

United States Copper Companies, the State, and Labour Conflict in Mexico, 1900–1910*

MICHAEL J. GONZALES

No topic encapsulates better the fundamental contradiction in capitalist development in Porfirian Mexico than the turbulent history of the copper industry. Within the space of a few years, the industry simultaneously experienced rapid growth, labour conflict and political controversy with international implications. This historical dynamic was unleashed, in part, by the Mexican government's policy of attracting overseas investors to Mexico through generous concessions and tax breaks that facilitated foreign control over key industries. The privileged position that public policy afforded foreign companies resulted in a nationalist backlash and exacerbated tension between native labour and foreign capital. The famous strike at Cananea, Sonora, in 1906 brought to national attention the grievances of Mexican workers over wage scales that favoured foreign workers over natives, falling real wages, and the power and arrogance of United States companies in Mexico. The strike became a scandal when armed North Americans from nearby Arizona crossed the border and assisted local authorities in crushing Mexican workers. This violation of Mexican sovereignty caused a storm of protest from both liberals and conservatives and unsettled the Díaz regime on the eve of the Mexican Revolution.

Historical interpretations differ significantly regarding the strikers' political objectives and the impact of the strike on the outbreak of the Revolution. What could be called the traditional interpretation emphasises the radical or anarchist nature of the conflict, which pitted exploited workers against a racist foreign corporation. The strike is seen as an important first step towards the Revolution and the key role that industrial workers would play in the national conflict. The organising role of the

* The author thanks Mr Peter Steere of the Special Collections division of the University of Arizona library for helping to locate documentary sources for this article, and acknowledges the valuable assistance of the staffs of the Arizona Historical Society, the Centro Regional de Sonora, and the Compañía Minera de Cananea, S.A.

Michael J. Gonzales is Professor of History and Director of the Center for Latino and Latin American Studies at Northern Illinois University

leftist Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) is also emphasised, and the presence of the United States-based Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) is invariably mentioned as further proof of strikers' political radicalism.¹ The revisionist viewpoint, on the other hand, argues that the strike was an industrial dispute without revolutionary pretensions. Workers struck for higher wages, the PLM did not play an important organising role, and the four years separating the strike and the Revolution blurred any possible historical linkage between them.²

This article presents a modified interpretation of the 1906 Cananea strike that incorporates elements of both the traditional and revisionist viewpoints. I place greater emphasis on the regional context of the strike, the key role of the state as an ally of capital on both sides of the border, and the impact of the conflict on subsequent rationalisation of production, on worker organisation, and participation in the Revolution.

I agree with the revisionists that the PLM did not organise the strike and that economic grievances, rather than political objectives, primarily motivated strikers. At the same time, the pro-labour, anti-capital messages of the Partido Liberal Mexicano and the Western Federation of Miners provided miners with ideological orientation and encouragement, and the WFM had a stronger presence along the border than previously recognised. The racist policies of US mine managers at Cananea and elsewhere, moreover, clearly contributed to the deterioration of labour-management relations. The reluctance of foreign miners to accept Mexican miners as equals, all along the border, also created tensions that slowed the unionisation process and strengthened management's position.

The Cananea strike unsettled everything. Company and government officials, vengeful in victory, expelled suspected members of the PLM and WFM and increased their social and military control over workers. Yet their victory was incomplete. The mine's owner, Colonel William C. Greene, suffered uninsured damages and cash shortfalls and was quickly set upon by rival mining magnates from the United States and forced to sell out. The political consequences of the strike, particularly the US intervention, also ran deep. The Díaz government was rightly alarmed

¹ The most detailed and well-documented analysis of Cananea's miners is provided by Juan Luis Sariego, *Enclaves y minerales en el norte de México* (Mexico City, 1988). His discussion of the 1906 strike appears on pages 131–7. The conflict is also analysed by Héctor Aguilar Camín in his brilliant political history of Sonora, *La frontera nómada* (Mexico City, 1985), pp. 114–24. Perhaps the best traditional analysis in English is provided by W. Dirk Raat, *Revoltosos* (Texas Station, 1981), ch. 3.

² The first to challenge the traditional viewpoint was Rodney Anderson in *Outcasts in Their Own Land* (DeKalb, 1976), pp. 110–17. Anderson's argument is placed in a broader context and slightly modified by Alan Knight in his monumental study of the Mexican Revolution. See, *The Mexican Revolution*, vol. I (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 108–18.

over the autonomy of foreign capital in Mexico and unsuccessfully attempted to increase its control over foreign mining companies and to regain control over the northern border. The brutal crushing of the strike, moreover, did not vanquish miners, but taught them the necessity of acquiring political allies and changing the balance of power. This helps explain why they fought against Díaz, formed labour unions, and later entered into a political alliance with the Constitutionalists.

Development of the Mexican copper industry, 1880–1910

The rise of vertically integrated foreign corporations in the northern desert created thousands of jobs, fostered railroad construction and helped to transform the Mexican economy.³ At the same time, however, the giant mines proved difficult to regulate⁴ and contributed to Sonora's economic dependence on the United States.⁵ These problems were replicated throughout much of Latin America during this period. In this case, however, they resulted less from structural differences in the United States and Mexican economies, as explained by dependency theory, than from the generous tax breaks, concessions, and favourable mining laws offered to foreign firms by the Mexican government.

On a global level, such incentives proved decisive in determining where copper companies invested during the nineteenth century. For example, the United States government offered copper companies generous investment incentives, favourable tax laws, and a high tariff on refined copper with impressive results in increased exploration, production and profits. By contrast, the Chilean Congress – controlled by *hacendados* hostile to mining interests – blocked passage of legislation that would have provided special treatment for the copper companies. As a result, Chile's massive deposits remained under-developed until policies changed and demand increased during the First World War.⁶

Porfirio Díaz laid out the welcome mat for foreign mining companies in the 1880s and 1890s. New legislation permitted foreigners to own subsoil rights (1892) and to buy land on the border (1894), repealing two restrictions inherited from Spain and kept on the books following

³ See below for details on the growth of the copper industry. Demand for copper increased following Faraday's discovery of electromagnetism, and the practical application of electricity by Edison and others. Copper proved ideal for use in motors, generators, wiring, cable, switch gear, particularly in the communication and transportation industries. See, George H. Hildebrand and Garth L. Mangum, *Capital and Labor in American Copper, 1845–1990* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), pp. 94–5.

⁴ Sariego, *Enclaves y minerales*.

⁵ Ramón Eduardo Ruíz, *The People of Sonora and Yankee Capitalists* (Tucson, 1988).

⁶ William W. Culver and Cornel J. Reinhart, 'Capitalist Dreams: Chile's Response to Nineteenth-century Copper Competition', *Comparative Studies in History and Society*, vol. 21, no. 4 (Oct. 1989), pp. 722–44.

Table 1. *Copper production, Mexico and El Boleo, 1900–10 (metric tons)*

Year	(1) Mexico	(2) El Boleo	(2)/(1) Per cent
1900	22,473	11,297	50.2
1901	33,943	11,510	33.9
1902	36,357	10,473	28.9
1903	46,040	11,291	24.5
1904	51,759	10,706	20.7
1905	65,449	10,350	15.8
1906	61,615	11,000	17.8
1907	57,473	11,150	19.4
1908	38,173	12,600	33.0
1909	57,230	12,425	21.7
1910	48,160	13,000	27.0

Source: Juan Manuel Romero Gil, *El Boleo* (Hermosillo, 1991) p. 83; and Marvin Bernstein, *The Mexican Mining Industry, 1890–1950* (Albany, 1964), p. 51.

disastrous wars with the United States and France.⁷ In addition, the commercial code was reformed to permit the formation of public corporations based on shares (1889), limitations were placed on the ability of state governments to tax corporations (1884), and a new banking law facilitated the availability of credit (1897).⁸ William Randolph Hearst, whose family owned considerable property in Mexico and the southwestern USA, was so impressed with the possibilities for land acquisition that he concluded: ‘I really don’t see what is to prevent us from owning all of Mexico and running it to suit ourselves.’⁹

The first major overseas investor in copper mining was the *Compagnie Du Boleo*, which developed deposits located on the eastern shore of Baja California near the port of Santa Rosalia. The French firm, controlled by the House of Rothschild, received generous concessions from the Díaz government that established precedents beneficial to United States copper companies. In 1885 ‘El Boleo’ was exempted from federal and local taxes for twenty years, and from export taxes and customs duties for fifty years. The government also agreed to built loading docks for the firm at Santa

⁷ Marvin Bernstein offers this assessment of the 1892 law: ‘Since miners were free to claim as much land as they could pay taxes on; work a mine in any manner they might see fit; open or close as their economic personal desires dictated; and employ any number of men they might wish, the mineowner and the speculator in Mexico attained a position of almost complete liberty of action’. *The Mexican Mining Industry, 1890–1950* (Albany, 1964), p. 28.

⁸ Juan José Gracida Romo, ‘Génesis y Consolidación del Porfiriato en Sonora (1883–1895)’, in Cynthia Radding Murrieta (ed.), *Historia General de Sonora*, vol. IV (*Sonora Moderno: 1880–1929*) (Hermosillo, 1985), pp. 22–3.

⁹ William Randolph Hearst to his mother (no day or month given), 1886, Hearst Family Papers, file 82168c, folder 10, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Quoted by permission of the Bancroft Library.

Table 2. *Profit and loss at El Boleo, 1887 to 1910*

Year	Francs
1887	- 502,000
1888	- 587,000
1889	- 1,204,000
1890	2,000
1891	743,000
1892	1,016,000
1893	714,000
1894	2,518,000
1895	2,633,000
1896	4,554,000
1987	
1898	3,441,000
1899	6,500,000
1900	7,624,000
1901	1,750,000
1902	1,750,000
1903	3,474,000
1904	4,204,000
1905	6,367,000
1906	10,133,000
1907	6,373,000
1908	4,693,000
1909	4,113,000
1910	3,856,000

Source: Romero Gil, *El Boleo*, p. 84.

