

THE IMPACT OF SENIORITY PRINCIPLES ON THE STATUS OF MEXICAN STEELWORKERS IN THE MIDWEST: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

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Introduction

The March 1937 agreement between the U.S. Steel subsidiary, Carnegie-Illinois, and the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC), which was later to become the United Steel Workers of America (USWA), is considered a momentous event in the history of the labor movement in the United States. After U.S. Steel, the citadel of anti-unionism capitulated, the other steel corporations either accepted or anticipated the provisions of the Carnegie-Illinois contract.¹

The agreement was of unprecedented importance. It recognized the SWOC as a collective bargaining agent, provided for the forty-hour week, eight-hour day, and time-and-a-half for all overtime. It specified a five dollar daily minimum wage and proportional increases in the brackets above the minimum. It also established a grievance system for workers' complaints, and introduced the principle of seniority for upgrades, promotions, demotions, layoffs, recalls, and vacations.²

The inclusion of the seniority principle in the contract, in the context of an industry convulsed by continuous seasonal, technological, and cyclical changes, was undoubtedly of major significance to the steelworkers. The seniority provisions promised a protective shield against hiring, upgrading, and training workers on the basis of kinship connections, while protecting older workers and union activists against arbitrary dismissals or reprisals.³ Conceivably, seniority also protected against the use of racial/ethnic criteria in the hiring,

promotion, training, or layoff of workers.⁴ Thus, the incorporation of this principle into the new union contract was hailed as a major victory for American workers.

Unionists from different political persuasions reached common ground, agreeing on the benefits of the seniority provisions. Trade unionists and communists agreed that the last hired should be the first to go, and the last to go should be the first returned to work. The consolidation of the workforce in an industry with very high turnover rates would facilitate organizing campaigns.

Raymond Walsh, who wrote a sympathetic account of the early period of the Congress of International Organizations (CIO), supported seniority stipulations, arguing that:

The employer wants freedom to hire the best available man when times are good, and to fire the least efficient man when times are bad, thus keeping his costs at a minimum. But it is a policy which places the burden of unemployment on the weak, the least capable, and refuses to protect the older man whose very loyalty of service has rendered him least prepared to change occupations.⁵

On the communist side, William Z. Foster, a leading figure in the steel strike of 1919, asserted that the seniority provisions protected older workers and prevented the arbitrary discharge of militant unionists. He also believed that economic depression and massive unemployment made seniority provisions even more imperative.⁶

However, while in theory the principle of seniority appeared to embody democracy, in the practical context it institutionalized the income and job security differentials between Whites and the predominantly unskilled and semi-skilled minorities. For one, the workers with the shortest period of employment and the least skills were Mexicans and Blacks, while the most experienced were native- and foreign-born Whites.⁷ Thus, Whites obtained greater access to apprenticeships, skilled occupations, and increased protection against layoffs or "bumpings."

The late entry of Mexicans into the mills is only one element that explains their low occupational status. Once hired, Mexicans were channeled into departments with a high proportion of unskilled, low-paying jobs, and their advancement into skilled jobs and better-paying departments was limited by the very seniority provisions that were meant to protect all workers.

*Establishment of Occupational Patterns
for Mexicans in the Steel Centers of the Midwest*

By the time the SWOC launched its organizational campaigns, Mexicans were already one of the steel industry's primary sources of unskilled labor. The disruption of migration from Europe to the United States caused by the outbreak of World War I, plus increasing production for military purposes, and mounting labor unrest, which culminated in the Great Steel Strike of 1919, sent steel corporations out in a frantic search for alternative sources of unskilled labor. Southern Blacks and Mexicans became the most likely alternatives.

If the war created severe labor shortages and the steel strike created the juncture for the importation of Mexicans, the uprooting force which provided the industries of the urban Midwest with much-needed unskilled laborers was the Mexican Revolution. The impact of the revolution, especially after 1914, was felt in the Bajío area of West Central Mexico, from which the majority of the early immigrants to Chicago and Northwest Indiana came.⁸

Intensive recruitment of Mexican nationals between 1919 and 1925 by major steel manufacturers such as U.S. Steel, Youngstown Sheet & Tube, and Inland Steel transformed these immigrants overnight into an important part of the local work force. By 1928, Mexicans already constituted 12.5 percent of the 44,073 steel and metal workers employed by companies in this area. Inland Steel alone employed 2,000 of the 5,495 Mexicans.⁹

