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Nogay: What were the social and economic characteristics of the company town...a... how did the cast system work there, did everybody live in the same kind of houses, was the company the boss and the workers were the workers or what?

Corbin: OK....I'm sorry, it doesn't hurt..a .. too much.

Nogay: OK

Corbin: OK. In the company town you had distinct class lines. You had company officials, who miners eventually called company licks and you had the workers. There's no middle class no rising entr.. entrepreneurs. Should I do that again?

Nogay: OK, let's try it again.

Why don't you ^{move your} back over this way a little bit.

Corbin: Thank you, . Probably nowhere in any other type of work situation did you have such distinct class lines as you have in company towns, particularly in the all pervasive company town system in southern West Virginia. By this I mean...a.. you had a, the owners , the coal operators and company officials and you had the workers, the miners. It was quite distinct with the owners, usually the mine owner himself living up the top the hill then the officials living middle ways up on the hill then the workers living down in the town itself..

Nogay: How..how were the miners paid, can you describe the economic situation? How the..the system of script how was that incorporated and how did the companies allocate the payment?

Corbin: OK...
at odds with a lot of historians, are you talking about

low wages itself or?

Nogay: No, just about how the company controlled that they never saw money cause of the script situation.

Corbin: OK....The miners were not paid in American currency. They were paid in a system of payment call coal script either metal coins or plastic coupons printed ^{either} by the company or for the company by a printing company. a....they were be paid in this and the only place they could get it redeemed would be at the company store, hence the company itself created its own monopolistic situation. They can, in other words the miners cannot take this.. metal coin,..take these metal coins or plastic coupons to a commercial store let's say in Charleston and cash it cause it had no valuous money. the only place it could be redeemed was at the company store itself so this would be an important way for the company to control the miners to make sure that they dealt at the company store itself.

Nogay: In what other ways did the company town control the in the areas of education, religion, and politics?

Corbin: The co... OK...The company towns might start out with good intentions even though in the south they house feed cloth and shelter a work force they were creating. But what develops is probably along this pervasive forms of social control in American history if not world history the whole system was set up to control the miners. This the coal companies used to the extreme for instance, they built the churches and the.. and because the coal company built the church the coal

operator himself selected what religion the miners were going to have.. The coal operators selected hired the....the coal operator hired the minister and the minister served the community as well as the church at the behest of the coal co.. coal operator. If he dared speak about the union urge the miners..he could not address..interrupt--

Nogay: OK, please start that question again.

Corbin: Sorry.

Nogay: Relax, its OK

Corbin: Mostly too much, try to boil it down, start stumbling... Are you going to repeat the whole question?.

Nogay: Yes

Corbin: OK ,I said too much elaboration to go to it.

Nogay: No, that's OK ...In what other areas did the coal company control the miners like in the area of education, religion and politics.

Corbin: The company town started out as a necessity, a necessity to house, feed, cloth and shelter the miners. What develops is an all pervasive system of social control social control of the miners.. Almost every aspect or institution in the town served the coal companies, and controlled the miners. By this I mean , take for instance the school itself the coal company built the school they hired the school teachers. The teachers had more or less control of the school, could talk about anything they wanted except the union. You see the church

since the coal companies built the church, they hired the minister. The minister served the company, he could not address the social wants and needs of the miners such as telling the need of higher wages, he could not talk about labor affairs. So the minister could get in he could preach that was it, could not be the councilor the friend the social leader that ministers usually are in communities. You really see the predominance a coal company in the company town the..in politics. A... the mine guards or company officials served as pollsters at the polling places which was usually the company store. A....they would serve this pollster..the miners ballots as they marked ballots they...can I start the politics over?

Nogay: OK

Corbin: Sorry

: If you want to we will turn the light out for a minute you can go outside and get a drink or something.

Corbin: No the problem is so much to say.

Nogay: You just relax and then just go ahead and talk and don't worry about cutting it down, we will edit it out. If you feel more comfortable just talking at length then go ahead Do you want us to stop here?

: No continue

Corbin: OK, Want me to pick up the politics again?

Nogay: Let's just pause.

Corbin: It's probably in politics where you see the real predominance

of the company town, that is their control of the miners. In the company town there is no representative democracy or representative government per say. There is no city council, no mayor, no ward boss to care to the needs of the miners. There's only the coal operator, himself.

A... in light of this ... do the pauses hurt?

Nogay: No just pause that's fine.

Corbin: OK...Here you find the companies controlling almost every political aspect of life in the coal company towns, particularly in the balloting--there was no secret ballot. Mine guards or other company officials served as pollsters. The polling places usually in the company store hence the coal companies could keep their officials right there to inspect the miner's ballots as the miners dropped them into the ballot box. Mine guards were often stationed outside the company store where the polling place, they simply handed the miner the ballot as the miner went into vote, the ballot already being marked of course. The miner just simply took the previously marked ballot, walked in, dropped it into the box.

Nogay: How did the miners respond to the control over their lives?

Corbin: I'm sorry.

Nogay: How did the miners feel about it?

Corbin: Are you talking about a particular point in time?

Nogay: OK, I'm not going to ask you that question. A...when and how did the union influence enter West Virginia?