Rosalia within three months, and to allow it to collect 50 per cent of all customs revenues. Fortified with these incentives, the company installed modern processing equipment, a 33 kilometre railroad linking the mine with the port, and an electrical plant and telephone service. By the turn of the century 'El Boleo' accounted for 50 per cent in national production (see Table 1), and soon reaped handsome profits (see Table 2).¹⁰

As Table 1 suggests, 'El Boleo' was displaced as Mexico's largest copper producer by US firms after the turn of the century. A key producer was the Phelps-Dodge Corporation of Boston which began to develop the mine site at Nacozari, Sonora in 1897. Phelps-Dodge (PD) initially invested \$3 million in a new power plant, two 200-ton mills, two 150-ton furnaces, and two five-ton Bessemer converters. The firm also acquired 35,000 acres of adjacent land to gain access to timber and water rights crucial for construction and milling operations.¹¹

¹⁰ Juan Manuel Romero Gil, *El Boleo: Santa Rosalia, Baja California, 1885-1954* (Hermosillo, 1991), pp. 13-84.

¹¹ Bernstein, *Mexican Mining Industry*, p. 60. According to Cananea's management the Moctezuma Copper Company, the Phelps-Dodge subsidiary that owned Nacozari, received 'similar concessions' to those granted to Cananea, which are described below

An exceptional feature of Nacozari was its integration into Phelps-Dodge's mining empire directly across the border. The lynchpin of the operation was the firm's new smelter and company town in the Sulphur Springs Valley, Arizona, immodestly named after Phelps-Dodge's president Dr James Douglas. By 1903, PD had linked Douglas by rail with Nacozari, Bisbee, Arizona and El Paso, Texas, and was emerging as Arizona's most powerful corporation.¹²

The most flamboyant mining entrepreneur in Porfirian Mexico was Colonel William E. Greene, who transformed Cananea, Sonora, from a modest settlement into the province's largest town and one of Mexico's premier mines.¹³ A transplanted easterner, Greene invested in ranching and mining along the Arizona–Mexican border and in 1899 laid claim to several mine sites around Cananea.¹⁴ At first, Greene spent a great deal of time on Wall Street raising money and relying upon George Mitchell, an experienced mining engineer from the famous Welsh smelting town of Swansea to oversee a variety of technical improvements.¹⁵

Greene's ability to raise money was undoubtedly aided by the generous concessions he had received from the Mexican government. The initial concessions, granted in 1899, exempted the company from paying all taxes on copper production and on the construction and operation of its physical plant.¹⁶ In 1904, Greene estimated that these exemptions had saved the company 'several hundred thousand dollars each year'.¹⁷

in the text. See: 'Statement of the Cananea Consolidated Copper Company, S.A.', re: 'How the Company has been Affected by Mexican Revolutionary Conditions, Taxation, etc.', presented before the 'Honorable Members of the Mexican–American International Commission', 28 Sept 1916, New York City, George Young, Secretary. Cananea Papers, Centro Regional de Sonora (hereinafter cited as CRS, Cananea), Hermosillo, Microfilm # 72/150, Reel 4.

¹² Robert Glass Cleland, *A History of Phelps-Dodge 1834–1950* (New York, 1952), pp. 131–50.

¹³ C. L. Sonnichsen, *Colonel Greene and the Copper Skyrocket* (Tucson, 1974).

¹⁴ Nevertheless, these were disputed claims and he did not gain clear title to them until a year later. W. C. Greene to C. E. Tyler, 8 April 1900, Hermosillo to Bisbee, Cananea Company Archives, Cananea, Sonora (hereafter cited as CCA) 1900 Documental 0020; S. M. Aguirre to W. C. Greene, 19 April 1900 (telegram), Bisbee to Cananea, CCA, 1900 Documental 0020. For Greene's years back east and in Arizona see Sonnichsen, *Colonel Greene*, pp. 1–28.

¹⁵ W. C. Greene to George Mitchell, 26 July 1901, New York to Cananea, Arizona Historical Society, Tucson, Cananea Consolidated Copper Company Papers (hereafter cited as AHS, Cananea) Box 1, MS 1032; W. C. Greene to George Mitchell, 12 August 1901, New York to Cananea, AHS, Cananea, Box 1, MS 1032; Sonnichsen, *Colonel Greene*, pp. 28–47.

¹⁶ General Superintendent to Dr L. D. Ricketts, 10 April 1920, Cananea to Warren, Arizona, CCA, 1920 Documental 0063.

¹⁷ W. C. Greene to A. S. Dwight, 15 Feb. 1904, New York to Cananea, AHS, Cananea, Box 1, MS 1032.

Moreover, that same year the government exempted Greene from paying import taxes on all machinery and materials required to build a new custom smelter. The ten-year concession covered 'construction material, edifices and buildings of all kinds, electrical, telegraphic, telephone apparatus, scientific instruments, locomotives, rails and accessories, cars and platforms of industrial railroads'.¹⁸ This exemption saved the company \$300,000 per year.¹⁹

In September 1900 Greene had also received the right to build a railroad linking Cananea with Naco, Arizona. The railroad eliminated delays and costs associated with hauling ore, machinery and supplies via mule train, and greatly increased export capacity. The agreement included 'the usual exemption' from import duties on construction materials and from taxes on the completed line.²⁰ The new railroad was sold in 1902 to the Cananea Rio Yaqui and Pacific Railroad Company, a subsidiary of the Southern Pacific, under terms which guaranteed Cananea favourable rates on ore shipments.²¹ Later on, the mining company also received the right to import fuel oil duty free, and to install an electrical power plant. This allowed the firm to run its plant more efficiently and to sell electricity to businesses and citizens in town.²²

Fortified with this impressive list of tax breaks, Greene sold large amounts of stock and invested the money in the mines. In less than two years, the company employed 1,200 men underground digging and hauling tons of copper ore from five separate mines. The ore was smelted in six newly built furnaces, specially designed by Mitchell, with a capacity of 1,200 tons per day. The company employed another 1,200 men in and around the smelter, and an additional 1,500 in the concentrator, railroad, powerhouse, offices and elsewhere. Mitchell had also overseen the construction of a hospital, bank, school house, company store, lumberyard, hotels, restaurants, houses, brickyard, foundry, machine shops, and huge storage bins for coal, coke, ore, and copper matte. The company was also making money by renting land and buildings to workers and merchants.²³ By 1905 the *Copper Handbook*, the bible of the industry,

¹⁸ Document dated 23 March 1904, CCA, 1904 Documental 0043.

¹⁹ W. C. Greene to A. S. Dwight, 15 Feb. 1904, New York to Cananea, AHS, Cananea, Box 1, MS 1032.

²⁰ George Young, Secretary, to T. Evans, General Superintendent, 29 April 1921, CCA, 1921 Documental 0089.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Letter dated 25 April 1908, CCA, 1908 Documental 0001; General Manager to Tomás Macmanus, 21 June 1909, Cananea to Mexico City, CCA, 1909 Documental 0042.

²³ J. W. Rennie to George Mitchell, 25 August 1901, Cananea to New York, CRS, Cananea, Microfilm # 72/150, Reel 1; General Manager, Cananea Copper Co. to Señor Coronel Juan Fenocho, 28 June 1902, Cananea to Hermosillo, CRS, Cananea, Microfilm # 72/150, Reel 1. Also see Jason H. Kirk, Manager, Mining Division, to W. C. Greene, 1 Aug. 1902, Cananea to New York, Cananea Consolidated Copper Co.

reported that the population of Cananea had grown to 15,000 persons and the Greene Consolidated Copper Company ranked as one of the ten largest copper companies in the world.²⁴

The recruitment and organisation of labour

When Greene began to develop Cananea in 1899 there were only a couple of hundred people living in the town, but within a few years over 5,000 men worked in the mines and another 10,000 men, women and children lived in town. This type of demographic explosion also occurred at Nacozari and 'El Boleo', and was characteristic of frontier mining settlements in North America. The process of labour recruitment varied from region to region, however, and additional research is required before a definitive analysis can be attempted for northern Mexico.

Company records and secondary sources show, however, that many Mexican miners were recruited by labour contractors (*enganchadores*) from peasant communities in Sinaloa, Sonora, Nayarit, Aguascalientes and San Luis Potosí.²⁵ At 'El Boleo', labour contractors like Florencio Carrasco from Mazatlán delivered shipments of 100 healthy men fifteen years of age or older, for which he received a commission of two pesos per worker. The company facilitated the process by lending recruits money to travel to the mine with their families.

In his detailed study of 'El Boleo', Juan Manuel Romero Gil argues that contracted workers, because they received advances and remained at the mine for several years, must have been subjected to debt peonage.²⁶ Nevertheless, it is possible that Mexican miners preferred to remain at the mine and to earn cash wages rather than return to the economic uncertainty of their villages, particularly during this period of land consolidation. Moreover, during the Revolution so many people came and left 'El Boleo' that Romero Gil likens the mine to an anthill.²⁷ This hardly corresponds to the image of perennially indebted workers.

It is also clear that many farmhands and cowboys in the region avoided labour contractors and migrated to the mines of their own volition. They

Records, 1898–1969 (separate collection donated by former company employee Robert F. Torrance), AHS, MS 1033, Box 1.

²⁴ Quoted in the finding aid to the Cananea Consolidated Copper Company Records, 1898–1969, AHS, MS 1033, Box 1.

²⁵ A. S. Dwight, Gerente General, to Pablo Rubio, Comisario, 30 Jan. 1905, AHS, MS 1032, Box 3; Romero Gil, *El Boleo*, pp. 113–38.