The occupational patterns established for Mexicans in the pre-CIO period (1919-1937) placed them as common laborers in the blast and open hearth furnaces, rolling mills and yard sections.¹⁰ Some of the occupations assigned to them were those of chippers, heater's helpers, and third helpers.¹¹ Paul Taylor, in his seminal study of Mexican industrial workers in Chicago and Northwest Indiana, noticed in the early 1930s that the overwhelming majority of the Mexican steel and metal workers at seven area plants were unskilled.¹² Table 1, below, shows the distribution of skills among Mexicans, based on Taylor's criteria, at U.S. Steel's subsidiary Illinois Steel Company in South Chicago and Gary, Indiana. He considered these data as "fairly representative" of the occupational status of Mexicans in five other large steel plants in the area.¹³

TABLE 1:
Distribution of Skills Among Mexicans and Total Employees
at U.S. Steel Gary Works and South Works, 1928

| | Total Number of Employees | Percent | Total Number of Mexicans | Percent |
|--------------|------------------------------|---------|-----------------------------|---------|
| Skilled | 8,101 | 36.7 | 38 | 1.8 |
| Semi-skilled | 5,704 | 25.9 | 397 | 19.1 |
| Unskilled | 8,256 | 37.4 | 1,646 | 79.1 |
| TOTAL | 22,061 | 100.0 | 2,081 | 100.0 |

Source: Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States: Chicago and the Calumet Region* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1932), p. 157.

Taylor's data revealed that 79 percent of all Mexicans were unskilled, compared to 37 percent of workers overall. While 37 percent of all workers were skilled, this was true for less than two percent of Mexicans.¹⁴ The semi-skilled, who represented a little over 19 percent of the Mexicans, included occupations such as railway switchmen and roll hand. The skilled, representing less than two percent, included, among others, painters, molders and electric welders.¹⁵

By 1928, Mexicans, with a relatively short record of service in steel, were already voicing their complaints against the hiring and promotional practices of their immediate supervisors, most of whom were of Slavic background. They complained of being given the dirtiest and hardest work, and charged that foremen showed favoritism toward members of their own ethnic groups. Some Mexicans believed that they were assigned to the ". . . most dangerous work and the lowest paid jobs."¹⁶ A steel company representative acknowledged the discriminatory practices of his foremen, stating that: ". . . we have Polish, Austrian, and Lithuanian foremen who prefer their own people."¹⁷ Thus, it was not an uncommon practice of low-level and middle managers to make job assignments based on both the perceived skills and ethnic-racial background of workers. A Mexican who exonerated top management from any wrongdoing laid the blame of discrimination on his immediate supervisors: "The *mayordomos* (foremen) make distinctions. They give the Mexicans the heavy work and the Poles *suave* (light) work with better pay. The office makes no distinction."¹⁸

In some instances, management's hiring practices were so fine tuned that Mexican job applicants were screened according to the color of their skin. A manager of a large steel plant stated:

When I hire Mexicans at the gate I pick out the lightest among them. No, it isn't that the lighter-colored ones are any better workers, but the darker ones are like the niggers. When some of our contractors who came from the outside to do work for us used Negroes, I noticed the attitude of our men when they ate in the company cafeteria. So I chose Mexicans instead of Negroes, and in order to minimize feelings of race friction and keep away from the color line as far as possible, I employ only the lighter-colored Mexicans.¹⁹

In contrast to this pragmatic approach, other steel managers favored the hiring of light-skinned Mexicans because they considered them more racially akin to Whites: "The Castilian Mexicans are more intelligent than the darker Indians. . . You can tell those with Negro blood. They seem to be thicker through the temples and duller."²⁰

Management's Evaluation Criteria and Departmental Seniority Systems

With the unionization of the major steel companies, the seniority provisions became a standard criteria when considering layoffs or promotions. If competence (i.e., knowledge, training, ability, skill, efficiency, physical fitness), family status and place of residency were relatively equal, then length of continuous service became the governing factor. Family status (marital status, number of dependents) and worker's place of residence, for example, became irrelevant unless length of service and competence were relatively equal. A typical clause stated:

It is understood and agreed that in all cases of promotion or increase or decrease of forces, the following factors shall be considered, and where factors (b), (c), (d), and (e) are relatively equal, length of continuous service shall govern.

- (a) Length of continuous service
- (b) Knowledge, training, ability, skill and efficiency
- (c) Physical fitness
- (d) Family status; number of dependents, etc.
- (e) Place of residence²¹

Thus, in practice, seniority and the perceived competence of a worker were considered the main evaluation criteria for the managers of the steel companies. It was in the interpretation of competence that the subjective evaluations of supervisors became paramount for the assignment of a worker to his "rightful place" at the mill. While a worker's length of service might be objectively determined by a manager, it was more difficult to rate his competence without any preconceived bias or favoritism.

