

Thomas G. Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labour War* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2008). 408 pages + Bibliography and Index. ISBN # 978-0674046917. Hardcover \$15.00

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Andrews' monograph discusses the conditions in the Colorado coal mines leading up to the Ludlow Massacre and the Ten Days War of 1914. This impressive monograph lays out why the history of coal in America during industrialization should take on a position of prominence that it has been largely denied. The monograph is composed of elements from environmental, social, labour, ethnic, and economic history that come together to create a comprehensive depiction of the world of coal mining in Colorado.

This coal field narrative begins with a brief discussion of the events of the Ten Days War and the "Ludlow Massacre," which Andrews believes are often oversimplified and thus require a deeper exploration that this work intends to provide. This over simplification, Andrews insists, arises when the Ten Days War is quoted as an example of worker unrest and struggle, without delving into the true causes and underlining factors that surround it (p. 6-9). For example, although Philip Foner's *History of the Labor Movement in the United States: The AFL in the Progressive Era, 1910–1915* discusses the Ludlow Massacre, it provides little examination of the larger picture. In contrast, Andrews' text leads readers through a multifaceted world connected by coal mining and the heavy price people paid for the use and abuse of this fossil fuel.

Andrews provides a brief biography of William Palmer, an English coal surveyor, engineer, and founder of the Colorado coal industry, in order to establish the geological and environmental roots of coal in the American mid-west (p. 24). Andrews argues that Palmer embodied the coal industry's industriousness and passion, especially as a proponent of the future of American expansion through coal. This faith, however, came with certain complications. Palmer recognized that the development of coal implied both environmental destruction and human degradation. Andrews uses Palmer to expose this duality of the coal

industry in Colorado by including Palmer's moral struggles over the profitable, yet costly expansion of the coal industry. One of the harshest of these costs was the hazardous working conditions that stretched men to their mental and physical limits (p. 25).

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The inhumane realities of Colorado's coal industry also led to the increasing importance of immigrant labour as a response to both these working conditions and as a way to reduce expenses. The shift from experienced colliers from the eastern United States and Britain to inexperienced immigrants represents a larger pattern of outsourcing jobs, as well as the constant struggle to achieve the lowest possible price for the consumer, while accumulating the highest possible profits for the parent companies (p. 93). These elements, common in working-class histories, are examined alongside ethnic conflict and the surprising level of camaraderie that managed to surpass it.

One of the factors that allowed the miners to achieve this, Andrews illustrates, was the growing tensions that emerged between the colliers and their employers during the 1880s. The growth of railways made it much easier and more cost effective to bring migrant labour to Colorado, and thus wages paid to miners plummeted, since disgruntled labourers could be easily replaced (p. 159). This signalled the start of serious labour demonstrations against these pay cuts. Andrews explains that these marches had limited success, however, and there were several years between each significant march. Nevertheless, the ability of the marchers to organize among dozens of nationalities, and across linguistic barriers was a testament to their perseverance (p. 17). Andrews creates a well rounded and balanced image of the lives of the strikers, yet he is careful not to romanticize worker solidarity and includes persistent elements of unrest within worker groups. Interestingly, Andrews notes that the ethnic diversity of the miners was part of a ploy by the mining corporations to prevent organization. The companies acted on the notion that social divisions and language barriers would create an environment of distrust and suspicion among their fellow colliers (p. 174).

The coal companies, however, did not anticipate the pride that the miners would take in their work. It was an exceedingly dangerous job, and the time they spent underground gave them an appreciation not

only for the skill it took to stay alive, but also for the need to rely on the skill of the person next to them, regardless of their nationality. Bonds were formed between people who could barely communicate, though these did not always last on the surface. Unfortunately, Andrews explains, these bonds were far from enough to carry a major strike action. Isolated mine strikes did not achieve much success, and in order to make a substantial impact, miners had to be able to organize walkouts that included multiple mines (p. 176). It was a well-organized strike through these methods that led to a standoff between miners and Standard Oil's armed enforcers, which eventually degraded into the "Ludlow Massacre" on April 20, 1914 (p. 176). The Massacre itself began as an armed skirmish against the strikers' tent city, resulting in a large fire and over a dozen deaths including wives and children of the colliers. In reprisal, the workers of the tent city unleashed the Ten Days War upon the corporations that they held responsible for the casualties. The workers' revenge was swift and they destroyed thousands of dollars worth of company property, killed mine guards, and thanks to many of their backgrounds in foreign militaries, generally wrought havoc on their enemies. Andrews presents this explosive and bloody retaliation as part of a larger picture of the inhuman conditions that coal miners toiled under. The coal miners were bleeding their employers, just as their blood had been spilled in the coal mines (p. 275).

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Andrews provides a wonderfully complex and fresh depiction of Colorado coal mining, with the exception of his possible over indulgence in the importance of coal in the history of American labour. Nevertheless, he provides an engaging and informative portrayal of the coal industry in Colorado and a true asset to anyone studying the place of coal in America.