²⁶ His best case is that in 1917 over one-half of the workers had been at the mines for over ten years. But this still may only suggest that these workers sought the security of steady wage employment during the turbulent Revolution. See Romero Gil, *El Boleo*, Table 22, p. 136.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 205–8.

were free to do so because the predominant ranching economy of the north did not require large, stable work forces but a core of *vaqueros* whose numbers could be increased during round-ups. As Friedrich Katz suggested years ago, this made long-term debt peonage on ranches impractical because large numbers of eternally bound cowboys would require *hacendados* to feed and house surplus labour.²⁸

Migrants were attracted by the higher wages paid by the mines. Cananea's daily wage of three pesos, for example, was three times higher than the standard agricultural wage;²⁹ and the company periodically attracted workers simply by posting advertisements.³⁰ Among those who came were 60 miners from San Luis Potosí who arrived in January 1905 with their families. They were described by management as 'well-behaved' men who were personally 'well-known' to the superintendent of the Sierra del Cobre mine in Cananea.³¹

The booming mines of northern Mexico also attracted large numbers of foreign workers from several different countries. For example, on 30 July 1902, Cananea employed 1,265 North Americans, 189 Chinese, 132 English, 62 Germans, 52 Irish, as well as several Scots, Canadians, Swedes, French, Italians, Swiss, Russians and one Hungarian. North Americans represented a majority in the accounts and finance section, and constituted the second largest group (after the Mexicans) in the mining, reduction, and railway divisions. Most of the Chinese (141) worked on the railroad, and the Europeans and Canadians were located, almost exclusively, in the mining and reduction sections.³²

The size of the work force continued to grow as the company expanded its tunnelling networks and refining capacity. For example, from 1902 to 1906 (the year of the big strike) the number of Mexican workers increased from 2,121 to 5,360, and the number of North Americans from 1,808 to 2,200. This suggests that most of the new jobs were for drillers, haulers, and shovellers, where Mexican labour predominated.³³

Juan Luis Sariego correctly argues that the ethnic division of labour at Cananea should be attributed to US managers' social, ethnic and racial

²⁸ 'Labor Conditions on Haciendas in Porfirian Mexico: Some Trends and Tendencies', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 54, no. 1 (Feb., 1974), pp. 1-47. Increased demand for labour during harvests and round-ups, however, created conditions that were conducive to short-term peonage.

²⁹ Ruiz, *People of Sonora*, pp. 110-13.

³⁰ For example, see the 1903 notice for workers in AHS, Cananea, MS 1032, Box 1.

³¹ A. S. Dwight, Gerente General, to Don Pablo Rubio, Comisario, Ronquillo, 30 Jan. 1905, AHS, MS 1032, Box 3.

³² Employees by nationality, 30 July 1902, CRS, Cananea, Microfilm # 72/150, Reel 4.

³³ Employees by Nationality, 30 July 1902, CRS, Cananea, Microfilm # 72/150, Reel 4; General Timekeeper to A. S. Dwight, General Manager, 8 June 1906, CRS, Cananea, Microfilm # 72-150, Reel 1.

prejudices against Mexicans.³⁴ Foreigners monopolised several skilled jobs including boilermaker, plumber, electrician, moulder, pipe fitter, and pressman.³⁵ There were, however, political and financial complications in maintaining the organisation of labour on the basis of race. Foreigners received higher wages than Mexicans and many North Americans were former members of the Western Federation of Miners, which was bitterly opposed by management.³⁶ This prompted the company to apprentice many Mexicans to skilled foreign workers,³⁷ and I believe that this reveals a managerial strategy of phasing out the politically dangerous, higher paid foreigners and replacing them with natives. The exchange of personnel was accelerated by the 1906 strike,³⁸ and served as a successful short-term policy to undercut unionisation and save money. However, it did not signal a change in racial attitudes by management. Mexicans remained under-paid, poorly housed, and unappreciated.³⁹

Before the strike, Mexicans and foreigners were employed as both machinists and blacksmiths, but most natives worked in less skilled positions throughout the mines. Management complained that Mexicans refused long-term employment and insisted on missing work to celebrate traditional saint's days and engage in heavy drinking. As Sariego notes, this is further evidence of US managers' prejudice against Mexicans.⁴⁰ Yet it also shows that workers had difficulty adjusting to routinised labour, and insisted on becoming miners on their own terms.⁴¹ Similar cultural conflicts are likely to have occurred wherever industrial capitalism was taking hold for the first time, and excessive drinking remained a problem among experienced miners regardless of racial and ethnic background. For example, according to the US miner quoted below, drinking and gambling were a serious problem among some foreigners at Cananea:

At the Elisa mine the biggest graft is going on. The foreman of the mine is running the saloon, he [is] playing cards with the [foreign] men all night and in the morning the men are going to the mine drunk and then going to sleep in the mine. No one is looking after things, [and] the little ore [that is] taken out is taken out by the Mexican miners.⁴²

Mexicans received higher wages at Cananea than elsewhere in Mexico,

³⁴ Sariego, *Enclaves y minerales*, pp. 119–22.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

³⁸ See below, Table 7.

³⁹ For example, Mexicans continued to live in inferior housing and were never appointed to managerial positions. See below for details on the dual wage scale for foreigners and natives.

⁴⁰ Sariego, *Enclaves y minerales*, pp. 119–22.

⁴¹ Jonathan Brown, 'Foreign and Native-Born Workers in Porfirian Mexico', *American Historical Review*, vol. 98, no. 3 (June, 1993), pp. 786–818, makes this point within a more general context.

⁴² D. W. Brown to L. D. Ricketts, 16 March 1906, Benson, Arizona to Cananea, CCA, 1906 Documental 0118.

but less than foreigners earned for the same work.⁴³ Mexicans complained about the dual wage scale and some of them migrated to mine sites in Arizona to earn higher wages.⁴⁴ The growing market for Mexican labour in the southwestern United States, however, was littered with imperfections and complications. For example, migrants had to contend with immigration laws, the racism of US miners and their unions, and Arizona's own version of the dual wage scale for Mexican and US miners.⁴⁵

In the literature, wages at Cananea are always discussed in terms of daily cash compensation. For example, Table 3 reproduces wage data published by Sarioego,⁴⁶ which I also saw in the Cananea company archive.⁴⁷ These figures graphically illustrate the dual pay scale for foreigners and natives. Nevertheless, they do not provide a completely accurate picture because pickmen and drillers were compensated according to the amount of ore they mined. Payment occurred in one of two ways. Under the contract system, drillers were required to chisel several feet of rock per shift. The exact distance depended upon the rock's hardness, and foremen took daily measurements and noted the results. By contrast, under the lease system a crew of Mexican workers mined a designated area under the supervision of a Mexican contractor, and the company paid according to the amount of ore dug. No money changed hands, however, until the contractor had reimbursed the company for all materials used by his workers, such as dynamite, blasting caps, timber, fuses and candles. Moreover, the mine could still refuse payment if the copper content of the ore fell below a predetermined minimum grade, such as two per cent. Crewmen, of course, also ran the risk of being cheated by contractors.⁴⁸

⁴³ Sarioego, *Enclaves y minerales*, p. 122.

⁴⁴ These records list 'Mexican' labourers, but may have meant 'Mexican-American'. Journal 'Contract Wages', Arizona Copper Co., March 1905, University of Arizona Special Collections (hereinafter cited as UASC), vol. 95, Az 146; Selim W. Franklin, President, South San Xavier Copper Co., to William McDermott, Esq., Twin Buttes Mining and Smelting Co. (a subsidiary of Phelps-Dodge), 4 April 1907, Tucson to Tucson, UASC, Twin Buttes Mining and Smelting Co., Correspondence, Box 2, 1904, 1906, Jan. 1907 to May 1908, Az 183; Payroll Sheets, UASC, Twin Buttes Mining and Smelting Co., 1904, Box 34, Az 183.

⁴⁵ Yvette Andrea Huginnie, "'Strikitos': Race, Class, and Work in the Arizona Copper Industry, 1870-1920", unpubl. PhD diss., Yale University, 1991. I am grateful to Professor Evelyn Hu-DeHart for this reference.

⁴⁶ Sarioego, *Enclaves y minerales*, p. 122.

⁴⁷ This information is now filed differently than cited by Sarioego. See, *Wages Scales*, CCA, 1916 Documental 0032.

⁴⁸ Evan Fraser-Campbell, 'The Management of Mexican Labor', *The Engineering and Mining Journal*, vol. 91, no. 22 (3 June 1911), pp. 1104-5; Letter to T. Evans, General Superintendent, 22 April 1921, CCA, 1921 Documental 0093; Labor by Contract, Sept. 1921, CCA, 1921 Documental 0080; Series of contracts written in 1923 in CCA, 1924

Table 3. *Daily wages paid to Mexican and foreign workers at Cananea, 1906 (pesos)*

Position	Foreigners	Mexicans
Miner	7.00	3.25
Machinist	7.50	4.00
Machinist's helper	7.00	3.50
Blacksmith	8.00	5.00

Source: Wage Scales, Cananea Company Archive, 1916 Documental 0032.

Whatever the method, copper mining was arduous and dangerous work. Until open pit mining was introduced at Cananea in the 1940s, ore was taken from shafts dug increasingly deeper into the earth. As in other large copper mines, work areas called stopes were blocked out in square sets and supported by timber. The ore was dug, hauled by car to a special shaft, and then hoisted to the surface. By the 1920s (and probably earlier), miners at modern mines were supplied with pneumatic drills. Until then, however, ore was dug using sledge hammers, chisels and dynamite. Ralph Ingersoll, who worked inside copper mines in Mexico and the United States, has left us with a description of the process:

In the olden days men used to go down with a chisel and a hammer and bang away at the rock until they cut an inch hole perhaps two feet deep. Then they filled the hole with powder and touched it off. The work was laborious – one man with a small hammer, ‘single-hacking’, in miner’s slang; or two men, one holding the drill and the other pounding it, ‘double-jacking’. There is a real thrill in holding the steel for a good double-jacker. He takes a full swing with a huge sledge-hammer, hardly looking where he strikes. If you hold the steel in the same place, he’ll go on hitting, fair and square, as fast as he can get the hammer back for another blow. But move it an inch or two to one side, and he will come down in the old spot once more, and the chances are ten to one that one of your hands is in time and space coincident with it; and that sledgehammer is moving when it comes around, and moving fast. I know because I’ve tried it, and from an American miner I got no sympathy for my bruises but plenty of cursing for not holding the iron steady.⁴⁹

Labour conflict

The development of isolated mine sites, such as Cananea, depended on the hardiness and skill of miners like Ralph Ingersoll. The mining boom in northern Mexico and the western United States drew experienced miners

Documental 0041; W. J. Mitchell to George Kingdom, 19 Sept. 1915, CCA, 1915 Documental 007.

