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The Politics of Paternalism: New England's Textile Industry from Corporate Capitalism to the
Second Red Scare

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Introduction

The textile industry has been a major focus for labor historians of New England, and specifically those of Massachusetts. The historiography largely focuses on watershed events or major centers of operations like the Lowell factories in the antebellum years and the 1912 Lawrence Textile Strike.¹ The revolutionary status of the Lowell factory system, as well as the romanticism and myth surrounding the Lowell girls, have been popular topics among historians, and often, too much emphasis has been placed upon these two historical topics. The mill cities of Fall River and New Bedford have also been favorites of local amateur historians. However, one important textile plant from Massachusetts is missing from the historical record: the Mount Hope Finishing Company founded in 1901 in the small village of North Dighton. Founded by J.K. Milliken, a man who can be defined as a classic New England industrialist, Mount Hope provides an interesting case study for labor historians.

The plant developed a unique brand of paternalism, while it navigated major events of the twentieth century such as the General Textile Strike of 1934 and the Great Depression without incident. But 1951 saw the plant caught up in a tense battle for unionization, tinged by the Second Red Scare that gripped the United States during the 1950s. Mount Hope was a rather large and important textile finishing firm in southeastern Massachusetts, employing at times almost 1,000 workers. Academic historians have provided case studies of textile plants and other industrial firms in other parts of Massachusetts and nearby Rhode Island, which were arguably not as prominent as

¹ For the 1912 Lawrence Textile Strike see Bruce Watson, *Bread and Roses: Mills, Migrants, and the Struggle for the American Dream* (New York: Viking, 2005); Henry F. Bedford, *Socialism and the Workers in Massachusetts, 1886-1920* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1966); and Ardis Cameron, *Radicals of the Sort: Laboring Women in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1860-1912* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1994). For the Lowell Mills see Thomas Dublin, *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979); Heidi Vernon-Wortzel, *Lowell: The Corporations and the City* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992); and James Besson, "Technology and Learning by Factory Workers: The Stretchout at Lowell, 1842," *The Journal of Economic History* 63, no. 1 (March 2003): 33-64.

Mount Hope.² Perhaps Mount Hope's location in North Dighton, away from cities such as Boston or Lowell, but overshadowed by closer locations such as Fall River and New Bedford, has cast Mount Hope out of historical consciousness.

Mount Hope Finishing Company contributed to the growth of North Dighton from a tiny agricultural community to small industrial town that experienced the rapid modernization of the early twentieth century. The town government of Dighton formed a close relationship with Mount Hope Finishing Company, which only strengthened through the years. High ranking executives and managers of Mount Hope participated in town government and were often elected to positions in town committees. As the company grew, it also paid a large amount of taxes to the town, creating much needed revenue to improve infrastructure. North Dighton was a small community and the workers of Mount Hope lived close together in houses near the factory. As time and technology advanced, workers that could make the commute lived farther away from the company in nearby Taunton. For the most part, workers respected founder J.K. Milliken and his family. Milliken successfully fostered a sense of respect and community via his own form of New England paternalism and sought to maintain a more personal connection with his workers. Contemporary observers noted that Milliken was fair and benevolent, yet maintained a strict leadership. Unions had no place at Mount Hope and workers even rejected attempts of outsiders to unionize the plant; which alone makes Mount Hope rather unique among New England textile mills. This sense of respect that the workers felt for Milliken played an important part in the workers' decision not to

² For Massachusetts see: Philip Thomas Silvia, "The Spindle City: Labor, Politics, and Religion in Fall River, Massachusetts, 1870-1905," (PhD diss., Fordham University, 1973); Mary H. Blewett, "Manhood and the Market: The Politics of Gender and Class among the Textile Workers of Fall River, Massachusetts, 1870-1880," in *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor*, ed. Ava Baron, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 92-113; and John T. Cumber, *Working-Class Community in Industrial America: Work, Leisure and Struggle in Two Industrial Cities, 1880-1930*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1979). For Rhode Island see: Gary Kulik, "Pawtucket Village and the Strike of 1824: The Origins of Class Conflict in Rhode Island," *Radical History Review* 17, (Spring 1978): 5-38, Gary Gerstle, *Working-Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City, 1914-1960*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); and Judith E. Smith, *Family Connections: A History of Italian and Jewish Immigrant Lives in Providence, Rhode Island, 1900-1940*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985).

strike during the General Textile Strike of 1934, which impacted the nearby cities of New Bedford and Fall River and various textile mills of Rhode Island. In 1934, the workforce of Mount Hope actively rejected the attempts of representatives from the United Textile Workers from Fall River and New Bedford; who were labeled union agitators by the local newspaper, the *Taunton Daily Gazette*. Unionized textile plants surrounded Mount Hope, but workers never struck or otherwise turned against Milliken for collective representation. The key question is why? Were the workers truly loyal to Milliken or was he just more successful than other plant owners in defeating embryonic unionism? Milliken employed a private police force, which was a common anti-union tactic for business owners, to ensure that no union members would infiltrate either the factory or the town. Yet, Milliken was also careful to keep his employees happy. In the years leading up to the 1934 General Textile Strike, the wages of Mount Hope employees were already competitive with unionized plants and Milliken did what he could during the Great Depression to keep the plant running and paychecks coming. Milliken seemed to deploy both sides of classical New England paternalism care for and discipline over those in his charge.

On a micro level, for historical purposes, Mount Hope Finishing Company is truly distinct. The company remained without a union in an area where many workers had union representation. Milliken himself was able to both harness and combine aspects of New England paternalism, personalism and corporate welfare techniques to keep workers loyal. On a larger level Mount Hope is not only a useful case study in the limits and strengths of paternalism, but is important in understanding the distinct regional characteristics that has been an important factor that has defined labor history and more broadly United States history. This is apparent in the way Milliken used paternalism and the nature of the media reports on the 1951 strike. From a historical standpoint, the eventual strike at Mount Hope in 1951 comes much later than one would assume or even expect. Yet, Mount Hope asks us to reconsider, as historians, the stakes of personal relationships and their impacts on both workers and employers.

By 1951, however, the atmosphere at Mount Hope Finishing Company had changed significantly. Newer and younger employees at the plant had not worked for Milliken as long as some of the older employees, who had been there for nearly 30 or 40 years. Importantly, Milliken's two sons, J.K. Milliken Jr. (Pete) and Robert D. Milliken had also taken over the company in the 1940s, so the strong paternalism J.K. Milliken Sr. had fostered had a lessened impact on many of the plant's workers by 1951. During the Korean War, the economic boom of World War II came to an abrupt end and conditions of the textile industry stagnated. The threat of moving South to secure cheaper labor and laxer regulations had always loomed over the workers at Mount Hope. By 1951, many northern textile plants had already moved South. The workforce at Mount Hope sought to do something about the threat of losing their jobs and turned to the Textile Workers Union of America (TWUA). In July 1951, Mount Hope Finishing Company laid off almost 200 workers. The TWUA argued that these workers were laid off not because of the dwindling economic condition of the plant, but to undermine union activity. In August 1951, some workers of Mount Hope Finishing Company decided to go on strike.

A bitter battle between the TWUA and the managers of Mount Hope Finishing Company waged on for almost two months until the National Labor Relations Board ordered a union election. The workers voted in favor of union representation. Yet, within days, the company announced that after 50 years of operations they were closing their plant in North Dighton. Mount Hope Finishing Company then moved South to Butner, North Carolina and successfully continued operations, without the union or economic troubles that had briefly emerged at Mount Hope in North Dighton, Massachusetts.

The striking workers in 1951 wanted a different kind of paternalism and protection than the one provided by the Millikens. With their growing fear of cheap southern labor, what the workers wanted was the protection of their own union. For fifty years the paternalism practiced at Mount Hope Finishing Company had fostered an atmosphere of respect and loyalty to the Milliken

family. As the years progressed and newer, younger workers came to the plant, that sense of respect fostered by Milliken through paternalism was not felt as strongly. These workers became concerned with losing their jobs to cheap southern labor. Yet, the strike became caught up in the anti-radicalism of the Second Red Scare. The strike for the Mount Hope employees, revolved around a battle of anti-union politics of the 1950s carried on by the media and government. The media coverage distorted the true meaning of strike, associating it with communism and the Second Red Scare, and not with the actual fear of losing jobs to the South and growing concerns about unfair labor practices. Most importantly, the case of the Mount Hope Finishing Company illustrates that no matter how well-intentioned and benevolent paternalism appears, it still has underlying duplicitous intentions to protect managers and owners, not the workers.

Historiography

Paternalism, within business, is a technique used to manage workers by providing them with housing and other benefits in order to both control and ensure loyalty from the employees. By 1900, industrialists began to see paternalism as a means to protect against the growing threat of the unionization of the workforce. Within the historical literature on corporate paternalism, two schools of thought emerge. Early historical interpretations of paternalism, and some more conservative contemporary writings within labor history, tend to argue that paternalism used by various companies was beneficial to both employee and employer. As historical scholarship changed during the 1970s and 1980s, writings on corporate paternalism tended to be more critical, arguing that it oppressed workers and potential unionization.³ Both these schools of thought tend

³ Historian Jason Russell shows in a case study of Canadian business Hobbs Hardware how management used paternalistic techniques to keep workers from unionizing and the lasting impact of this. Russell argues "places like Hobbs Hardware show how management in the post-war period-in this case the mid 1970s-orchestrated effective campaigns to keep low-wage workers out of unions. This is especially true for those workers who toiled in seemingly inconsequential workplaces that were part of the growing service sector, and where unionization was largely prevented." Jason Russell, "'Just Business': 1970s Management Paternalism and Failed Service Sector Unionization," *Labour/ Le Travail* no. 72 (Fall 2013): 131. Critical scholarship on paternalism has expanded beyond just historians and into other disciplines such as sociology. See Frank J. Weed, "The Sociological Department at the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, 1901 to 1907:

to look at labor across a broad geographic and chronological period. When studying labor on a specific plant, however, the historical arguments on corporate paternalism diverge, revealing subtle complexities that incorporate some elements of both interpretations while rejecting others. This is the case in the Mount Hope Finishing Company of North Dighton, Massachusetts.

At Mount Hope Finishing Company, J.K. Milliken, the plants founder, successfully practiced paternalism, only having one strike in the fifty-year history of the company. Yet, unlike what most labor and industrial historians have argued, the paternalism practiced by Milliken had its roots not in the corporatism of the early twentieth century, but instead in New England concepts of republicanism practiced by various industrialists dating back to the early nineteenth century; this was done most famously by Lowell Mills during their early development. The older workforce at Mount Hope seemed to have accepted Milliken's management style. This is evidenced by the fact that unlike most of New England's textile workers, Mount Hope workers did not go on strike in 1934, during the General Textile Strike that swept the southern and northeastern United States. Yet, by 1951, the younger workforce at Mount Hope Finishing Company felt compelled to strike, and pushed against this paternalism. The historiography of corporate paternalism is a rich field, but, most of these historians focus either on southern paternalism as a means of both class control and racial segregation during the late nineteenth century or on industrial paternalism as practiced by the major industrial plants in the Midwest cities of Chicago, Detroit, or Pittsburgh. At Mount Hope, the style of paternalism had a sense of personalism, more common in New England ideals of republicanism, which is largely ignored in the historiography.⁴

Scientific Paternalism and Industrial Control," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* Vol. 41 (Summer 2005): 269-284.

⁴ I use personalism here to mean that J.K Milliken was both approachable and available to his workers while he had a very active role at Mount Hope Finishing Company before he stepped back and let his sons take over the day to day operations. Milliken also moved to North Dighton and lived within a close proximity to his workers. This personalism assisted in making workers loyal to Milliken.

Historian Dale Newman analyzes the impact of paternalism on a southern textile town, mostly focusing on issues of class and race. To investigate the impact of employer paternalism on the white workforce at the LeClay Cotton Mill located in Piedmont, North Carolina, Newman takes a social history approach. In his 1978 article "Work and Community Life in a Southern Textile Town," published in *The Labor History Reader*, Newman explores the social origins and isolation of white workers in Carol County, North Carolina and the disenfranchising effect paternalism had on the workforce. Newman's main argument is, "By examining the power and prestige of employer paternalism, one is able to understand why collective action by white textile workers was slow to come and quick to fail."⁵ Newman, through the use of primary source documentation such as oral history interviews and local newspaper articles, illustrates the debilitating and isolating nature of southern paternalism that inhibited the collective action among the white workforce while also leading to economic stagnation and dependence of that workforce. Newman contends that, "Three generations of employer paternalism had produced a hereditary workforce of poorly educated, economically insecure, and socially isolated individuals."⁶ Such conclusions are typical of those investigating paternalism in the American South.⁷

The paternalism practiced at LeClay followed workers not just into their public and social lives outside the workplace, but also into their home lives. Moral policing of unskilled workers by management created a hierarchical structure and uneasy atmosphere within the town. Some families worked exclusively in management positions, but marriage among workers mixed families and occupational status. As Newman explains, "These kinship ties and the company's promotional

⁵ Dale Newman, "Work and Community Life in a Southern Textile Town," in *The Labor History Reader*, ed. Daniel J. Leab (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 433.

⁶ Dale Newman, "Work and Community Life in a Southern Textile Town," 434.