The subjective evaluations made by the immediate supervisors and by the general foreman of a department—most of whom were White—about whom to lay off, train or promote proved to be prejudicial to Mexicans, and later to Chicanos and other Latinos. Managers made their evaluations in the context of an occupational pyramid in which Mexicans had been positioned at the very bottom for a long time and were already identified with menial occupations. They were virtually kept out of skilled jobs because there was no set precedent of their efficiency as skilled workers and craftsmen.

Their cumulative experience in the mills, which had made them excellent chippers, scarfers, hookers, and other general laborers, was now hindering their chances of being considered suitable candidates for skilled occupations such as electrician, mechanic, roller, pipefitter and welder.²² Thus, the occupations traditionally held by Mexicans served as informal identifiers, influencing management assignment and promotion decisions.²³

The realization that long job tenure did not automatically insure upgrading or promotion if not accompanied by positive management evaluations led a Mexican worker at Inland to note in 1956:

They can't fire a Mexican like they used to. The union protects them. . . we have seniority now, but I've seen departments where Mexican men have high seniority but the representation of the union doesn't do anything for them. They don't get the same chances for promotion.²⁴

The status of Mexican, Chicano, and other Latino workers could be further viewed in the context of the distinction between plant-wide and departmental seniority. Beginning in 1937 and until the mid-1970s, seniority within a job classification or department was the determinant for promotion, transfer opportunities, protection against layoffs, recall rights, and access to training in the steel industry.²⁵

Although seniority computed on a plant- or company-wide basis was taken into account during layoffs or recalls, the key factor in determining the status of a worker vis-à-vis his co-workers was ultimately his departmental and sequence seniority.²⁶

After the managers of steel companies assigned a worker to a department, the worker could initiate admittance into a promotional sequence by his own request. Afterwards, his advancement within a given occupation was controlled by his position in the seniority totem called "sequence seniority." He usually entered the sequence at the lowest paid levels of an occupation, and began competing for better paid or more desirable jobs based on his entry date. Thus, a department had different seniority sequences, depending on the variety, complexity and size of its operations. For instance, Inland's Steel Blast Furnace Department, in 1956, had the following sequences: "dock mechanical," "ore bridge operators," "dock cleaner," "pig machine," "foundry," "general labor," "millwright," "pipefitter," "electrical," "furnace well," "stockhouse," "highline," and "miscellaneous maintenance."²⁷

Promotion policies compelled a worker to enter a sequence in the bottom job. From there he had to push his way up through various layers of jobs before he was finally allowed access to a job he wanted or for which he was qualified, irrespective of his plant-wide seniority. Thus, a worker who was allowed to use his seniority to bid on jobs in his own department was denied the opportunity to use it plant-wide.

The seniority provisions of the contract penalized workers who transferred, with a loss of the seniority in their old departments, after thirty days. In addition, transferred workers were subjected to what amounted to a demotion. They were compelled to start at the bottom of the occupational sequence in their new departments, becoming juniors of fellow workers with less plant-wide seniority.²⁸ For Mexicans, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans, the above seniority stipulations became a powerful deterrent that confined them to opportunities offered by the department to which managers had originally assigned them. These groups were able to advance up the seniority totem, but not in proportion to their presence in the workforce.

Mexicans in the Steel Mills: The Case of Inland Steel

The combined impact of informal management tracking systems and USWA-sponsored seniority provisions on Mexicans and other Latinos

can be viewed by focusing on Inland—historically, one of the largest industrial employers of this group in the Midwest. By the early 1960s this company was the third largest steel maker in the United States (6,700,000 net ingot tons annually). The 22,000 members of USWA's Local 1010 made it the largest steel local in the country.²⁹

Inland, as a case study, offers the opportunity to extrapolate data. The fact that the USWA established an industry-wide pattern of collective bargaining meant that all the big steel corporations had virtually identical contractual provisions. Such similarities make the experiences of Mexicans and other Latinos at Inland useful in gaining an understanding of the experiences of members of this group at other firms.³⁰

