health and Human Services starting in 1981.

This proposed major change in the structure of OSHA's authority got most of the attention that was focused on the bill, but the OSHA Improvements Act also called for additional, smaller changes to the occupational safety and health system. Under the new law, for example, OSHA would no longer be compelled to inspect a plant after receiving a worker's complaint, and would instead be allowed to decide for itself whether the allegation warranted an investigation, after first contacting the employer for a "satisfactory response." The bill also would have lowered the maximum penalties that businesses would have to pay for violating OSHA restrictions if they had a safety committee in the plant.[447]

The Schweiker Bill attracted a lot of early support in the Senate. Its proponents claimed that the changes called for were both reasonable and necessary. Since OSHA was only able to inspect about 56,000 of the nation's nearly five million workplaces in any given year, supporters claimed that the bill simply helped to set guidelines to focus the agency's activity. By targeting only the worst offenders, OSHA's scarce resources would be more efficiently used, and by leaving safe workplaces alone, the agency's particularly bad reputation in the business community would improve.[448] The bill was promoted as the sane middle ground between overstepping bureaucracy and unregulated chaos. It drew powerful supporters from both sides of the aisle, including co-sponsorships from Orrin Hatch and liberal environmental hero Gaylord Nelson. The bill was also supported by New Jersey Democrat Harrison Williams, the chief sponsor of the original Occupational Safety and Health Act in 1970.[449] In addition, the bill attracted the backing of the deep-pocketed business lobbyists at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, a traditional enemy of OSHA's that was happy to see the agency's power curtailed. Although the Chamber of Commerce did not think the Schweiker bill went far enough, it saw the bill as a good starting point and hoped to get further changes – such as the setting of health and safety performance standards rather than "specific rules to meet those standards" – included as the proposed law made its way through Congress.[450]

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[447] Helen Dewar, "Senate Bill Would Curb OSHA Inspection Powers," *WP,* April 1, 1980; Lehner, "Senate Gets Bill Aimed at Curbing of OSHA Rules,"; "Another Threat to OSHA," *International Teamster,* February, 1980, 24; Philip Shabecoff, "Capitol Battle on Safety Agency Opens," *NYT,* April 2, 1980; Environmentalists for Full Employment, "Action Alert: OSHA Under Attack," February, 1980, BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 255, folder 2.

[448] See Williams Press Release (12/19/79) on the issue, which claimed "difficulties still remain... in focusing enforcement activities on the most hazardous workplaces, and I do believe it is necessary for OSHA to come to grips with this enforcement problem. Limited resources should be effectively

The OSHA Improvements Act was instantly a serious concern for the AFL-CIO, which realized that preventing the bill's passage was going to be an uphill battle. Labor's position was made all the weaker by the fact that it had to admit the OSH Agency was not without its problems. It was not able to effectively monitor all of the nation's workplaces, respond quickly to worker complaints, promulgate useful exposure codes for toxic substances, or punish rule breakers severely enough to deter future violations.[451] "Any faithful reading of the history of OSHA," AFL-CIO

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targeted to concentrate on the most unsafe workplaces." Quoted in Miller, footnote 22; also see Lehner, "Senate Gets Bill..."

[449] Miller, 37; "OSHA: Reform or Emasculation?" *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* January 14, 1980.

[450] Shabecoff, "Capitol Battle on Safety Agency."

[451] Even as late as 1990, AFL-CIO officials complained to Congress that only 24 toxic chemicals had full standards and OSHA fines remained "the lowest of all federal environmental and safety statutes." Testimony of Margaret Seminario, Director of the AFL-CIO Department of Occupational Safety and Health, before the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, Subcommittee on Labor on Legislation to Amend the Occupational Safety and Health Act, May 1, 1990, GMMA RG21-002, box 16, folder 34. See also John Mendeloff, *Regulating Safety: An Economic and Political Analysis of Occupational Health and Safety Policy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1979).

Secretary-Treasurer Tom Donahue said in marking the agency's 10th anniversary, "will, of course, reveal that we have never come close to that goal of safe and healthy workplaces."[452] However, most labor leaders diagnosed the agency's problems – and their potential solutions – very differently from the regulatory reformers. The OCAW's Tony Mazzochi, for example, linked OSHA's shortcomings to lack of worker involvement in the standards-setting and inspection processes. Others agreed more with John Mendeloff, an academic workplace health and safety analyst, who argued that "the problem is that the potential of [OSHA's] present program is too small." From labor's point of view, instead of curtailing the agency and reducing its inspection capability, Congress should have been expanding both.[453]

The bill's opponents, in organized labor and elsewhere, were unhappy with it for numerous reasons, from the analytically grounded to the highly speculative. Many groups argued that lowering penalties for noncompliance and relying more on employer's self-report data was a recipe for creating violations. These changes, according to Lloyd McBride of the Steelworkers, "emasculated" OSHA and would encourage companies to lie to avoid inspections.[454] Others associated with the labor and environmental movements agreed with that assessment, claiming that the bill gave employers "a clear incentive to under report deaths and injuries… in order to preserve their 'safe' status." Similarly, the AFL-CIO pointed out that its own study of workplace deaths revealed that 41 percent of them had occurred in workplaces that the Schweiker Bill would exempt from inspection, calling into question just what definition of "safe" the senator was working with.[455]

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[452] Donahue, remarks at an IUD luncheon marking the 10th Anniversary of OSHA.
[453] Buttel, Geisler, and Wiswall, 32; Mendeloff, 154-157. Look into some of the other sources here too – Bacow has a bunch;
[454] "OSHA: Reform or Emasculation?"

Of all the problems that the bill's antagonists raised during the debates, the most frequent and powerful centered on OSHA's responsibility as an agent of injury and disease prevention. Opponents argued that eliminating routine inspections in most workplaces would fundamentally revise this *raison d'être*. Instead of preventing accidents, OSHA's assignment would become investigating their causes after they happened and cleaning up the mess, which was "closing the barn door behind the horse," in the words of the AFL-CIO's lobbying department.[456] This theme was repeated and elaborated throughout the public debate on the bill. *Washington Post* public affairs columnist William Raspberry highlighted the differences between the old system and the proposed new one by asking if OSHA was meant to be an ambulance or a fence, while the United Electrical Workers took the analogy one step further, warning that the bill would "turn OSHA into a coroner's office," documenting worker injuries and illnesses without any ability to prevent them.[457]

The point was driven home most fully in written testimony sponsored by the Urban Environment Conference, Sierra Club, and twenty-three other environmental and community health groups before the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources in 1980. If the OSHA Improvements Act would be so beneficial, the group asked, why not expand it further? "Why do we not exempt from food sanitation inspections food establishments that have a year's record of cleanliness?" Their own obvious answer to the question was that it was because such a system could not preempt problems but could only respond to them. "What diner would want to eat in such an exempted facility? ... Indeed, if we were to improve restaurant sanitation as S. 2153 seeks to 'improve' OSHA, some number of restaurant patrons would have to sicken and die before the establishments were fully inspected again."[458]

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[455] Environmentalists for Full Employment, "Action Alert: OSHA Under Attack;" Statement by the AFL-CIO Executive Council on "Attempt to Cripple OSHA," May 6, 1980, GMMA AFL-CIO Press Releases, box 44, folder 5.

[456] Quotes from Lehner, "Senate Gets Bill Aimed at Curbing of OSHA Rules."

[457] William Raspberry, "OSHA: Ambulance or Fence?" *WP,* March 24, 1980; the "turn OSHA into a coroner's office" line was widely published including in "Schweiker Criticizes Job Safety Bill Foes," *Pittsburgh Press,* March 20, 1980.

Organized labor, led by the AFL-CIO, was among the first constituencies to realize the size of the threat the Schweiker bill posed to an occupational safety and health system in which they were deeply invested. To their credit, labor leaders also realized the enormity of the challenge facing them in defeating the bill. They quickly appealed to "the non-labor environmental and health communities to help in a major legislative battle" in stopping "another chapter in the lengthy history of anti-worker legislative attacks on OSHA."[459] Between March and May 1980, the AFL-CIO solidified its outreach to non-labor groups by hosting a series of regional conferences in Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, Houston, and Los Angeles designed to highlight the threats OSHA faced in Congress. Word of the conferences was disseminated widely, welcoming all comers "to develop a strategy to defeat this legislation and to establish an on-going political structure to safeguard the work environment."[460]

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[458] Testimony before the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, May 9, 1980, GMMA Unprocessed files, 86-0035, BO1/A/04, "U, 1984."

[459] Letter from George Colling to "Friend," March 17, 1980, BANC MSS 71/103, carton 255, folder 2.

[460] Letter to Friend from Brett Hill and George Coling, March 17, 1980, BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 255, folder 2; Memo to Doug, Paul, John et al from Brock [Evans], n.d., BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 255, folder 2.