⁷ See Lee J. Alston and Joseph P. Ferrie, "Labor Costs, Paternalism, and Loyalty in Southern Agriculture: A Constraint on the Growth of the Welfare State," *Journal of Economic History* Vol. 45 (March 1985): 95-117 and Gary M. Fink and Merl L. Reed, eds. *Race, Class, and Community in Southern Labor History*, (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1994).

policies of advancing the most loyal and reliable employees fostered the fear that even one's own family might report one's unapproved activities –not just in the mill or village- but in the home as well.”⁸ Workers had to always be aware of their actions to ensure they were compliant and not breaking any rules set by the company. If families could not trust one another in the home, unionization would be difficult to achieve. In LeClay, the plant created a social hierarchy that carried over into workers' personal lives, and people knew where they belonged. In a particular example, Newman shows the reader the true power that paternalism had over the workers with this incentive for workers to become informants to get ahead. On top of this, superintendent of the plant, along with the deputy sheriff “would not allow women to smoke on their porches, or wear shorts in public, and who evicted any family whose daughter got pregnant out of wedlock.”⁹ This is how workers lived their everyday lives: under the constant eye of the employer that went well beyond controlling the workplace.

Infiltration of the management of the mill in the private life also arises in historian Douglas Flamming's 1992 case study on the Crown textile mill in Georgia. Flamming writes, “Millhands knew the social implications of living in a company-owned home. Crown maintained its own special police force, and drunkenness – even drinking in public – was cause for dismissal and eviction from company housing...Such corporate discipline irked some household heads...who had reason to resent managerial intrusion into their personal affairs.”¹⁰ But, for many years workers of both LeClay in North Carolina and of Crown Mill in Georgia accepted this paternalism. This brand of paternalism was total, and Newman and Flemming clearly show how it impacted and infiltrated workers' everyday life and inhibited collective action among workers to better their working conditions.

⁸ Dale Newman, “Work and Community Life in a Southern Textile Town,” 441.

⁹ Dale Newman, “Work and Community Life in a Southern Textile Town,” 441.

¹⁰ Douglas Flamming, *Creating the Modern South: Millhands & Managers in Dalton, Georgia, 1884-1984* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 134.

The extreme form of paternalism practiced in the South differed from the more moderate form of corporate paternalism, also known as welfare capitalism, which developed during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, welfare capitalism became favored by and prevalent among some of the largest companies in the United States. Unlike the paternalism practiced in the South, welfare capitalism was less intrusive on the private lives of employees. Focused on the northern urban centers and larger cities, unlike tightknit mill villages, management could not extend its control or influence over workers that lived in private apartments or houses. Yet, welfare capitalism was, nonetheless, a form of corporate paternalism in which employers maintained control over their workforce in exchange for providing some moderate forms of welfare services and benefits for employees. These services and benefits included, but were not limited to, health insurance plans, workers' compensation, lunchrooms, and in some cases, clubhouses. Industrialists used welfare capitalism to both protect against the unionization of the workforce and as industrial self-regulation. Welfare capitalists sought to illustrate with their benefits that the government did not need to pass extensive labor legislation. In her 1997 book *The Business of Benevolence: Industrial Paternalism in Progressive America*, historian Andrea Tone presents a comprehensive study of welfare capitalism within the complicated political and social forces of Progressive era. In her chapter "The Politics of Labor Reform," Tone argues, "As labor regulations became a permanent fixture of the economic landscape, many employers made welfare capitalism their best defense against welfare statism. Never just a strategy for improving labor efficiency, welfare work was, at its inception, also a political movement propelled by employers' desire to halt the advance of the welfare state."¹¹ Tone's argument revolves around welfare capitalism being created to combat progressive era politics. The desire for workplace reform among industrialists became rooted in a superficial ideal to help workers.

¹¹ Andrea Tone, *The Business of Benevolence: Industrial Paternalism in Progressive America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 17.

The welfare capitalism practiced by Macy's, Filene's and even Eastman Kodak was just as duplicitous in comparison to the paternalism practiced at Mount Hope, yet it did not have a façade of personalism. Mount Hope did not have the national reputation of these big businesses. Milliken's welfare capitalism does not seem to have the sole purpose of stopping government labor legislation or the growth of the welfare state. Welfare capitalists also wanted to establish a connection between worker and employee, which already existed at Mount Hope in the earliest days of the company. As Tone states, "Welfare work promised to renew the personalism of small firms within the colossal aggregations of Progressive America."¹² Milliken lived among his workers in North Dighton and always in or around the plant, making himself accessible to his workers, which is emblematic to his own style of paternalism, influenced by New England republicanism, yet combining some of the definitive features of welfare capitalism. Some aspects of Mount Hope's paternalism modeled the techniques of welfare capitalism, such as publishing a company magazine. Mount Hope Finishing Company published the *Mount Hope News* periodical every month beginning as early as 1919.¹³ *Mount Hope News* functioned as publicity and propaganda and similar to what Tone found in other company newsletters was "a form of welfare work, attempting to restore closer communication between the two parties by conveying written and visual messages from management to employees."¹⁴ Employees from different skill sets and departments were connected through this publication. It repeatedly illustrated the benefits of paternalism such as departmental clambakes, news of employee marriages and vacations, and reported recreational activities among workers. Featured prominently were the workers themselves, even some writing articles, which fostered a feeling of importance. *Mount Hope News* reached the public, giving the residents of Dighton who did not work at Mount Hope an opportunity to participate in corporate events and know how well the company treated its employees.

¹² Andrea Tone, *Business of Benevolence*, 57.

¹³ The earliest Mount Hope News that has been found during research is from 1919. I have not come across the specific date that the company started circulating Mount Hope News.

¹⁴ Andrea Tone, *Business of Benevolence*, 103.

Tone writes from a macro-perspective on industrial paternalism, which excludes an extensive analysis of one specific plant practicing paternalism. In a 1998 journal article, "Divided Loyalties: Immigrant Padrones and the Evolution of Industrial Paternalism in North America" published in *International Labor and Working-Class History*, historian Gunther Peck gives the reader a more personalized approach to understanding paternalism, which is often missing from the historiography on industrial paternalism. Peck argues that "But historians of industrial paternalism have also too narrowly defined it as a set of institutional policies or 'nonwage benefits,' thereby neglecting important ideological features – the boss's personalism and notions of familial obligation-that characterized and defined the appearance of paternalism among both skilled and unskilled workers."¹⁵ Tone rejects the personalism in her large-scale analysis and focuses on these bosses as welfare capitalists with an agenda. It was Milliken's own personalism that influenced and defined the paternalism experienced by workers at Mount Hope. Mount Hope was a smaller firm that had aspects of corporate paternalism, but J.K. Milliken's own position in the community helped popularize his persona of benevolent father figure to his workers. Labor historian Philip Scranton has examined the many variations of paternalism, but from more of a sociological perspective. In his article "Varieties of Paternalism: Industrial Structures and the Social Relations of Production in American Textiles" he argues "Effective paternalism required that the master have broader claims than merely his role as an employer...His connections to a noted local family, long experience and expertise in the practice of manufacture...appropriate to different contexts would all contribute to the creation of durable paternalist social relations."¹⁶ Milliken came from a well connected old New England family and had previous experience managing mills in New Bedford. To say Milliken was a master might stretch it too far, but he had the characteristics of a paternalistic owner that his workers would respect.

¹⁵ Gunther Peck, "Divided Loyalties: Immigrant Padrones and the Evolution of Industrial Paternalism in North America," *International Labor and Working-Class History* No. 53 (Spring 1998): 50.

¹⁶ Philip Scranton, "Varieties of Paternalism: Industrial Structures and the Social Relations of Production in American Textiles," *American Quarterly* No. 2 (Summer, 1984): 238.

When compared to the corporate paternalism of the industry leaders of the early twentieth century, and certainly with southern paternalism, the authority Mount Hope had over their workers and the community seems strikingly different. Tone asserts “welfare programs were concentrated in railroad companies and in steel, machine-shop, electrical, and printing establishments but were less pronounced in textile manufacture.”¹⁷ Mount Hope, being in the textile industry, had pronounced benefits that could rival any other large firm, and extended them to all workers, skilled and unskilled. Even though Mount Hope had benefits that were analogous to corporate welfare, the paternalism practiced at Mount Hope fell more in line with traditional New England republicanism, which had older historical roots dating back to the early nineteenth century and best exemplified in the historical literature on the Lowell textile mills of the early nineteenth century.

Paternalism in New England tended to assume a slightly different image than elsewhere in the country. In New England, paternalism was not just a corporate need to control workers and limit the growth of unions, but was rooted also in the region’s Puritan and republican past. As such, corporate paternalism in New England appeared to many as more benevolent and was generally accepted by not just corporate and civic leaders, but also the general public and even in some cases the workers themselves. Historian Thomas Dublin’s 1979 seminal case study on the young women workers in the Lowell Mills, specifically focusing on Hamilton Company, illustrates the way New England republicanism influenced paternalism within the plant. The young women workers of the Lowell Mill defined themselves as “Yankee Girls” and were mainly the daughters of Protestant, yeoman farmers. These young women who came from the agrarian towns of New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts to work must have experienced a culture shock when coming to an industrial setting such as Lowell. The men who owned the Lowell Mills and hired these Yankee Girls were known as ‘The Boston Associates,’ a group of early industrialists. Two prominent stockholders in the Boston Associates, Abbott Lawrence and Nathan Appleton were National Republicans,

¹⁷ Andrea Tone, *The Business of Benevolence*, 58.

members of the Whig party and practiced Unitarianism. However, the men of the Boston Associates wanted to protect these women workers from the problems of industrialization that they saw unfold in England, and to create a strong and competent labor force while also countering national concerns about industrialism replacing agriculture as the economic and cultural base of the young United States. Company housing was a key ingredient in establishing the New England republican paternalism in Lowell. According to Dublin, "Most workers at Hamilton resided in company-owned housing. Almost three fourths, 73.7 percent, lived in housing provided by the Hamilton or the adjacent Appleton Company...about 95 percent of women workers in Hamilton Company housing were single residents of female boarding houses."¹⁸ For the time, this was unique to northern New England textiles. Comparatively, in Rhode Island, company housing did not become a prominent feature of textile companies. The company housing for the Lowell workforce, mainly boarding houses, kept the women both close to the plant, and protected, this need stemming from the Puritan and republican past of the region: a much older version of paternalism than the welfare capitalism of the early twentieth century.

The boarding houses of the Lowell Mills reflected and exemplified both the religious and republican antebellum ideologies and values of the region. The boarding houses illustrated these ideologies as well as the ability of the Boston Associates to control their workforce through corporate paternalism. To the early New England industrialist, the English factory system allowed for the degradation of the working class, leading to immorality and vice, and this could not happen in the United States. Cultural historian John F. Kasson explains in his 1976 book *Civilizing the Machine: Technology and Republican Values in America*, "To the eighteenth-century mind republicanism denoted a political and moral condition of rare purity, one that had never been

¹⁸ Thomas Dublin, *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press: 1979), 27.

successfully sustained by any major nation.”¹⁹ The great American experiment would not falter among the workers in Lowell. As Dublin states, “Housing for female workers kept wage levels down, but it was also an instrument of social control. For women company boardinghouses were part of a broader vision of corporate paternalism...In order to protect the virtue of American women workers, ‘the most efficient guards were adopted in establishing boarding houses.”²⁰ If the women were not protected in order to assume their gender and work roles, then the public virtue, a pillar of republicanism would be upset. Nathan Appleton, a prominent stockholder in the Boston Associates, knew of the conditions of the working class in England and he did not want the workers in Lowell to succumb to the same fate of class dependency. Historian John F. Kasson illustrates and expands on this point in his chapter “The Factory as Republican Community: Lowell, Massachusetts.” Kasson states, “Lowell promised to resolve the social conflict between the desire for industrial progress and the fear of a debased and disorderly proletariat. Its founding sprang from the conviction that, given the proper institutional environment, a factory town...might stand as a model of enlightened republican community in a restless and dynamic nation.”²¹ This unique nature of corporate paternalism in New England, rooted in Puritan ideals of a New England utopia, is symbolized by the role Mount Hope Finishing Company played in its own community and the limited participation of its workers in the strikes of 1934 and even that of 1951. Milliken wanted to protect his workers to ensure a loyal workforce with a low turnover rate.

Paternalism in Milliken’s Mill Village

To understand the complexities of the corporate paternalism practiced at Mount Hope Finishing Company, one must take a closer look at the plant’s founder, J.K. Milliken. Milliken certainly harbored a sense of old-school New England republicanism, which he implemented into his business ideology. On July 5, 1875 future founder and treasurer of the Mount Hope Finishing

¹⁹ John F. Kasson, *Civilizing the Machine: Technology and Republican Values in America* (New York: Grossman Publishers: 1976), 4.

²⁰ Thomas Dublin, *Women at Work*, 77.

²¹ John F. Kasson, *Civilizing the Machine*, 65.

Company, Joseph Knowles Milliken was born in Salem, Massachusetts, to Charles Dodge Milliken and Helen Doane Milliken. The Milliken family itself had deep roots in New England, dating back to the seventeenth century.²² Charles Dodge Milliken, born on May 2, 1841, lived with his family in Maine, until he moved to Boston where he worked as a dry goods salesman. He eventually moved to Salem where he met his future wife, Helen D. Knowles. The Knowles family also had deep roots in New England. John Knowles first arrived from England in 1639 and settled in Watertown in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.²³ Joseph Frank Knowles, Helen's brother, had ties to the textile industry dating back to the mid-1870s and he worked in the industry until his death in 1909. It would be Joseph Frank Knowles who influenced his nephew, J.K. Milliken, into a career in the textile industry.