In a survey of personnel records from the years 1955-56, now at the Calumet Regional Archives at Indiana University Northwest, the following data on Spanish-surnamed workers were obtained (data were available on 2,640 workers, or 68 percent of the total with Spanish surnames). Table 2 shows the distribution of "helper" positions held by Spanish-surnamed workers at Inland's Open Hearth #1 and Open Hearth #3 in 1956. "Helpers" were a category of workers who assisted melters, a group of skilled workers responsible for the quality of steel produced in the open hearth furnaces.³¹ Latinos represented 20 percent of Inland's overall workforce of 18,820 (3,877 workers) and 37.5 percent of the total number of workers in Open Hearth #1 and Open Hearth #3 (157 workers). Yet, only 2.1 percent of "first helpers" were Latinos. In startling contrast, more than two thirds of the "third helper" category, which required the least skill, was occupied by Latinos, as were more than one third of the semi-skilled "second helper" positions.³²

TABLE 2:
Distribution of Latino Helpers in Inland Steel
Open Hearths #1 and #3, 1956

| Occupations in Sequence | Total Number of Workers | Total Number of Latinos | Percent Latinos |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| First Helper | 142 | 3 | 2.1 |
| Second Helper | 138 | 60 | 43.4 |
| Third Helper | 138 | 94 | 68.1 |
| TOTAL | 418 | 157 | 37.5 |

Source: USWA Local 1010 Records, Box #6, Continuous Service Lists, 1955-1956 (Gary, Calumet Regional Archives).

Lengthy stays at Inland helps explain the status of the three Latino first helpers, a more skilled position at Open Hearth #3. Mexicans had been concentrated in the labor pool of the open hearth sections since the early 1920s, and thus were at the top of the seniority lists.

Table 3 shows that even in those departments where Latinos were concentrated, some occupations were out of reach, such as those of the essentially lily-White Mechanical Division. The Inspection, Electrical and Crane Division did not fare better. Out of a combined labor force of 113 workers, only three were Latinos, including two out of 75 in the Inspection Division, none out of 10 in the Electrical, and none out of 28 in the Crane Division.³³

**TABLE 3:
Number of Latino and Non-Latino Workers in Inland Steel
Open Hearth #3 Mechanical Division, 1956**

| Occupation | Number of Non-Latinos | Number of Latinos |
|---|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Crane Repairman (1st Class) | 3 | 0 |
| Mobile Equipment Repairman (1st Class) | 3 | 0 |
| Mobile Equipment Repairman (2nd Class) | 2 | 0 |
| Welder Combination (1st Class) | 3 | 0 |
| Boiler Maker (1st Class) | 1 | 0 |
| Millwright (1st Class) | 5 | 1 |
| Maintenance Day Pipefitter | 1 | 0 |
| Turn Pipefitter | 4 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 22 | 1 |

Source: USWA Local 1010 Records, Box # 6, Continuous Service Lists, 1955-1956 (Gary, Calumet Regional Archives).

Table 4, below, which includes the craft and maintenance occupations of six work areas and one department (Open Hearths #1, #2 and #3, Cold Strip #2, Galvanizing, Mechanical, Blast Furnaces) shows that, overall, Latinos had made very modest inroads in traditionally White-dominated occupations. By 1956, 14 years after the USWA obtained its first contract from Inland, Latinos, who as a group had a service record of 36 years, had barely penetrated the traditional turf of the White craftsmen.

TABLE 4:
**Number of Latinos and Non-Latinos in Craft
 and Maintenance Occupations, 1956**

| Occupation | Number of Non-Latinos | Number of Latinos | Percent Latinos |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Motor Inspector (Maintenance) | 150 | 4 | 2.6 |
| Pipefitter (Craft & Maintenance) | 49 | 2 | 4.8 |
| Millwright (Maintenance) | 86 | 7 | 8.1 |
| Welder (Craft & Maintenance) | 49 | 6 | 12.2 |
| Roll Turner (Craft) | 48 | 0 | 0 |
| Boilermaker (Craft & Maintenance) | 12 | 0 | 0 |
| Rigger (Craft & Maintenance) | 8 | 3 | 37.5 |
| Blacksmith (Craft & Maintenance) | 4 | 1 | 25.0 |
| TOTAL | 406 | 23 | 5.6 |

Source: USWA Local 1010 Records, Box # 6, Continuous Service Lists, 1955-1956 (Gary, Calumet Regional Archives).

In Table 5, the breakdown of crafts and maintenance occupations into three major categories ("first class," "second class" and "helpers") allows for a closer look at the standing of Latinos within the crafts and other skilled jobs.³⁴ Out of a total of 21 Latinos found in these jobs, only slightly over one-half (11) had first-class status, five were second-class and five were helpers).