⁴⁹ Ralph Ingersoll, *In and Under Mexico* (New York, 1924), pp. 59–65.

from the coal fields of Pennsylvania, the Upper Peninsular of Michigan, and small digs scattered throughout North America. They found themselves thrown together in make-shift towns and camps, sometimes hundreds of miles from the nearest established community, and without support from institutional authority. Frequently divided by culture, language and experience they struggled to overcome racial and ethnic prejudices to stand shoulder to shoulder. This section will begin by exploring some of the linkages between miners' movements in the western United States and northern Mexico.

The great silver mining boom of the 1870s and 1880s in the Rocky Mountains created over-night millionaires, and communities of miners who clamoured for higher wages and the right to unionise. Conflicts intensified when the price of silver collapsed in the 1890s and management responded by decreasing wages, laying off miners and closing down mines. These draconian measures ignited a wave of strikes throughout the region, including famous confrontations at Coeur d'Alene, Idaho and Cripple Creek, Colorado, which left scores of miners dead.⁵⁰

Organised labour played an important part in encouraging miners to strike. Members of the Knights of Labor, migrating from the coal fields of Pennsylvania, organised silver miners at Leadville, Colorado, as early as 1879. But the Western Federation of Miners soon emerged as the union of choice for westerners. The WFM believed that the interests of workers were fundamentally at odds with those of big business, and it actively organised miners throughout the west⁵¹ and along the Mexican border.⁵²

Mine owners resisted the WFM with all the resources at their disposal. For example, companies used informers to infiltrate locals and pass along crucial information. They also hired strikebreakers ('scabs') and armed detectives (Pinkerton agents) to disrupt unions. These tactics, which sometimes appeared illegal, generally went unchallenged by pro-business governments at the local, state, and federal levels. In fact, some particularly bitter strikes, such as those at Cripple Creek, Colorado and Bisbee, Arizona, were crushed with federal troops. It is not surprising that most miners' unions failed during these years.⁵³

Mines in Arizona and Mexico did not escape the attention of the

⁵⁰ Mark Wyman, *Hard Rock Epic* (Berkeley, 1979); Melvyn Dubofsky, 'The Origins of Western Working Class Radicalism, 1890-1905', *Labor History*, no. 7 (1966), pp. 132-54. I am grateful to Dr Mildred Beik for the latter reference and for her insights into the history of US miners.

⁵¹ Wyman, *Hard Rock Epic*, ch. 9.

⁵² Phil Mellinger, "'The Men Have Become Organizers': Labor Conflict and Unionization in the Mexican Mining Communities of Arizona, 1900-1915', *Western Historical Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 3 (Aug., 1992), pp. 323-47.

⁵³ Wyman, *Hard Rock Epic*; James W. Byrkit, *Forging the Copper Collar* (Tucson, 1982); and below.

Western Federation of Miners. Organising efforts were complicated, however, because US and European miners barred Mexicans from skilled positions and union membership. Mine managers, not surprisingly, exploited these ethnic and racial divisions and replaced strikers with scabs from opposing ethnic groups.⁵⁴

The failed WFM strike at Congress, Arizona, in 1902 illustrates these patterns. The WFM organised the strike to gain union recognition and succeeded in halting production. Management refused to negotiate, however, and resorted to standard strike-breaking tactics. Two undercover agents, including a Pinkerton operative, infiltrated the union and reported crucial information to managers. The company, borrowing from long-standing tradition, also imported a priest to quell the rebellious spirits of strikers. As the manager put it: 'Father Quito came down from Prescott as a pacifier and they told me that the holy father always preached with a six-shooter in the tail of his ecclesiastical (sic) coat.'⁵⁵

What finally broke the strike, however, was the timely arrival of strikebreakers. These were Mexicans from Phoenix. Previously, the other miners had voted to exclude *Mexicanos* from all positions except ore shovellers ('muckers'), a particularly arduous, disliked, and low-paying job. It seems likely that this exclusionary policy, based on prejudice, made it easier for Mexicans to be hired as strikebreakers. Nevertheless, they still had difficulty getting through the WFM picket line. Management finally smuggled them into the mine in closed railroad box cars and hired armed deputies to protect them while they worked. As a parting gesture, defeated strikers dynamited the mine's water pumping plant located 8 miles outside of camp.⁵⁶

The WFM recognised that ethnic divisiveness was undermining its efforts to organise mine sites, and in 1903 the national convention voted to recruit Mexicans actively and to censor the local at Globe, Arizona, for formally excluding Latinos. Nevertheless, the vote did not erase ingrained racial and social prejudices of North Americans and Europeans toward Mexicans, and conflicts continued for several years. A major turning point, according to Phil Mellinger, was the 1915 strike at Clifton-Morocenci, Arizona, when Mexican and US miners supported each other and received generous contributions from Latino mutual aid societies. This strike was followed by a major recruiting drive of Mexicans by the WFM, and by 1917 Mexicans constituted one-half of the union's membership in Arizona and held several WFM vice-presidencies.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Mellinger, 'The Men Have Become Organizers'.

⁵⁵ Memoirs of William Field Staunton, II, 'The First Fifty Years, 1860-1910', UASC, AZ 152, Box 1, Personal Material.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 120-5.

⁵⁷ Mellinger, 'The Men Have Become Organizers'.

Despite these gains, however, Mexican-Americans continued to earn less than Anglo-Americans for the same work, to live in segregated, inferior housing at mine sites, and to suffer from discrimination in local communities.⁵⁸

The same ethnic divisions that undermined the organisation of Mexican and non-Mexican miners in Arizona also existed at Cananea. Management's dual wage scale created a labour hierarchy based on race, and foreign workers received superior housing and services. Nevertheless, US and European workers were not contented. They expressed unhappiness over high rents, high hospital fees, and low wages,⁵⁹ and a majority had been members of the Western Federation of Miners.⁶⁰

The first outbreak of serious labour unrest at Cananea occurred in 1902 when 65 foreign mechanics – machinists, blacksmiths, boilermakers, pipefitters and a tinsmith – struck and shut down construction of the new smelter. The strikers demanded a wage increase from 45 to 50 cents per hour, which was unceremoniously rejected. Management claimed that strikers already earned five cents an hour more than machinists in Arizona, and quickly expelled the discontented across the international border. This had adverse consequences for the company, however, as mechanics in Arizona, out of solidarity with strikers, refused to accept work at Cananea. Management was forced to import two groups of mechanics from Colorado, which delayed construction of the smelter for 60 days.⁶¹

Nevertheless, management had no regrets. The real issue was not the extra five cents an hour. Greene was in the middle of a major construction project with millions of dollars on the line, and workers in the concentrator already received 60 cents per hour for similar work, which was clearly unfair and bound to cause trouble sooner or later.⁶² Management refused the wage increase because it feared a concession

⁵⁸ Huginnie presents an excellent discussion of racial, job, and social discrimination against Mexican miners in Arizona. In 1916 the WFM changed its name to the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers and became more conservative. Many Arizona miners were subsequently attracted to the Industrial Workers of the World. See Huginnie, 'Strikitos', chs 5 and 6.

⁵⁹ John Dwyer, 'The Greene Consolidated Copper Mines', *The Engineering and Mining Journal* (March, 1903), p. 416; Raat, *Reveltosos*, p. 75.

⁶⁰ See, *Official Proceedings of the Thirteenth Annual Convention of the Western Federation of Miners*, 27 May 1905, Salt Lake City, Utah. Special Collections, University of Colorado, Boulder.

⁶¹ 'List of Mechanics who Quit Work on April 21, 1902', CRS, Cananea, Microfilm # 72/150, Reel 4; Anson W. Burchard to A. B. Wadleigh, 1 May 1902, Cananea to Denver, AHS, Cananea, MS 1032, Box 1; Anson W. Burchard to Myron M. Parker, 19 May 1902, Cananea to Washington, D.C., AHS, Cananea, MS 1032, Box 1.

⁶² Anson W. Burchard to H. W. Hardings, 19 May 1902, Cananea to Washington, D.C., AHS, Cananea, MS 1032, Box 1.

would encourage the creation of a union. As Anson W. Burchard, the Second Vice-President and Comptroller, explained:

We feel that it is highly important for the future of the enterprise that any attempt to establish Trade Union conditions here should be frustrated, and that is precisely the issue involved in the present controversy.⁶³

In large measure, management could confidently take a hard line with strikers because of the firm support it received from local, state and federal officials. The town of Cananea, the largest in the province, owed its dramatic growth to the copper mines and this was reflected in many ways. For example, the company owned the most property, employed the most people, and paid the most taxes. It also sold electricity to the community and paid the salaries of postal workers and policemen (the two services that most directly affected its interests). Within any political system, this degree of economic importance would have given the firm considerable political influence. But in Porfirian Mexico, where democracy was a sham, the company's local influence was magnified.⁶⁴

Regional and national strongmen also supported the company in various ways. Greene received numerous tax breaks and other concessions from the federal and state governments. Particularly reassuring was the cozy relationship that company officials enjoyed with the leader of the *rurales* in Sonora, Colonel Emilio Kosterlitzky. The relationship involved financial, personal and political considerations. For its part, the company paid \$280 per month to the *rurales*, helped Kosterlitzky survey and develop a small mine, and put his friends and relatives on the company payroll. With good reason, Kosterlitzky referred to Greene as his 'friend' and sent Christmas cards to company officials.⁶⁵ The colonel also reciprocated in more meaningful ways. For example, he arrested persons suspected of stealing from the mines, and he kept a suspicious eye on political opponents of the Díaz regime. Greene also counted on

⁶³ Anson W. Burchard to Myron M. Parker, 19 May 1902, Cananea to Washington, D.C., AHS, Cananea, MS 1032, Box 1.