Although born in Salem, Milliken and his family moved to New Bedford while he was still very young. He attended Friends Academy, an independent day school founded by the Quakers in 1810, and then went on to Harvard College (Harvard University). Even though he attended this Quaker school, J.K. Milliken practiced Unitarianism throughout his life. Milliken graduated from Harvard in 1895 with an A.B. In the June 1916 *Harvard College Class of 1896 Secretary's Fifth Report*, which checked up on the members of the class of 1896, Milliken succinctly stated "I have some things to regret, much to be thankful for, and hope that Dame Fortune may smile no less often in the future than she has in the past twenty years."²⁴ Milliken's blurb about himself was certainly modest, compared to the long winded boasting done by the majority of his classmates. Interestingly, he did not mention his success with the Mount Hope Finishing Company, which by 1916 was well established. In 1912, the book *Representative Men and Old Families of Southeastern Massachusetts*, which contains biographies and genealogical information of important men and families from

²² *Representative Men and Old Families of Southeastern Massachusetts*, Vol. 3 (Chicago: J.H. Beers & Co., 1912. Reprint, London: Dalton House, 2015), 1483. Citations refer to the Dalton House edition.

²³ *Representative Men and Old Families of Southeastern Massachusetts*, Vol. 1 (Chicago: J.H. Beers & Co., 1912. Reprint, London: Dalton House, 2015), 192.

²⁴ *Harvard College Class of 1896 Secretary's Fifth Report: June, 1916*, (Norwood: The Plimpton Press, 1916), 189, accessed April 1, 2017, <https://books.google.com/books?num=19&id=g-8nAAAYAAJ&q=Milliken#v=snippet&q=Milliken&f=false>.

Massachusetts, reported Milliken was, “Of kindly disposition and modest bearing, he is withal a genial man, approachable and pleasant.”²⁵ Milliken’s short writing on himself in the Harvard report of the class of 1896 can attest to this.

After graduating from Harvard, Milliken returned to New Bedford and worked in a management position at the Dunnell Mill in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. In 1899 he joined his uncle, Joseph Frank Knowles at the Hathaway Mill in New Bedford. Two years later, in June of 1901, along with his uncle and other investors, Milliken founded the Mount Hope Finishing Company of North Dighton. By December 1901, the plant turned out goods for consumption. As Mount Hope Finishing Company quickly grew, so did the village of North Dighton. Milliken participated actively in town affairs and contributed to the expanding infrastructure. At the turn of the century, macadamizing roads in North Dighton became an important step in modernizing the time. The issue of building roads is a recurrent theme in the annual town reports from the first quarter of the twentieth century. As early as 1906 the town appointed Milliken on a committee, along with Charles S. Chase and George M. Chase, who worked alongside Milliken as managers at Mount Hope Finishing Company, to purchase a stone crusher for the town for the purpose of building roads. In 1907, the residents of Dighton voted to appoint Milliken to the finance committee. As the years went on the town appointed Milliken, and other prominent men involved with Mount Hope Finishing Company, to various committees and other high ranking positions within the local government.²⁶

Milliken’s interest in both participating in business and serving the public, extended beyond North Dighton. He involved himself in various associations in southeastern Massachusetts, such as in 1912, when he joined the board of directors of The Machinists’ National Bank in Taunton, Massachusetts. In 1925, with the sudden death of the then bank president, William C. Davenport, Milliken assumed the position and was considered “an able successor to the five men who preceded

²⁵ *Representative Men and Old Families of Southeastern Massachusetts*, Vol. 3 (Chicago: J.H. Beers & Co., 1912. Reprint, London: Dalton House, 2015), 1483.

²⁶ Helen H. Lane, *History of the Town of Dighton Massachusetts*, (Dighton: Town of Dighton, 1962), 245-246.

him.”²⁷ Milliken remained the president of the bank until 1951, when Mount Hope Finishing Company made the move to North Carolina. Milliken concerned himself with the large-scale issues of the Massachusetts industry and served as the vice president for the National Association of Finishers of Massachusetts and the Associated Industries of Massachusetts. In addition to this, as of 1928, Milliken also served for nearly forty years as a director of the Massachusetts Life Insurance Company of Springfield, and as a member of the Fall River Manufacturing Mutual Fire Insurance Company. Apart from these profession and business associations, in 1906 the fraternal organization Free Masons initiated Milliken and he remained a member for life. Milliken’s various connections and corporate positions illustrates his many connections and his persona as a typical New England industrialist.

The paternalism practiced at the plant, and Milliken’s own anti-union sentiment was rooted in his own political beliefs. Throughout his life, Milliken remained a staunch Republican, which impacted his views on unionization. The book *Representative Men and Old Families of Southeastern Massachusetts*, reported of Milliken that “Politically he is a Republican.”²⁸ An example of Milliken's support for the Republican party is illustrated through the August 11, 1928 clam bake held at the Mount Hope Finishing Company for the Bristol County Republican Association which included "leading Republicans" from Massachusetts.²⁹ During the last decade of the nineteenth century and first decade of the twentieth century the Republican Party in the United States was deeply divided between Progressive reformers and pro-business advocates. William McKinley, president from 1897-1901, represented the later, but when Vice President Theodore Roosevelt rose to the

²⁷ *Taunton and The Machinists' National Bank: High Lights in the History of the City and a Record of the Bank*, (1928), 30. Old Colony History Museum,

²⁸ *Representative Men and Old Families of Southeastern Massachusetts*, Vol. 3 (Chicago: J.H. Beers & Co., 1912. Reprint, London: Dalton House, 2015), 1483.

²⁹ "Leaders of G.O.P Gather at Dighton, *Daily Boston Globe*, August 12, 1928, B5, accessed April 21, 2017, <https://secure.pqarchiver.com/boston-sub/doc/747522357.html?FMT=AI&FMTS=ABS:AI&type=historic&date=Aug+12%2C+1928&author=Special+Dispatch+to+the+Globe&pub=Daily+Boston+Globe+%281928-1960%29&edition=&startpage=B5&desc=LEADERS+OF+G.+O.+P.+GATHER+AT+DIGHTON>.

presidency upon McKinley's assassination the Progressive wing had a new champion. Progressive control of the Republican Party did not outlive Roosevelt's presidency, however, and when Roosevelt lost the Republican nomination upon his return to politics in 1912 the Progressives defected from the Republican Party, leaving it to be defeated by Woodrow Wilson's own brand of Progressivism within the Democratic Party. Although Herbert Hoover tried to bring back a sense of Progressivism to the Republican Party in 1928 his efforts died with the Great Depression and Progressivism once-and-for-all found a home in the Democratic Party with Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Throughout this larger national political history, it would appear that Milliken remained loyal to the McKinley-faction of the Republican Party and probably supported the conservatives of Howard Taft, Warren Harding, and Calvin Coolidge. Reportedly, "Milliken never failed to contribute generously to the national Republican Party, even during the long years of its trial as a minority party."³⁰ In historian Burke Davis's 1981 book, *A Fierce Personal Pride: The History of Mount Hope Finishing Company and its Founding Family*, he revealed "From the start, unionism had no place in Mount Hope's concept of management."³¹ Unionism certainly did not have a place at Mount Hope and the paternalism implemented by Milliken contributed to no move by the workers for unionization in fifty years. Even outside of Mount Hope, Milliken exercised his anti-union sentiment. In one recorded incident in 1919, as vice president of the National Finishers Association of Massachusetts, Milliken assisted in ending a strike among longshoremen from the New England Steamship Company and a sympathy strike started by truckmen.³² Another example of Milliken's aversion to unions and collective action is in his speech to group of young workers graduating a trade school for textiles. In 1927, while addressing the graduating class of the New Bedford Textile

³⁰ Burke Davis, *A Fierce Personal Pride: The Story of Mount Hope Finishing Company and the Challenges to its Founding Family* (Butner: Mount Hope Finishing Company, 1981), 35.

³¹ Burke Davis, *A Fierce Personal Pride*, 7.

³² "Converters 1920 Year Book," *Dry Goods Guide*, September 1920, 30, accessed April 1, 2017, <https://books.google.com/books?id=ca00QAAMAAJ&pg=RA8-PA8&dq=dry+goods+guide+september&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjcobGy0YTTAahVD44MKHWWCCUAQ6AEIGjAA#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

School, Milliken's speech consisted almost entirely of reading the students an excerpt of the 1899 essay "A Message to Garcia" by writer Elbert Hubbard. These young students who were to be entering the workforce were read an essentially anti-labor essay. "A Message to Garcia" chastises and demonizes workers that are not loyal to their duties and do not follow directions. It expresses the notion that workers are to be docile, subservient, not to question authority, and not to disturb the order of things. Radical workers were those that questioned authority and disloyal workers turned to unions for representation. The essay champions individuality and not collectivism, "And this incapacity for independent action, this moral stupidity, this infirmity of the will, this unwillingness to cheerfully catch hold and lift-these are the things that put pure Socialism so far into the future...It is survival of the fittest. Self interest prompts every employer to keep the best."³³ There are many different topics that Milliken could have discussed in his speech, but he chose this essay. If workers are only concerned about themselves and not other workers, then unionization may not be a popular ideology to turn to.

Official literature written by upper-level management and distributed by the company contained negative and somewhat condescending sentiments towards workers that went on strike in nearby New Bedford. In June 1928, Albert R. White, an upper-level manager at the plant and editor of *The Mount Hope News* wrote an article titled "The Problem of Distribution." In this article, White wrote rather disparaging comment of New Bedford mill workers: "If the New Bedford mill workers had understood the economics of the situation...they perhaps might not have walked out so hastily, assuming that New Bedford mill workers are as intelligent as average textile employees throughout New England."³⁴ White's observation implies that lower level workers that go on strike do not understand the complexities of economics. The forces working against these workers may be

³³ "Address made by Mr. J.K Milliken to the Graduating Class at the New Bedford Textile School, June 11, 1927," *Mount Hope News* Vol. VII No. 2, September 1927, 11-13. Folder VM863, File M863H, Old Colony History Museum.

³⁴ Albert R. White, "The Problem with Distribution," *Mount Hope News*, Vol. VII No. 10, June 1928, 4-5, Folder VM8638, File M863H, Old Colony History Museum.

influenced by both economics and management. Yet, from the laborers' perspective, one doesn't have to understand the complexities of economics to recognize when they are being exploited.

Milliken's commitment to the conservative wing of the Republican Party is also illustrated by his political and financial supported Republican congressman and Speaker of the House, Joseph W. Martin Jr. of North Attleborough, Massachusetts. Historian Burke Davis, who knew the Millikens, explained of Martin that "His regular visits to J.K. bespoke their long, intimate association, and it was perhaps because of Martin that J.K. maintained the perennial interest in G.O.P national politics which had been his birthright."³⁵ Martin himself was against unions, like Milliken, and always looked out for the business of the northern textile industry. During the 1930s, Martin was in ardent opposition of the New Deal and assisted in the formation of the coalition of southern Democrats and Republicans in 1938. When the New Deal threatened the northern textile industry, Martin became outspoken and aggressive towards various pieces of legislation. One such piece of New Deal legislation he opposed was the 1932 version of the Fair Labor Standards Act written by Senator Hugo L. Black of Alabama. This early draft of the Fair Labor Standards Act allowed southern mills to pay a lower minimum wage than northern mills, under the assumption that living expenses in the South were much lower. Opponents of the bill argued that the southern mills would get an unfair advantage. By the 1930s, the northern textile industry had already started to move south. Lower wages made the South a more attractive place to operate a business, which only further inhibited the northern plants. When the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 did not include the higher minimum wage in the North, Martin voted for it. Martin also supported the Smoot-Hawley Tariff to protect domestic manufacturers, and later opposed its repeal. Passed on June 17, 1930, the protectionist Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act raised the United States tariff rates even higher than they were under the Fordney-McCumber Act of 1922. Despite the historical debate surrounding the

³⁵ Burke Davis, *A Fierce Personal Pride: The Story of Mount Hope Finishing Company and the Challenges to its Founding Family*, 35.

economic impact of Smoot-Hawley as to whether or not it protected New England industries,³⁶ Martin stated “I do not propose to let men who never saw my district determine whether or not those industries which have brought employment and livelihood to my people are economically sound.”³⁷

During his career, Martin had a long history of supporting protectionist legislation for the northern textile industry, which explains Milliken’s own interest and investment in Martin. Taunton and Fall River are two mill cities within Martin’s congressional district. As Martin recognized in his autobiography, “...the textile mills began leaving New England for the South...I was a high-tariff man for years, favoring protection for the mills of Fall River and Taunton....”³⁸ This protectionist legislation that Martin favored for the northern textile industry, and more specifically his own congressional district, benefited Mount Hope Finishing Company and Milliken. At Mount Hope Finishing Company’s fiftieth anniversary celebration in 1951, Congressman Martin “served as toastmaster” and praised Milliken as “a great builder for New England and America.” Although Milliken was clearly a conservative businessman, it would be a mistake to lump him in with the same kind of paternalism practiced by southern leaders or the staunch welfare capitalists in charge of the larger firms of the 1910s and 1920s. Milliken sought to craft and mold North Dighton into a quaint New England mill village based more on regional concepts of republicanism and centralized paternal power, and, for a short time, he did just that.

Since the early days of the Mount Hope Finishing Company, Milliken expanded his paternalism to the town of Dighton. The improvements to the town infrastructure acted as a trickle down effects by the plant. As a result, the town relied upon them, and Mount Hope certainly had influence in local town government, some employees of the town appeared to be working for Mount

³⁶ Joseph W. Martin Jr. and Robert J. Donovan, *My First Fifty Years in Politics* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1960), 75.

³⁷ Joseph W. Martin Jr. and Robert J. Donovan, *My First Fifty Years in Politics*, 75.