Corbin: The union influence basically entered West Virginia...let's try it again....I'm having trouble with some of the questions

you ask because they are opening into a...interrupt

Nogay: Sometimes, let me ask you this way, some of the miners felt they told they felt the company town was safe and secure or they just accepted it that's the way it was. When did they begin to question that maybe things didn't have to be this way?

Corbin: OK....The miners initially accepted aspects of the company town cause they were provided descent housing for the most part, it was monotonous housing--all the houses were the same. It was descent housing compared to what some of them had before. Here we're talking about southern blacks who had been sharecroppers, living in shacks. They come up and have a relative descent house, the first time in their life many of them received money. It might have been script but at least they had money where they could take to the company store and purchase their own goods. Such things as that. Through the time, we are talking here from 1880's to approximately 1900, they started sensing something was wrong with the system. They didnot have a voice, here we're talking about the United States which every person has a democratic right to vote the way they want, to go to school where they want, to move to do what ever they want.. They started sensing this was not the scheme of things.. You do not see any real response to this until Paint Creek, Cabin Creek strike in 1912 and 13. See there I want to back and say something.

Nogay: OK, well just take it one step at a time, just answer the immediate question .

Corgin: The immediate question, OK.

Nogay: What was the operators response to the union influence or the union?

Corbin: From the early stages southern West Virginia coal operators had strong opposition to the union whether it was out of wanting total control or alligence of their miners to the economic problems it might present. Here we are talking about cutting into wage, into their own profit , higher wages meaning less profits. Eventually they'll start seeing a more comprehensive terms. At this time between 1900 to 1920 even as late as 1930 coal contitute 80 to 90% of the energy in the United States. The United Mine Workers had organized approximately 80 to 90% of the miners in the country.. The miners did not organize for those in West Virginia which was a rapidly developing coal field..Hence the West Virginia coal operators came to view the United Mine Workers great concern. --I'm having trouble with... try it again.....I'm trying to say too much Beth,I'm sorry. You were saying one step at a time and I keep wanting to go on to another story. Do do have a particular time on that one when you are saying how...

Nogay: How did the a operator view the union?

Corbin: The West Virginia coal operators who come to view the union as esentially as a subversive if not traderous force in the United States. Where this comes about is from about 1900 to 1930, coal constituted 80 to 90% of the energy in the United States. The United Mine Workers had organized every major coal field in the United States except West Virginia. In the view of the coal companies, if the United Mine Workers

organized West Virginia they would control 100% of the coal production in the United States which would be, in other words it would mean approximately that the United Mine Workers would control 80 to 90% of the energy production within the United States; hence, the West Virginia coal operators came to view themselves as a kind of a last remaining stand between the United Mine WorkersThe West Virginia coal companies saw themselves as the last stand or last refuge of the United Mine Workers total monopolization of coal production, energy production in the United States.

Nogay: Why are you having so much trouble, is there anything I can do?

Corbin: I don't know.

Nogay: Let's change tapes.

Corbin: Important to the miners for several reasons. One, The Paint Creek, Cabin Creek strike was important to the miners for several reasons. This was the first real explosion of unionism in southern West Virginia. Until this time there had been previous strikes but this was mostly out...a... unions coming in from the outside trying to organize the southern West Virginian miner but this time the Paint Creek Cabin Creek strike was an internal explosion of unionism. By this I mean a realitive minor contract dispute on Paint Creek leads to a walkout of several thousand miners, they are joined by about 5000 more miners on Paint Creek. The next day or next week 10,000 miners from Cabin Creek join them so its an internal explosion. It catches the

coal operators off guard. They have been prepared for invasions before from international organizations sending union organizers into the area. This first time that the West Virginia miners rise up in mass, the operators are not prepared for it. They try to repel, to put down the uprising in traditional ways thru brute force. Right there I want to say so much and I know I can't do it.

Nogay: You do whatever you want, whatever you want to say. I have no control. You just say whatever you want to say...Tell me about the Baldwin Felts agents, how did they get introduced into West Virginia?

Corbin: The Baldwin Felts agents started out originally as detectives on the railroads, they were guarding the railroad payroll, they were guarding the mine the payrolls for the coal companies. A few individual coal operators, one in particular, Justin Collins from Fayette and Raleigh counties, recognized the importance of 'em as mine guards and start hiring them as mine guards to one to police the company towns and also to keep out the union organizers. He was one of the few to really use Baldwin Felts guards at this time for this purpose. This time being 1890's. The 1902 coal strike when the United Mines Workers sends in dozens of organizers to try to unionize southern West Virginia miners, the coal operators throughout the southern part of the state begin to see the unionist invading force. They begin to hire mine guards for this purpose. To keep out union organizers the Baldwin Felts agents would resort to various and almost any tactic. They

would guard the mine site, they'd ride the trains throughout the southern part of the state searching for union organizers. They would go undercover dressed as coal miners, go to work in the coal mines to serve as spy to watch out for union organizers. Once found they would employ any tactic necessary to get the organizer out of there. By that violence.

Nogay: What were some of the ways that the company would use to put down the union, we're talking about evictions, possibly blackballing and firing people? Can you explain some of those tactics?

Corbin: The companies use various means to keep the union out. With controlled company housing they have the right to evict the miner any time they want to, throw them out of the house. So if a coal miner went to the mine was seen talking to union organizer express pro union feelings he could come home that day and find all his furniture dumped out onto the company road, evicted and told to get out. When they went on strike they would be cut off from the company store.....Is that the type stuff you wanted or more?...