In its campaign for allies to fight the Schweiker Bill, the AFL-CIO leaned heavily on those organizations that possessed a mixed labor and environmental membership and that had been founded in the previous decade, including Environmentalists for Full Employment, the Progressive Alliance, and the Urban Environment Conference. Of the environmentalist organizations that lacked a significant union presence, the Sierra Club was by far the biggest supporter of the Federation's efforts. The Club's board very quickly passed a resolution condemning the Schweiker-authored changes to OSHA, which Washington Office Director Brock Evans circulated "to every labor leader we can think of" to show the Club's "desire to help."[461] Evans encouraged his colleagues back in San Francisco to involve the organization even more deeply. "I think this whole question is a golden opportunity for us to build bridges with labor," he wrote in a memo. "Even more, I think we can win." Evans need not have questioned his organization's commitment. The anti-Schweiker coalition had strong support among staff leaders, who encouraged Evans to continue working with labor to defeat the bill. Within weeks, strategy meetings were being pulled together by the Washington staffs of the Sierra Club, AFL-CIO, and United Steelworkers.[462]

Evans was no stranger to organized labor or OSHA issues. Two years previously, in 1978, he lent his expertise to a USW-led campaign to prevent weakening amendments to the agency, and penned an article in *National News Report* that was noted in union circles.[463] Again this time he did not hesitate to lend his years of experience as the Sierra Club's point man in Washington to the cause, firing off letters to undecided congresspersons, especially those who might be more concerned about what environmentalists thought of them than labor unions. Still, Evans worried that his group's relative lack of experience on workers' issues would hamper its efforts to provide meaningful testimony when the bill came up for hearings. Would the Club's lack of expertise be an issue? Would its representatives not be taken seriously? However, Evans' fears were calmed by his labor associates, who reassured him that the Club did not need to be an expert on how OSHA affected workers. The fact that it was not an expert was exactly the point – "this is beyond a labor issue," he was told, "it is a matter of health and safety for the entire community."[464]

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[461] Memo to Doug, Paul, John et al from Brock [Evans].
[462] Ibid; "Another Threat to OSHA."
[463] Letter to Brock Evans from Robert T. Hayden, October 6, 1978 and letter to Robert T. Hayden from Brock Evans, November 6, 1978, BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 226, folder 3.

The fight against the Schweiker Bill was carried out on multiple levels. An aggressive lobbying campaign was unveiled early, and played a major role in the planned actions. The AFL-CIO seized on election-year pressures to persuade Democrats Alan Cranston (CA) and Gaylord Nelson (WI) to withdraw their announced support for the bill.[465] Other Senate Democrats were likewise targeted by the labor-environmental OSHA supporters. "It is not surprising that OSHA is under attack at this time," wrote the EFFE in announcing its opposition to the OSHA Improvements Act. "What is surprising – and intolerable – is that the Schweiker bill is supported by some of the Senate's leading liberals." Calling the OSHA Improvements Act the "Schweiker-Cranston-Church-Hatch-Williams bill," the proposal's opponents lumped liberal Democrats Cranston, Frank Church (ID), and Harrison Williams (NJ) in with Schweiker and the very conservative anti-labor, antienvironment Orrin Hatch, making it clear that they would not forget the liberal co-sponsors of the bill and would hold them as responsible for dismantling OSHA as the Republicans.[466]

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[464] Memo from Brock Evans, "Status of OSHA Amendments Issue," n.d. BANC MSS 71/103, carton 255, folder 2.

[465] Dewar, "Senate Bill."

In addition to lobbying, the Anti-Schweiker forces also carried on an effort to create grassroots pressure to stop the bill. Numerous local groups, such as the Philadelphia Area Project on Occupational Safety and Health (PAPOSH), Boston Mobilization for Survival, and the Committee to Save OSHA of New York City, were either created or drafted into service to build support in their areas. The bill's opponents also organized a letter writing campaign among the members of their various organizations, an effort for which Sierra Club members had "very high enthusiasm" Evans happily reported.[467] Predictably, the local efforts were fiercest in Schweiker's home state of Pennsylvania. There, the Philadelphia-based PAPOSH, in coalition with the AFL-CIO, grabbed headlines by picketing the senator's house. PAPOSH also caused a stir when it accused Schweiker of acting out of a personal vendetta against OSHA, claiming that he decided to go after the agency after a company that he was financially invested in was cited for extensive health and safety violations. It was a "conflict of interest," the organization charged, for the senator to be writing legislation that clipped the wings of an agency that had so recently, if indirectly, cost him money.[468]

Schweiker would remain on the defensive throughout the next several months, as the labor movement led the bill's opponents in a masterful campaign to discredit the OSHA Improvements Act with the public. Schweiker's office was able to beat back the idea that his OSHA bill was motivated by vengeance, calling it "a false and disgusting slur," and noting that the senator had been working on the new law months before the agency's ruling.[469] But the UAW kept Schweiker firmly planted on the hot seat by having posters printed up and circulated with the senator's picture surrounded by the caption "WANTED for conspiracy to injure, maim, and kill thousands of American workers."[470] The poster may have been overblown, but it did its job; Schweiker was forced to respond and, in so doing, raised the public profile of the controversy even more. In June, the bill's opponents returned their attention to the bill as opposed to the people behind it, and took out a full page ad in the *New York Times* provocatively asking "Ten years ago, our nation said workers have a right to safety and health on the job. Have we changed our minds?" The 149 labor, environmental, and community health organizations listed as sponsors at the end of the ad communicated to readers that the bill had come under widespread condemnation, while the aging female worker at its center reemphasized that the threat posed by passage spread well beyond traditional industrial occupations. Meanwhile, the United Steelworkers issued a call to arms that was far less subtle, telling readers of its newspaper to "kill the Schweiker bill before it kills you."[471]

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[466] Environmentalists for Full Employment, "Action Alert."

[467] Memo to Doug, Paul, John et al from Brock.

[468] "Conflict of Interest Laid to Schweiker by Union Group," *NYT,* March 17, 1980.

The campaign OSHA's defenders put together was, in many ways, a defense of the system as it stood. But it was a curious sort of defense. Reminding people of OSHA's achievements in limiting the dangers faced by workers in industrial settings was key to the program, but at the same time, if the bill's opponents overstated how safe American workplaces were, they risked undercutting their argument that OSHA was still necessary. Emphasizing the dangers of U.S. workplaces, on the other hand, potentially begged the question of why an agency that could not seem to adequately do its job in protecting workers should be maintained. The tension was obvious in much of the pro-OSHA literature, as the agency's defenders walked a very fine line.

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[469] Ibid.
[470] *Observer-Reporter* [Washington, PA], March 21, 1980.
[471] Ad in *NYT,* June 15, 1980; USW quoted in Dewar.

The concept that ultimately resolved this dilemma and gained the most traction for the bill's opponents was their framing of the debate as one pitting average workers' health against corporate profit and big business greed. This messaging allowed them to explain the continued danger of American workplaces as a result not of OSHA's failure, but of the agency not being allowed to do its job. Lane Kirkland's testimony before the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee illustrates this framing mechanism perfectly. "For the first seven years of its history," the labor leader charged "OSHA was not given a chance, [it] was picked out by right wing groups and business associations as a symbol of big government's interference with laissez-faire business practices." But despite the interference, he continued, OSHA had still managed to bring about a 10 percent decline in workplace fatalities and a 15 percent decline in workplace injuries.[472] The dangerous situation faced by Americans at work, this line of thinking ran, was not a testament to OSHA's failure but was instead an indication of how little concern U.S. industry had for its employees. In light of the concerted effort by big business to undercut OSHA's power, any success the agency had in curbing injuries and illness should be considered an achievement. OSHA was worth saving because it was doing a good job, but also because it was a bulwark against the uncaring forces of the market. "Fortunately for us," declared a

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[472] Warren Brown, "Business, Labor Battle Over OSHA's Future," *WP,* April 2, 1980.

Sierra Club memo, "our adversaries on this are not among the nation's favorite institutions."[473]

In the end, the OSHA Improvements Act was defeated. Schweiker could not get it out of committee onto the Senate floor. The Senator mused over some possible work arounds, including attaching pieces of the bill to the Labor-HEW appropriations package. The anti-Schweiker coalition geared back up to fight it, but ultimately those amendments were never introduced.[474]

But the defeat of the Schweiker Bill was not the saving grace for OSHA that the bill's opponents hoped it would be. Indeed, the threat it posed would come to seem relatively minor the next year when the newly inaugurated Reagan Administration began rolling back regulatory rules and cutting funding for enforcing agencies. In an early, private meeting Vice President George Bush, speaking on behalf of the administration, told labor representatives that reforming OSHA would be one of the president's top regulatory priorities, both because the agency had not performed well in the past, and because it had developed "an adversarial role and a reputation for nitpicking."[475] The agency's budget was cut, and Reagan's appointee to lead it, Thorne Auchter, deemphasized enforcement in favor of education and voluntary standards. Additionally, in implementing the president's "Regulatory Relief Plan," Auchter subjected the agency's regulatory standards to a strict cost-benefit analysis, eliminating as many regulations as possible that were calculated to have a high cost and little financial benefit.[476] By the AFL-CIO's accounting, nine major OSHA standards were eliminated in Reagan's first 100 days alone. The president was acting out the wildest dreams of regulatory reformers who, in the words of Lane Kirkland, sought "to turn the clock back, to repeal some laws, restrict others, and strangle those that remain through budgetary cutbacks."[477]

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[473] Memo to Carl, Fran, Paul, Doug, Brock from Brant, April 3, 1980, BANC MSS 71/295, carton 142, folder 1.

[474] AFL-CIO Industrial Union Department, "Legislative Alert #1," BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 255, folder 2.

[475] Letter to Howard D. Samuel from Sheldon Samuels, May 14, 1981, GMMA Unprocessed Files, 83-0058, Bo4/D/09.