³⁸ Joseph W. Martin Jr. and Robert J. Donovan, *My First Fifty Years in Politics*, 54.

Hope during the 1934 and 1951 strike. However, one of the most important contributions of the company to the town was the payment of taxes. According to Burke Davis who wrote the 1980 book *A Fierce Personal Pride: The History of Mount Hope Finishing Company and Its Founding Family*, early on Milliken, “had begun the process of developing the village itself, an almost endless series of concerns that was to end in his patriarchal control of North Dighton.”³⁹ Davis recognized Milliken’s desire to have a paternalistic influence over North Dighton. Mount Hope Finishing Company needed these improvements in order to expand and improve the business, not as a generous act for the town. Milliken developed the area around his business for his own advancement. Milliken and other high ranking employees being involved in town government was not exactly duplicitous, but it certainly put them in favor. When Mount Hope made upgrades to the business to modernize it, these advancements would eventually be absorbed by the town. In 1901, there was only one mile of macadam road in Dighton. The modern amenities installed by the company also benefitted life for those in the town. Building roads throughout the town was one of many large projects co-managed by both Mount Hope Finishing Company and the town Dighton.

The company contributed money and labor to the building of the roads to lessen the burden on the town. Dirt roads presented difficulties in moving goods to and from the plant consistently, so the company built macadamized roads. As reported in the Town of Dighton’s selectmen’s report of 1903, “A section of Spring Street westerly from the Mount Hope Finishing Co.’s works has been improved at their expense, and the town has rebuilt a section easterly from their works to Pearl street...”⁴⁰ This is one very early example of Mount Hope and Dighton working together to improve the town. Even into the 1920s, Mount Hope still took an active part in financing the construction of cement roads; “Spring Street from Summer to Pearl Street has been improved with a reinforced cement construction, the town paying \$8000 and the rest of the expense was met by the Mount

³⁹ Burke Davis, *A Fierce Personal Pride*, 25.

⁴⁰ *Annual Reports of the Town Officers of the Town of Dighton for the Year Ending December 31, 1903*, (Fall River: Press of Samuel E. Fiske, 1904), 1.

Hope Finishing Co."⁴¹ Other improvements to town infrastructure such as running water, gas, electricity and a hospital coincided with the plant's growth and advancement. In 1909, "Pipes have been laid and hydrants erected by the Mount Hope Finishing Company to furnish water for North Dighton. They have contracted with the City of Taunton to furnish water. This has been done at no cost to the town."⁴² Mount Hope was creating it's own mill village in North Dighton with any financial reliance from the town of Dighton. The town also benefitted from this because it was less tax revenue they had to spend or loans to borrow. Water is a necessary tool for industrialization and Mount Hope demanded a supply in order to expand the business. At the turn of the twentieth century Dighton had no public water supply and wells often dried up. The inability to easily access water and the absence of a reliable water supply inspired the plant to create a contract with Taunton to install water pipes in 1907 and by 1909 this was finally realized. The installation of these pipes led to hydrants and house connections for the people of Dighton. Natural gas hookups and electricity were two other resources extended to the townspeople due to Mount Hope's expansion. Within a short amount of time, Mount Hope Finishing Company constructed the village of North Dighton into a typical company town. Part of turning North Dighton into a mill village based on New England republicanism, Milliken built and established company housing, a hospital, along with numerous benefits both inside and outside of the plant, to protect and win workers' loyalty.

Another classic technique of corporate paternalism instituted by Mount Hope was company housing. When Milliken and his uncle Frank Knowles first purchased the property included were thirteen dilapidated cottages for employees to live in. Milliken fixed these cottages up and

⁴¹ *Annual Reports of the Town Officers of the Town of Dighton For the Year Ending December 31, 1923*, (Taunton: C.A. Hack & Son Inc., 1924), 5.

⁴² *Annual Reports of the Town Officers of the Town of Dighton For the Year Ending December 31, 1909*, (Taunton: Harrington Press, 1910), 6.

eventually expanded the number of company owned houses to 175 by 1927.⁴³ That is quite a large number of houses for the small town of Dighton, which only had a population of roughly 3,000 in 1927.⁴⁴ Employees rented the houses “on a competitive bidding basis, which enables an employee to make his own price.”⁴⁵ Workers would have to bid against one another, which could possibly cause animosity between workers. Yet, according to *From Grey to Beauty: An Account of the Industry Carried on at North Dighton by the Mount Hope Finishing Company*, a book published by Mount Hope, “If the occupant has an honest heart and good intentions, he need not worry over shelter or any other necessity of life.”⁴⁶ This statement alone is very paternalistic, but it illustrated the company’s view that they needed to really take care of their workers. The company’s outlook was reminiscent to that of the Boston Associates, which owned the Lowell Mills, and the republican past of the region. The houses, within close proximity of each other, had yards and some privacy. Milliken set out to create a community of workers that would be loyal to him and the company, as well as do their best on the job. After the boom of World War I and an influx of revenue, Milliken began a five year plan to improve the town, which mainly focused on renovating company housing.⁴⁷ By the 1920s, Milliken had also moved to Dighton from Taunton and lived within a close proximity to the plant and his employees. Milliken could be close to his plant, but was unlikely a power move to monitor his employees in their private lives. Milliken lived among his workers and also felt a deep personal connection to North Dighton, the town that he developed. On August 21, 1951, in the midst of the strike, Milliken delivered a speech outside of his house and nearly 500 former and current employees showed up and the event remained peaceful. In this speech Milliken

⁴³ Harriet E. O'Brien and the Walton Staff, *From Grey to Beauty: An Account of the Industry Carried on at North Dighton by the Mount Hope Finishing Company*, (Privately Printed: 1927), 77. Folder VM863H, File 863H, Old Colony History Museum.

⁴⁴ *Massachusetts, Taunton Directory 1927* (Providence: Sampson and Murdock Co., 1927), 7, Old Colony History Museum.

⁴⁵ Harriet E. O'Brien and the Walton Staff, *From Grey to Beauty: An Account of the Industry Carried on at North Dighton by the Mount Hope Finishing Company*, (Privately Printed: 1927), 77. Folder VM863H, File 863H, Old Colony History Museum.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁴⁷ Burke Davis, *A Fierce Personal Pride*, 28-29.

discussed his connection to the town and stated "North Dighton is my life...North Dighton is my home. Here my roots are deeply established and here in North Dighton, God willing, I expect to die."⁴⁸ He had good reason to have such an emotional and physical connection to the town, with all of the additions and improvements he made for workers and the company.

Milliken used various forms of paternalism to gain worker's loyalty and respect such as the Mount Hope Hospital and the Mount Hope Farm. The Mount Hope Hospital started in 1919 and offered affordable rates for healthcare to workers and those in the community. The hospital consisted of about six beds and only had one to two nurses on duty at a time. The formation of the hospital was a strategic way for the employers to show that they cared about the employees, while not providing any actual healthcare plan, and a further development of the village of North Dighton by the company. There was a greater dependency and notion that the company provide for the basic needs of the employee. Another great example of this is the Mount Hope Farm started in 1915. The farm spanned over 500 acres and provided workers and residents of North Dighton and Taunton with fresh milk, fruits and vegetables at a low cost. No outside forces or institutions needed to come in between employer and employee; be it a union, government, or even a grocer. In terms of benefits, this idealized model for the company village Milliken created is reminiscent of New England republicanism. These benefits, along with the respect that workers felt for the Milliken family, factor into the decision for workers not to join a union and in some regards, double cross Milliken himself.

Mount Hope Finishing Company had a relatively low turnover rate, which reflected the respect the workers possessed for the Millikens and the numerous employee-benefits offered. In one case, Polish immigrant Stanley Nowak worked for the company for nearly forty years in the

⁴⁸ "Text of Milliken Talk to Strikers," *Taunton Daily Gazette*, August 21, 1951,3, Old Colony History Museum Microfilm Collection, M435TDG436 Roll 435.

bleaching department.⁴⁹ Many different ethnic groups worked at Mount Hope. In the earliest days of the plant, Milliken hired skilled English textiles workers. As time progressed, different ethnic groups began to work at the plant; including Irish, Polish, and Portuguese. There was never much inter-ethnic conflict between these groups because within the plant, one thing united them which was working for the Millikens. Historian and friend of the Milliken family, Burke Davis wrote in his book about Mount Hope "but J.K. still seemed to know most of the workers by name, and the company's traditionally close personal relationships were reflected in strong anti-union sentiment among the workers."⁵⁰ Despite Davis having an obvious bias due to his close ties with the family, his claim about the strong relationship between employee and employer is not farfetched. Milliken himself lived close to the plant and among many of the workers, and he felt a genuine connection to North Dighton.⁵¹ However, it is unknown if the workers themselves actually had prominent anti-union beliefs. It also helped that wages at the plant were competitive with union rates.⁵² Their loyalties remained tied to the company and not any outside forces. These extras provided to the workers by Milliken fostered an environment of worker loyalty that in turn worked in Milliken's favor during the Great Depression.

During the General Textile Strike during the Great Depression in 1934, Mount Hope remained untouched by union activity, worker protest and upheaval. This is one example of Milliken's successful practice of paternalism. Throughout the Great Depression, the profits of the plant dropped significantly from \$530,000 in 1928 to \$87,000 in 1935.⁵³ Like with other plants and industries throughout the country during the Depression, hours were cut for workers. Burke Davis

⁴⁹ Kelsey Murphy and Brian J. Payne, transcript of an unpublished oral history interview with Maryan Nowak conducted at Old Colony History Museum on July 19, 2016, 4.

⁵⁰ Burke Davis, *A Fierce Personal Pride: The Story of Mount Hope Finishing Company and the Challenges to its Founding Family*, 42.

⁵¹ "Text of Milliken Talk to Strikers," *Taunton Daily Gazette*, August 21, 1951, 3, Old Colony History Museum Microfilm Collection M435TDG436, Roll 435.

⁵² Burke Davis, *A Fierce Personal Pride: The Story of Mount Hope Finishing Company and the Challenges to its Founding Family*, 42. Kelsey Murphy and Brian J. Payne, transcript of an unpublished oral history interview with Maryan Nowak conducted at Old Colony History Museum on July 19, 2016, 11.

⁵³ Burke Davis, *A Fierce Personal Pride*, 43.

stated "J.K.'s wage policy at this period was to pay the Fall River scale plus ten cents an hour coupled with numerous fringe benefits."⁵⁴ Davis does not clarify if it was a unionized or non-unionized wage scale of Fall River. Maryan Nowak, son of a former Mount Hope employee explained "...union wages were not that different from Mount Hope wages. The Milliken's always managed to keep the wages much the same..."⁵⁵ No employee payroll records survive, but existing data on wages from unionized textile plants in Fall River can give an idea of what the average worker at Mount Hope would have made on an hourly basis during the 1930s.⁵⁶ With wages that competed with union rates and the respect Milliken had for his employees, the workers probably did not feel the need to strike. Mount Hope had competitive wages, but more importantly, the workers felt like they were respected by the Millikens. Historians have shown that one important reason for workers to participate in the General Textile Strike was the lack of respect and job security.⁵⁷ With the numerous benefits, competitive wages and close relationships it is obvious to see why workers wanted to remain loyal to the company and not organize. The strike heavily impacted surrounding cities such as Fall River, New Bedford, Providence and Woonsocket. Dighton was not exactly left unmarked by the strike, and historian John A Salmond in his 2002 comprehensive book *The General Textile Strike of 1934: From Maine to Alabama* notes, "There was rioting in several Massachusetts textile towns, especially Dighton..."⁵⁸ This claim of excessive rioting in Dighton is false. Salmond provides no footnote or primary source documentation for his claim. The articles from the *Taunton Daily Gazette* that covered the situation in North Dighton and Burke

⁵⁴ Burke Davis, *A Fierce Personal Pride*, 42.

⁵⁵ Kelsey Murphy and Brian J. Payne, transcript of an unpublished oral history interview with Maryan Nowak conducted at Old Colony History Museum on July 19, 2016, 11.

⁵⁶ See Martin Segal, "Interrelationship of Wages Under Joint Demand: The Case of the Fall River Textile Workers," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 70. No. 3 (Aug., 1956): 464-477 and A.F. Hinrichs, "Historical Review of Wage Rates and Wage Differentials in the Cotton Textile Industry," *Monthly Labor Review*, Vol. 40 No. 5 (May 1935): 1170-1180.

⁵⁷ See Janet Irons, *Testing the New Deal: The General Textile Strike of 1934 in the American South*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

⁵⁸ John D. Salmond, *The General Textile Strike from Maine to Alabama* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 84.

Davis's account contrast with Salmond's observation. Again, the *Taunton Daily Gazette* covered the events in Dighton in great detail, yet the workers own perspectives are missing.

The suggestion the workers at Mount Hope did not strike solely because of their loyalty to Milliken is rather dubious. Milliken's own actions during the strike played a key role in discouraging any potential would-be organizer from mobilizing workers at Mount Hope. Milliken's actions reveal that he felt threatened by the strike activity in nearby cities and potential union activity in his own plant. Fall River and New Bedford had heavy strike and union activity with the United Textile Workers. Workers at the Whittenton Manufacturing Company, Old Colony Manufacturing Company, and Diamond Textile mill walked out on strike. On September 5, 1934 The *Taunton Daily Gazette* reported of nearby North Dighton that, "The Mt. Hope Finishing Co. at North Dighton which employs over 1,000 workers...are operating and no trouble is expected."⁵⁹ One thousand workers is a large number of employees and to have them influenced by union activity and the strike would have greatly impacted Milliken and his management philosophy of his workers. Potential unionization of Mount Hope threatened to end the control Milliken worked to establish since the opening of the plant in 1901. Milliken prided himself that he had one the largest non-unionized textile plants in the region.