Nogay: What did the miners learn about the violence from the Paint Creek and Cabin Creek strike?

Corbin: The main thing the miners learned about the Paint Creek Cabin Creek strike was it was a sword that cut both ways. Until this time the coal companies, particularly Baldwin Felts mine guards used violence to intimidate the miners to keep them cower or subordinate. During this strike when the miners encountered violence on day to day basis, begin to see violence as a justified way to achieving righteous goals. Righteous goals on part of the mine guards for the

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coal companies. Now this experience on day to day basis the miners learned violence can be legitimate ways of achieving righteous goals and their goal would be the union. So for the first time you really being to see the coal miners employ violence for their own goals and they would in all succeeding strikes. The viol....The viol.... Was that better?

Nogay: Your doing fine. What was the role of... Why was World War I important.

Corbin: World War I was probably a major turning point in the labor movement in West Virginia. Two years, two years being the duration of war 1917-1919. The miners had heard the national government, all government officials, state officials, the coal companies their own union leaders talk about the need to produce coal or the need to fight to make the world a safer democracy. That was important because the miners started talking terms of democracy. Making the world a safe democracy was inevitable that there going to apply these terms these concepts of phrases to their own back yard. One of the most popular phrases at the time was the need to defeat the iron hand of atrocropy or in other words the iron hand of the kiser, this being the period 1917-1919. The war ends and you can read the miners speeches or letters at the time. They are talking about the needs of defeat of the iron hand of the coal operators. What they have done is take this World War I rhetoric and applied it to their own situation, to their own backyards..Their own backyards being the coal companies. They're going to Europe to make the world a safe democracy don't they have a right to make southern West Virginia a safe democracy.

Nogay: Why did West Virginia not retreat in the national 1919 strike?

Corbin: The 1919 strike was the first time the West Virginia miners really participated in a national coal strike. This was a strike called by Lewis, of course, to get wage increases for the coal miners to match inflation rates during the time. For several reasons Lewis and President Woodrow Wilson compromised that strike basically the nation was out of coal and they needed the coal. So Lewis realized that need was going to compromise the strike and part of the compromise included a small wage increase for the miners but also recognition of the union. This came about in World War I. The 1919 strike the compromise settlement worked up between John L. Lewis and President Woodrow Wilson recognized the union. In southern West Virginia though they violated, in total defiance of the United Mine Workers and defiance of the coal miners and defiance of the national government. The southern West Virginian coal operators withdrew recognition of the union. So although Lewis and President Woodrow Wilson order the miners to return to work the southern West Virginia miners stay out, demanding recognition of the union.

Nogay: What was the role of the government in the Paint Creek and Cabin Creek strikes?

Corbin: The Paint Creek Cabin Creek strike would set the pattern for ^{the role of} government in all succeeding strikes in West Virginia at least coal strikes in West Virginia until the new deal in the 1930's. That would be the State government would try and stay out of the strike as long as it could, or as long as the coal companies were in control of the strike

With that Paint Creek / Cabin Creek strike, once the coal miners have turned the tide, that is, once the miners have started to gain control of the strike or were on the verge of victory, the state government jumps in, you see the state governor declaring Marshall Law and calling out the state troupes to break the strike.

Nogay: How were the Baldwin Felts agents ~~used~~ viewed by the miners?

Corbin: I can't get a good starting point.

Nogay: OK, well try another...

Corbin: No, just give me a good starting point, I'm not sure what you want.

Nogay: Did the Baldwin & Felts agents give the coal operators a specific target to express their violence against?

Corbin: Give the coal operators?

Nogay: (Not sure of answer)

Corbin: Wait just a second...The Baldwin Felts guards came to symbolize all things that the miners hated. Just looking at the pictures things, you've just never seen pure hatred of any group of people toward anybody else as the miners would hate the Baldwin Felts guards for decads - they've been kicked around, beaten, intimidated by the Baldwin Felts mine guards through various tacktics; whether it's beatings, killings, what have you. And now this just developes this intense shear haterad of...I could give you several stories...One is a Baldwin Felts guard named Shopan, he'd been wounded in gun battle. He was on a train, he's got three or four bullets in him, bleeding from the chest a conductor from the train walks in sees a coal miner spitting tobacco juice in this dying man's face, saying "You better die you sun-of-a-bitch, if you don't die I'll kill you."

This type of haterad. The miners ~~have~~ attributed almost every form of atrocity to the mine guards. Some of this probably exaggerated ~~group~~... grew out of, but still expresses how much they did hate the mine guards. One of them would be the story of the mine guard kicking the fetus out of a pregnant women; there is another story about the mine guard cutting the breast off~~a~~ of a woman. Whether the stories are ~~true~~ ^{true} or not we don't know, the point is the miners believed it, and it just expressed ~~the-mine-~~ their images through their haterad ~~th~~ toward the mine guards.

Nogay: Why did West Virginia... Why was West Virginia so hard to Unionize?