⁶⁴ Eugenia Meyer, Coord., *La Lucha Obrera en Cananea 1906*, 2nd ed. (Mexico City, 1990), p. 25; Aguilar Camín, *La frontera nómada*, p. 99. Sonora's legislature was tightly controlled by provincial elites. Thus, in the words of Aguilar Camín (p. 104): 'En un lapso de treinta y dos años a contar de 1879, solo sesenta y cuatro personas ocuparon los posibles 208 puestos en dieciseis legislaturas de trece escaños cada una. Entre los diputados de mayor incidencia se contaban los hermanos, primos y semicompadres de (General) Luis E. Torres....'

⁶⁵ Emilio Kosterlitzky to William C. Greene, 17 Jan 1901, Magdalena, Sonora to Cananea, AHS, Cananea, MS 1032, Box 2; James H. Kirk, Superintendent, to H. C. Rolfe, 25 May 1902, AHS, Cananea, MS 1032, Box 1; George Young to Colonel E. Kosterlitzky, 2 March 1908, Cananea to Magdalena, AHS, Cananea, MS 1032, Box 2; Emilio Kosterlitzky to George Young, 31 Aug. 1908, Agua Prieta to Cananea, AHS, Cananea, MS 1032, Box 2; Emilio Kosterlitzky to George Young, 24 Dec. 1907, Magdalena to Cananea (telegram), AHS, MS 1032, Box 2.

Kosterlitzky, a veteran of the Yaqui wars, to use deadly force to protect his investment.⁶⁶

Such an emergency arose on 1 June 1906, when Cananea's Mexican workers went out on strike, shut down the mine, and threatened to put Greene out of business. Greene relied on Kosterlitzky and the state governor, Rafael Izabal, to crush the strikers. But he also over-reacted, perhaps even panicked, when he asked Phelps-Dodge chief Walter Douglas to send 200 armed Arizona Rangers to Cananea. The presence of armed US troops on Mexican soil – breaking the heads of nationals – was a major embarrassment to the Díaz government, and graphically illustrated the power and independence that foreign firms had achieved. This episode links the 1906 strike with the Mexican Revolution because it contributed to anti-foreign sentiment and helped justify revolutionary legislation that rescinded concessions to foreign firms, increased corporate taxes and gave more rights to mine workers.

The 1906 strike was primarily a protest over falling real wages, threatened lay-offs, and the dual wage scale for natives and foreigners. Workers were also exposed to pro-union, anti-capital, and anti-government messages from the Partido Liberal Mexicano and the Western Federation of Miners. This does not prove, however, that either the PLM or the WFM organised the strike. In fact, the WFM's role is unclear and the local PLM leadership was caught off-guard by the outbreak of the conflict.

In the literature, more weight has been given to the PLM's influence.⁶⁷ However Greene accused the WFM of 'inciting the Mexicans' and bankrolling the PLM's local organisation.⁶⁸ I do not have corroborating evidence of Greene's accusation, but it is likely that the WFM, or at least its principals, had more influence at Cananea than generally acknowledged. The WFM claimed 1,500 former members at Cananea in 1905,⁶⁹ including

⁶⁶ Emilio Kosterlitzky to Ygnacio Macmanus {company attorney}, 26 Sept. 1902, Magdalena to Cananea, AHS, Cananea, MS 1032, Box 2; Emilio Kosterlitzky to George Young, 29 Feb. 1908, Magdalena to Cananea, AHS, Cananea, MS 1032, Box 2; Emilio Kosterlitzky to George Young, 31 Aug. 1908, Agua Prieta to Cananea, AHS, Cananea, MS 1032, Box 2.

⁶⁷ Sariago, *Enclaves y minerales*, pp. 129–37; Meyer, coord., *La Lucha Obrera*, pp. 62–75; Aguilar Camín, *La frontera nómada*, pp. 115–23. John Mason Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico* (Berkeley, 1987), pp. 63–8, attributes influence to the PLM as well as to agitators from the 'Industrial Workers of the World and other radical workers from the southwest'. However, he presents no particulars about the latter groups. Raat, *Revoltosos*, ch. 3, offers the most thorough traditional interpretation in English.

⁶⁸ W. C. Greene to Colonel Myron M. Parker, 11 June 1906, Cananea to Washington, D.C., CCA, 1906 Documental 0050.

⁶⁹ See, *Official Proceedings of the Thirteenth Annual Convention of the Western Federation of Miners*, 27 May 1905, Salt Lake City, Utah. Special Collections, University of Colorado at Boulder Library.

many foremen and skilled workers,⁷⁰ and these individuals would have been critical of management and supportive of workers' grievances. Despite the racial divisions that plagued the WFM in Arizona, Cananea's foreign miners could have concluded logically that to exclude Mexicans from organising activities *in Mexico* would only strengthen the company and condemn any foreign-based union to failure.

The PLM was not a union, but a persecuted political organisation that favoured replacing Porfirio Díaz with a government favourable to the working classes.⁷¹ By 1906 its principal leaders had been exiled to St Louis, Missouri, and local officers were constantly looking over their shoulders for *rurales* or the police. Nevertheless, the party managed to maintain local cells, distribute copies of its newspaper *Regeneración*, clamour for workers' rights, and provide disparate but tangible opposition to the Díaz regime. Alan Knight minimises the impact of these efforts on the outbreak of the Revolution, however, citing the difficulty of proving linkages between the PLM and the manning of the barricades.⁷²

The PLM's notoriety stems, in part, from its supposed role in organising the 1906 strike at Cananea. The party's influence in Cananea stemmed from two liberal organisations, the Unión Liberal Humanidad and the Club Liberal de Cananea, established in early 1906 by Manuel Diéguez, Estaban Baca Calderón, and Lázaro Gutiérrez de Lara. They distributed copies of *Regeneración* around town, wrote to Ricardo Flores Magón in St Louis, and debated political theory and tactics. Baca Calderón, the most militant of the three, spoke of 'reclaiming justice' for the wage earner and of resisting the 'caciques, the vile lackeys of capitalism'. He also wanted miners to realise that 'the dictatorship was their worst enemy' and 'feel the desire to overthrow it'. He and his friends also spoke of forming a 'Liga Minera de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos'.⁷³

It is unclear why management and local authorities allowed the liberals to operate openly. The municipal president had arranged for a spy to infiltrate the Club Liberal and pass information to mine managers.⁷⁴ They may have dismissed the liberals as relatively harmless ideologues. A more likely explanation, however, is that management was particularly disorganised at this juncture. Department heads were feuding and vital

⁷⁰ George Young, Secretary, 'Summary of Labor Conflicts at Cananea, 1906–1913', 1 Feb. 1913, CCA, 1916 Documental 0032.

⁷¹ Among other things, the PLM advocated the 8-hour day, indemnities for job-related accidents, child labour laws, and equal pay for Mexicans and foreigners. Meyer, coord., *La Lucha Obrera*, pp. 52–3.

⁷² Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, vol. I, pp. 44–7; Colin M. MacLachlan, *Anarchism and the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley, 1991), for a discussion of the persecution of Flores Magón in the United States.

⁷³ Aguilar Camín, *La frontera nómada*, pp. 115–19.

⁷⁴ Meyer, coord., *La Lucha Obrera*, p. 66.

information was not being shared.⁷⁵ Perhaps management had meant to suppress the PLM but had not given it priority.

The PLM's most inflammatory act was a speech delivered by Baca Calderón on 5 May 1906, to mark the great liberal victory at Puebla in 1862. Among other things, he exclaimed:

Examinad vuestra conciencia y ella os dirá que de nada os ha servido la sagrada herencia de libertades, conquistadas a precio de sangre... Enseñadle al capitalista que no sois bestias de carga; a ese capitalista que en todo y para todo nos ha postergado con su legión de hombres blondos de ojos azules. ¡Que vergüenza!, estáis en vuestro propio suelo y los beneficios que produce, vosotros deberíais corresponder en primer lugar...'.⁷⁶

These activities are seen by Sarioego as the beginning of an anarcho-syndicalist movement at Cananea which would endure throughout the Revolution. Sarioego, and several other scholars, have emphasised the significance of the PLM's radical ideology on miners' consciousness and there can be little doubt that Baca Calderón's speech, the dissemination of radical literature, and talk of a miners' union, struck a resonant chord with Mexican miners.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, ideological influences and evolving consciousness are notoriously difficult to measure, and the ensuing events suggest that economic issues were uppermost in workers' minds.

On the day the strike broke out two Mexican contractors at the Oversight Mine were sacked for not meeting their production quotas, and foremen announced that more ore would have to be dug by fewer men. This meant lay-offs and higher production quotas for those who remained.⁷⁸ Angry miners raced through the mine breaking electric lamps and shouting 'equal pay for equal work' and other demands. Management accused the dismissed contractors of inciting the men to riot,⁷⁹ but it is unlikely that they needed much additional encouragement.

In addition to the lay-offs, Mexican miners' purchasing power was weakened because of the declining peso, which had been devalued by 50 per cent the previous year.⁸⁰ This increased the cost of imported goods stocked in Cananea's stores, and also widened the economic gulf separating Mexicans from foreigners because the latter's gold wages lost no purchasing power. US labourers were already paid twice as much as

⁷⁵ W. C. Greene to Mark L. Sperry, 28 June 1906, CCA, 1906 Documental 0086.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Aguilar Camín, *La frontera nómada*, p. 118.