Then on September 6, 1934, just a day after the *Taunton Daily Gazette* reported that no trouble should be expected at Mount Hope, Milliken hired armed guards to protect the plant from union activity from nearby cities, especially Fall River. At one point, Milliken hired 502 guards to protect the plant from rioters.⁶⁰ According to historian Burke Davis what inspired this sudden increase in protection was news that "irate strikers planned an invasion of North Dighton to be led

⁵⁹ "Local Mills Feel Further Effects of Picketing," *Taunton Daily Gazette*, September 5, 1934, 1, Old Colony History Museum Microfilm Collection, M311TDG312 Roll 311.

⁶⁰ "Number of Guards at Mt. Hope is Cut," *Taunton Daily Gazette*, September 25, 1934, 10, Old Colony History Museum Microfilm Collection, M311TDG312 Roll 311.

by "Ann the Red" Berlach and another radical organizer, Mariano Bishop."⁶¹ This planned invasion never came to be realized and the rioting never occurred. The guards Milliken hired came from New Jersey and the police of Dighton were on Mount Hope's payroll. On top of this, Milliken recruited nearly fifty employees to protect the plant, and armed them with pistols and clubs. Mount Hope barricaded the streets leading to the plant and the village turned into a compound ruled with an iron fist, knowing who came and who went. One reporter described the scene as "A virtual State of martial law exalted within a half mile radius within a half mile of the Mount Hope Finishing Company."⁶² The company prepared for a cataclysmic showdown between union agitators and the heroic forces protecting North Dighton and the workers. This event speaks to the tension of the situation and adamant anti-union ideology of the Milliken's. It was nothing but sensationalized media reporting. The way events played out over the next few weeks in the village of North Dighton were dramatic and revealed how much Milliken despised unionization.

The non-strike of 1934, when most of the nation's textile workers went on strike, is remarkable because it shows both the fear and the loyalty that the workers possessed for Milliken. He went to excessive measures to protect his plant and illustrate to his workers what he would do to put them down if they tried to strike. The workers chosen and armed by Milliken consisted of only fifty of the nearly 1,000 workers at the plant. These were probably the most loyal employees that did not support the unionization of the workers. Employees at Mount Hope had it good and they showed that physically by not striking and unionizing when they had the chance to do so. However, Milliken flexed his strength with the hiring of the armed guards and funding the police payroll. As time passed, things returned to normal around the town and the plant. The fears of unionization and invasion by union leaders calmed down. This relaxation is reflected in the case of

⁶¹ Burke Davis, *A Fierce Personal Pride: The Story of Mount Hope Finishing Company and the Challenges to its Founding Family*, 44.

⁶² "Mount Hope Finishing Company Guarding all Approaches to the Big No. Dighton Plant," *Taunton Daily Gazette*, September 6, 1934, 1, Old Colony History Museum Microfilm Collection, M311TDG312 Roll 311.

the Mount Hope militia. During the time period of a potential strike, according to historian Burke Davis in *Fierce Personal Pride*, the Mount Hope Militia "drilled faithfully for a few months, marching through the village streets daily..."⁶³ The militia marching through the streets represented a looming threat of what could happen if workers got out of line. It appears as a measure of control by the company. Yet, as time went on, the militia drilled only occasionally until it disbanded. Fifteen years later, workers would be involved in a larger and nastier strike against Mount Hope Finishing Company.

The 1951 Strike

In the period between 1934 and 1951, business appeared to be doing fine at Mount Hope. The plant survived the Great Depression and came out prosperous during the boom of World War II. Due to the increasing level of business, the company had to hire more workers during the war. During the post war years until July 1951, Mount Hope had around 600-750 employees working at the plant.⁶⁴ After the war, workers still retained many of the benefits the company had to offer such as the Mount Hope club, sports leagues, affordable employee housing, banquets, clambakes and a newly installed cafeteria in 1944. On the surface, things at the plant appeared to be operating smoothly in 1951, which made the strike appear to be sudden. A broader look at the larger economic context, however, shows that business quickly dwindled in 1951 after the Korean War boom and as many other manufacturing plants in the northeast continued to move south, workers at Mount Hope had reasonable fears that their jobs too would be heading south. On August 13, 1951 nearly 200 Mount Hope employees went on strike claiming unfair labor practices by Mount Hope. Their claim did not rest on dwindling wages, but a general fear of loss of job security.

⁶³ Burke Davis, *A Fierce Personal Pride*, 45.

⁶⁴ "Mount Hope Finishing Co., North Dighton, Mass., Applies Production-Control Methods to Its Cafeteria Operation," *Textile World*, August 1951, 111, MSS 396 Box 238 Folder Mount Hope. Wisconsin Historical Society, Textile Workers Union of America Collection, 1915-1994.

Although wages at Mount Hope remained competitive the inflationary economy during 1951 decreased their buying power. With all of these benefits for workers during this period, wages remained rather stagnant. In 1950, bleacher Stanley Nowak made around \$3,200 per year. This pay competed with unionized Fall River and New Bedford cotton workers wages for the late 1940s and early 1950s. In December of 1948 unionized occupations in Fall River and New Bedford cotton mills, such as a slasher tender and card grinder, earned \$1.36 and \$1.28 per hour.⁶⁵ By keeping a base rate of 43 hours per week, straight time, a slasher tender earned around \$3,050 and a card grinder earned about \$2,900 per year. However, per hour rates can be misleading to determine annual income due to the fact that industrial workers often had long periods of lay offs. One important component to the competitive wages is that occupations working within cotton manufacturing earned less than those in textile finishing. Weekly earnings in November of 1948 in Massachusetts for dyeing and finishing made close to \$15.00 more than those in the cotton goods industry.⁶⁶ Dyeing and finishing was also considered a more skilled occupation. Yet, Mount Hope workers such as Stanley Nowak still earned wages that were either close to or even higher than the average pay. The vast majority of mills in Fall River and New Bedford were those that dealt with cotton, not dyeing and finishing. Milliken probably paid rates to compete with these companies despite it being a lower skilled occupation. With the increase in inflation taken into account during the post-war years, the purchasing power of Nowak's income decreased. In 1951, the Bureau of Labor Statistics determined that for a four person family with an modest and adequate standard of living in an urban area needed \$3,750 for a budget.⁶⁷ Between the years 1941 and 1951, food prices

⁶⁵ Statement of the TWUA-CIO in the Matter of Arbitration with Fall River Textile Mfrs. Association and New Bedford Cotton Mfrs. Association, January 3, 1949. US MSS 129A series 10A, Box 17, Folder New Bedford Cotton, Wisconsin Historical Society, Textile Workers Union of America Collection, 1915-1994.

⁶⁶ Statement of the TWUA-CIO In the Matter of Arbitration with Fall River Textile Mfrs. Association and New Bedford Cotton Mfrs. Association January 3, 1949. US MSS 129A Series 10A, Box 17, Folder New Bedford Cotton, Wisconsin Historical Society, Textile Workers Union of America Collection, 1915-1994.

⁶⁷ David S. Johnson, John M. Rogers and Lucilla Tan, "A Century of Family Budgets in the United States," *Monthly Labor Review* (May 2001): 31, accessed January 13, 2017, <https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2001/05/art3full.pdf>.

increased by eight percent.⁶⁸ Workers, unionized or not, on a national and local level clearly felt the impacts of inflation and wage instability. Yet, wages do not appear to be the sole, or even primary, cause of the 1951 strike. Workers had a bigger problem to worry about than their pay scale, and that was the move of the textile industry to the southern United States.

For many years at Mount Hope, the prospect of moving South seemed appealing, yet also a move of abandonment for Milliken and the company village that he constructed. Throughout the years that Mount Hope existed in North Dighton, many plants from New England began moving South, and it seemed as though the trend would not impact Mount Hope because of Milliken's personal connection with the town that he largely built. Yet, Mount Hope depended upon receiving cotton from plants to finish, and if a large amount of those plants moved down south, then it would no longer be economically feasible to ship the cotton up north to be finished. Lax labor legislation, lower wages and taxes, as well as cheaper cost of production attracted numerous New England industrialists. For Mount Hope workers, they were probably well aware of the threat that the South posed to their jobs, but with Milliken's paternalism they might have felt secure. In the September 1927 edition of *The Mount Hope News*, Albert R. White, employed in upper level management at Mount Hope, wrote an interesting article titled "What is the Trouble with Cotton Textiles in Massachusetts." In this article, readily available to all employees at the plant, White discussed the various advantages that the South had over the North. These advantages included producing quality goods at a lower cost, wages, cost of living, freight weights, and legislation protective of labor.⁶⁹ White's underlying argument expressed that Northern legislators do not pass enough protective legislation for industry and had too many laws protecting labor, which supposedly held Mount Hope back. He reminded the reader "...if no change is made there will be a gradual

⁶⁸ Stephen B. Reed, "One Hundred Years of Price Change: The American Inflation Experience," *Monthly Labor Review* (April 2014): 12, accessed January 13, 2017, <https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2014/article/one-hundred-years-of-price-change-the-consumer-price-index-and-the-american-inflation-experience.htm>.

⁶⁹ Albert R. White, "What is the Trouble with Cotton Textiles in Massachusetts" *Mount Hope News*, September 1927, 19-20. Folder VM863H Mount Hope Finishing Company, Old Colony History Museum.

procession southward bound of ambition, brains, machinery and money that ought to remain here in New England."⁷⁰ The article took on a negative tone and it served as a warning as to the potential future for workers: loosing their jobs to the South. This warning became reality for the workers in 1951.

In late 1950 and into 1951, Milliken and his two sons and Frank Daylor, a consultant for the company and future vice president, took a business trip to various cities and towns in North Carolina to inspect the areas for a potential new location for the Mount Hope plant. Although the Korean War, which began in 1950, sparked an economic boom for manufacturing, it was fleeting. From what Burke Davis presents in *A Fierce Personal Pride*, financially, the plant appeared to be on an downward spiral, and the only feasible option was a move South so as to cut production cost and once again be competitive. In a case of wage arbitration from 1952 between the Textile Workers Union of America and Fall River Textile Manufacturers Association, New Bedford Cotton Manufacturers Association and Berkshire Fine Spinning Associates, Inc., revealed "Bitter events have destroyed the predictions on which the parties' agreement rested. Instead of continuing on a plateau of prosperity, the textile industry slid into a deep depression. While the reduction in business has by no means been confined to the Fall River-New Bedford group of mills."⁷¹ It is apparent that the economic conditions of the northern textile industry were not great, but Davis certainly puts a dramatic spin on it.

According to historian Burke Davis, 1951 did not prove to be a successful year for the company and for the first time in its history it showed negative profits.⁷² In Davis's book on Mount Hope he shows that in January 1951 the plant processed 2,000,000 yards per week and by May that

⁷⁰ Albert R. White, "What is the Trouble with Cotton Textiles in Massachusetts" *Mount Hope News*, September 1927, 19-20. Folder VM863H Mount Hope Finishing Company, Old Colony History Museum.

⁷¹ Walter Gellgorn, "Opinion of the Arbitrator," In The Matter of the Arbitration Between Fall River Textile Manufacturers Association, New Bedford Cotton Manufacturers Association, Berkshire Fine Spinning Associates, Inc., and Textile Workers Union of America, C.I.O, July 15, 1952, 2, MSS 396, Box 17, Folder New Bedford. From the Wisconsin Historical Society, Textile Workers Union of America Collection, 1915-1994.

⁷² Burke Davis, *A Fierce Personal Pride*, 70.

number had dropped to only 450,000 yards.⁷³ As production slowed, until July of 1951, the plant was only able to maintain the employment of several hundred workers, about half of the 1300 the company usually kept on in times of full employment, and had to restrict work weeks to only three or four days for those remaining employed.⁷⁴ Things became so bad that Superintendent Albert Carr reflected on the business conditions of the plant during the Korean War bust: "The plant was already losing money. The reserve we had set aside for payment of workers' bonuses was gone. Employees were grumbling, and competition from southern finishers was fierce."⁷⁵ It is understandable to see why employees were unhappy with not receiving their bonuses, yet the company had the funds to host as a grand fiftieth anniversary for the plant in June 1951. Supposedly, as Bob Milliken explained there was an ulterior motive for holding the party, and that was to invite customers and buyers, pay for their trip, let them tour the plant and feed them in hopes that they would give them more business.⁷⁶ Apparently, that strategy did not work. It is entirely possible that the funds for the party came out of Milliken's own pocket. Nearly nine-hundred Mount Hope employees, alongside many wealthy businessmen, attended the fiftieth anniversary party. Shortly following the celebrations, the workers made the abrupt decision to strike.

Discontented workers turned to union representation to better serve and protect their interests. Sometime during the late spring and early summer of 1951, employees started to become more involved with the Textile Workers Union of America and organizing fellow workers. Long time resident and town historian Helen Lane explained in her 1962 book *History of the Town of Dighton Massachusetts* "In May a small group of dissatisfied workers began to meet to discuss organizing the employees. Other areas of annoyance-long latent-came to the surface."⁷⁷ The TWUA

⁷³ Burke Davis, *A Fierce Personal Pride*, 70.

⁷⁴ Helen Lane, *A History of the Town of Dighton Massachusetts* (Dighton: Town of Dighton, 1962), 197.

⁷⁵ Burke Davis, *A Fierce Personal Pride*, 70.