Corbin: West Virginia was hard to unionize for several reasons. One is the coal companies control of the ~~estt~~ state ~~g~~ government. ~~It began in the 1890's~~ In the beginning 1980's to 1890's industrialists ~~had~~ had such a dominant influence in the state government and the executive mansion itself and the state legislature. And the west Virginia coal industry became so powerful, so wealthy, so quick, they would take over this dominance, predominance in the state government. Also, ^{if you} their sheer willingness to use any extremes to keep out the Union. Their willingness to employ Baldwin felts and give them total control of the situation and keep out union organizers to intimidate miners who showed~~a~~ pro-union pro-clivities. They just had total control on the ~~step~~spot. They being the Baldwin-Felts.

Nogay: Who led the Union movement in West Virginia? What were some of the characters there?

Corbin: (Interrupt.) The Paint Creek/Cabin Creek strike was important to the miners for several reasons. One would be - its during

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this strike that they learn the significance, or the use of terror. For decades they have been called the coal companies strictly Baldwin-Felts mine guards used terror to kinda of intimidate the miners and terrorize them into submission. During this strike when they encountered terrorism or the violence on a day to day basis, the miners themselves begin to turn the table, turn the trick you might say. They began to employ violence against the mine guards. At Montclo they ambushed the mine guards killing several of them within 10 to 15 minutes, several of them being 16 to 20 mine guards within a 15 to 20 minute period. Out of this experience miners themselves began to learn that violence is a sword that can cut both ways. It can be used to terrorize them - they had been terrorized for two decades- but they can also use violence to terrorize the mine guards, and to drive them out of the creeks, out of the valleys. They learned the mine guards are just as intimidated or afraid of violence as they themselves are. So be a major significance their learning the meaning of terrorism or violence. Second, and just as important significance of Paint Creek/ Cabin Creek strike was, here is where the West Virginia Miners develop their own local leadership. Until this time ^{the} UMWA officials of West Virginia were ~~sent~~ sent in by the international organization, usually from Ohio Pennsylvania, wherever.. During the Paint Creek/ Cabin Creek strike the United Mine Workers, for justified reasons tried to compromise the strike that the international union was unprepared for the extremes to which the coal companies would go to defeat the strike. They were unprepared for the power the coal companies have within the state government. Such

things like that, so they try to get the best possible settlement. So their officials in the state of West Virginia did try to compromise the strike. The local people rise up and refuse to let them do it, there local people being particularly Frank Kenney and Fred Mooney and Bill Patrick and Bill Blizzard. They keep the miners - they persuade the miners to remain on strike and eventually gain a total victory which would be ~~total~~ recognition of the union. A few years later Kenney would be elected president of District 17, which at that time was all of the State of West Virginia. Fred Mooney would be elected secretary of Treasure and Bill Patrick, vice-president of the ~~State of~~ ^{Miner in} West Virginia, so out of the Paint Creek/Cabin Creek strike you do have local leadership arising up. One which the West Virginia miners could follow much easier than international officials being sent in from other states.

Nogay: How was the march on Logan developed? How did the coal go out and...What lead, what sparked the march on Logan?

Corbin: The immediate spark on Logan... The immediate spark to prompt the march on Logan would probably be the killing of Sid Hatfield. Sid Hatfield was gunned down on his way to trial, August 1, 1921, ~~the~~ it would be six days later when Frank Kenney calls a meeting at the state capitol. Approximately 4 to 6^{to} 7,000 miners meet there with many ^{and they} lists ^{to} of speeches by other Mother Jones, by Frank Kenney. Kenney goes in to ask the governor...this time Kenney still wasn't ^{fully} prepared for march on Logan... He asks the state governor to protect the union organizers he sent into ~~to~~ Logan, Mingo County's. In otherwords, just give us our rights. When the governor refused to meet with him, that's when Kenney comes

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out before the miners to tell ~~them~~ us, you have no rights in this state, therefore, you have no recourse except to fight. He tells them to go home and wait the call to mobilize.

And then what happened?

What happens during the next two weeks, we really don't know. The miners who ~~admitted~~ eventually engaged upon the March of Logan took a vow of secrecy. A vow which most of them still honor today. Talking with all the miners who I became convinced who took part in that march still won't talk about it. So were not quite sure what does happen, but from what I say will pick up, the miners-- Kenney uses that two week period to prepare for the March on Logan, to get the people fully trained and also make sure they all have full provisions - provisions being, armaments, amunitions and food. Then beyond August 21 when Kenney calls another -- it will be on August 21 when Frank Kenney calls another meeting, this will be on Cabin Creek. Six, Seven thousand miners meet that day. His message that day can be summed up in one word to "mobilize". He gives the place of mobilization be Lins Creek, West Virginia about ten miles ^{outside} ~~from~~ Charleston. For the next three days anywhere from the neighborhood of 5 to 10 thousand miners start assembling at Lynns Creek in preparation for the march on Logan.

Nogay: How were the miners organized -- what did their mobilization reasonable? an army perhaps?

Corbin: The miners that took ~~part~~ ^{up} to the March on Logan were ^a fully trained, highly disciplined ^{question} ~~disciplined~~ army, there is no ~~doubt~~ about it.

Frank Kenney was the unofficial leader of the march on Logan. They had a journalism mode, Bill Bilzzard, other than ~~that~~ those two all of the officers the March on Logan were War World Two veterans. They brought in World War I veterans to train the miners, they taught them troupe movements, they taught them ~~flank~~ flank formations or flank movements, they formed squadants they also developed ~~the way~~ ^{to} dress to recognize their own soldiers. That would be a red bandana around the neck and jeans. They were given drilling instructions, how to carry their weapons, how to shoot their weapons, they were given target practice with these World War I veterans teaching them how to shoot. Can I try that one ~~over~~ over? Or, was I doing alright?