TABLE 5:
Categories of Latinos Within Craft
and Maintenance Occupations, 1956

| Occupation | Total Number of Latinos | First Class | Second Class | Helpers |
|-----------------|----------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------|
| Motor Inspector | 4 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Pipefitter | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Millwright | 7 | 2 | 0 | 5 |
| Welders | 6 | 4 | 2 | 0 |
| Rigger | Information Not Available | | | |
| Blacksmith | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 21 | 11 | 5 | 5 |

Source: USWA Local 1010 Records, Box # 6, Continuous Service Units, 1955-1956 (Gary, Calumet Regional Archives).

Table 6 shows the effects of management's initial job assignment system on Latino workers at Inland Steel. By 1956, the majority of the 2,640 Latinos covered by this survey were concentrated in seven of 22 areas in the company.³⁵ By the mid-1950s, the assignment of newly-hired Latinos to unskilled occupations in the open hearths, rolling mills, transportation areas and yards—which Paul Taylor had noticed as far back as the early 1930s—was a well-established pattern. In sharp contrast, in departments and shops where operations required large numbers of craftsmen and other skilled workers (Mechanical, Stores and Refractories, Power & Steam & Combustion, Quality Control, Carpenter and Blacksmith shops), Latinos were under-represented, or not represented at all.

TABLE 6:
Distribution of Latinos at Inland Steel, 1956
 (9 Work Areas, 2 Departments and 3 Shops)

| Area/Department | Total Number of Workers | Number of Latinos | Percent Latinos |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Open Hearth #1 | 702 | 305 | 43.4 |
| Open Hearth #2 | 1748 | 728 | 41.6 |
| Open Hearth #3 | 694 | 351 | 50.5 |
| Transportation & Yards | 933 | 521 | 55.8 |
| 44 & 76 Hot Strip Mill & #3 Blooming Mill | 1563 | 408 | 26.1 |
| Field Forces | 848 | 161 | 18.9 |
| Mechanical Department | 749 | 52 | 6.9 |
| Stores & Refractories | 366 | 37 | 10.1 |
| Power & Steam & Combustion | 464 | 33 | 7.1 |
| Quality Control | 414 | 19 | 4.5 |
| Machine Shop | 295 | 17 | 5.7 |
| Blacksmith Shop | 63 | 8 | 12.6 |
| Carpenter Shop | 37 | 0 | 0 |
| Electrical Department | 68 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 8869 | 2640 | 29.7 |

Source: USWA Local 1010 Records, Box # 6, Continuous Service Lists, 1955-1956 (Gary, Calumet Regional Archives).

In the context of an industry that had traditionally assigned Latinos and other minorities to unskilled occupations, the departmental seniority provisions became the USWA's main Achilles' heel in its quest for the reduction of inequalities between its predominantly White craftsmen and its largely unskilled and semi-skilled minority members.

Herbert Hill, an expert on the impact of racial conflict in the workplace and in labor relations, goes as far as to state that CIO-endorsed departmental seniority provisions, testing devices, and unrelated job qualifications kept Blacks and other minorities out of the best paid and more skilled occupations, perhaps as effectively as the old craft unions had through White-only membership provisions, racially biased licensing boards and apprenticeship programs

that favored White applicants. Hill concludes that "as black workers in the steel industry, in pulp and paper manufacturing, in oil and chemical refineries, in tobacco factories and in other industries have learned, what exclusion is to craft unions, separate lines of promotion and seniority are to the industrial unions."³⁶

The Steel Manual for Job Classifications and Latinos

Beginning in 1937, the contract seniority provisions formally established the elusive criteria of competence ("knowledge, training, ability, skill and efficiency") for promotions and layoffs. In matters of wages, a counterpart was found in the *Manual for Job Classifications*, commonly known as the *Steel Manual*, which went into effect in February of 1947. The implementation of the *Manual's* new guidelines to rate the perceived worth of jobs in the steel industry helped eliminate the pronounced wage disparities among workers performing similar functions, and in some instances helped reduce wage differences among various categories of workers. The *Steel Manual* classified and approved benchmark jobs into a wage scale with 30 standard wage classifications. It used 12 factors to rate the perceived worth of jobs according to their content, as seen in Table 7. The *Manual* became paramount in determining the perceived competency, and thus, the earning levels, of various categories of workers.