⁷⁶ Burke Davis, *A Fierce Personal Pride*,

⁷⁷ Helen H. Lane, *History of the Town of Dighton Massachusetts*, 197.

documents that dealt with the strike do not mention anything about what Lane calls "long latent" grievances, and unfortunately, these complaints are likely lost to history. Throughout the duration of the strike, tensions between workers did come to the surface. In a September 1951 interview with the newspaper *Taunton Daily Gazette*, John W. Synan revealed some interesting dynamics between striking and non-striking employees that does not appear in other sources on the strike. Synan reported "stones also have been thrown at cars entering and leaving the plant, and that nails have been strewn in front of the mill...sugar had been poured into one man's automobile gas tank and a jar of yellow paint and beer hurled through the windshield of another." These acts, probably common tactics of other strikes, do reveal the tension and anger those on strike felt towards employees that still decided to work.

The essential part that both Lane and Davis failed to capture in their writings on the strike is the unfair labor practices conducted by Mount Hope that drove workers to strike. These unfair labor practices such as refusing to hold an election and discriminating in who they laid off in July 1951, are covered in depth in the National Labor Relations Board case. Detailed information pertaining to the strike and Mount Hope's move south resides in the documents related to the 1952 and 1953 National Labor Relations Board court cases. According to this case, in July of 1951 some workers acquired applications for union representation from the Textile Workers Union of America-C.I.O, and on July 24, 1951, "323 employees applied for membership in the Union and designated it as their bargaining agent."⁷⁸ It is important to note that Mount Hope still employed all of these 323 workers after they signed union cards. Pete Milliken received a letter from the TWUA on Saturday July 28, 1951, four days after the workers signed their union cards, which requested the plant to recognize the union. The *Taunton Daily Gazette* published the contents of the July 28th

⁷⁸ Intermediate report of Case Docket No. . 1-CA-1085 In the Matter of Mount Hope Finishing Company, Mount Hope Finishing Company, Inc. Joseph K. Milliken, Frank L. Daylor and Robert D. Milliken and Textile Workers Union of America, CIO, IR-830 Taunton, Mass, 3, MSS 396 Box 238 Folder Mount Hope, Wisconsin Historical Society, Textile Workers Union of America Records, 1915-1994.

letter in the August 7, 1951 article "Mt. Hope Company Questions Union's Claim of Majority Representation." The letter succinctly stated the request to collectively bargain with the company:

This will serve to advise you that the Textile Workers Union of America, C.I.O, represents a majority of the Employees of the Mt. Hope Finishing Company. Accordingly, the Union is desirous of entering into a collective bargaining agreement with you for all production and maintenance employees (excluding supervisory and clerical employees) at the above mentioned plant. To accomplish this end, we request that conferences begin as soon as possible. Please provide us of the earliest time and place to suit your convenience for such collective bargaining conference.⁷⁹

Then on July 31, 1951, in a decision that aroused suspicion, without any prior warning, the company laid off 185 employees, or 30% of their workforce. The layoffs appeared to be sudden, but considering the poor economic conditions of the plant, they should not have come as a too much of a surprise. During the court case, the company claimed they needed to lay off these workers for financial reasons, and had plans to do so well before Pete Milliken received any letters from the union; "The record further shows that since April 1951 the management had under consideration a plan to reduce its working force, and that this plan was revived in the middle of July 1951."⁸⁰

During the June 1952 NLRB court case, however, NLRB lawyer Sidney A. Coven cross examined Pete Milliken and asked "Had there been any discussion prior to July the 28th as to when this layoff would be made?" and Pete Milliken answered "No, I don't think there had been."⁸¹ Pete Milliken's statement shows that there was no specific date for when employees would be laid off.

Management claimed that these layoffs were thought of well before Pete Milliken received the letter from the TWUA, but it seems that the request for union recognition became the deciding factor in the timing to layoff an additional 65 workers on top of the original 120 employees who were to be

⁷⁹ "Mt Hope Company Questions Union's Claim of Majority Representation," *Taunton Daily Gazette*, August 7, 1951, 2, Old Colony History Museum Microfilm Collection, M436TDG436 Roll 435.

⁸⁰ Decision and Order D-7444 Docket No. 1-CA-1085, 5, MSS 396 Box 238 Folder Mount Hope, Wisconsin Historical Society, Textile Workers Union of America Records, 1915-1994.

⁸¹ Official Report of the Proceedings before the National Labor Relations Board Docket No. 1-CA-1085, 76. MSS 396 Box 238 Folder Mount Hope, Wisconsin Historical Society, Textile Workers Union of America Records, 1915-1994.

fired. According to Pete Milliken eliminating 120 jobs would have been sufficient enough to improve the financial status of the plant: "In our discussion up to that time, we had felt that about a hundred and twenty, or approximately 20 per cent, would be a reasonable approach."⁸² It is impossible to know Pete Milliken's personal list of employees he wanted to layoff before he received the letter from the TWUA, yet the final layoffs did target a disproportionate amount of employees associated with the union. If the union had been recognized it would have been harder for the company to just layoff workers before consulting with the union. Pete Milliken explained as much during his cross examination, saying "that it's easier to alter your work force without a union than with a union."⁸³ Before the layoffs, Mount Hope had a total of 615 employees on the payroll and after the layoffs it retained only 425 employees. Out of the 615 employees, around 53% signed union cards and out of the 185 employees laid off, 69% had signed union cards; thus suggesting a targeted layoff and a violation of fair labor practices.

Mount Hope's anti-labor behavior did not stop at their discriminatory layoff of workers associated with the union. The company then partook in various unfair labor activities in an attempt to stop union organization from progressing any further at the plant. These ranged from interrogating employees to refusing collective bargaining with the union. According to the intermediate report Pete Milliken "approached one of the employee organizers, Armand Poudrier, at his machine, specifically asked him if he had signed a union card, where he obtained it and what he did with it."⁸⁴ During the trial, another employee, John Soares reported that Pete Milliken asked him about fellow employees involved in the union: "He said 'Could it be this fellow, that fellow, or

⁸² Witnesses for the General Counsel, Trial Transcript, Direct Examination of Joseph K. Milliken Jr., pg 2, MSS 396, Box 238 Folder Mount Hope, Wisconsin Historical Society, Textile Workers Union of America Records, 1915-1994.

⁸³ Official Report of the Proceedings before the National Labor Relations Board Docket No. 1-CA-1085 pg. 82-83 Mss 396 box 238 folder Mount Hope Finishing Company, Wisconsin Historical Society, Textile Workers Union of America Records, 1915-1994.

⁸⁴ Intermediate Report of Case, Docket No. 1-CA-1085 In the Matter of Mount Hope Finishing Company, Mount Hope Finishing Company, Inc. Joseph K. Milliken, Frank L. Daylor and Robert D. Milliken and Textile Workers Union of America, CIO, IR-830 Taunton, Mass, 6. MSS 396 Box 238 Folder Mount Hope, Wisconsin Historical Society, Textile Workers Union of America Records, 1915-1994.

any other fellow."⁸⁵ From the date Pete Milliken received the letter from the TWUA, the plant was adamant about not bargaining or accepting the representation of the union without a proper election. The Milliken sons' indifference to and rejection of the union was really just a continuation of the long history of anti-unionism and the paternalistic legacy of their father, J.K. Milliken. Mount Hope sent a letter to the TWUA sometime in early August that explained, "The Mount Hope Finishing Company is unable and unwilling to recognize your organization as representing a majority of the employees...unless your Union has been duly certified as the collective bargaining agent for the employees by the appropriate governmental agency."⁸⁶ These were typical anti-union strategies practiced by management facing a potentially organized workforce.

On the morning on August 10, 1951, Mount Hope officials and lawyers held a meeting with the NLRB at the North Dighton plant to discuss an election, but TWUA officials were not permitted to sit in. This angered both the workers and the union so finally on the evening of August 10, 1951, the employees and the union held a meeting and voted to strike the following Monday, August 13, in response to the management's refusal "to permit the Union representatives to sit on this conference, the Respondent interfered with, restrained, and coerced its employees," as well as, the targeted anti-union layoffs.⁸⁷ On August 13, around 75 men formed picket lines during the morning shift, and the *Taunton Daily Gazette* reported that 60 workers crossed the line into work.⁸⁸ In the evening, with the start of the second shift, the picket lines reformed. The strike continued into September, along with an extensive amount of media coverage in numerous local and national newspapers, including coverage by the *Chicago Sun Times* and conservative columnist Westbrook

⁸⁵ Witnesses for the General Counsel, Direction Examination of John Soares, 20, MSS 396 Box 238 Folder Mount Hope, Wisconsin Historical Society, Textile Workers Union of America Records, 1915-1994.

⁸⁶ "Mt. Hope Company Questions Union's Claim of Majority Representation," *Taunton Daily Gazette*, August 7, 1951, 2, Old Colony History Museum Microfilm Collection, M435TDG436 Roll 435.

⁸⁷ Intermediate Report of Case, Docket No. 1-CA-1085 In the Matter of Mount Hope Finishing Company, Mount Hope Finishing Company, Inc. Joseph K. Milliken, Frank L. Daylor and Robert D. Milliken and Textile Workers Union of America, CIO, IR-830 Taunton, Mass, 6. MSS 396 Box 238 Folder Mount Hope, Wisconsin Historical Society, Textile Workers Union of America Collection, 1915-1994.

⁸⁸ "60 Cross Mt. Hope Picket Lines, North Dighton Strike Peaceful During Morning," *Taunton Daily Gazette*, August 13, 1951, 1, Old Colony History Museum Microfilm Collection, M435TDG436 Roll 435.

Pegler. This national media made one essential mistake in the reporting on the strike, however. The media coverage transformed the strike, into a product of the Second Red Scare and communist agitation, not labor injustice. The localized media coverage from that of the *Fall River Herald*, *Taunton Daily Gazette* and the *Boston Globe* offered informative, unbiased day by day coverage, without any apparent anti-communist or anti-labor sympathies.

The Second Red Scare

The 1951 strike at Mount Hope Finishing 1951 took place during the Second Red Scare, which had gripped the United States both politically and culturally. Many factions of U.S. society, including organized labor, which had a long history of being labeled as radical in the United States, did not escape the Second Red Scare unscathed. Both unions and strikes became associated with the growing threat of domestic communism. Historians have showed how overwhelmingly the U.S. government fought the supposed domestic Communist threat. Anti-communism was everywhere and the slightest act could be enough to deem one as a radical or even a Stalinist. In Southeastern Massachusetts, anti-communist political and anti-labor sentiment made their way into the newspapers, in the form of anti-union advertisements and articles reporting on activities of the "Reds." With the anti-communist fervor rocking the country, it is not surprising that media coverage of the Mount Hope Finishing Company strike, on the national level contrived it as a product of radical activism by a communist-controlled union. This misled readers about the true cause of the strike: The company's unfair labor practices. Strong political anti-labor sentiment among politicians, the government and even the press, created an environment where even labor injustices in a small town were mislabeled and deemed illegitimate due to the association with radicalism.

The political climate of the country complemented the irrational and sometimes false reporting of press, and the Mount Hope strike is a prime example of this. The extensive reach that

anti-communism had on the American people allowed it to seep its way into the psyche. Historian Richard M. Fried in his 1990 overview of the Second Red Scare, *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective* strings together the complexities that gave rise to McCarthyism and provides an overview of how the political atmosphere inspired a culture of fear that emerged and rooted itself during the late 1940s and 1950s. Through case studies of cultural aspects, Fried shows how anti-communism became pervasive in many aspects of American society, turning trivial events and situations into something related to or influenced by communism. Fried explains “In some of these episodes, anti-Communist rhetoric stemmed from ideological concerns (as in the defense of baseball) or, in less rational interludes such as the Wheeling candy plot, from simple fear. In others, it was more functional.”⁸⁹ The manipulation of the Mt. Hope strike by the media reflects the same process at work. The anti-communist rhetoric deployed by those that wrote about the strike had ideological and functional motives. It was less about reporting the truth of labor injustice and more about discrediting the strike through the rhetoric of anti-communism. By 1951, the Second Red Scare was in full swing and it was easy for reporters to scapegoat the strike.

The strike at the Mount Hope Finishing Company received daily news coverage from the *Taunton Daily Gazette*, *Fall River Herald* and the *New Bedford Standard-Times*. It even received some national coverage from the *Chicago Tribune* and conservative journalist Westbrook Pegler. The interest in the strike at Mount Hope is reflected in the greater media coverage and television programming during the late 1940s and early 1950s on communism and things considered to exemplify Americanism which set itself apart from the others in Eastern Europe. According to historian Stephen Whitfield, news networks had an obligation to conform to “the operations of McCarthyism, and indeed contributed to the sour and irrational vindictiveness that he

⁸⁹ Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective*, (New York: Oxford University Press: 1990), 35.

incarnated.”⁹⁰ If a television network or major newspaper did not contribute to the domestic shaming of Communism, then they risked being accused of leftist sympathies. This pressure to conform to the force of McCarthyism inhibited fair news reporting. The group of people that the American people turned to obtain information on current events and issues of domestic and foreign policy had a bias that impacted both the method and the integrity of their reporting.

