

UMWA

The United Mine Workers of America has fought for workers' rights at home and abroad.

The UMWA accepted all mine workers regardless of race, religion or national origin.

The union was formed when the Knights of Labor in Erie, Colorado, merged with the National Progressive Union of Miners and Mine Laborers in 1890.



Refugees of Ludlow tent colony at Trades Assembly Hall, Trinidad, Colorado, April 22, 1914. Photographed by Lewis R. Dold



Women march in support of UMW coal miners on strike against CF&I in Trinidad, Colorado, carrying a United States flag and signs: "God Bless Mother Jones," and "Ladies Assembly of Southern Colorado." ca. 1914

UMWA history is full of legendary leaders and tragic events.

Throughout its history, the UMWA has provided leadership to the American labor movement. Among the great UMWA leaders were John L. Lewis, Phil Murray, Bill Green, William B. Wilson, and John Mitchell. Famed labor activist Mother Jones joined forces with the UMWA when they led their first rally in the southern coalfields of Colorado in 1903. Legendary stories about the Molly Maguires in the Pennsylvania coal fields, Matewan in West Virginia, and the Ludlow Massacre, have been handed down through the generations.

Despite the threat of physical harm and economic ruin, miners have constantly struggled against great odds to achieve better working conditions.

Over the years, these accomplishments have included:

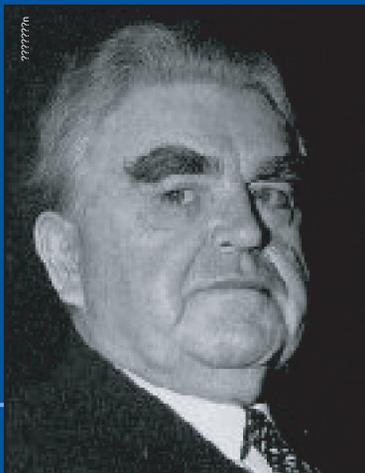
- ☞ 1898 the eight-hour work day
- ☞ 1933 collective bargaining rights
- ☞ 1946 Welfare and Retirement Fund --The UMWA Fund built eight hospitals in Appalachia, established numerous clinics and recruited young doctors to practice in rural coal field areas
- ☞ 1969 UMWA convinced Congress to enact the landmark Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act. The law protected miners' safety and provided compensation for miners suffering from black lung disease.



Unidentified coal miner during the UMW labor strike against CF&I, ca. 1913

The UMWA continues to work nationally and internationally.

While the UMWA's primary role is to speak out on behalf of American coal miners, it also has been active internationally--denouncing apartheid in South Africa and promoting the formation of democratic labor unions abroad. The UMWA also now organizes workers in auto manufacturing, construction, steel mills, hospitals, public sector, rubber industries, electrical utilities, data entry, schools, professionals and many more other occupations.



John L. Lewis, ca. 1946

The legendary John L. Lewis officially became UMWA president in 1920.

He remained at the helm of the UMWA for 40 years. Lewis built the UMWA into a formidable union, raising the living standards of mine workers throughout North America and transforming health care delivery in Appalachia. His work in creating the CIO led to the organization of millions of unorganized industrial workers and an increase in living standards for millions of American families.