TABLE 7:
***Steel Manual* Rating Factors for Job Classifications, 1947**

| Factor | Maximum Weight of factor |
|--|---------------------------------|
| (1) Pre-employment training | 1.0 |
| (2) Employment training and experience | 4.0 |
| (3) Mental skill | 3.5 |
| (4) Manual skill | 2.0 |
| (5) Responsibility for materials | 10.0 |
| (6) Responsibility for tools and equipment | 4.0 |
| (7) Responsibility for operation | 6.5 |
| (8) Responsibility for safety of others | 2.0 |
| (9) Mental effort | 2.5 |
| (10) Physical effort | 2.5 |
| (11) Surroundings | 3.0 |
| (12) Hazards | 2.0 |

Source: Robert Tilove, "The Wage Rationalization Program in the United States," *Monthly Labor Review*, June 1947, pp. 967-979

The steel companies and the USWA gave the highest rating, over 50 percent of the total points, to “responsibility” factors. As a result, the top members of the crew—all craft or skilled workers—were given special treatment. While craft jobs, such as machinist and roller, received considerable credit, occupations in which Latinos were over-represented, such as laborer, stocker and chipper, were given the lowest ratings.

Little weight was given to the “physical effort” and “hazards,” that common laborers performed and endured under dangerous conditions. If properly recognized, these factors could have received higher marks. However, their actual assigned weights illustrate a set of values inclined to favor craft jobs. An ultimate effect of these rating factors was to sanction the primacy of the knowledge and skills of the predominantly White craftsmen and skilled workers, to the detriment of the largely unskilled Mexican, Latino, and Black workers.³⁷

Conclusions

The manner in which the seniority provisions became operative after management had exercised its job assignment prerogatives did not offer unskilled Latinos any substantive hope of moving out of their menial occupations. On the contrary, it encouraged them to remain in the departments of their initial assignment. Under these circumstances, rather than transfer to other lines of work, Latinos largely opted to stay in those occupations and departments where they were heavily concentrated and to try to advance within the occupational ladders available in those sections. Therefore, it was more common to seek intra-departmental rather than inter-departmental transfers.

As a consequence of the above, most Latinos were not exposed to a wide range of occupations in such areas as the mechanical, electrical and maintenance departments, or the carpenter and machine shops. This severely limited their capacity to gain qualifications outside of their traditional sections.

Racially and ethnically biased hiring and assignment practices, largely unchallenged by the leadership of the USWA, together with subjective job evaluations helped perpetuate inequalities between Whites and Latinos in the steel mills. The seniority provisions of the collective agreements in the SWOC-USWA era ultimately cemented an occupational hierarchy that kept Latinos at the bottom.

NOTES

- ¹ Robert R.R. Brooks, *As Steel Goes: Unionism in a Basic Industry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), pp. 110-129, 242-260; I. W. Abel, *Collective Bargaining, Labor Relations in Steel: Then and Now* (New York: Columbia University Press for Carnegie-Mellon University, 1976); United Steel Workers of America, Education Department. *Then and Now: The Story of the United Steelworkers of America* (n.p., 1974).
- ² William T. Hogan, *Economic History of the Iron and Steel Industry in the United States*. 5 Vols. (Lexington, Massachusetts.: Lexington Books, 1971), Vol. III, pp. 1173-1178.; Edward Robert Livernash, *Collective Bargaining in the Basic Steel Industry* (Washington: United States Department of Labor, 1961), pp. 231-234; Frederick H. Harbinson, *Collective Bargaining in the Steel Industry: 1937* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1938), pp. 1-9.
- ³ Brooks, *As Steel Goes*, pp. 217-240.
- ⁴ Raymond J. Walsh, *CIO, Industrial Unionism in Action* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1937), pp. 125, 233; Brooks, *Ibid.*
- ⁵ Walsh, *Ibid.*, p. 126
- ⁶ Although Foster did welcome the inclusion of seniority provisions into the union contracts, he advised workers ". . .to check possible abuses and to protect the place of the youth in industry. Seniority rules must not be used to discriminate against the employment of Negroes." William Z. Foster, *American Trade Unionism: Principles, Organization, Strategy, Tactics* (New York: International Publishers, 1970), pp. 283-284.
- ⁷ In this paper, the term "Mexican" refers to those individuals born and/or raised in Mexico. "Chicano" refers to individuals of Mexican ancestry born and/or raised in the United States. Finally, "Latinos" refers to individuals who can trace their ancestry to Latin America, regardless if they were born or raised in the United States or in Latin America. In 1948, U.S. Steel's recruitment of 500 Puerto Rican islanders to work as laborers at the Gary Works marked the true diversification of the Latino community in Chicago and Northwest Indiana. (*Gary Post Tribune*, June 7, 1948, p. 1).
- ⁸ Francisco A. Rosales, "Mexican Immigration to the Urban Midwest During the 1920's" (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1978), pp. 98-99.
- ⁹ Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States: Chicago and the Calumet Region* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1932), pp. 34-37, 67; Rosales, *Ibid.*, p. 176.
- ¹⁰ The blast furnaces are the first major productive units in the steel industry, as they transform iron into molten metal. The blast furnace is "essentially a tapered, giant cylindrical steel shell lined with refractory brick, [that] . . .reduces the iron content of the ore to a relatively pure metal called pig iron. This is accomplished by introducing three basic materials, iron ore, coke and limestone at the top of a vertical shaft or stack. . . ." Hogan, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 391.