Labor unions have had a long history of being characterized as radical by the media and management in the United States. The labor movement fought to get moderate craft unions accepted by business and shed the radical image bestowed upon them. There were, however unions that remained rather radical, such as the Industrial Workers of the World that provided fuel for the fire of anti-communism. Even moderate unions, such as the Congress of Industrial Organizations, were associated with communism. By the post-war years, the government had shifted its stance on labor and unionism from its more accommodating position during the Great Depression. The Taft Hartley Act passed in 1947 and made substantial changes to the pro-labor Wagner Act passed in 1935. Historian Ellen Schrecker explains how organized labor in the United States became linked with radicalism and communism: “Until the issue of national security became paramount during and after World War II, most major red scares occurred in response to labor unrest. Red-baiting offered anti-union employers a way to legitimize opposition to organize labor without having to refer to economic issues.”⁹¹ Organized labor could not shake this reputation into the 1950s. Historian Elizabeth A. Fones-Wolf explains that during the early 1950s, business leaders, less concerned with communism, rallied together to politically combat the threat of organized labor and supporting Eisenhower for President in 1952.⁹² Both politically and socially, the opposition and fear to organized labor and its relationship to communism was well established in the United States by

⁹⁰ Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, (Baltimore, The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 166.

⁹¹ Ellen Schrecker, *Many are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1998), 49.

⁹² Elizabeth A. Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism 1945-60*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 54-57.

1951. Both the national and local reporting on the strike is a reflection of where the United States was both politically and socially in 1951.

Media Coverage of the 1951 Strike

The broader political and social climate of anti-communism and opposition to organized labor played an important role in the national media coverage of the strike. The reporters obscured the real cause of the 1951 strike at Mount Hope. On the national level, the reports mistook it for a communist infiltration of a small town. Yet even the local reports failed to fully investigate the cause of the strike, favoring the Millikens view and casting aside the ideas and views of the strikers. Reporting from a sympathetic angle on a strike could have raised suspicions of the reporters' political affiliations. Reporters from different parts of the United States that wrote about the strike did not know the history of Mount Hope Finishing Company or have the local connections with the Milliken family. A geographic analysis of news articles relating to the strike reveals unbiased, detailed and mundane local reporting, untouched by anti-communist sentiment and anti-labor sentiment. Within the national coverage strong anti-communist and anti-union sentiments emerges. Essentially, there was an exploitation of the strike at Mt. Hope on the national level, with reporters only covering the one isolated event of violence, and not anything else. This geographic analysis gives insight into the regional political differences as well as highlights important dynamics of the strike missing in secondary writings.

The *Taunton Daily Gazette* reported day by day coverage of the July layoffs, the strike and its aftermath, with rather objective, rational reports on events. Most of the articles revolved around daily short articles, consisting of information about legal actions taken by both the TWUA-CIO and Mount Hope. A major lapse in strike coverage from the *Taunton Daily Gazette* is the lack of employee voices. In only a few articles throughout the duration of the strike did the paper actually quote workers, but it does not reveal much of their subject opinions about the circumstances

surrounding the strike. Since almost all of the people employed at Mount Hope Finishing Company during the strike are dead, it is difficult to fully understand how workers on both sides of the struggle felt. Like other newspapers in 1951, it had daily coverage on communism, the Korean War, and the Truman presidency.

The local coverage was extensive but a rather traditional and without the impassioned, and biased reporting found in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* and column by conservative Westbrook Pegler. There is concise, day by day coverage of the various events that unfolded with picket lines or the legality of Mount Hope not accepting a union election. The articles are mainly a summary of events related to the strike, with very little original commentary from reporters. On August 7, 1951 the *Taunton Daily Gazette* ran the article "Mt. Hope Company Questions Union's Claim of Majority Representation" in which it is recounted "Two letters have passed between the Mount Hope Finishing Company and the Textile Workers Union of America relative to the attempt on the part of the workers at the Mount Hope Plant."⁹³ The contents of both letters were published in order to better inform the reader about the current situation. This kind of comprehensive reporting from the local newspapers continued throughout the duration of the strike. On August 11, 1951 the *Taunton Daily Gazette* ran the article "Union Disputes Company Claim on LRB talk, Counsel for Firm Says 'Plant Open as Usual Monday," which provides insight into the tedious developments of the strike through the comments of representatives from both the TWUA and Mount Hope Finishing Company: "Walter Powers, counsel for the Mount Hope company said late this morning that the plant 'will be open as usual on Monday morning.' With regard to the 190 laid of employees Schofield said: 'The fact that the company refuses to let them vote indicates to us that instead of being merely laid off as the company claims, these men in reality have been discharged.'"⁹⁴

⁹³ "Mt. Hope Company Questions Union's Claim of Majority Representation," *Taunton Daily Gazette*, August 7, 1951, 2, Old Colony History Museum Microfilm Collection, M435TDG436 Roll 435.

⁹⁴ "Union Disputes Company Claim on LRB talk, Counsel for Firm Says 'Plant Open as Usual Monday," *Taunton Daily Gazette*, August 11, 1951, 1, Old Colony History Museum Microfilm Collection, M435TDG436 Roll 435.

Importantly, the *Taunton Daily Gazette* contains first-hand accounts of men directly involved in the strike from both Mount Hope and the TWUA. This lends the reporting an unbiased feel. The *Taunton Daily Gazette* had ample opportunities in the reporting to discredit the TWUA, yet they do not. An example of this is the September 7, 1951 article "190 'Laid Off' Before Strike Ruled Eligible, Bargaining Agent Poll Date Subject For Early Parley," which reported "Doolan said that the notice of the election order was received this morning from Washington, where the union petition had been under consideration since a N.L.R.B. hearing three weeks ago."⁹⁵ This article is another example of the impartial local reporting. It is entirely possible that the *Taunton Daily Gazette* could have argued in favor of Mount Hope and criticized the NLRB decision to allow the laid off workers to vote.

These type of reports are not exactly enthralling, but they are able to give a clear breakdown of the strike and timeline of events. National coverage of the strike did not begin until there was a violent outburst initiated by the strikers in September. Similarly to the *Taunton Daily Gazette* the *Fall River Herald* and *Daily Boston Globe* contain a similar sense of dispassionate reporting on the strike. On August 14, 1951 the *Boston Globe* ran the article "CIO Calls Strike at North Dighton Finishing Firm," which explained "Peaceful picketing by 75 employees began today at three entrances of the Mount Hope Finishing Company, as a C.I.O union carried out a threat to strike because the firm allegedly 'stalled' in permitting an election...No disorders were reported as 60-odd employees crossed the lines."⁹⁶ This report is dull but objective, but with a hint of skepticism towards the claims of the TWUA. The *Fall River Herald* ran unexciting daily updates on the strike at Mount Hope, such as in the September 10, 1951 article "Mount Hope Firm Seeking Injunction to Halt TWUA Pickets," which stated "Assistant Treasurer Robert Milliken disclosed that

⁹⁵ "190 Laid Off Before Strike Ruled Eligible, Bargaining Agent Poll Date Subject For Early Parley," *Taunton Daily Gazette*, September 7, 1951, 1, Old Colony History Museum Microfilm Collection, M436TDG437 Roll 436.

⁹⁶ "CIO Calls Strike at North Dighton Finishing Firm," *Boston Globe*, August 14, 1951, 4, accessed April 21, 2017, <https://secure.pqarchiver.com/boston-sub/doc/839553521.html?FMT=AI&FMFS=CITE:AI&type=historic&date=Aug+14%2C+1951&author=&pub=Daily+Boston+Globe+%281928-1960%29&edition=&startpage=4&desc=CIO+Calls+Strike+at+North+Dighton+Finishing+Firm>.

company counsel would appear at 3 P.M. before Judge Felix Forte in Suffolk County Superior Court on the injunction matter. Milliken charged that the pickets incited by agitators which the TWUA has brought into Dighton has become increasingly unruly."⁹⁷ The *Fall River Herald* remained neutral to both Mount Hope and the TWUA in the coverage of the strike. Again, each newspaper had plenty of opportunities to condemn the strike and attack the TWUA, but they remained objective. These articles presented here are just a few examples of this persistently unbiased local reporting. The national coverage completely ignores the tedious dynamics of the strike that is recounted in detail in the local context. Part of the failure of the national coverage is it's inability to correctly contextual the strike and deliver dispassionate reporting.

It is understandable that the strike at Mount Hope Finishing Company would have received substantial local news coverage. The company had a reputation as one of the largest non-unionized textile plants in the area, and the Milliken's had local prestige as an old New England family. It is remarkable that this localized event gained news coverage outside of Massachusetts and New England. Yet, one incident of violence during the strike on the night of September 11, 1951 caught the attention of reports on a national level. The violent outburst provided fodder for those who did not support unions and an opportunity to craft another negative view of organized labor for the public to consume. The local reporting was matter-of-fact and mundane, but this puts in a sharp contrast to the exploitive national coverage. Both the local and the national press reported on this outburst of violence, but what differs from local coverage is the language used, level of detail and proper contextualization of the strike.

On the night of Wednesday September 11, 1951, workers on strike met at the South End Portuguese club on Baker Road in nearby Taunton for a union meeting. It was there that the workers received news that the NLRB granted an election to take place on the following Monday. In

⁹⁷ "Mount Hope Firm Seeking Injunction to Halt TWUA Pickets," *Fall River Herald*, September 10, 1951, 1, Fall River Public Library Microfilm Collection.

excitement and celebration around 150 “strikers were parading Dighton streets.”⁹⁸ The celebration appeared to have turned rowdy and according to eye witness reports, “strikers stoned six homes of non-striking employees.”⁹⁹ Edith O’Connell, a Dighton resident, was hit in the eye with a rock and treated for facial wounds. Her husband, Edward O’Connell, also a non-striking employee, came to his wife’s aid and fired a gun “above the heads of the demonstrators, shouting defiance at the mob.”¹⁰⁰ In the *Taunton Daily Gazette* an eye witness reported that after O’Connell fired his weapon, the strikers were “faced by ‘about 10 men’ bearing guns.”¹⁰¹ Interestingly, the gun Mr. O’Connell used in the confrontation was borrowed from the Dighton police force.¹⁰² This small detail illustrates the collaboration between those loyal to the company and the police. It is entirely plausible that some in the group of strikers could have been carrying firearms. However, from the reports it is apparent that no shots came from the strikers, if so it probably would have been heavily reported in the press. The McGowan residence was also pelted that night with rocks. The disturbance went on all night and police were not able to break it up until 1 a.m. Thursday morning. Although it potentially could have escalated into something much more violent and destructive it appears that no additional violence occurred that night.

The *Fall River Herald* also reported this event with great detail and also provided an interview with Mrs. Edith O’Connell and Mrs. Beatrice McGowan. In the September 12, 1951 the *Fall River Herald* article "Gunfire Disperse Group; Election on Monday" the newspaper provided more

⁹⁸ "Armed Violence Erupts as Mob of Dighton Strikers Goes Amok in 'Riotous' Nocturnal Parade," *Taunton Daily Gazette*, September 12, 1951, 1, Old Colony History Museum Microfilm Collection, M436TDG437 Roll 436.

⁹⁹ "Armed Violence Erupts as Mob of Dighton Strikers Goes Amok in 'Riotous' Nocturnal Parade," *Taunton Daily Gazette*, September 12, 1951, 8, Old Colony History Museum Microfilm Collection, M436TDG437 Roll 436.

¹⁰⁰ "Armed Violence Erupts as Mob of Dighton Strikers Goes Amok in 'Riotous' Nocturnal Parade," *Taunton Daily Gazette*, September 12, 1951, 8, Old Colony History Museum Microfilm Collection, M436TDG437 Roll 436.

¹⁰¹ "Armed Violence Erupts as Mob of Dighton Strikers Goes Amok in 'Riotous' Nocturnal Parade," *Taunton Daily Gazette*, September 12, 1951, 8, Old Colony History Museum Microfilm Collection, M436TDG437 Roll 436.

¹⁰² "Gunfire Disperse Group; Election on Monday," *Fall River Herald*, September 12, 1951, 1, Fall River Public Library Microfilm Collection.

first-hand accounts of what actually happened from the interviews of both Mrs. Edith O'Connell and Mrs. Beatrice McGowan. Although these two women were on the other side of the strike, the information they provide gives insight into what the families of non-striking employees thought. James McGowan, whose house the strikers threw rocks at, worked at Mount Hope as a receiving foreman. He also fired above the crowd of strikers as well with a .38 caliber pistol.¹⁰³ Edward O'Connell, husband of Edith O'Connell, was a personnel manager at the plant. It appears that the strikers coming from the South End Portuguese club purposefully targeted houses of non-striking employees with rocks. The *Fall River Herald* report looks favorably among the victims and mentioned James McGowan, Beatrice's husband was a "Marine veteran of World War II and saw action in the Pacific."¹⁰⁴ To the post-war American, this subtle mention of McGowan's military service, probably appear even more abhorrent because they attacked a veteran. It is reasonable to recognize the fear that the McConnell's, McGowan and other families felt. North Dighton was a small village and Mount Hope Finishing Company created a sense of community among the workers. An event like this would have possibly shaken any tight-knit community. Residents and the town of Dighton government criticized the Massachusetts State Police for not sending men down earlier in the week to prevent violence. Even if the state police did arrive beforehand, there is still a strong possibility that strikers would have still marched into North Dighton from the South End Portuguese Club that night. However, the law was on the side of strikers. Massachusetts law declared that state police "can not be used or called upon for service in any industrial dispute unless actual violence has occurred therein."¹⁰⁵ The town could not have requested state police aid before any actual violence. Even after September 12, 1951, the state was unwilling to provide the town with national guardsmen because "nothing has yet developed in the way of unlawful activity

¹⁰³ "Gunfire Disperse Group; Election Monday," *Fall River Herald*, September 12, 1951, 1, Fall River Public Library Microfilm Collection.

¹⁰⁴ "Gunfire Disperse Group; Election Monday," *Fall River Herald*, September 12, 1951, 2. Fall River Public Library Microfilm Collection.