⁷⁷ Sarioego, *Enclaves y minerales*, pp. 131–5.

⁷⁸ Aguilar Camín, *La frontera nómada*, p. 119; George Young, 'Summary of Labor Conflicts at Cananea, 1906–1913', 1 Feb. 1913, CCA, 1916 Documental 0032.

⁷⁹ George Young, 'Summary of Labor Conflicts at Cananea, 1906–1913', 1 Feb. 1913, CCA, 1916 Documental 0032. ⁸⁰ Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico*, p. 63.

Mexicans for the same work, and the weak peso seriously aggravated this long-standing inequity.

Throughout the evening disgruntled miners from the Oversight encouraged others to join them in a strike.⁸¹ This was clearly not the work of the PLM. Strike leaders approached the liberals but received a mixed response: Baca Calderón immediately agreed to join them, but Diéguez called the strike an ‘inconvenient act’ and hesitated. The future Constitutionalist general, however, soon found the courage of his convictions. His change of heart has been traditionally credited to Baca Calderón,⁸² but Diéguez may have been also influenced by his brother, who was among the original strike leaders.⁸³

During the evening Greene was informed of the impending strike by a Mexican worker, and was handed a circular that called for robbing the bank, taking firearms and food from the company store, occupying the mines, and over-throwing the Díaz government. Baca Calderón later denied that the PLM had authored the document and criticised it as crude and ‘not the work of intellectuals.’⁸⁴ The document shows, however, that strikers had discussed both political and economic issues and were not engaging in a mere spontaneous outburst.⁸⁵

The advocacy of political change by strikers undoubtedly helped Greene mobilise government support to crush them. He sent the company attorney by special train to ask Governor Izábal to send federal troops and to dispatch Colonel Kosterlitzky with the *rurales*. He also telegraphed Walter Douglas in Bisbee requesting 200 rifles, 20 pistols and 5,000 rounds of ammunition, and then boarded a train to retrieve them. He stormed through the customs house at Naco without being stopped, and arrived back at Cananea at 4 am on 1 June with his arsenal.⁸⁶

At 11 am some 3,000 Mexican workers assembled and a strike committee presented Greene with a list of demands.⁸⁷ The document was signed by fifteen Mexicans and one PLM leader (Baca Calderón). Its tone was polite, to the point, and focused on key economic issues. There was no mention of revolution, destruction of property, unions, or political parties. In other words, all reference to political action had been shelved

⁸¹ George Young, ‘Summary of Labor Conflicts at Cananea, 1906–1913’, 1 Feb. 1913, CCA, 1916 Documental 0032.

⁸² Aguilar Camín, *La frontera nómada*, p. 119.

⁸³ Strike leaders to President to the C.C.C. Co., S.A., 1 June 1906, AHS, Cananea, MS 1032, Box 1.

⁸⁴ See, Esteban Baca Calderón, *Juicio sobre la guerra del yaqui y génesis de la huelga de Cananea* (Mexico City, 1956), p. 40. Cited in Anderson, *Outcasts in Their Own Land*, pp. 115–16.

⁸⁵ This is the position of the revisionists. See Anderson, *Outcasts in Their Own Land*, pp. 110–17; and Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, vol. I, pp. 108–18.

⁸⁶ W. C. Greene to Colonel Myron M. Parker, 11 June 1906, Cananea to Washington, D.C., CCA, 1906 Documental 0050.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

in favour of focusing on work-related issues.⁸⁸ Strikers lamented the inequities of the dual pay-scale and, 'with deep regret', informed Greene that the lay-offs in the Oversight mine had led them to strike. They asked that 'as a question of justice' the company appoint Mexican foremen, and in recognition of miners' 'love for work' that Greene increase the salaries of Mexican workers by one peso a day. The strikers also asked for an eight-hour work day as well as the dismissal of abusive foremen in the Oversight. Greene rejected every demand and refused to negotiate.⁸⁹ His uncompromising position was harsh, but typical of the times. Negotiation with workers would have established a dangerous precedent and Greene was already prepared for a violent confrontation.

Strikers turned angry and roamed throughout the camp making sure that everything was shut down. Greene dispatched heavily armed men to key places, including the bank, the company store, and the plant, with instructions to prevent robberies and the starting of fires.⁹⁰ It was not long, however, before a major conflict occurred at the lumberyard. A crowd there had been initially dispersed with high-powered water hoses, but it quickly reformed in an ugly mood. Armed employees confronted the miners and Arthur S. Dwight, the general manager, discharged his shotgun into the crowd.⁹¹ This set off gun fire from both sides and the North Americans fled. Five Mexicans lay dead along with the superintendent of the lumberyard, George Metcalf, and his brother William. Strikers then torched the lumberyard causing \$125,000 worth of damage.⁹²

The strikers, some 2,000 strong, then set out for Greene's house which stood on a *mesa* over-looking the town. Greene was, however, waiting for them with several dozen heavily armed men with instructions to shoot 'the leaders' at the first sign of violence. Once again, Dwight precipitated a confrontation when he pushed a strike leader. A shot rang out and Greene's men fired into the crowd, killing eight (including four strike

⁸⁸ An anonymous reader for this Journal believes that Baca Calderón forced strikers to adopt a more conservative position. However, the evidence only shows that the formal list of demands presented to Greene did not contain the political rhetoric of the broadside distributed the night before. There is no evidence that Baca Calderón had forced strikers to modify their demands, or that the strike leaders who approached Baca Calderón were the authors of the broadside. Baca Calderón, well-known for his fiery political rhetoric, may or may not have favoured a more conservative position.

⁸⁹ Strike leaders to the President of the C.C.C. Co., S.A., 1 June 1906, AHS, Cananea, MS 1032, Box 1.

⁹⁰ W. C. Greene to Colonel Myron M. Parker, 11 June 1906, Cananea to Washington, D.C., CCA, 1906 Documental 0050.

⁹¹ Statement by Arthur S. Dwight, 6 June 1906, CRS, Cananea, Microfilm # 72/150, Reel 4. Dwight claimed that his shotgun accidentally discharged when he dropped it.

⁹² George Young, 'Summary of Labor Conflicts at Cananea, 1906-1913', CCA, 1916 Documental 0032; W. C. Greene to Colonel Myron M. Parker, 11 June 1906, Cananea to Washington, D.C., CCA, 1906 Documental 0050.

leaders) and wounding sixteen. Another clash soon followed downtown when strikers broke into the company store and pawn shops and took guns and ammunition. Company employees joined forces with local police and fired into the newly armed crowd, killing approximately 20 persons. An additional 45 miners were arrested and placed in jail. By the end of the day, at least 33 Mexicans and two North Americans had been killed.⁹³

The next day Greene arranged for 200 to 300 Arizona Rangers to cross the border and assist in the suppression of the strike. This was in violation of international law and against the wishes of the Díaz government. Governor Izábal, arriving at the border and ignoring orders, agreed to deputise the North Americans and allow them to escort him to Cananea. General Torres's *federales* and Kosterlitzky's *rurales* were also on their way to the mine.⁹⁴

Izábal and the North Americans arrived first. The governor and Greene asked the miners to return to work and were roundly booed. There was not a renewal of violence, however, until the arrival of Torres and Kosterlitzky in the afternoon. Men on horseback rode down a group of miners, and company men took up positions on the crest of the *mesa* and fired indiscriminately into the crowd. There was also a clash between *rurales* and strikers at the market, which resulted in more deaths. The following day General Torres gave strikers the choice of returning to work or being drafted into the army and sent to fight the Yaquis. Miners dejectedly returned to their jobs without having won any concessions except for the dismissal of the offending foremen in the Oversight mine.⁹⁵

Aftermath

Greene congratulated everyone for a job well done. In a letter to Enrique C. Creel, the Governor of Chihuahua, he praised the surgical killings:

One of the most fortunate circumstances connected with the lamentable occurrences, is that every Mexican who was killed was a striker and nearly everyone was a ringleader... This seems almost providential...⁹⁶

He also wrote to an associate that the swift crushing of the strike was sure to attract more foreign investment:

I notice that some of the papers state that this will have a tendency of retarding the investment of foreign capital in Mexico. It seems to me that it should be the

⁹³ W. C. Greene to Colonel Myron M. Parker, 11 June 1906, Cananea to Washington, D.C., CCA, 1906 Documental 0050.

⁹⁴ W. C. Greene to Colonel Myron M. Parker, 11 June 1906, Cananea to Washington, D.C., CCA, 1906 Documental 0050; George Young, 'Summary of Labor Conflicts at Cananea, 1906-1913', 1 Feb. 1913, CCA, 1916 Documental 0032; Sonnichsen, *Colonel Greene*, pp. 188-207; Aguilar Camín, *La frontera nómada*, p. 120. ⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ W. C. Greene to Don Enrique C. Creel, Governor of Chihuahua, 10 June 1906, CCA, 1906 Documental 0046.

other way. Looking at the strikes we have had at Leadville, Coeur d'Alene, etc., in which mines could be shut down for months and months, here within 24 hours after the occurrence occurred, the Governor was on the spot with a special train and without any red tape immediately commenced to do business.⁹⁷

Greene also happily acknowledged that the strike give authorities the excuse to expel, jail, or kill suspected union members and PLM followers. All known members of the WFM were deported to the United States, and 87 Mexican labour activists were imprisoned. Interestingly, the latter included many previously deported from New Mexico and Southern California to Mexico, which underscores the fluidity of labour activism along the border. Although some PLM members escaped,⁹⁸ Diéguez, Baca Calderón, Gutiérrez de Lara and two others were detained. Governor Izábal wanted them shot under the *ley de fuga*, but Vice-President Ramón Corral refused and they were sentenced to 15 years hard labour in the notorious San Juan de Ulúa prison.⁹⁹

The suppression of the strike also afforded the opportunity to replace public officials whose performance on behalf of the company had been less than expected. Greene believed that the municipal president was sympathetic towards the PLM and he was replaced by Richard Arnold, a Mexican of US or English descent. Greene also arranged to replace the United States vice-consul at Cananea, whom he called a 'sissy', with a Colonel Breathitt. This was done by one of Greene's attorneys, who approached both President Roosevelt and Secretary of State Root.¹⁰⁰

For his part, Governor Izábal issued a public statement which justified the crushing of the strike. He asserted that Mexican workers at Cananea lived like members of 'the middle class', with houses, furniture, and money in the bank. They had no reason to complain and they had been dealt with appropriately.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, Izábal had a lot to answer for. He had allowed US gunmen to cross the border and to intimidate Mexicans. This resulted in a storm of protest in the public press and was one of the few issues that united liberals and conservatives.¹⁰² This sentiment was not lost on Francisco Madero, who later counted the Cananea affair among the principal abuses of the Porfiriato.¹⁰³ According

⁹⁷ W. C. Greene to Colonel Myron M. Parker, 11 June 1906, Cananea to Washington, D.C., CCA, 1906 Documental 0050.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Aguilar Camín, *La frontera nómada*, p. 121.