OSHA/Environmental Network

Of course it did not take great clairvoyance to predict that Reagan's election would lead to a sea change at OSHA. Within weeks after the November voting, union officials within the IUD had decided that "there is greater need to build support in the field, in collaboration with non-labor allies, in the light of election returns."[478] To execute their plan, which called for the creation of an official alliance to protect the nation's occupational safety and health programs, IUD officers drew on the networks that had been established fighting the OSHA Improvements Act. Environmentalists such as Sierra Club President Joe Fontaine reacted positively to the IUD's initiative, and encouraged widespread support for the call for an alliance. "THE TIME FOR SUCH A COALITION IS NOW," he wrote to Club members. "During the current Congress, we can expect the Occupational Safety and Health Act and the Clean Air

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[476] Prior to becoming Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA, Auchter directed the health and safety program of his family's construction business. The four OSHA chiefs to hold the position before him – George Guenther, John Stender, Morton Corn, and Eula Bingham – had come from the Department of Labor, the Boilermakers Union, or academics (Corn had a doctorate in industrial hygiene and Bingham had a doctorate in zoology, ecology and biochemistry). The new direction of the agency caught no one by surprise. *Reflections on OSHA's History,* 62-64. See also "OSHA, EPA: The Heyday is Over," *NYT,* January 4, 1981; "Taking the Shackles off Business," *NYT,* March 1, 1981.

[477] Donahue, remarks marking the 10th Anniversary of OSHA; Lane Kirkland, remarks at the Legislative Conference of the Industrial Union Department, May 12, 1980, GMMA AFL-CIO Press Releases, box 44, folder 5.

[478] "Overview of IUD Activities," November 30, 1980, GMMA Unprocessed files, 82-0151, BO3/A/13.

Act to be the initial targets of the Reagan Administration's efforts to eliminate regulations which, supposedly, are not 'cost effective' and which hamper the operation and growth of big business."[479]

At a Chicago conference in January, 1981, environmental and labor activists, along with representatives from a few public health organizations, formalized their relationship as the Network for Safe Workplaces and Clean Communities, later renamed the OSHA/Environmental Network.[480] Publicly announced at a February 6 press conference, the Network was sold as a "grassroots effort to preserve and strengthen the Occupational Safety and Health Act and environmental laws such as the Clean Air Act." The new organization would be led by a policy-making board that included equal numbers of labor and environmentalist leaders, including Doug Fraser and representatives from the Sierra Club. The group was initially co-led by Howard Samuel and Joe Fontaine, but Fontaine was ultimately replaced by Mike McCloskey. While the national organization made policy and worked for improved federal standards, the heart of the Network was made up of state-level organizations. Initially set to operate in twelve states, by the end of its first year the Network had a presence in twenty. [481]

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[479] Letter from Joe Fontaine to Fellow Environmentalists, April 6, 1981, BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 263, folder 7.

[480] Dianne Dumanoski, "An Emerging Alliance," *Boston Globe,* February 23, 1983; "A Short History of the Network for Safe Workplaces and Clean Communities," n.d., BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 263, folder 7.

[481] Ibid; Letter from Howard Samuel to Doug Fraser, April 19, 1982, WRA Douglas Fraser Collection, Box 48, Folder 11; IUD Press Release, "Labor and Environmental Groups Form Alliance," February 25, 1981, BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 263, folder 7; Club Board of Directors Meeting Agenda, February 7-8, 1981, BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 19, folder 10; quote from Letter from Joe Fontaine to Fellow Environmentalists. Ultimately state OSHA/Environmental Networks were built in twenty-two states, with some of the biggest success stories in New York, Wisconsin, and California.

The earlier anti-Schweiker effort paid dividends for the new coalition almost immediately. The Network's national leaders, drawing on their prior cooperative experience, did not require a long period of familiarizing themselves to one another's politics and operating procedures. The importance of this existent relationship can best be seen in comparison to the state Networks, where the necessity of getting to know new partners and agree on ground rules often took priority over political activity in the Networks' early days. That necessity was broached in an early conference held for potential Network state leaders. There, more experienced officials reiterated to the newcomers the importance of building connections. "Even meeting just to discuss various issues before any serious action is necessary can help build your network," they were told, "since you will get a chance to get to know one another in a relaxed way."[482] The less experienced state leaders were also reminded how critical it was to reach an agreement on coalition boundaries early in the process. "One of the first orders of business at a meeting should be a friendly discussion concerning an 'agreement to disagree' about certain issues. Rather than spending a great deal of time arguing about matters where you haven't seen eye to eye in the past, identify those issues where you do all agree and begin working on them." This common sense approach was repeatedly advised as the state networks grew and new ones were formed. "The most often repeated point," reported an attendee of a later OSHA/Environment Network Workshop on State Legislative Activities, "was that coalition members must agree to disagree, and put aside issues which divide labor from environmentalists."[483]

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[482] Jim Lanard, "Report on Workshop C – Organizational Activities and Political Action," BANC MSS 71/289 c. carton 120, folder 5.

The frequent refrain to "agree to disagree" speaks to the continued salience of green blackmail – the threat by employers that vigorous enforcement of environmental rules would lead to plant closures – especially at the state and local level. Upon hearing the news of the Network's founding, some unionists questioned the idea, expressing their job concerns to Howard Samuel. Those concerns were made even more clearly at early planning meetings, where state-level Network officials feared "that philosophical differences in the past relating to one or two issues would make it difficult to work together in the present…. Concern was expressed that the political climate and our opponents' effective use of economic blackmail made it hard to win on controversial issues."[484] The fear among state Network leaders that job blackmail would hamper their effectiveness in attracting members or even gaining acceptance from skeptical rank and file union members demonstrated that some convincing would be needed before workers would fully embrace the idea of an alliance with environmentalists.

Network leaders addressed those concerns head on, adopting arguments that environmentalists had been using since the mid-1970s. In its Statement of Principles, the OSHA/Environmental Network flatly rejected the premise that environmental and occupational safety and health regulations were an important factor contributing to plant closures, concluding "there is no basic conflict between economic and environmental and health and safety interests." Instead, it insisted, as the Sierra Club had before, that environmental and OSH regulation "stimulates the economy as a whole" and leads to additional job opportunities.[485] Wisconsin OSHA Network leaders and Len Germanson, political action director of the Allied Industrial Workers International Union, later echoed the point OSHA and the Clean Air Act “will not cost jobs. We actually feel the Clean Air Act has created many more jobs than it has lost for the economy…. Those companies that have gone out of business probably were marginal anyway.”[486]

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[483] Ibid; OSHA/Environment Network, "SUMMARY Workshop on State Legislative Activities," BANC MSS 71/289, carton 120, folder 5.
[484] Sierra Club Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, (3/13/82); Lanard.

The Network also continued to draw on the precedents of the Schweiker Bill fight in crafting the terms that it used to understand and portray the threats it faced. The central focus remained on the contrast between the needs of the community and the greed of corporate leaders. For example, when describing the problems created for the EPA and OSHA in the Reagan era, the Network explained to members that, for the president “the so-called burden on business has out-ranked the health of workers.”[487] Or, as the Sierra Club's Carl Pope astutely summarized it: “in almost every federal agency and department, Reagan and his followers have sought to use the power of government to increase the level of risk that society is expected to tolerate, to exalt individualism and individual interests at the expense of community and its values, and to limit the degree to which we make sacrifices today in the interests of the future."[488]

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[485] OSHA/Environmental Network Statement of Principles in IUD announcement "Labor and Environmental Groups Form Alliance," February 25, 1981, BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 263, folder 7. The Sierra Club would continue to make that argument throughout the economic downturn of the 1980s, see Michael McCloskey, “Environmental Protection is Good Business,” *Sierra* (March/April, 1981):31-33.

[486] Ken Germanson, quoted in “Common Ground,” BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 263, folder 7.

[487] “Job Safety Agency Caters to Business Just Like EPA,” *AFL-CIO News* February 26, 1983; Letter to Doug Fraser from Howard Samuel, April 19, 1982, WRA, Douglas Fraser Collection, box 48, folder 11; Testimony of the Urban Environment Conference, Sierra Club, et al. before th Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, May 9, 1980, GMMA Unprocessed Files, 86-0035, Box B01/A/04, Folder U.

Finally, the Network continued to emphasize the commonality of the threats facing OSHA and other regulatory programs, collapsing the distinctions between them and consolidating them under a shared rhetorical roof. In their testimony against the OSHA Improvements Act, for example, Sierra Club representatives had said OSHA "represents a strong link in a chain of legislation and administrative programs created to control hazardous substances and conditions," including the EPA, Consumer Products Safety Commission, and FDA.[489] The Schweiker Bill specifically targeted OSHA, but the bill's opponents realized that they were not defending it in a vacuum. OSHA's fall would be the first of many if it were allowed to happen, and so its defense came to be a defense of regulation in general, as was suggested by a memo that circulated among Sierra Club leaders at the time: "While the attack by business has been both on individual regulations and on the concept of regulation, our response or defense has generally centered on the individual regulations which we support. With evidence of the underlying change in the minds of politicians on the concept of regulation in general, however, I think it would be prudent for us to make a defense there as well."[490]

That policy made even more sense with Ronald Reagan in the White House. In the name of reviving the economy and restoring small-government conservatism, the Reagan Administration sought to undo a decade's worth of regulatory commitments, either by discontinuing the programs, defunding their enforcement, or turning the executive bureaucracies over to the industry interests that they were designed to police. In addition to cutting back on workplace protections, the Reagan Administration also sought to limit air and water quality regulations, auto emissions standards, and a host of other labor, environmental and consumer protections. The National Labor Relations Board even found its chief legal representation coming from the former legal counsel for the National Right to Work Committee.[491] The OSHA Network saw an opportunity in this across the board assault to connect previously disparate federal policies, and in so doing to build bridges between interests that had not formerly been aligned.