The open furnaces perform the second major operation in steelmaking. Indeed, the actual process of steel manufacturing begins when the materials (molten pig iron, scrap and other raw materials) are loaded into open hearth furnaces to produce steel ingots (*Ibid.*, p. 408).

The rolling mills are usually the last major productive phase in the steelmaking process. The steel ingots are reheated for shaping into finished products such as steel wire, structural steel girders and metal plate. William Kornblum, *Blue Collar Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 37.

Finally, the yards are a network of narrow and standard gauge tracks connecting the departments with each other and with the railroad tracks of the main line. It is in the yards where materials are piled and loaded onto trains. To operate this transportation machinery and keep the yards and tracks clean, a large number of workers is required.

- ¹¹ Chippers in foundries used a hammer and cold chisel, or a pneumatic chisel to remove surface impurities from steel products. A heater's helper was a laborer in the blast furnaces. Third helpers were laborers assigned to the open hearth furnaces who performed various strenuous tasks such as shoveling limestone and other materials into the sweltering furnaces, weighing charges, and cleaning up work areas. As late as 1942, the task of mixing was done by hand because there were no mechanical devices. United States Department of Labor, *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*, Volume 1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939), pp. 173, 445, 450; *Steel Shavings* 7, (Gary, IN: Indiana University Northwest), p. 18.
- ¹² The seven plants analyzed by Taylor were Gary Works and South Works (U.S. Steel), Tin Mill-American Sheet & Tin Plate Company, Inland Steel, Wisconsin Steel, National Tube and McCormick Works (Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States* pp. 36-37).
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 156.
- ¹⁴ The main duties of the unskilled consisted “. . .largely either in handling the materials and products of the different processes or in cleaning up the waste, such as slag and scrap, which accumulates in tremendous quantities in all the departments.” (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Report on Conditions of Employment in the Iron and Steel Industry in the United States*. 4 Vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913), Vol. III, p. 82.
- ¹⁵ The duties of a railway switchman (brakeman) were the switching and stopping of railroad cars in order to load or unload them. A roll hand or rolling-forging operator used a roller-die machine to forge heated iron bars into specified shapes. Finally, a molder was described as a worker who “makes molds for bulky castings on foundry floor by packing and ramming green sand, dry sand, or loam around patterns which have been placed in suitable flasks.” *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*, pp. 99, 607, 755.
- ¹⁶ Taylor, *Op. cit.*, p. 102.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 92.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Harbison, *Op. cit.*, p. 19; Hogan, *Op. cit.*, p. 1175; Livernash, *Op. cit.*, p. 233; United Steelworkers of America, *Steel Labor* (March 20, 1937), p. 2; Agreement Between the United Steel Corporation and the United Steel Workers of America: Production and Maintenance Employees, Central Operations, Steel, (Pittsburgh, PA, 1956), p. 62; Agreement Between Inland Steel Company and the United Steel Workers of America, Local Union No. 1010 (Indiana Harbor, IN, 1945), pp. 33-36.

²² The main responsibility of a scarfer was to tend rolls through which skelp (steel strips for making pipe or tube) or steel sheet was run prior to its being formed into tube. A hooker, also called crane follower or chainer, was a laborer who assisted a crane operator by affixing rope, cable, or chain sling to the object being lifted. *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*, pp. 244, 794.

²³ Taylor quoted the employment manager of a steel plant as saying that "The Mexicans are the best class of labor we get now. They are better than the colored or the south Europeans, though not than the old north Europeans. They are a nice class of people to handle. If the American people will just treat them right, we'll have a fine class of people and a fine class of labor. They stand heat well and stand hard work. We find a number of big strong Mexicans who are as able as the others to do the work requiring strength." Taylor, *Op. cit.*, p. 89.

²⁴ Joel Seidman, *The Worker Views His Union* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 81.

²⁵ In April 1974, the federal government filed a consent decree with nine steel companies and the USWA. The government determined that Blacks, women and Latinos "were systematically assigned to lower-paying jobs with little opportunity for advancement, denied training opportunities, and judged by more stringent qualification criteria than were White males." The decree committed U.S. Steel, Republic, Youngstown Sheet and Tube, Bethlehem, Jones and Laughlin, National Steel, Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel, Armco Steel and Allegheny-Ludlum to pay \$30.5 million to 34,449 Black and Latino steelworkers and to 5,559 women employees hired before 1968. Ray Marshall, *Employment Discrimination: The Impact of Legal and Administrative Remedies* (New York, Praeger Publishers, 1978) p. 7; United Steel Workers of America, *Evaluating The Steel Industry* (Pittsburgh, 1976), p. 12.