¹⁰⁰ W. C. Greene to Don Enrique C. Creel, Governor of Chihuahua, 10 June 1906, CCA, 1906 Documental 0046; W. E. D. Stokes to W. C. Greene, 21 June 1906, CCA, 1906 Documental 0086

¹⁰¹ *Mexican Herald*, 24 June 1906, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰² For example, the pro-cleric daily *El Estandarte* of San Luis Potosí condemned Izábal and compared the use of Arizona Rangers to the US invasion in 1847, while the business and commercial weekly *El Progreso Latino* claimed that Cananea's strikers were struggling for their rights against foreigners. Anderson, *Outcasts in Their Own Land*, pp. 112-13.

¹⁰³ Knight, *Mexican Revolution*, vol. I, p. 148.

to Héctor Aguilar Camín, the 1906 strike also severely undermined the legitimacy of the Porfirian oligarchy in Sonora.¹⁰⁴ And, throughout the nation, the conflict strengthened the position of Díaz's nationalist critics who sought to limit the influence of foreign corporations.

Nevertheless, this does not prove that the Cananea strike was a PLM plot to overthrow Díaz.¹⁰⁵ Baca Calderón, writing later in life, insisted that the liberals had not instigated the strike nor written the circular calling for an uprising against Díaz.¹⁰⁶ There is no compelling reason why Baca Calderón would have lied about the PLM's role in the strike, especially since it had become part of the revered lore of the Revolution.

The liberals clearly provided strikers with ideological orientation and motivation, and some organising may have been done by the WFM, which had the practical experience. Some individual strikers among the rank-and-file were also more politically radical than the strike leaders. Sariego rightly argues that the conflict taught workers that they would have to confront the company directly to win concessions. In other words, it was a radicalising experience that increased class consciousness and laid the foundation for future strikes.¹⁰⁷ However, it was also a bitter experience. Dozens of strikers had been killed and hundreds more exiled or imprisoned, and with speed and precision. Another important lesson for workers was that to win meaningful concessions they needed powerful allies and perhaps a new political system. This inspired thousands of them to man the barricades in 1910 (Baca Calderón and Diéguez became leaders), while the rest were poised to take advantage of the political opportunities afforded by the Revolution to press for higher wages, better benefits, and a union.¹⁰⁸

On the heels of the strike, Greene was confronted with major financial and managerial problems. On 5 June he received news that three board members, through stock dumping and spreading rumours about the strike, were trying to depose him and seize control of the company. Greene momentarily restored calm by providing detailed accounts of the strike's suppression.¹⁰⁹ However, fundamental problems remained. The continued purging of WFM members and others suspected of 'political incorrectness' was causing severe labour shortages in the smelter and lowering production. Moreover, nearly all department heads had resigned

¹⁰⁴ Aguilar Camín, *La frontera nómada*, p. 95.

¹⁰⁵ Anderson, *Outcasts in Their Own Land*, pp. 114–17. ¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 115–16.

¹⁰⁷ Sariego, *Enclaves y minerales*, p. 137.

¹⁰⁸ There is abundant evidence for this in the surviving papers of the Cananea mines. See my manuscript 'United States Copper Companies and the Mexican Revolution, 1906–1924'.

¹⁰⁹ Myron M. Parker to Colonel W. C. Greene, 5 June 1906, CCA, 1906 Documental 0044.

or were on the verge of resigning, and there was constant bickering among them. Greene blamed this on the new timekeeper whose reforms had saved the company money, but alienated practically everyone. The exception was the general manager Dwight, who was the timekeeper's mentor. If Greene demanded the timekeeper's resignation, which seemed inevitable, his general manager would also resign.¹¹⁰

Greene was also having financial problems. Insurance failed to pay for \$147,916.54 worth of damages incurred during the strike, and in December the treasurer notified creditors that payments would be late.¹¹¹ Other problems included the falling price of copper as well as the increasingly higher sulphur content of Cananea's ore, which required new reverberators for processing. This required cash Greene did not have and led him to accept a partnership with mining moguls Thomas F. Cole and John D. Ryan. The latter was president of Amalgamated Copper Co. of Butte, Montana, and both were business associates of William Rockefeller and Henry H. Rogers, the latter a long-time adversary of Greene's. Cole and Ryan had already acquired the Calumet and Arizona copper mines near Bisbee, and were now casting a covetous eye on Cananea.¹¹²

Greene initially formed a new corporation with Cole and Ryan to develop two large local mines, with Greene receiving approximately \$2 million in cash. This company was called the Cananea Central Copper Company, with headquarters in Cole's home town of Duluth, Minnesota. Within a few months, it merged with Greene's to form a new holding company, Greene Cananea Copper Co., with Cole as president and Greene as vice-president. Shareholders in Greene's old company received stock in the holding company, and Cole, Ryan and a few others voted themselves stock worth several millions of dollars. This was a manoeuvre they had previously employed in 1899 when they helped form Amalgamated Copper (later re-named Anaconda) in Butte, Montana. At the stockholders' meeting on 15 February 1907, Cole and Ryan seized control of the new company and pushed Greene out. The colonel, heavily in debt and in failing health, gradually sold off his remaining property in Mexico and died in a vehicle accident in 1911.¹¹³

It was difficult for independents like Colonel William C. Greene to last long in the copper business. The deck was stacked against them by the big

¹¹⁰ W. C. Greene to Mark L. Sperry, 28 June 1906, CCA, 1906 Documental 0086.

¹¹¹ See the series of letters written to creditors in Dec. 1906, CRS, Cananea, Microfilm # 72/150, Reel 1. On problems collecting insurance see, George A. Young to D. Cole, Assistant General Manager, 9 Aug. 1907, CRS, Cananea, Microfilm # 72/150, Reel 1.

¹¹² Sonnichsen, *Colonel Greene*, pp. 210–15. Sonnichsen's narrative is based on newspaper, documentary and secondary sources. See his notes, p. 297.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 215–19; 255. Sonnichsen's narrative is based on documentary and newspaper sources. See his notes, p. 297.

corporations. Greene had failed to build a company comparable to Anaconda, Phelps-Dodge, or Kennecott because he was not a particularly efficient manager, did not have the same access to resources, and was undercut by rivals. Copper mining required extensive and continuous investment in order to mine and process low grade ore in massive quantities. It was also expensive to ship tons of copper, and Greene had sold his railroad in 1902. Other producers, such as Phelps-Dodge, shipped ore on their own railroads and saved accordingly. Similar struggles between copper producers had occurred in Montana in the early twentieth century with Anaconda eventually emerging victorious.¹¹⁴

In some ways, big copper resembled big oil. John D. Rockefeller managed to push aside most of his rivals in the Eastern and Midwestern United States through control over railroads and refining before anti-trust legislation and oil discoveries overseas and in Texas, Oklahoma, and California allowed rivals to form. This still only amounted to a handful of major companies – Standard, Royal Dutch Shell, Texaco, Arco, and a few others – which dominated the industry until they had to make room for nationalism and OPEC.

Cole and Ryan, linked with Anaconda and Rockefeller, were making a major move into Mexico with the purchase of Cananea. Almost simultaneously, they formed the International Smelting and Refining Company with the intention of building several smelters in Mexico and competing with ASARCO for the North American market. Other major investors in the International included William Rockefeller, W. C. Corey of U.S. Steel and H. C. Frick of Pittsburgh. The company was initially capitalised at \$50 million.¹¹⁵ In 1916 Anaconda also began to develop the massive copper deposits in Chile, which coincided with rapidly rising copper prices on the world market because of the war.¹¹⁶

Cole and Ryan inaugurated a new era at Cananea with the appointment of Dr Louis D. Ricketts as general manager. Ricketts was called ‘*malcintado*’ by Mexican workers because he always wore a belt several sizes too big. Despite his appearance, he was one of the top mining engineers and managers of his generation, and he proceeded to rationalise production at Cananea. The new owners put \$3 million at Ricketts’s disposal,¹¹⁷ and in November 1907 he ordered a complete shutdown to install a new plant.¹¹⁸ The timing of the shutdown conveniently coincided

¹¹⁴ Hildebrand and Mangum, *Capital and Labor*, pp. 65–71.

¹¹⁵ *The Mexican Mining Journal*, vol. 8, no. 3 (March, 1909), pp. 11–12.

¹¹⁶ Hildebrand and Mangum, *Capital and Labor*, p. 69.

¹¹⁷ *The Mexican Mining Journal*, vol. 6, no. 10 (October, 1907), p. 19.

¹¹⁸ The Cananea Consolidated Copper Company, S.A., Annual Report of the Superintendent of the Reduction Division for the year 1908, CCA, 1908 Documental 0002.