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[488] Carl Pope, "Ronald Reagan and the Limits of Responsibility," *Sierra* (May/June, 1984): 51-54, 51.

[489] Joint Testimony of the Urban Environmental Conference and the Sierra Club before the Senate Committee on XXX.

[490] Memo from Brant to Carl [Pope], Fran, Paul, Doug [Wheeler], Brock [Evans], April 3, 1980, BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 142, folder 1.

While incorporating a variety of regulatory causes on an ad hoc basis, the Network committed itself to protecting and extending the Clean Air Act and Environmental Protection Agency as well as its namesake OSHA, and it explicitly and repeatedly linked the three "regulatory areas most important to workers."[492] A major branding effort was undertaken to clarify the connections between workplace and community health for the nation's environmentalists and union members. The Network produced buttons and stickers bearing the slogan “Save Clean Air/ Clean Air Saves Lives! Save OSHA/ OSHA Saves Lives!” The same design made its way onto Network created pamphlets that further developed the idea that workplace and community health were inextricably united and suffering from politically motivated abuse. "The Occupational Safety and Health Act and the Clean Air Act are under attack by the Reagan Administration and big business," it warned. "Effective regulation of toxic agents in the workplace has ended. At the same time, the Administration wants to undermine the battle against air pollution through weakening legislative proposals and lax enforcement."[493] Throughout the early 1980s the OSHA/Environmental Network rarely discussed OSHA, the Clean Air Act, or the EPA without reinforcing the theme that each was tied to the others.

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[491] Ronald Story and Bruce Laurie, *The Rise of Conservatism in America, 1945-2000: a Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2008): 23.

[492] "Attack on OSHA and the Environment."

Although the Network was designed to operate on both the federal and state levels, its leaders saw "little hope of effective action at the federal level."[494] They largely dismissed the idea that new major federal regulations could be implemented, and adopted mostly defensive national goals. The Network was able to claim success in its limited federal ambitions, preventing the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health from being rolled into the Center for Disease Control and minimizing enforcement cuts in OSHA and the Mine Safety and Health Administration.[495] The successes that the Network could claim in the early 1980s very much resembled those of one of its core members, the Sierra Club. In an interview with *Sierra,* McCloskey put as good a face on his group's efforts as possible; the Club did not create new policy, he said, "but we can point to a whole string of administration initiatives we've succeeded in checkmating this year…. We have held the line, at least wherever Congress was involved."[496] The bar was set low, but at least it was effectively vaulted. Meanwhile, the Club and the Network (as well as the AFL-CIO) worked just as hard, but with a more mixed success record, to score moderate improvements to a series of other federal health programs, including the High Risk Occupational Disease Notification and Prevention Act, Occupational Disease Compensation Act, Superfund, Clean Air Act, and Clean Water Act.

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[493] OSHA/Environmental Network pamphlet, "You Can Help Save Lives," GMMA Unprocessed Files, 83-0058, BO4/D/08.
[494] Summary: Workshop on Legislative Activities, n.d., BANC MSS 71/289 c, carton 120, folder 5.
[495] Overview of IUD Activities, January 4, 1981 and Overview of IUD Activities, May 17, 1982, GMMA Unprocessed Files, 84-0048, BO3/c/03.
[496] Frances Gendlin interview with Michael McCloskey, "Michael McCloskey: Taking Stock, Looking Forward," *Sierra* (January/February, 1983): 45.

The decision to focus on maintaining rather than extending standards at the federal level enabled the Network to devote more resources to its state affiliates, which functioned to benefit the national OSHA Network in two ways. First, the state Networks served as meeting places and informational clearinghouses that could diffuse local tensions between environmentalists and unions before they had a chance to become national stories. The national organization also assembled a suggested program of activities for state Networks, that heavily emphasized the need for the state affiliates to create effective channels of communication between members, both to speed response times against bad policies, and simply to keep local labor and environmental leaders in touch with one another. The Network also encouraged state affiliates to participate in a variety of educational programs, which would provide labor and environmental activists with a basic understanding of one another's issues.[497] This familiarity would ideally permeate beyond the activists who were actually involved in the Networks and into their workshops and communities.

The second function of the state Networks was to lobby for increased environmental and labor regulation on the state level. The states provided a more promising avenue for success in this regard then did the federal government, and Network leaders also hoped that an ever more complicated set of state guidelines would prove annoying to the nation's biggest businesses and encourage them to support federal regulation as a simpler alternative.[498] The state alliances were free to set their own programs as local conditions dictated, and a diverse but overlapping set of goals took shape through the middle of the decade. The list of reforms that one or more state Networks worked for is long and includes victim compensation for people exposed to toxic pollution, cleaning up toxic waste sites, OSH protections for public employees, removing asbestos from schools, and protecting groundwater from contamination with pesticides and other chemicals.[499] Workplace and community health programs clearly dominated the Networks' agendas, but sometimes they were able to reach beyond this common ground. Such was the case when the Wisconsin OSHA/Environmental Network supported a recycling bill that eventually made its way through the state legislature in 1990.[500]

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[497] OSHA/Environmental Leadership Program for State Networks, n.d., BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 273, folder 16.

The subject that most dominated Network policy making and that inspired its most dogged efforts at reform was toxic waste. Revelations of toxic waste leaks in Hopewell, Virginia (1976), Love Canal, New York (1978), Valley of the Drums, Kentucky (1979), and Times Beach, Missouri (1982), along with the major disaster in Bhopal, India (1984), in which thousands were killed by the accidental leakage of gas from a pesticide plant, helped to cement toxic waste as one of the major environmental stories of the 1980s. With its overlap between workplace and community safety, it was also a natural topic for cooperation between unions and environmentalists. The OSHA/Environmental Network's national leadership advised state leaders not to rely on Superfund – the federal program designed to clean up hazardous waste sites – even as they worked to strengthen its requirements. Instead, the state Networks were encouraged to pursue the establishment of "mini-Super funds (sic)" on the state level "due to failure of [the] federal program to clean up local dump sites."[501] In addition to the state Superfunds, the state Networks also pushed for stricter rules for handling, transporting, and disposing of toxic wastes as well as increased civic participation in the siting of dump areas.[502]

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[498] Obach, *Labor and the Environmental Movement,* 53.
[499] OSHA/Environmental Network press release, "Network Executive Committee Releases Statement on '84 Goals," July 13, 1983, BANC MSS 71/289 c, carton 120, folder 5; Workshop on Legislative Activities; Wisconsin OSHA/Environmental Network, "Position Paper 4: Water Pollution," June 22, 1982 in "Wisconsin/OSHA Environmental 'NETWORK' (sic) Position Papers," BANC MSS 71/289 c, carton 120, folder 5.
[500] Obach, "The Wisconsin Labor-Environmental Network."

Of all the toxics related campaigns, the struggle around Right to Know laws was the biggest and most successful. The principle embodied by Right to Know laws was simple: that workers and communities have a vital interest in being aware of the potentially hazardous chemicals to which they are exposed, allowing them to make informed decisions about the level of risk they are accepting. Right to Know laws had various permutations, but generally they all required that companies disclose which of the tens of thousands of potentially harmful chemicals then in commercial production were in use in their facilities.[503] The OSHA/Environmental Network, at both the federal and state levels, called for more specific protections that went beyond this simple rule. It called for chemicals used in the workplace to be clearly labeled with their actual name rather than a brand name, and that the chemical composition also be made available to workers. The Networks pushed to get workers the legal right to have access to the results of workplace toxicity studies that would inform them of how dangerous the chemicals they worked with were and what to do if they were exposed to levels deemed to be unsafe. Many state Networks also sought to make publicly available information regarding what chemicals companies were storing and where, as well as what chemical byproducts were being released into the air and water.

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[501] OSHA/Environmental Leadership Program for State Networks.

[502] Wisconsin OSHA/Environmental Network, "Position Paper 7: Toxic Waste," June 22, 1982 in "Wisconsin/OSHA Environmental 'NETWORK' (sic) Position Papers," BANC MSS 71/289 c, carton 120, folder 5.

[503] In 1985 *Sierra* magazine noted that "60,000 chemicals are in commercial use in the United States... there are 35,000 or more pesticides, 8,600 food additives, and 3,400 cosmetic ingredients." Cass Peterson, "How Much Risk is Too Much?" *Sierra* (May/June 1985): 62-64.

Efforts to enshrine the Right to Know into the law predated the OSHA Networks. Basic Right to Know concepts were at the heart of the original OSHA legislation in 1970, which called for the Secretary of Labor to "issue regulations requiring employers to maintain accurate records of employee exposures to potentially toxic materials or harmful agents... Such regulations shall provide employees or their representatives with an opportunity to observe... monitoring or measuring, and to have access to the records thereof."[504] As it turned out, deciding what fell under the rubric of "potentially toxic materials or harmful agents" became a difficult and time-consuming task, marred by confusion, delay, and political lobbying. For that reason, as early as 1978, a coalition of labor, environmental, and public health organizations in New Jersey undertook a state level campaign to have 104 toxic or carcinogenic chemicals labeled and the community and worker health risks associated with them disclosed.[505] OSHA belatedly proposed a labeling standard for workplace chemicals in 1980, but in 1981 it was suspended by the agency's incoming leadership.[506]

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[504] 29 USC 657, Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, section 8 (c)(3).

[505] Sierra Club New Jersey Chapter press release, January 11, 1978, BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 226, folder 5.