¹⁰⁵ "Town Asks Aid of State Police; Plea Rejected," *Taunton Daily Gazette*, September 12, 1951, 8, Old Colony History Museum Microfilm Collection, M436TDG437, Roll 436.

with which local law enforcement agencies are unable to cope, as evidenced by the lack of any arrests."¹⁰⁶ It is obvious that the events of that night were not as violent and riotous as the newspaper made them out to be. Yet, the town police went further to secure order, and, in a totalitarian move, to stop the violence, ordered house to house checks for firearms.¹⁰⁷ The town overacted to the events and wanted to show the union they could flex their muscles. The reaction of the town government further illustrates the deep ties that formed over the years between Mount Hope Finishing Company and the town of Dighton.

In the reporting from both the *Fall River Herald* and *Taunton Daily Gazette*, there are no firsthand accounts from strikers that participated in the events on the night of September 11, 1951. The union, similar to the reports on a national scale, appears to be this entity with no acknowledgement to the workers actually filled the ranks. The incident on the night of September 11, made the union seem to be nothing but violent. Mrs. McGowan summed up "If this is union, then I don't want any part in it."¹⁰⁸ The localized reporting on this incident gives the reader a better understanding into the dynamics of the strike. Readers from the Fall River, Taunton and North Dighton were more informed about Mount Hope, the Milliken's and the strike than those from other areas of the country.

This isolated event of strike related violence in a small town located southeastern Massachusetts provided an opportunity to criticize organized labor. The *Chicago Tribune* ran three articles about the incident of violence in North Dighton. The first article titled "Town Refused Help to Quell CIO Goon Riot" ran on September 13, 1951. This article takes an overtly biased stance against organized labor and the political left. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* claimed "The riotous

¹⁰⁶ "Town Asks Aid of State Police; Plea Rejected," *Taunton Daily Gazette*, September 12, 1951, 8, Old Colony History Museum Microfilm Collection, M436TDG437, Roll 436.

¹⁰⁷ "Menges Clamps Firearms Curb," *Taunton Daily Gazette*, September 13, 1951, 7, Old Colony History Museum Microfilm Collection, M436TDG437, Roll 436.

¹⁰⁸ "Gunfire Disperse Group; Election Monday," *Fall River Herald*, September 12, 1951, 2, Fall River Public Library Microfilm Collection.

demonstration by CIO goons was waged against the homes of workers who have remained at their jobs"¹⁰⁹ The misinforming terms "goon" and "riot" are used throughout the article. If the strikers wanted to perform more acts of violence against non-striking employees, they could have done more than just throw stones at a couple of houses. The article stated "The goons stoned homes and severely manhandled a housewife as a climax to weeks of violence."¹¹⁰ It is true that the so-called "goons" stoned homes, but according to the local articles, it is misleading to say they severely manhandled a housewife. It is clear that there were tensions among striking and non-striking employees at Mount Hope, but there was never any prolonged violence caused by the strike. The *Chicago Tribune* also criticized Paul A. Dever, the "Democratic governor, whose tenure has been distinguished by his communications of executive sentences of convicted murderers" for not sending state police aid to North Dighton after they requested it.¹¹¹ It is also noted in the article that Mount Hope had "satisfactory" relationship with their employees "until the CIO union recently launched a drive to unionize the Mount Hope Company's workers."¹¹² In this context the union is portrayed as a subversive entity. The second article published in the *Chicago Tribune* related to the incident of violence and the Mount Hope strike appeared the next day on September 14 explained, "A dozen policemen went from door to door seeking weapons but reported they didn't find any."¹¹³ The article also summed up the towns desire for police aid and the upcoming union election. Nothing more on the Mount Hope strike appeared in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* until a week later.

¹⁰⁹ "Town Refused Help to Quell CIO Goon Riot," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 13, 1951, part 2 pg 8, accessed April 21, 2017, <http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1951/09/13/page/28/article/town-refused-help-to-quell-cio-goon-riot>.

¹¹⁰ "Town Refused Help to Quell CIO Goon Riot," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 13, 1951, part 2 pg 8, accessed April 21, 2017, <http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1951/09/13/page/28/article/town-refused-help-to-quell-cio-goon-riot>.

¹¹¹ "Town Refused Help to Quell CIO Goon Riot," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 13, 1951, part 2 pg 8, accessed April 21, 2017, <http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1951/09/13/page/28/article/town-refused-help-to-quell-cio-goon-riot>.

¹¹² "Town Refused Help to Quell CIO Goon Riot," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 13, 1951, part 2 pg 8, accessed April 21, 2017, <http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1951/09/13/page/28/article/town-refused-help-to-quell-cio-goon-riot>.

¹¹³ "Hunt for Guns to Prevent New Goon Violence," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 14, 1951, Part 3 pg 13, accessed April 21, 2017, <http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1951/09/14/page/43/article/hunt-for-guns-to-prevent-new-goon-violence/>.

On September 21, 1951, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* ran the article "Goon Plagued Plant to Quit; Town Dismayed: Strike Violence Ends Dighton Industry." The article places blame for the closing of the Mount Hope Finishing Company on the CIO and the "violence-ridden" strike they conducted.¹¹⁴ It is also argued that "The big firm's operations have been crippled by the strike which the CIO Textile Workers union called Aug. 13."¹¹⁵ The strike did not cripple the operations at Mount Hope Finishing Company. By 1951, the company had already slowed operations, had workers on shortened shifts and laid off 190 employees in July. What the strike really "crippled" was the ability of the management of Mount Hope to do as they wanted to, which had done for so many years because of the paternalism practiced by the plant. The article revealed "Milliken said the plant would probably be relocated in the south. He said two southern states had offered choice sites and generous tax arrangements."¹¹⁶ The South offered different incentives for businesses to move there. States in the north generally had stricter labor legislation and higher wages, so the South appeared to be a perfect place a company that wanted to conduct operations without a union. In this article, Milliken also claimed that the union victory was not a factor in the subsequent closing of the plant, but rather it was "influenced by the fact that 320 employees still working in the plant have been unable to carry on their work because of intimidations and threats of violence."¹¹⁷ Milliken's reason stated here for closing the plant is dubious. Throughout the strike, the plant

¹¹⁴ "Goon Plagued Plant to Quit; Town Dismayed: Strike Violence Ends Dighton Industry," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 21, 1951, Part 2, pg 7, accessed April 21, 2017, <http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1951/09/21/page/29/article/goon-plagued-plant-to-quit-town-dismayed>.

¹¹⁵ "Goon Plagued Plant to Quit; Town Dismayed: Strike Violence Ends Dighton Industry," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 21, 1951, Part 2 pg 7, accessed April 21, 2017, <http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1951/09/21/page/29/article/goon-plagued-plant-to-quit-town-dismayed>.

¹¹⁶ "Goon Plagued Plant to Quit; Town Dismayed: Strike Violence Ends Dighton Industry," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 21, 1951, Part 2 pg 7, accessed April 21, 2017, <http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1951/09/21/page/29/article/goon-plagued-plant-to-quit-town-dismayed>.

¹¹⁷ "Goon Plagued Plant to Quit; Town Dismayed: Strike Violence Ends Dighton Industry," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 21, 1951, Part 2 pg 7, accessed April 21, 2017, <http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1951/09/21/page/29/article/goon-plagued-plant-to-quit-town-dismayed>.

remained in operation and the extent of threats and violence faced by the employees is questionable at best. Mount Hope needed to avoid unionization in any way so it could to move down south without any interference. The lawsuits brought against them by the union cost them time and money in court, something that would have been entirely avoided if the TWUA-CIO had not tried to unionize the plant at this crucial time in the company's operation.

The *Chicago Daily Tribune* was not the only newspaper on a national level to empathize with the management of Mount Hope Finishing Company. The *Rome News Tribune* based out of northwest Georgia had some interesting things to say about the situation at the Mount Hope Finishing Company. The *Rome News Tribune* started to cover the Mount Hope Finishing Company strike after the events of September 11, 1951. The article "Strike Mob Attacks Homes of Workers" published on September 12, 1951, briefly summarized the incident of violence and outlined the events of the strike. The next article published in *Rome News Tribune* related to Mount Hope Finishing Company was an opinion piece by conservative columnist Westbrook Pegler titled "Concession to Terrorism" on September 27, 1951. This same opinion piece also appeared in the *Wilmington Morning Star* in Wilmington, North Carolina and in the *Reading Eagle* in Reading, Pennsylvania. The title of the opinion piece in the *Rome News Tribune* stands out because it implies that the actions of union are comparable to that of terrorism. Pegler wrote about the night of September 11, 1951, in North Dighton and criticized the union and Governor Dever for not sending in State Police. Pegler stated that the events in North Dighton were "another flagrant case of mob terrorism by criminal unioneers."¹¹⁸ In this piece Pegler's writing is sensationalized and reads as a political rant. Pegler claimed that those who fired into the crowd of strikers to scare them off should have "been within their rights had they blown the heads off as many of the terrorists as they could

¹¹⁸ Westbrook Pegler, "Concession to Terrorism," *Rome News Tribune*, September 27, 1951, 4, accessed April 21, 2017, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=5UxHAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=fDEDAAAAIIBAJ&pg=6907%2C5878625>.

hit with their shotguns."¹¹⁹ Pegler's language is contradictory. He advocated for violent acts to be committed against the union, which would have been more vicious and brutal than the rocks the strikers threw at six homes.

The national reports on Mount Hope Finishing Company exemplified how deeply entrenched the second Red Scare had become in both the press and the American psyche. Pegler's writing reflected the news media fear and hatred of communism during the second Red Scare. It also speaks to the nature of news during this time. Newspapers published articles that made falsified and exaggerated claims on events. However, it also can reveal how people actually thought and what they may have believed in politically and morally. At this point in time, the average American still had faith in the press and consumed this news as factual. At the time, Pegler's words may not have been viewed as controversial. The language used in some of these articles such as referring to union members as "goons" and calling them "terrorists" exemplifies how media criticized and delegitimized organized labor as subversive and detrimental to America and freedom of businesses. The government, news, and capitalists took steps to fight the perceived threat of organized labor. The localized reports in context are more detailed and provide more insight into the different dynamics of the strike. The strike did not catch the attention of other newspapers until what some considered mob violence, to occur. The reporting on the strike at Mount Hope Finishing Company demonstrates how the mainstream press could take an isolated incident and use it to make generalizations about organized labor. The national reports focused less on the rights of workers and labor and more about conserving American ideologies about the freedom of business and individualism against a radical and foreign force. Some similarities between the local and national coverage is that the newspapers collectively condemned what happened on the night of

¹¹⁹ Westbrook Pegler, "Concession to Terrorism," *Rome News Tribune*, September 27, 1951, 4, accessed April 21, 2017, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=5UxHAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=fDEDAAAAIIBAJ&pg=6907%2C5878625>.

September, 11 1951, which is not surprising and are never critical of the management of Mount Hope Finishing Company.

Conclusion

The workers at the Mount Hope Finishing Company did not achieve victory like they thought they did on the night of September 17, 1951 after the union won the election. The very next morning the Milliken's announced they were closing the plant in North Dighton sometime within the next month. The decision to close appeared abrupt and without reason, but the employees had no control over what the Milliken's did. The decision to unionize was an effort to protect jobs from capital flight, which other northern workers had experienced many times before. On October 20, 1951 the company finally closed and resumed operations in Butner, North Carolina under the name Creedmore Company, soon changed to Mount Hope Finishing Company. A number of loyal employees moved down to North Carolina to continue to work for the company. Then in 1952, the NLRB filed a complaint against Mount Hope, North Carolina because they committed several violations of the Taft-Hartley Act. The hearing was set to begin in June of 1951 in Taunton, Massachusetts. On July 30, 1953, trial examiner C.W Whittemore issued the decision and order. Whittemore determined that the company did partake in unfair labor practices, ordered the North Carolina incarnation of Mount Hope to offer jobs to the workers from North Dighton even if that meant firing new employees and pay employees back wages, which would have amounted to somewhere around \$2,000,000, as well as fines and penalties for violating the Taft Hartley Act. This decision would have been detrimental and costly to Mount Hope's new operation in North Carolina. The company appealed and won a hearing in the Fourth Circuit court in Charlotte, North Carolina. This was Mount Hope's new home turf and support for management in the south was strong. Justice Morris A. Soper, who presided over the case, in his opinion stated "the Union was not the cause that

closed the business in Massachusetts.”¹²⁰ The NLRB decision and order issued in 1953 was reversed and ultimately Mount Hope Finishing Company faced no legal consequences for their alleged unfair labor practices.

It is clear that Mount Hope certainly had a successful practice of paternalism during its fifty year run in North Dighton, as evidenced by the avoidance of any unionization and the loyalty workers felt towards the Milliken family. The Millikens and other men in high management at the company had local and regional financial and political connections that cannot be understated. Greater economic forces were at work and well before the 1950s, the southern United States was a welcoming place to capital. The case study of Mount Hope provides insight into the way regional political and ideological divisions between North and South, and worker and capitalist unfolded during the 1950s. The media coverage of the strike is yet another example in labor history of the far reaching impact of the anti-labor propaganda supported by government, capitalists and media during the 1950s, in a localized context. Most importantly, the case of the Mount Hope Finishing is an interesting situation of paternalism, with an edge of personalism, carefully crafted to divert workers away from the paternalism of the union. Milliken's paternalism made workers feel special and above the need to unionize. In the context of the Mount Hope Finishing Company, paternalism inhibited the formation of both a working class identity and a union.

¹²⁰ Burke Davis, *A Fierce Personal Pride: The History of Mount Hope Finishing Company and its Founding Family*, 113.

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