Nogay: You're doing fine but they had hospitals and other things too, though. What we talked about yesterday.

Corbin: Do you want me to start the whole thing ~~over~~, or just pick up?

Nogay: What ever you feel the most comfortable with.

Corbin: The miners that marched on Logan were a highly trained, disciplined army. They had an unofficial leader, that was Frank Keeney the President in district 17, they had a journalism mode, Bill Blizzard. Other than those two they, were World War I vetrans, particularly World War I officers served as--took--

(Break)

Corbin: And ~~how~~ ^{how} he organized affair. There was nothing half hazard or commicle about it. The miners are fully trained, you had

an unofficial leader of the march, Frank Keeney, president of District 17. Bill Blizzard was journalist mode, otherwise the officers for the miners ~~an~~ army were all World War I veterans. Many of them had been army officers during World War I, they served as officers of the march. World War I veterans taught the miners how to shoot, they taught them various flank movements, troupe movements, they had ~~bug~~ buglers which would give calls for the march. They were provided hospital facilities, commessaries to feed them, they had sanitary facility's. So they began to march when they -- they would march 90 miles mostly in formation and once they hit Blair Mountain you really see how they organized and disciplined and trained these guys are. There was nothing haphazard, in about or spontaneous bout. They were fully prepared for this. When they hit Blair Mt. they didn't just charge the Mt. they waited until everybody got there and then bugle calls were given for ~~a~~ certain squadrans to move at certain times. Previous to this scouts had been sent out to cut down the telegraph and telephone wires. The local at Blair Mt. , ~~bring~~ ^{bring} wrenches and provided other forms of shelter for the miners who were marching from Charleston once they got there. It was a highly organized disciplined affair.

Nogay: How did they organize so many miners, 10,000 of them?

How did 10,000 miners get the word, were they all from West Virginia or were they from other outside areas?

Gerbin: What was the reaction of the state and federal government, to the march?

Corbin: The state government controlled largely by the coal companies was outraged. They handle the trials subsized largley by the

coal companies. They try the miners for treason and eventually five ~~hundred~~ hundred -fifty, six hundred will be indicted for treason against the state government. They believe the miners are guilty as charged. For decades the coal company's have been telling the nation that the United Mine Workers was a barbarous traders force within their mist. Now they have what they consider evidence of it. That being the march on Logan and the violance which incurred during the march on Logan. The Federal governments reaction was somewhat skitsofrenic it was a valid affair which had to be stopped. You can understand the administration, President Hardings administration aiming to stop at seeing in the troups the planes, and doing whatever was necessary to put down this intense ~~by these~~ violence incurring within its borders. And a large number of government officials felt the miners were guilty of treason, on the other hand statements, letters, other things ~~ref-~~ revealed that the Federal government was somewhat sympathetic to the miners. There was a senate investigation. Six senators came into West Virginia and investigated to see what was going on, they really revealed to the nation, ~~Nation~~ being the federal government, what was going on in West Virginia. So you really feel that the federal government is somewhat sympathetic to the miners and that would be one ^{of the} reason why the federal government itself never prosecutes the miners.

Nogay: Why did the federal government send in troups?

Corbin: The federal government sent in troups simply to stop the violence. They might have felt sorry for the miners. Some of them might have even identified with the miners. But they cannot allow the ^{violence} ~~balance~~ to continue within its own

borders. It had gotten ~~n~~ out of hand, people were being killed. The violence had to be stopped.

Nogay: Did the airplanes — could you talk about what kind of airplanes were sent in?

Corbin: By the government?

Nogay: Yes. Did the airplanes sent in ~~by~~ by the federal government have bombs and did they use them? Were the miners bombed by airplanes?

Corbin: The miners were bombed by airplanes. We know for sure that the Logan County Cooperators association rented planes and dropped home made bombs on the miners. We also know for a fact that President Harding sent in the air service, that is bombing planes. Whether they participated in any bombings we don't know for sure. Circumstantial evidence points out that actually they did—some of these U.S. planes did drop bombs on the miners. Certainly homemade bombs dropped by rented commercial planes were not going to scatter 20,000 miners, who had been fighting for at least 2 weeks.

Nogay: How did the miners feel about the federal troupes coming in?

Corbin: They felt overwhelmed. (laughing) Be the presence of the federal troupe which would prompt the miners to eventually surrender. You can see their situation, they're fighting 10,000 Don Shaffins, Deputy Sheriff, Baldwin-Felts mine guards, State Police, they got them on one side, they got 25 hundred federal troupes on the other side. They got planes flying overhead. They didn't have much choice at that point. But to surrender. No matter how righteous the cause. Then also they had won the point. They had ~~w~~ shown the coal companies they were willing to fight to gain their rights.

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Nogay: Did these miners ever break through to the Logan County side?