[506] Sandy Buchanan, "History of Ohio Citizen Action's Right-to-Know Campaigns," remarks at the National Canvasser's Conference, Paducah, KY, February, 1997 http://www.ohiocitizen.org/campaigns/rtk/righttoknow.html (accessed September 29, 2013); Network

Right to Know was an issue that the OSHA Network dove into almost immediately after its founding. “Since the federal government has failed [to enforce right-to-know provisions of OSHA and Toxic Substances Control Act], we must ask every state legislature to act in the coming year," Network planners wrote to state Network leaders.[507] The Networks found it to be a perfect fit for their needs. Mutually beneficial to unions and environmentalists, and capable of drawing the support of the community at large, Right to Know projects rapidly gained traction. The issue “dominated discussion" at an early Network organizational meeting, and within months campaigns were established in nine states, including OSHA Network strongholds such as Wisconsin as well as unexpected places such as Tennessee.[508]

Under intense pressure from the Networks, their constituents, and other citizens groups, OSHA did finally publish a Hazard Communication Standard in 1983. However, that new standard was limited and considered by the Network to be too weak to do much good, inspiring redoubled effort on the part of the Networks. "The Reagan administration thought a weak OSHA standard would preempt state-level action by labor, consumer, health and environmental groups,” Howard Samuel wrote two years later in the OSHA Network newsletter. “Just the opposite has occurred. More states have laws or bills pending than ever before."[509] With states and localities across the country adopting their own standards, the Network also kept the pressure on the federal government for improved Right to Know legislation. In

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for Safe Jobs and a Clean Community Eastern Pennsylvania Planning Meeting minutes, March 16, 1981, BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 263, folder 7.

[507] OSHA/Environmental Network, "What Does the Network Stand For?" BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 109, folder 29.

[508] Workshop on Legislative Activities; Lanard.

[509] Howard Samuel, "Editorial: Public Rejects Reagan Health Policies," *OSHA/Environmental Watch* 4, no. 4 (1985), 4.

the wake of the Bhopal disaster, that pressure increased even more. Howard Samuel, at a 1985 press conference framed the issue starkly, asserting workers "have a basic and fundamental right to know the dangers associated with making a living. They are human beings entitled to the best protections our society can provide, not chattel to be used ... and disgarded when they join the ranks of the 100,000 who die... each year from occupational diseases caused by hazardous exposure."[510] Community protections were increased shortly thereafter by the Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act (1986), but a concurrent strengthening of workplace protections supported by Network members – the High Risk Occupational Disease Notification and Prevention Act – struggled to find enough support in Congress.

Participation in the Network accelerated the growth of health and safety issues within the Sierra Club and AFL-CIO and strengthened the bonds between them. By the mid-1980s, toxics campaigns had become more fully integrated into the Sierra Club's program than ever, absorbing an increasing amount of staff time and attention. Numerous articles in *Sierra* were devoted to toxics or workplace health, while others often mentioned them merely in passing, as if Club members could be assumed to be knowledgeable on the subject. The Club's 1985 electoral rundown linked those issues to its core wilderness organizing, tempering its disappointment at GOP success in the 1984 midterm elections "because Republicans since Teddy Roosevelt have been stalwart conservationists, and because a large number of Sierra Club members are Republicans, environmentalists hope to redirect the party away from those right-wing politicians who express a knee-jerk opposition to health and safety regulations and land preservation."[511] Michael McCloskey's 1985 testimony in support of the High Risk Occupational Disease Notification and Prevention Act also indicated how thoroughly his organization was adopting toxics work. McCloskey recounted a pattern of increased action in support of Right to Know legislation, but also noted that although the Club's efforts in that area had only recently expanded they were felt to be a natural fit within the organization. "The tradition of the Club includes support for the rights of everyone to information on the names, effects, places of exposure, uses, and methods of prudent control of toxic agents to which any of us may be exposed. We have never understood, and have never accepted, the system of values that has created a caste of workers deprived of these fundamental rights."[512]

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[510] Samuel quoted in OSHA/Environmental Network press release "Environmental, Labor Reps Hit shortcomings in Worker and Community Protection Laws," July 16, 1985, BANC MSS71/295 c, carton 109, folder 29.

Whether or not the Sierra Club would have come to this position without its association with labor and the OSHA/Environmental Network is impossible to say. This activity certainly culminated from the slow progress the Club had been making toward incorporating toxics issues since the 1970s. Yet the heavy focus on toxics issues as related specifically to the workplace (as opposed to the larger community) in the mid-1980s indicates that the Network influenced the thinking of Club staffers. In fact, the Club practice of seeding labor-friendly articles into its journal was a tactic for community building that was commonly pursued by Network activists, and had been considered by the Sierra Club as far back as the first meeting of its Labor Committee in 1973.[513]

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[511] Richard Munson, "Greening the Capitol," *Sierra* (January/February, 1985), 38. Other articles that discuss toxics or workplace health that year include Peterson, "How Much Risk is Too Much?"; Gale Warner, "Low-level Lowdown," *Sierra* (July/August, 1985): 19-23; Carl Pope, "An Immodest Proposal," *Sierra* (September/October, 1985):43-48.

[512] Michael McCloskey, testimony on High Risk Occupational Disease Notification and Prevention Act before the House Committee on Labor and Education subcommittee on Health and Safety and Labor Standards, July 17, 1985, BANC MSS 71/295 c, carton 109, folder 29.

Its collaborative work with the OSHA Network also likely influenced the Club's decision to expand its labor programming. The Labor Liaison committee had had its existence cut to a low profile "task force" in the late 1970s. But by 1982 its status as a National Committee was restored, and the revitalized committee was pushing in all directions to publicize the Club's "long and honorable effort… for a healthy and safe workplace for all citizens," among "our natural allies – organized labor."[514] The mid 1980s also witnessed a bit of renewed interest in the Club in working with unions on union specific efforts. For example, in 1983 the Club put a staff member in charge of tracking jobs initiatives after Brock Evans, having by then left his post as Sierra Club Washington Office chief and taken a spot on its volunteer Board of Directors, "encouraged the Club to become involved in the jobs issue stating that the economic situation is affecting the very lives of the earth's inhabitants."[515] In this instance the Club was again acting in the manner encouraged by OSHA Network leaders, who thought a useful way "of developing a good relationship between labor and environmentalists is to 'cross fertilize' – that is, to… support issues not directly related to public health but of deep concern to either labor or environmentalists."[516]

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[513] "Notes of the Meeting of the Labor Committee," November 9, 1973; Samuel H. Sage, "Workshop Summary," n.d., BANC MSS 71/289 c. carton 120, folder 5.

[514] Letter from Theodore A. Snyder, Jr. to Les Reid, May 28, 1978, BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 38, folder 26; Letter from Joe Fontaine to Les Reid, March 19, 1982, BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 38, folder 26; Letter to All you Sierra Club Members who have indicated a desire to become involved in building an effective coalition with union labor organizations in your own localities from Working Group members Les Reid, Michael Brandt, et al, September 20, 1983, BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 38, folder 26.

[515] Sierra Club Board of Directors meeting minutes, 1/23-29/83.

[516] Lanard.

The inverse was also true; the first half of the 1980s saw a growth in the amount of attention that labor paid to environmentalist themes. Labor publications, such as the *AFL-CIO News,* followed the example set by the Sierra Club and discussed environmental issues more frequently and supportively than they had in previous years. The labor press also started to draw links between the problems experienced by unionist and environmentalist communities by including the environment in otherwise non-environment related stories. For example, in a 1981 *AFL-CIO News* report on the Reagan Administration's FY '82 budget, workers were told to expect problems to arise from scaled back solar energy research & development and natural resource protections as well as cuts to job training and income support programs.[517] Likewise, a 1983 report highlighted the similarities between the destruction Reagan appointees were wreaking at the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and at the EPA, claiming that both agencies had adopted the same priorities in "catering to business."[518]

Similar sentiments even found their way into the talking points of AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland. Kirkland was not generally known for his environmental conscience; he was firmly committed to traditional energy sources such as coal and nuclear power, and was more than willing to sacrifice environmental protections that ran counter to economic development. But he was also willing to engage in easy coalition building, and in the early 1980s environmentalists were proving easy for organized labor to work with. At Solidarity Day, a 1981 AFL-CIO sponsored event focused on expanding labor's relationship with non-union partners, Kirkland praised environmentalists for the support they had given to a variety of labor programs and highlighted labor's efforts for environmental reform. "We have been pleased to work with the environmental movement to enact and defend clean air and water legislation, toxic substances control and strict stripmining legislation. And we have appreciated environmentalist support during our struggle for Labor Law Reform, to defend OSHA and for effective full employment legislation."[519] His phrasing suggests that Kirkland did not see the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts to be labor programs – they were to environmentalists what full employment legislation was to organized labor, an individually held interest that the other side unselfishly helped to pass. However, as he emphasized the support that the two communities could provide one another with their particular interests, his remarks also implied that there was one important area in which the two's goals overlapped: occupational and community health. "We in labor have long recognized that a job which kills and cripples is not much of a job," Kirkland noted. "That a clean workplace is not worth much if our homes and communities lie in the midst of poisoned air and poisoned water."[520] The AFL-CIO president was equally magnanimous later that year at the Rubber Workers convention, lumping labor and environmentalist problems together and telling the assembled delegates that originated from the same causes. The Reagan Administration, he intoned, "would have you believe that the President is leading a sort of popular liberation movement… He proposes to liberate the construction industry from the prevailing wage law… [and] proposes to liberate industry from restrictions against polluting the air and water and against stripping the natural resources that government holds in trust for the people." His larger point, restated for those that missed it the first time, was that "the labor movement is not alone" in fighting Reagan's policies.[521]

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[517] "The Threat to Jobs and Social Progress," *AFL-CIO News,* March 28, 1981.
[518] "Job Safety Agency Caters to Business Just Like EPA," *AFL-CIO News,* February 26, 1983, GMMA Unprocessed Files, 86-0035, BO1/A/04.