Table 4. *Metal production at Cananea, 1899-1910*

Year	Copper (lbs.)	Silver (ozs.)	Gold (ozs.)
1899-1902 ¹	32,371,026	272,816	342
1903	42,310,544	397,425	2,391
1904	55,014,339	446,186	3,752
1905	62,839,510	401,307	3,861
1906	54,833,559	426,021	4,117
1907	58,180,856	766,422	6,100
1908	18,619,609	447,663	2,879
1909	44,547,689	933,539	5,877
1910	45,680,145	1,184,980	5,468

Source: Production and Value, 1899-1921, CCA, 1921 Documental 0126.

¹ Annual average.

Table 5. *Value of metal production at Cananea, 1899-1910 (dollars)*

Year	Copper	Silver	Gold	Total
1899-1902 ¹	4,208,235	136,408	6,840	4,351,481
1903	5,684,741	200,501	47,335	5,684,741
1904	6,992,322	322,975	75,040	7,390,337
1905	8,959,029	233,045	77,220	9,269,294
1906	9,495,075	275,535	83,340	9,852,950
1907	10,814,657	507,110	132,000	11,453,767
1908	2,511,785	215,621	57,580	2,784,986
1909	5,840,291	475,737	117,540	6,433,568
1910	5,765,291	627,091	109,360	6,501,742

Source: Production and Value, 1899-1921, CCA, 1921 Documental 0126.

¹ Annual average.

with a period of low copper prices. However, it also cost thousands of workers their jobs and caused a sharp decline in tax revenues. This was a stark demonstration of the company's importance to the regional economy.

Over the course of the next eight months, technical improvements increased production efficiency and saved on labour costs. However, production declined in 1908 because of the shutdown and did not immediately return to 1907 levels because less ore was being mined. Improved efficiency in the plant allowed for higher recovery of silver and gold. For example, by replacing all eight furnaces with new models the company doubled ore smelting capacity from 50,000 to 100,000 tons per month. The new furnaces could also be operated with 100 fewer men per shift, or 300 fewer per day. An additional 300 jobs were eliminated because the new plant did not require a sampling department. New roasters, converters and reverberatory furnaces were also installed, which increased the percentage of copper matte recovered from 35 to 45 %, cut down on emissions of poisonous sulphuric gas, saved on power

Table 6. *Daily wages paid to foreign workers at Cananea, 1906–8 (pesos)*

Position	1906	1907	1908
Miner	7.00	8.00	7.00
Machinist	7.50	8.50	8.00
Shift Boss	12.00	12.00	11.00

Source: Wage Scales, Cananea Company Archive, 1916 Documental 0032.

consumption, and eliminated several jobs in the converter house. The system of transporting ore and organising labour was also re-organised to improve efficiency and increase production.¹¹⁹ In 1909 *The Mexican Mining Journal* declared the new smelter ‘the most modern in the world...’¹²⁰

Ricketts also saved money through the introduction of the caving and slicing system of tunnelling (which required less timber), a reduction in wages, and the use of cash incentives to encourage better attendance.¹²¹ The ‘premium’ system paid Mexican workers an additional 25 to 50 cents per day if they worked 26 to 28 days per month. At first, it only applied to those working underground and earning less than 4.50 pesos per day, but it was later extended to most departments. The percentage of workers earning premiums increased from 32% in July 1907, to 68.9% in January 1910. According to management, the premium system greatly improved worker attendance and productivity. The plant no longer experienced unscheduled shutdowns during the night shift, which had occasionally occurred, and workers now stuck to the same job. This led to greater efficiency through job specialisation. In other words, management had created a situation more closely resembling a factory system.¹²²

Moreover, the premium system achieved these results without increasing the company’s labour bill over 1906 levels. The size of the work force had been trimmed, base wages were only slightly above 1906 rates, and the company reserved the right to lower daily wage by one peso if the price of copper fell below 18 cents per pound. The wages rates in Tables 6 and 7 assume payment of a premium as well as high copper prices – in other words, a best case scenario for workers. Note that a dual pay scale for native and foreign workers was still in place.

The rationalisation of production at Cananea also received a helping hand from the federal and state governments. The federal government granted the company the right to import fuel oil duty free, as long as

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Vol. 8, no. 1 (April, 1909), p. 28.

¹²¹ L. D. Ricketts, ‘The Cananea Consolidated Copper Co. in 1908’, *The Engineering and Mining Journal*, vol. 87, no. 14 (3 April 1909), pp. 701–5.

¹²² The Cananea Consolidated Copper Company, S.A., Annual Report of the Superintendent of the Reduction Division for the year 1908, CCA, 1908 Documental 0002; ‘Wage Scales’, CCA, 1916 Documental 0032.

Table 7. *Daily wages paid to Mexican workers at Cananea, 1906–8 (pesos)*

Position	1906	1907	1908
Miner	3.25	3.75	3.50
Machinist	4.00	4.50	4.25
Gang Boss	4.50	5.00	5.00
Mucker	3.00	3.50	3.25

Source: Wage Scales, Cananea Company Archive, 1916 Documental 0032.

Table 8. *Cost of producing one ton of copper at Cananea, 1907–10*

Year	Cost (dollars)
1907	6.82
1908	3.86
1909	3.09
1910	2.69

Source: *The Mexican Mining Journal*, vol. 11, no. 7 (July 1912), p. 46.

domestic oil could not be found at the same price. This allowed Ricketts to forego the use of more expensive coal and to install state of the art equipment in the new plant. For its part, the state government extended Cananea's exemption from export taxes on copper for 20 years.¹²³ The net result of these concessions and improvements was to lower dramatically the cost of production (see Table 8).

Cananea's new concessions underscored the government's failure to fashion a stricter policy toward foreign-owned mines. The Díaz regime, in the wake of the 1906 strike, had attempted to curtail the supreme position of foreign capital in the national economy. Most notably, at great expense, it nationalised most of the foreign-owned railroads in 1907, and the following year proposed new legislation to limit foreign ownership of mines in the border states and to increase government's regulatory power over mining. The Minister of Development, Olegario Molina, stated publicly that foreign mining 'trusts' enjoyed more privileges than Mexican companies, and he made specific reference to the Cananea affair of 1906 as a motivation for the proposed mining law. The new legislation was, predictably, vigorously opposed by the mining companies, whose lawyers and lobbyists successfully delayed passage for two years. The law that finally emerged was a toothless document that changed little.¹²⁴

What impact did the rationalisation of production, brought about by new concessions and technical innovation, have on labour relations at Cananea? According to management:

¹²³ L. D. Ricketts, 'The Cananea Consolidated Copper Co., in 1908', *The Engineering and Mining Journal*, vol. 87, no. 14 (3 April 1909), p. 705.

¹²⁴ Bernstein, *The Mexican Mining Industry*, pp. 78–83.

Table 9. *Foreign and native workers at Cananea, 1907–10*

Date	No. of Employees	Natives (%)	Foreigners (%)
Feb. 1907	4,854	67	33
April 1909	3,414	82	18
July 1910	3,941	88	12

Source: Wage Scales, Cananea Company Archive, 1916 Documental 0032.

The community had been transformed from a virulent (sic) hotbed of insubordination and disregard for the general welfare into a peaceful, prosperous and contented condition.¹²⁵

But how contented were workers? Thousands of miners had been laid off during the shutdown, the size of the work force had been trimmed, base wages had been lowered in 1908, and management and government were more determined than ever to prevent unionisation. Moreover, following the 1906 strike a permanent army garrison was built at Cananea to suppress future disturbances with even greater efficiency. Management also took advantage of the shutdown to purge any remaining WFM and PLM sympathisers, and to cut back significantly on the number of US workers (see Table 9).¹²⁶ This latter decision looked good to outsiders and helped several individual Mexicans. However, the company was primarily seeking to limit WFM infiltration and save on wages, rather than institute equitable hiring practices. In 1907 the WFM leadership lamented that it could not organise a union at Cananea, and that membership at Cananea was restricted to those who could secretly enlist in Arizona.¹²⁷ It is clear that social and armed control of workers intensified following the strike, and that management self-assuredly mistook the effects of repression and regimentation for contentment.

Conclusion

United States copper companies' privileged position in Mexico had been nurtured and fortified to the point where the Díaz government could not reform its own policy following the 1906 strike. Capital's victory, however, was not without its costs. The Cananea strike revealed the risks inherent in Mexico's blueprint for economic growth, the social dislocation

¹²⁵ The Cananea Consolidated Copper Company, S.A., Annual Report of the Superintendent of the Reduction Division for the year 1908', CCA, 1908 Documental 0002.

¹²⁶ George Young, 'Summary of Labor Conflicts at Cananea, 1906–1913', 1 Feb. 1913, CCA, 1916 Documental 0032; W. C. Greene to Colonel Myron M. Parker, 11 June 1906, Cananea to Washington, D.C., CCA, 1906 Documental 0050.

¹²⁷ *Official Proceedings of the Fifteenth Annual Convention of the Western Federation of Miners*, Denver, Colorado, 10 June to 3 July 1907, p. 195, Special Collections, University of Colorado at Boulder Library.

caused by development of the copper industry on both sides of the border, and workers' receptiveness to liberal ideology.

Cananea's strikers demanded higher wages and improved working conditions during a period of falling real wages and threatened lay-offs. Although they were not part of a PLM plot to overthrow Díaz, their actions had important political ramifications. The seeds were planted for a working class movement and regional linkages among miners were forged. Mexican workers also learned the futility of challenging the big copper companies until the balance of power in Sonora and Mexico could be changed. During the four years that separated the strike from the outbreak of the Revolution, they remained poised to press for higher wages and more rights. They were not contented, resigned, or vanquished. When politically discontented members of the Sonoran bourgeoisie joined the Revolution,¹²⁸ Cananea's miners seized the opportunity to form a union and to press company officials and revolutionary leaders for higher wages, improved benefits, and more control over the workplace.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ For the Revolution in Sonora, see Aguilar Camín, *La frontera nómada*.

¹²⁹ See my manuscript 'United States Copper Companies and the Mexican Revolution, 1906–1924'.