Corbin: The Miners had captured at least half of Mountain Ridge. They had gotten through Shaffens lines, they're ready to descend upon Logan and Mingo County's to clean up out the mine guard system, as they said ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~ "to hang Don Shaffin from ^{an} apple tree", I believe. They were going to go right to Mingo County to liberate, that is get their ^{union} brothers and sisters out of the jails in which they had been incarcerated for several years. They had broken through definitely, ~~coal companies~~ Coal Operators in Logan County were wiring the press and saying, "there ~~was~~ upon us, within the next hour were all going to be slaughtered. This wasn't readerick, ^{they were sincere,} they were scared the miners had captured the mountain ridge, they were coming into Logan, ^u When the Federal troupes arrived, and the miners would surrender.

(Pause)

Un beknown to coal miners, coal operators and so many others, President Harding actually had declared Marshall Law in the state of West Virginia, put the entire state under Marshall Law, months earlier, right. The ~~Min~~ Mingo county strike had started somewhere in early May of 1920 and it became so violent so quick Harding at that time signed a proclamation putting the entire state under Marshall Law but they kept it quiet knowing how federal troupes and state troupes had been abused by the coal companies before. The coal companies and their control of the State Government. So they kept it quiet, but they had the proclamation signed and ready to move in Federal troupes when ~~ever~~ necessary. They had to be ready to roll because they had army intelligence agents in the state

reporting back the amancity and intensity of violence. So once things got out of hand they had to have everything ready to roll to put down the violence. It would be in August 1921 with the march on Logan that things finally got out of hand. No longer could they hold back federal troupes At the march on Logan Harding asked them several times to return home, the miners did not, the violence continued. Harding calls his cabinet into emergency session. They have no choice but to make marshall Law public, put the entire state of West Virginia under Marshall Law.

Nogay: At what point does he decide to send in the Federal troupes?

Corbin: When the miners dddn't return _____

Nogay: What happens after Blair Mt. with the treason trials. Just what was the story there and what was the fact that none of the miners received inditments with... what was happening there? What happened to the miers * who were arrested after Blair Mt.?

Corbin: Once the miners were surrendered ~~556~~ 556 of them would be indited for insurrection and treason against the State of West Virginia. Bill Blizzard, the journalism of the strike would be the first one tried for treason. They might have gotten by with it except the trials were moved to Jefferson County, West Virginia, which was the very same county. In fact would be the very same courthouse in which John Brown had been tried for treason about a cantury earlier. So actually seventy years earlier. So you have labor, papers, liberal, press, p newspapers, magazines, throughout the county, coming into cover the treason trials, as they are now dalled throughout the nation. They are played upon this parrell in 1858,

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John Brown was tried ~~for~~^{for} treason to try and liberate the black slaves. Now, 556 coal miners were being tried for treason to try and liberate the industrial slaves, being the coal miners. Probably with the press, the national press that the trials got, put so much pressure. At least the trials were exposed nationally, receiving day to day coverage, in national newspapers, including: Washington Evening Star, The Post, New York Times. It's not until the press leaves do they convict any miners of treason. Mr Allen, who was convicted of treason against the State government does go to prison for several years, until he ~~escapes~~^{escapes}.

Nogay: Just one more question. About, the company towns. What kind of control did the ~~dein~~ company in the early days have over the miners?

Corbin: The companies controlled nearly every aspect of the miners life. They controlled social institutions, they schools, the coal companies hired the teachers, they could fire the teachers when they wanted, strictly if the e teacher started talking about labor affairs, or discussing the union. The companies built the church, they hired and fired the minister. Particularly if that minister started addressing the social needs of the miners. That is, talking about their miserable living and working conditions. The most pervasive form of company control however, comes in politics. The nation has found upon representative government, representativ politics. In the company towns you had no representative government. The coal operator was the mayor, the town counsil, the town boss, the word boss, he was everything and the political power in the company towns was ^{the}mine guards. You really see it

in voting rights. There was no voting rights in the company towns. The polling place was usually the company store, or the company school. The posters were company officials or mine guards. If a miner went into vote the company official inspected the ballot to make sure the miner voted the right way. If he did not he could be fired from the job, ejected from his house, often violently ejected from both job and house. Sometimes you have the -- I know upon several occasions at least where company officials simply stood outside of the polling place and handed the miners their ballots already marked as they went in to drop them into the ballot box.

Nogay: Do you recall at all, the Boomer Special that went through on Paint Creek, can you tell that story?

Corbin: It was in, I think, the second or third month of the strike when the coal companies...

Interupt: Say that again, please. Now respond.

Corbin: Do you remember, real quick, when it was. I forget which month it was?

Nogay: It doesn't matter, if you just tell what happened.

Corbin: The Bull Mouse Special was a train rigged up by the coal operators and the mine guards to -- it was a locomotive, one box car and a caboose with iron plate siding on each side in angles with gatling guns sticking out through port holes in the aluminum siding -- I'm sorry, the Bull Mouse Special was a train rigged up by the mine guards and several of the coal operators, it consisted of a locomotive, a box car and a caboose and had iron plate siding on the side with gatling guns sticking through holes in the siding. They drove it up the tracks through the tent colony's firing the gatling guns into the tent colonys. Miraculously no body-- only one

person was killed. Sisco Estep was killed. Dozens were wounded, it's a miracle only one person was killed. They got to the end of the line the coal operator on the train Quinn Morton hollard, "Back it up, we'll give the sons-of-bitches another round." This was one of the times Baldwin Felts mine guards showed a little humanity, and wouldn't let them do it. So it only went through one time.