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[519] Kirkland quoted in Kazis and Grossman, 251.
[520] Ibid.

Organized labor also undertook some environmentally friendly initiatives outside the parameters of the OSHA Network. The IUD led the way, dividing its energy between three big programs – trade, organizing, and occupational health.[522] It worked for the reauthorization of Superfund, to provide the EPA with the continued authority to clean up toxic waste sites and sue hazardous waste polluters for damages. In the middle of the decade it concentrated its lobbying initiatives on securing the High Risk Occupational Disease Bill and a complementary Compensation Act to ease some of the suffering of workers who had been poisoned on the job. The OSHA/Network, the IUD concluded, provided "valuable support for both bills."[523] The AFL-CIO itself also cooperated with environmental organizations for toxic abatement goals. For example, in 1982 it joined with Friends of the Earth, the Sierra Club and four other environmental organizations in a lawsuit against the EPA, which refused to release data it had collected on eleven different toxic pesticides. The plaintiffs argued that workers and their communities had the right to know the effect that producing or using these chemicals would have on their bodies.[524]

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[521] Lane Kirkland address to Rubber Workers Convention, October 5, 1981, GMMA RG20-003, box 47, folder 4.

[522] See Industrial Union Department, AFL-CIO Executive Council Meeting agenda, April 30 – May 1, 1981, GMMA Unprocessed Files 83-0058, BO4/D/09; Industrial Union Department, AFL-CIO Executive Council Meeting agenda, January 12, 1982, GMMA Unprocessed Files 84-0048, BO3/C/03; Memo to Lane Kirkland and Tom Donahue from Howard D. Samuel, December 30, 1985, GMMA Unprocessed Files 88-0101, BO8/A/02; Industrial Union Department, AFL-CIO Summary of Activities, July 31, 1986, GMMA Unprocessed Files 88-0101, BO7/J/42.

[523] IUD Summary of Activities, July 31, 1986.

[524] AFL-CIO News Service Release, "EPA Sued for Data on Toxic Pesticides," May 6, 1982, GMMA RG98-002, box 14, folder 10.

Conclusion

The early 1980s was an optimistic period for blue-green coalition builders. Although the labor and environmental movements faced serious political threats from the rising tide of national conservatism, their concerted mutual action proved capable of beating back the most reactionary changes to the environmental and labor regulatory systems. Having individually concluded that workplace and community health were issues of dire significance, the two movements joined forces to beat back major limiting revisions to the Occupational Safety and Health Act. The fight against what seems to be, in hindsight, a fairly unimportant piece of legislation proved significant in ways beyond its short-term success. The Schweiker Bill helped take a nebulous feeling and a vague set of overlapping principles and crystallized them into a functioning political alliance. Blue-green coalition builders used the experience as a springboard to create the OSHA/Environmental Network, which prospered by building on the connections, rhetoric, and organizing principles pioneered during the Schweiker Bill controversy. The Network – and its state affiliates – in turn helped to create a friendlier environment for environmental organizations and unions to operate even outside its confines. After years of insecurity, the relationship between workers and environmentalists was finally stable.

These interactions demonstrate the need for careful examination of the activity of liberal political actors in the early 1980s. Although the era is known for conservative ascendance, neither the labor movement nor the environmental movement sat idly while their gains of previous decades were wiped away. Instead, they reemphasized their commitment to those values and committed themselves to a thorough defense of the status quo, establishing themselves as important actors in the era’s historical processes. The two continued to push for new reforms at the state level, and far from adopting the decade’s supposed pro-business tone, developed a strong anti-corporate rhetorical position. Though my evidence does not speak to the experience of all liberal social movement organizations, it suggests that historians would be wise to consider the 1980s to be a period of political transition rather than conservative domination.

Epilogue: Beginnings in the End

While the interactions between the labor and environmental movements are often thought of as intermittent, or even sporadic, this characterization does not stand up to sustained historical scrutiny. The twentieth century saw extensive interaction between organized labor and the environmental movement at the national level. Between 1970 and 1985, the list of cooperative endeavors undertaken between the two grew at a steady pace. This growth largely took place in two distinct eras: 1970 - 1973 and 1978 - 1985. The first was marked by almost overwhelming optimism and the sense that environmental improvements could be had fairly cheaply. It was during this period that the blue-green coalition's biggest legislative triumphs were won and the modern regulatory state took shape through them. The Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Occupational Safety and Health Act were the key achievements of this alliance, which had reached its apogee by 1973. The second period could almost be considered the mirror opposite of the first. Created in an era of pessimism rather than optimism, neither the environmental nor the labor movement expected to win great victories through this alliance. Instead, in that period's more trying circumstances, "victory" was defined as successfully fighting rearguard actions to defend earlier gains. In this respect some victories were won, but it was fear rather than hope that cemented the relationship.

The five-year period in between was itself not bereft of labor-environmental interaction. The period saw rising hostility between the two, as green blackmail pushed workers to reconsider how clean an environment they really needed. But it also saw some notable cooperation. The Sierra Club defied its stereotypical image as an aloof, single-issue constituency and went out of its way to build bridges with unions. These efforts could pay dividends in sometimes unexpected ways, as the Club and the United Mine Workers combined to urge new regulations that made coal mining both more humane and a bit more environmentally friendly.

The first and last periods, times in which blue-green collaboration was easier and more obvious, tend to attract the most attention from historians. But it is the middle period of the late 1970s – a time that most histories discount – that is crucial for properly understanding this relationship. This period reminds us that collaboration is a process, not an event, and as such it has to be actively worked at. Even as active coalition involvement waned in the mid-1970s, important work to maintain or restore earlier links was being done. This work often fell disproportionately on environmentalists, and included the Sierra Club's support for full employment legislation and its efforts to convince organized labor – and the population in general – that environmental reforms could create jobs as easily as destroy them. But they did not act alone. Several labor groups, including the UAW, USW, and the AFL-CIO, continued to speak publicly about the need for the two sides to unite, and they strove to undercut job blackmail in their members' minds. The work that was done in the mid-1970s helped to ease the way back to the alliance at the end of the decade by keeping the participants familiar with one another and preventing firm ideological barriers from forming. Having the ability to avoid problem areas was, in the words of Len Germanson, the key to the OSHA Network's success. "Instead, we link up on those issues that we feel we're mutual on."[525]

The issues that labor and environmentalists could "feel mutual on" shifted dramatically over the decade and a half covered in this dissertation. The early bases for collaboration were built on the fundamental principles of the emerging environmental movement: clean air, clean water, and natural resource preservation. These issues were uncontroversial, and enjoyed widespread support throughout the population. However, as the economy turned sour in the mid-1970s many workers – and more than a few of their union representatives – were convinced that pollution controls and resource protection were injurious to the working class. Environmental protections delayed infrastructure improvements, made goods more expensive by increasing production costs, and ultimately threatened their jobs by undermining industry's bottom line. Environmentalists pushed back against this thinking, and it was not embraced in all corners of the labor movement. But the fear of the environmental job killer took hold well enough to make these issues – particularly resource protection – extremely complicated for labor leaders. By the 1980s unions could embrace the theoretical idea of resource protection, and they could support the protection wild spaces and animals in far-off areas of the world, such as the Amazon. But when it came to participating in specific programs for environmental limits to development at home, unions always chose the path of least resistance and fewest perceived economic sacrifices over undisturbed wilderness. Indeed, in the late 1980s labor would pursue jobs over the preservation of old growth forests in the Pacific

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[525] Germanson quoted in "Common Ground."

Northwest, leading to one of the most divisive episodes ever in the history of blue-green affairs.

Occupational safety and health also emerged early on as a potential avenue for cooperation. However, over the course of a few brief experiments the issue failed to gain significant environmentalist support and faded from the attention of blue-green coalition builders. The return to the occupational safety and health alliance in the late 1970s and early 1980s was made possible by internal shifts within organizations such as the Sierra Club, which increasingly accepted the importance of environmental health issues in U.S. workplaces and communities. However, the OSHA/Environmental Network was built as much on anxiety toward the anti-regulatory commitments of the new Republican White House as on environmental dedication to OSHA, which remained a relatively minor concern for environmentalists. Interestingly, the Sierra Club position continued to evolve, and toxic pollution of communities became an issue that it engaged with more aggressively and independently throughout the 1980s. Even after the demise of the Network, the Club evinced alarm at the amount of chemicals seeping into the nation's homes and schools.[526]

As an issue for inter-movement politics, energy followed a straighter but no less telling path than workplace health. The energy question emerged in 1973, but it was not initially a troubling one. Labor-environmental cooperation was possible in support of coal use as well as conservation. Nuclear power openly split both movements. But as the decade wore on and scientific knowledge of the danger of carbon fuel burning improved, the environmental position shifted increasingly against coal. At the same time, a labor movement that equated cheap energy with economic growth became more pro-coal, more pro-nuclear, and less supportive of conservation. Progressive unions such as the Winpisinger led IAM, who were willing to challenge the pro-nuclear assumptions of the labor movement, were a small minority. Moreover, those union leaders were constrained enough the AFL-CIO's internal political dictates that they did not want to risk an open break over the anti-nuclear cause. By the 1980s, energy issues had become the third rail of labor-environmental politics, and in the middle of the decade stepping on it could no longer be avoided.