In addition, the USWA was forced to acknowledge its role in employment discrimination against Blacks, Latinos and women. The consent decree also specified goals and set up timetables for the hiring and promotion of members of the above groups to supervisory, technical, and clerical jobs, and in company-sponsored training programs. Another important provision was the replacement of departmental seniority with plant-wide seniority as the criteria for promotions, demotions, layoffs and recalls in the industry (*Ibid.*).

²⁶ William B. Gould, *Black Workers in White Unions: Job Discrimination in the United States* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 67; Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, "Powell et. al. v. Inland Steel Company and the United Steel Workers of America, et. al. TCH 4c-2599" (Washington, n.d.), p. 20; Frederick H.

Harbison, *The Seniority Principle in Union-Management Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1939), pp. 12-13, 23, 25-26.

- ²⁷ Agreement Between Inland Steel Company and the United Steelworkers of America, Locals 1010 and 64, May 7, 1947, pp. 19-23; USWA Local 1010 Records, Collection 115, Box #6 (Gary, IN: Calumet Regional Archives).
- ²⁸ Agreement Between Inland Steel Company and USWA, Local Union 1010, May 7, 1947, p. 24.
- ²⁹ Julian Samora, *Mexican-Americans in a Midwest Metropolis: A Study of East Chicago* (Los Angeles, University of California, Los Angeles. Mexican American Study Project. Advanced Report 8. 1967), p. 11.
- ³⁰ Since the SWOC period (1936-42), the United Steel Corporation established the pattern of settlements which the other steel firms would follow. However, the highly centralized nature of the bargaining process and the consequent propensity toward standardization of settlements throughout the industry should not lead to the conclusion that the contracts of the different steel firms were mere carbon-copies of the U.S. Steel contract. On the contrary: "There have been frequent variations from the U.S. Steel settlement on both wage and non-wage items to meet special situations, and there were occasions when a company other than U.S. Steel led in the settlement." Livernach, *Op. cit.*, p. 86.
- ³¹ The highly skilled melters worked in a section where scrap iron was melted and purified. They decided when each furnace was ready to pour by observing the color of the molten metal through cobalt-blue glasses and by referring to carbon tests of the metal made by the First Helpers. The assistants of the latter group of workers, the Second Helpers, worked under extremely hot conditions when near the furnace, weighing the scrap iron and loading it into charging boxes. They locked the charging boxes, inserted them into the furnace, and manipulated the control which dumped the charge. *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*, pp. 527, 839, 1171, 1372.
- ³² Inland Steel Company. *Employment Characteristics, Human Resources Information Management*. (East Chicago, IN: Inland Steel Department of Personnel, 1990).
- ³³ USWA Local 1010 Records, Box No. 6, Continuous Service Lists, 1955-1956 (Gary, IN. Calumet Regional Archives).
- ³⁴ In this case "helper" refers to a strata of workers, usually with very few skills, who assisted the semi-skilled or skilled workers by supplying them with materials and tools, cleaning working areas, machines and equipment. United States Department of Labor, *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*, Volume 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1949), p. 659.
- ³⁵ Inland Steel's 22 work areas included: Blast Furnace, Coke Plant, Plant No. 3, No. 1 Open Hearth, No. 2 Open Hearth, Power & Steam & Combustion, No. 2 Bloomer, 10" & 14" Mills, Plant No. 1 Mills, Plate Mill & Silo Road, Galvanize, 76" Hot Strip, 44" & 76" Slab Yard & No. 3 Bloomer, 44" Hot Strip, Cold Strip, Tin Mill, Transportation & Yards, Field Forces, Stores & Refractories, Quality Control, No. 3 Open Hearth. *Local 1010 Steelworker*, Vol. 2, No. 6 (Gary, IN. Calumet Regional Archives).

- ³⁶ Herbert Hill, *Black Labor and the American Legal System: Race, Work and the Law* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 25.
- ³⁷ Hogan, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1189-1191; United Steel Workers of America and the United Steel Corporation *Job Description and Classification Manual* (n.p., 1953), pp. 5-10.; Inland Steel Company, *Job Description and Classification Manual: Basic Steel Operations* (n.p., 1963), pp. 6-13.