Was that a good discription, there?

Nogay: Yes, you did a good job. We've got to go.

INTERVIEW WITH DAVID CORBIN

Fr: Beth Nogay

Nogay: When did the early exploitation of coal begin?

Corbin: Large scale development of WV coal begins in the 1890s. Thomas Jefferson was writing about the coal in the 1800s..the large deposits in the western section of the state of Virginia. The trouble was the Appalachian Mountains prohibited any type of transportation that was needed to get in and get the coal out....so not until the 1890s when the development of the steamdriven plow that could tunnel through the mountains that you have the large scale development of coal.

Nogay: How did coal operators find labor to work the mines?

Corbin: The operators found a problem with trying to create an industry in a remote agricultural area so they needed to create their own labor force ... to do this they recruited the native appalachians and native West Virginians and they do this by luring the people from the farms to the coal camps. But there were not enough West Virginians to fill this need so they sent agent to the south to recruit southern blacks they sent agents to imigration ports such as Ellis Island to get European imigrants. They even sent agents to Europe itself to recruit workers to mine the coal.

Nogay: What did the operators offer the laborers to come here?

Corbin: The presented a rosy picture....high wages to be earned and ideal living and working conditions. They presented the coal camps as a land of milk and honey.

Nogay: What did the companies do to accomodate the large influx of labor?

Corbin: If you are going to create a work force from out of nowhere you have to be able to house feed and shelter the labor your bringing in so out of this developes the company town system. This was not unique t West Virginia you have this type town throughout the united states but to the skill in which it was in WV it would be unique. They built company houses to house the miners and

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stores from which the miners got provisions...food, tools, powder to mine the coal and also had to meet the miners social needs such as churches schools playgrounds so what you have is the company creating the whole way of life for the workers

Nogay: What were the social and economic characteristics of the company town? How did the system work? Did everybody live in the same kinds of houses was the company the boss and the workers the workers?

Corbin: The company town had distinct class lines...company officials who the miners would eventually call the company licks and you had the workers...no middle class no ...usually the mine owner himself living at the top of the hill then the officials living middle ways then the workers living down in th town itself.

Nogay: How were the miners paid? Describe the economic situation.

Corbin: The miners were not paid in American currency they were paid in a system of payment called coal script...metal coins or plastic coupon printed by or for the company by a printing company....they would be paid in this and the only place they could get it redeemed was the company store. Hence the company made it on monopolistic situation. The miners could not take this anywhere else to trade. This was a way of the company to make sure the miners traded at the company store itself.

Nogay: In what other ways did the company control the miners?

Corbin: The whole system was set up to control the miners. They built the churches and they selected what religion it would be. The operators hired the minister and he served the way the company wanted them to. Also the schools the teachers could talk about anything except the union. The predominance of the company really showed in politics. The mine guards served a polsters at the poling places which was usually the company store. Only the coal operatorno council no mayor only the coal operator to care for the miners. In light of this you find the company controlling every political aspect of life in the coal company towns. No secret ballot. The officials inspected the ballots as the miners droped them into the box ... guards were often stationed outside the poling place and handed the miners thethe ballots as they went in to vote ...already marked and the miner just walked in and dropped it into the box...

Nogay: When did the miners begin to question that life didn't have to be this way?

Corbin: The miners accepted this way of life for a while....because the company provided for them....monotonitious housing all the same but it was decent housing compared to what some had had before. Southern black who had been living in shacks and come here and had a relatively decent house and in some cases it was the first time some had received money....it might have been script but at least they had money they could take to the company store and purchase their own goods. Through time...from 1880s to 1900s they started sensing something wrong with the system. They did not have a voice. We are talking about the United States in which every person was to have a voice and a democratic right to vote how they wanted to go to school where they wanted to move wherever they wanted and they started to sense this wasn't the scheme of things. No response to this until the Paint Creek/Cabin Creek strike in 1912 and 1913.

Nogay: What was the operators response to the union influence?

Corbin: From early stages southern WV operators had strong opposition to the union. Whether its out of wanting control or the economic problems. Higher wages meaning less profits. Eventually they will be into more comprehensive terms...between 1900 to 1920 to 1930 coal constituted 80 to 90% of the energy in the United States the United Mine Workers had organized 80 to 90% of the coal miners in the country...the miners did not organize with the miners in WV which was a rapidly developing coal field. Hence the WV coal operators came to view the United Mine Workers with great concern. They viewed themselves as the last remaining stand between the UMW

Corbin: It was a highly organized affair. The miners are fully trained they had an unofficial leader of the march, Frank Keeney, president of district 17, Bill Blisser was general lissima otherwise the officers of the army were all World War I veterans and many of them had been officers during WWI they served as officers of the march. WWI veterans taught the miners how to shoot and taught them flank movements they had buglers which would give the calls for the march. They were provided hospital facilities and commosaries to feed them. Had sanitary facilities so they began to march 90 miles mostly in formation and once they hit Blair Mountain you could see how organized and trained they were. Nothing hap-hazard about it they were fully prepared for this. They waited until everybody got to Blair before they attacked....the bugle calls were given for certain squadrons to move at certain times...previous to this scouts had been sent to cut the telegraph and telephone lines the local at Blain Mountain had dug trenches and provided shelter for the miners who were marching from Charleston. Highly organized deciplined affair.