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[526] For examples see Carl Pope, "Once More, With Compliance," *Sierra* (September/October, 1987): 34-38; Josh Getline, "EPA Wavers Again of Chlordane," *Sierra* (January/February, 1988): 20-24; Jim Stiak, "Pesticides and Secret Agents," *Sierra* (May/June, 1988): 18-21.

Historians have struggled to develop a commonly accepted periodization of labor-environmental politics. When it started, when it peaked, and when it ended remain debatable points. The long-term view taken by this dissertation resolves many of these debates not by choosing sides, but by demonstrating that the choices are themselves misleading. I have argued here for a bimodal understanding of blue-green coalition building, with interactions rising or falling based on factors both internal and external to the participants. These multiple peaks suggest that historians cannot identify the end of blue-green coalition building because there is no end, there is only the end of certain phases. And even in off-peak periods cooperation never ceased entirely.

Breakdown of the OSHA Network

The end of the occupational safety and health phase came in the mid-1980s. Although the OSHA/Environmental Network was still officially ongoing, by 1985 its period of effective existence had come to an end. From there, cooperation between the labor and environmental movements decayed rapidly and outright hostility became the norm. By the end of the decade, their relationship reached a nadir worse than any point in the 1970s. It is difficult to account for this dramatic souring of relations, but a few potential causes likely combined to bring it on.

One of the most popular explanations revolves around the era's inherently conservative atmosphere, which ultimately overwhelmed blue-green coalition builders by forcing them to constantly work to maintain the status quo. There was little time for unity in marginal areas, this thinking goes, when fundamental positions of the individual movements were continually under assault. According to Robert Gordon, "mainstream labor and environmental groups mobilized their resources to defend core values – union jobs and wage increases on the one hand, and the preservation of wilderness areas and endangered species on the other. By the mid-1980s, defense of these core values had become a top priority, and the labor and environmentalist alliances collapsed."[527] There is certainly some substance to this argument, as both movements were frequently forced to strike reactionary postures throughout the decade. However, this explanation also begs the question why things changed in the middle of the decade. The Reagan Revolution did not force the labor and environmental movements apart early in the decade; in fact, it was the catalyst for increased cooperation at that time. What changed between 1981 and 1985 is unclear from this perspective.

The answer to what changed partially lies in the internal dynamics of the individual organizations. The United Auto Workers, for instance, underwent a major

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[527] Gordon, 462.

change of leadership in 1983, when the retiring Douglas Fraser was replaced by Owen Bieber. Bieber had neither the gravitas nor the easy likeability of Fraser, and he also lacked his predecessor's political savvy and deep-seated progressive streak. It is possible that this new generation of UAW leaders – the first who had no connection to Walter Reuther – did not subscribe to the same social unionist principles that had guided the organization for thirty years. As importantly, the UAW suffered a string of economic setbacks that embarrassed the union and hampered its ability to operate. Under pressure from a struggling auto industry, concessionary bargaining, which had begun under Fraser, became the norm.[528] As the union hemorrhaged members and gave back previously won gains, rank and file rebellion simmered and, at the end of 1984, the Canadian segment of the organization split to form its own independent union.[529]

By the mid-1980s, the Sierra Club was also in disarray. The election of Ronald Reagan was initially a boon to Club organizing, as panicked environmentalists flocked to the organization and poured money into its coffers. But by the middle of the decade membership was starting to decline and the organization was operating at a loss.[530] The professional staff's morale deteriorated as Club managers deferred wage raises, denied employee input in decision making, and added hours to the workweek.[531] In 1991, after 10 percent of the staff was laid off, the remaining Club employees undertook a unionization campaign of their own that resulted in a majority signing cards with UAW District 65.[532] As importantly, in 1985 Michael McCloskey was replaced as executive director by moderate Republican lawyer Doug Wheeler, who ostracized the staff further and resigned the position in little more than a year.[533] The Board of Directors wrangled internally while they searched for a replacement, ultimately deciding by an eight to seen vote to hire Michael Fischer. This internal "fractiousness," to quote a word Fischer used on five separate occasions in describing the board in his oral history of the era, would certainly hamper cross-movement alliance making, as would McCloskey's absence from day to day strategy planning.[534]

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[528] Stanley Aronowitz, "Union Contracts: A 'New Contract?'" *The Nation,* April 24, 1982, 495; John Russo, "Ill at Ease in Lordstown," *The Nation,* July 3, 1982, 13.

[529] Eric Mann, "Workers and Community Take on G.M." *The Nation,* February 11, 1984 and "The Diary of a U.A.W. Dissident," *The Nation,* November 10, 1984, 472-474; John Holusha, "Canadians Break from Auto Union," *NYT,* December 11, 1984.

[530] These problems began as early as 1983. See Board of Directors Meeting Minutes January 23-29, 1983, BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 20, folder 2.

[531] Letter to Doug Wheeler from Matt Scoble, November 27, 1985, BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 20, folder 25; Memo to the Board of Directors from Sierra Club Stewards Committee, October 10, 1986,

Internal discord and external politico-economic pressure may have been enough to spell the end for labor-environmental collaboration on their own, but at the same time renewed hostility over energy policy also began to grow, making relations between the two movements even more tense. These new energy problems were more difficult to reconcile than they had been previously. During the oil shocks of the 1970s, environmentalists and unions diagnosed the nation's energy problems differently, but both at least recognized that the U.S. had an energy problem. This common bond was no longer present in the 1980s. Oil prices fell steadily between 1981 and 1986; energy was now cheap and plentiful, so most people in organized labor saw no reason to restrain its use.[535] Lane Kirkland's resignation from the board

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BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 20, folder 25; Memo to Sierra Club Staff from Michael Fischer, July 11, 1991, BANC MSS 2002/230, carton 29, folder 11.

[532] Michael L. Fischer, *Sierra Club Executive Director, 1987-1992,* (1997), Sierra Club Oral History Series, 91.

[533] McCloskey, *In the Thick of It,* 231-245.

[534] Fischer oral history, 38, 50, 64, 68.

[535] Smith, *Energy, the Environment, and Public Opinion,* 32.

of the Alliance to Save Energy is symbolic of labor's loss of commitment to any energy conservation, although Kirkland's resignation itself was not particularly meaningful since the Federation president had almost no involvement in the organization to that point.[536]

However, wise use of resources was no longer the main issue regarding energy for environmentalists, who had, by the mid-1980s, come to see far more apocalyptic problems in the nation's reliance on carbon energy. Curbing acid rain became a primary goal of the Sierra Club early in the decade, and remained so throughout. Calling it "an environmental crisis," the Club urged Congress, the White House, the EPA, and state governors to take action to remediate "acid pollution [that] is silently choking the life in our lakes and streams [and posing] serious public health risks."[537] On the other hand, even those segments of the labor movement that recognized acid rain as a problem took little to no action. The IUD, for example, was hesitant. Its preferred acid rain control program called for the use of "conventional technology" and clean coal, but not the banning of high sulfur coal which it estimated would throw 32,000 miners out of work.[538]

Just as the acid rain issue was heating up, global warming broke rapidly from the world of science into the public consciousness.[539] Its emergence as an issue of concern for the Sierra Club was just as ferocious. By 1989 Club members identified global warming as one of the three most important issues in the country. "Never before," wrote Executive Director Fischer, "has an issue come to the top of the Sierra Club agenda so quickly. Given the magnitude of the stakes, the urgency of the hour, and the breadth of the problem, this seems appropriate."[540] But global warming was an issue of life or death for many in the labor movement as well, only in a different way. The United Mine Workers, in particular, saw in global warming the end of coal mining and the end of the union. For years the union devoted itself to fighting the idea of global warming's existence, and hindering any accommodation that the labor movement might try to make with environmentalists on the issue.[541]

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[536] Letter from Lane Kirkland to Charles Percy, February 8, 1983, GMMA Unprocessed files, 85-0031, BO3/F/30.

[537] Sierra Club, "The Clean Air Act in the Senate," March, 1984, BANC MSS 71/289 c, carton 81 folder 20.

[538] Executive Council Meeting Schedule, June 1-3, 1988, GMMA Unprocessed files acc # 1992-0079, loc.#A03/H/20, "IUD"

[539] For information on the historical growth of scientific understanding of climate change, see Spencer Weart, *The Discovery of Global Warming* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

But from the ashes of the occupational safety and health coalition of the 1980s, new labor-environmental collaboration arose in the 1990s. This time, the alliance grew around opposition to the institutions of neoliberal globalization and free trade, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and World Trade Organization (WTO). Ostensibly, this cooperation began in 1993, as the two movements joined forces to undermine support for NAFTA in opposition to the Clinton Administration's free trade goals. This collaboration initially appears to be an alliance of convenience, with each side's opposition to the pact arising from the impact they believed it would have on their core organizing areas. The labor movement saw free trade as enabling capital flight from the United States to non-unionized countries, costing Americans jobs, weakening the labor movement in the U.S., and creating an overworked, low-wage class abroad. Similarly, environmentalists objected to capital's ability to flee U.S. environmental restrictions or to prevent the passage of new ones by threatening to outsource production if they were implemented.

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[540] Letter from Michael Fischer to Mike Clark, March 22, 1989, BANC MSS 2002/230 c, carton 27, folder 1.
[541] Joe Uehlein, telephone interview with author conducted May 15, 2011.

However, neither the Sierra Club nor the AFL-CIO was new to the free trade debate. Both had studied the issue throughout the late 1980s, and had come to their opposition well in advance of NAFTA's emergence as an issue of public concern. As these positions evolved, the lessons learned by the organizations in their prior relationship contributed to their thinking regarding free trade. In that way, the collaboration of the 1970s and early 1980s, particularly the OSHA/Environmental Network, continued to influence blue-green decision making even after those alliances declined, helping to set the stage for renewed cooperation in the early 1990s. As importantly, the two organizations occasionally cooperated on issues related to international trade pre-NAFTA period, demonstrating once again that even in an era of mostly hostile relations, cross-movement cooperation was still sometimes practical.

This influence was most clearly evident within the Sierra Club. There, Club activists were brought into contact with international trade issues through concerns about pesticides. Club leaders worried that communities could be poisoned by imported crops that were tainted by pesticide residue. More disturbing, however, was the fact that U.S. companies were continuing to produce and sell abroad pesticides that were banned from the American market for their dangerous effects on people and non-target animals. By the mid-1980s, the Sierra Club had made curbing the use of agrochemicals around the world one of its primary international goals, and stopping the manufacture and sale of banned pesticides by U.S. companies was one of its chief tactics in that campaign.[542]

By that point the Club was well-versed in pesticides, having fought against their use in national parks and other U.S. areas since the 1960s. However, what set this campaign apart from those that had come before was the important role that people – both foreign workers as well as foreign and domestic communities – played in the Club's rhetoric. Having worked with unions on occupational disease, the health concerns of those exposed to the toxic chemicals played a prominent role in the Club's organizing. International Program leader Gary Taylor's description of the problem to other Club leaders shows how the issue was thought about within the organization's top echelons. "At least 500,000 people," he wrote "mostly in the Third world, are poisoned. Most developed countries in the world have virtually no controls over export of toxic substances. Most importing Third World countries have insufficient infrastructures to monitor imports or to deal medically with sickness and death arising from the misuse of agrochemicals."[543]

Club activity in the pesticide campaign also presaged the sort of cross-border, cross-movement organizing that NAFTA opponents would try to adopt in the early 1990s. A good example occurred in June of 1983. That year, the Club, along with U.S. farm labor organizers met with representatives from eleven Latin American nations in Mexico for the formation of the Latin American Pesticides Action Network. The North American Network members recommitted themselves to stopping the sale of particularly dangerous pesticides in Latin America and also pledged to push the World Bank to not fund agriculture projects that used agrochemicals on a large scale.[544]

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[542] "Hard Ideas on Congressional Handles for U.S. Initiatives to Protect the World Environment," n.d. [1985?], BANC MSS 71/290 c, carton 1, folder 24.

[543] Gary Taylor, "Sierra Club Role in Global Environmental Protection (Background Paper)," 1985, BANC MSS 71/103 c, carton 20, folder 16.

The old alliance was also present in the AFL-CIO's approach to globalization in the late 1980s, as the labor organization frequently injected environmental concerns into its arguments against free trade. These issues were especially apparent when the Federation discussed the relationship between the U.S. and Mexico. Focusing most of its attention on the maquiladoras, manufacturing plants built in northern Mexico by foreign (largely U.S.) investors that export most of their products, the AFL-CIO warned that trade liberalization between the U.S. and Mexico in 1988 had not improved conditions in either country. Instead, Secretary-Treasurer Thomas Donahue claimed, "the job losses and trade deficits are unabated... and the toxic waste and pollution along the border are building toward a catastrophe that is going to complicate the lives of Texans and Mexicans alike for generations."[545] In other instances the AFL-CIO made the Southern California furniture industry out to be an example of the havoc that trade liberalization could cause. Speaking before Congress, Federation lobbyists argued that furniture makers had moved production to Tijuana to avoid California environmental regulations, with expectedly disastrous results. "The pollution that California sought to eliminate remains," they concluded, "it merely originates a few miles away, across the border. Workers in the U.S. have lost their jobs, and Mexican workers are endangered by the absence of effective health and safety regulations."[546] Although the AFL-CIO's engagement with the environmental issues arising from free trade may have been somewhat more cynical than the Club's anti-pesticide initiatives, it demonstrated the labor group's recognition that environmentalism was politically important and its comfort in discussing those issues when it needed to.

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[544] Letter from Gary Taylor to International Committee, August 2, 1983, BANC MSS 71/290 c, carton 13, folder 16.

[545] Thomas Donahue, remarks before the Texas AFL-CIO Convention, July 26, 1989, GMMA RG20-003, box 52, folder 9.

Trade also served as an opportunity for the two organizations to reach out to one another on a few occasions. For example, in 1986 Michael McCloskey (then serving as acting Sierra Club Executive Director) signed – along with Owen Bieber, Lane Kirkland, William Winpisinger, and Howard Samuel – a letter to the Senate demanding the strengthening of workers' rights under the new Global Agreement on Tariffs and Trade that was then being negotiated.[547] Later, the AFL-CIO returned the favor to the Sierra Club, urging Congress to exclude "products made in an environmentally unsafe manner" from U.S. markets, arguing that environmentally questionable production "constitutes an unfair trade practice" similar to unsafe working conditions or lack of unions.[548]

In February of 1991, when the chief executives of Canada, Mexico, and the United States announced that negotiations were commencing to create a free trade pact between the three nations, the Sierra Club, UAW, and AFL-CIO were quick to oppose the idea.[549] However, no sustained inter-movement organizing arose at that time. Instead, each of those organizations focused primarily on its own core interests and what impact NAFTA would have on them. They also worked to convince reluctant partners within their movements to oppose the pact.[550] Thus, it was not until 1992, when the agreement's ratification began to be debated in Congress, that the Club and the AFL-CIO put aside the differences that had grown between them and joined forces in an effort to forestall the agreement's ratification.

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[546] Testimony of William J. Cunningham before the Senate Finance Committee, July 30, 1990, GMMA RG21-002, box 16, folder 45.

[547] Letter to Signers of Letter to U.S. Senate Endorsing International Labor Standards from Howard D. Samuel, July 28, 1986, GMMA Unprocessed files, 88-0101, BO8/A/02.

[548] Cunningham Testimony.

[549] Amy Lowrey and David Corn, "Fast Track to Unemployment," *The Nation,* June 3, 1991, 735-738.

Lobbying together, the Sierra Club and AFL-CIO showed that blue-green coalition politics was not only still possible, but it was powerful. The union federation took the lead in grassroots mobilization. In 1992, it hosted a nationwide series of town hall meetings to persuade congressional representatives to oppose NAFTA. "Where possible," the national office advised regional planners, "environmental groups and other coalition organizations should be encouraged to participate."[551] The AFL-CIO Executive Council Trade Committee also staged numerous events throughout the year, including a conference on "Trade, Jobs, and the Environment" in May.[552] Futhermore, the two organizations built a joint lobbying apparatus that grew increasingly strong through 1993. Reflecting on the initiative later, McCloskey remembered "I found it rewarding to be working closely with the labor movement.... Labor gradually brought a large block of Democrats to its side, and we brought some more."[553]

In the end, these efforts proved unsuccessful. NAFTA was approved by Congress in November, 1993 and went into effect in 1994. This defeat could have led Club and AFL-CIO leaders to rebuke the resurrected coalition, but they did not. The NAFTA opposition always knew that it was facing long odds – NAFTA had early bipartisan support in Congress and was promoted by the Clinton Administration as a central piece of its economic agenda – but it had still nearly managed to defeat the trade agreement.[554] Moreover, the strength of the opposition created a national outcry and forced the Clinton Administration to negotiate a series of side agreements meant to ameliorate NAFTA's worst potential side effects. Although most of the documents related to what happened next remain sealed, it seems clear that support for a blue-green trade coalition remained high within the leadership structures of both labor and environmental organizations. The two sides continued to work together on this issue throughout the decade, albeit more quietly than in 1992-1993.

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[550] McCloskey, *In the Thick of It,* 291-296, 301; Alexander Cockburn, "Clinton, Labor and Free Trade," *The Nation,* November 2, 1992, 1, 506-509.
[551] Memo to Mark Anderson from Ed Feigen, "Grass Roots Anti-NAFTA Action Plan," August 25, 1992, GMMA AFL-CIO Unprocessed Files, A05/G/27.
[552] AFL-CIO Executive Council Trade Committee, meeting talking points, February 14, 1992, GMMA AFL-CIO Unprocessed Files A05/G/27.
[553] McCloskey, *In the Thick of It,* 294-295.

Labor-environmental cooperation once again became front-page news in late November 1999, as massive protests by an international coalition of over 1,400 labor organizations, human rights groups, anarchists, and environmentalists disrupted the Seattle Ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Because blue-green hostility was a political shibboleth by this time, when unionists marched arm in arm with environmental protestors dressed like sea turtles (to draw attention to the 1998 WTO decision that threatened turtle protection) under banners that read "Teamsters and Turtles, Together at Last," it was an unexpected sight and well worth commenting on within the press.[555] However, while it may have astonished the public at large, this heralded blue-green unity did not arise spontaneously in Seattle.

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[554] The final vote in the House o Representative was 234 to 200 in favor of the agreement. James Gerstenzang, "Senate Approves NAFTA on 61-38 Vote: Passage in Upper House Had Been Expected," *L.A. Times,* November 21, 1993.

[555] Marc Cooper, "Teamsters and Turtles: They're Together at Last," *Los Angeles Times,* December 2, 1999.

Instead, it was the product of years’ worth of concerted effort and cooperation stretching back to 1970.

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