Nogay: ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

What was the reaction of the state to the march?

Corbin: The state government was outraged...they handled the trials paid for mainly by the coal companies they tried the miners for treason ..556 were indited for treason against the state government and they believd the miners were guilty as charged. For decades the companies had bee telling that the UMW was a trator. Now the march was considered as evidence of this. The government reaction was somewhat two-faced it was a violent affair which had to be stopped. President Hardings administration aimed to stop it. A large number of government officials felt the miners were guilty of treason. On the other had the federal government was somewhat sympathetic to the miners. A senate investigation stemed and it revealed to the nation what was going on in WV. Due to this sympathetic feeling of the government toward the miners the gov. never prosecutes the miners.

Nogay: Why did the federal government send in troops?

Corbin: To stop the violence. They might have felt sorry and maybe even identified with the miners. But they could not allow the violence to continue within its own borders. It was out of hand and people were being killed.

The violence had to stop.

Nogay: Were the miners bombed by airplanes?

Corbin: Yes. The Logan County Coal Operators Association rented planes and dropped homemade bombs on the miners. We also know that President Harding sent in air service with bombing planes....whether they participated in any bombings we don't know for sure. Circumstantial evidence points that they did....some certainly homemade bombs dropped by planes were not going to scatter 20,000 miners who had been fighting for at least 2 weeks.

Nogay: How did the miners feel about federal troops coming in?

Corbin: They felt overwhelmed. It was the presence of the federal troops which would eventually prompt the miners to surrender. Their situation was they were fighting 10,000,,Don Chafin Deputy Sheriff and the Baldwin Phelps mine guards and state police on one side and 2500 federal troops on the other side they got planes overhead and didn't have much choice but to surrender at this point no matter how righteous the cause. They also they had won the point. They had shown the coal company that they were willing to fight for their rights.

Nogay: Did the miners ever break through to the Logan County Side?

Corbin: The miners had captured at least $\frac{1}{2}$ the mountain ridge ..they had gotten through Chafin's lines and were ready to descent upon Logan and Mingo Counties to clean out the mine guard system as they wanted to hang Don Chafin from a sour apple tree. They were going to Mingo county to liberate ...get their union brothers and sisters from jail where they had been for several years. They had definately broken through. Coal operators were wiring the President saying there upon us within the next hour we are all going to be slaughtered...they were sincere....they were (the miners) were going into Logan when the federal troops arrived and the miners surrendered. The entire state had been put under martial law but they kept it quite but they had the proclamation signed so they could move in troops when necessary. They had to be ready to roll because intelligence agents were reporting the immensity and intensity of the violence so once it got out of hand they had to be ready to roll.....

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to stop the violence. In August 1921 in finally got out of hand with the March on Logan and no longer could they hold back the federal troops. Harding asked them several times to return home but the violence continued. Harding called Cabinet to emergency session and had no choice but to make martial law public and put the entire state of WV under martial law.

Nogay: ~~XX~~ What happens after Blain Mountain?
With the treason trials?

Corbin: Once the miners surrendered 556 would be indicted for treason against the state of WV. Bill Blizzard was first to be tried. They might have gotten by with it but the trials were moved to Jefferson County WV where John Brown had been tried for treason about a century earlier..70 year earlier. You have newspapers, magazines, liberal papers throughout the country to cover it...the treason trials as they were called through the nation. 1858 John Brown was tried to try & liberate the black slaves and now 556 coal miners were being tried for treason to try & liberate the industrial slaves meaning the coal miners. The press put pressure and the trials were exposed nationally on a day to day coverage and not until the press leaves do they convict any miners of treason. Mr. Allen who was convicted on treason does go to prison for several years until he escaped.

Nogay: What kind of control did the company have over the miners?

Corbin: The company controlled nearly every aspect of the miners life. They controlled social institutions and schools they hired and fired the teachers particularly if the teacher started talking about labor affairs or discussed union. The companies built the church and hired and fire the ministers if that minister started addressing the social needs of the miners that is talking about the miserable living and working conditions. The main company control came in politics the company towns had no representative government the coal operator was the mayor the town council the town boss and he was everything. The political power in the company towns was the mine guards. You really saw it in voting there were not any voting rights in the company towns. The poling place was usually the company store or the company school the polsters were company officials or mine guards. The miner went to vote and the mine guard or officials inspected the ballots to make sure the miner voted the right way. If he did not he would be fired from the job and ejected from his house.

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Often violently ejected from both job and house. On several occasions company officials stood outside the polling and handed the miners their ballots already marked and the miners just went in to drop them into the ballot box.

Nogay: Do you recall the Bulman Special that went through on Paint Creek?

Corbin: In the...the Bullman Special was a train rigged up by the ~~company~~ coal operators and the mine guards to...a locomotive and box car and a caboose with iron plate siding on each side in angles with gatling guns sticking out through holes. They drove it up the tracks through the tent colonies and aimed the gatling guns into the tent colonies. Only one person was killed. Cisco Estep was killed. Dozens were wounded. The coal operator owned the train...Quinn Norton said back it up and we will give the sons-a-bitches another round. This was one time the Baldwin-Phelps mine guards showed a little humanity and wouldn't let them do it. So it only went through one time.