

**Powerlessness and Pollution in Alleghany County, Virginia:
A Historical Analysis of Paternalism and Economic Coercion in Appalachia and its
Relationship with Environmental Degradation**

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Abstract

Alleghany County, an extractive community, has depended heavily upon a single paper mill known as MeadWestvaco for over a century. The purpose of this study is to explore the degree to which MeadWestvaco utilizes paternalism and economic coercion as forms of power to control and maintain community quiescence regarding the company's negative environmental impact in Alleghany County. This paper mill has negatively affected Alleghany County relative to other Virginia communities. However, there has been very little local action against the paper mill's environmental impact. To define and recognize paternalism and economic coercion, I undertake a historical analysis of the cotton textile industry of the Southern Piedmont and coal mining industry of Southern Appalachia, where these systems of power have been documented. In applying the indicators of paternalism and economic coercion found in these nearby Southern industries to Alleghany County, Virginia, I find that MeadWestvaco utilizes both strategies to some degree to control and influence community awareness of and response to the company's environmental damage.

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For my father, who spent his life writing and performing music that celebrated the natural beauty of our home. He raised my brothers and me to love the mountains, forests, rivers, and creeks of Alleghany County and to be proud of who we are and where we come from.

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For my mother, who insists I can do anything I put my mind to, never lets me see the glass half empty, and encourages and supports me no matter what. I love you, Mom!

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*Give me that Blue Ridge Mountain magic
It's the only kind I know
Hope I never wander too far from here
Like to see that mountain magic grow*

- Curtis “Bootie” Wrenn

In memory of my father and grandmother.

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Glossary

AHEDC	Alleghany Highlands Economic Development Corporation
C&O	Chesapeake and Ohio Railway Company
CAP	Citizens Against Pollution, Inc.
CPU	Covington Paperworkers Union
CRPA	Cowpasture River Preservation Association
DSLCC	Dabney S. Lancaster Community College
EPA	Employee Protective Association
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
IBPSPMW	International Brotherhood of Pulp, Sulphite, and Paper Mill Workers
PWOC	Paper Workers Organizing Committee
UPA	United Paperworkers of America
UMWA	United Mine Workers of America
USW	United Steel Workers
VPAC	Virginia Packaging Applications Center
WVPP (WVP&P Co.)	West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company

Chapter 1: Statement of Problem

It is an unpleasant little place. Alleghany County's seat is dominated by Westvaco's bleached-board plant, which occupies the town's gut with a cancer of stink, smokestacks, and high-rise machinery. Clanking and hissing and mountains of wood chips rise from the Jackson's flood plain. A concrete pool filled with chocolate-colored goo squats on its bank. "Good God almighty," I muster as we roll along a ridge overlooking acres and acres of environmental bruise. Even had I not spent the day paddling a beautiful mountain stream, Covington's ugliness would be jolting. And its smell—its smell is sharp, all-pervading. "How can anyone live here?" (Swift 2001: 48)

The purpose of this study is to explore the degree to which MeadWestvaco utilizes paternalism and economic coercion as forms of power to control and maintain community quiescence regarding the company's negative environmental impact in Alleghany County. Alleghany County, an extractive community, has depended heavily upon a single paper mill known as MeadWestvaco for over a century. This paper mill has negatively and unequally affected Alleghany County relative to other Virginia communities. However, there has been very little local action against the paper mill's environmental impact. In this study, I propose that MeadWestvaco utilizes both paternalism and economic coercion to control and influence community awareness of and response to environmental inequality

Previous sociological research has shown that rural, lower class communities often house businesses and other economic institutions that abuse environmental resources and/or damage community health through pollution, employee exploitation, and retardation of community improvement. Communities rely on damaging extractive industries for many reasons including geographic isolation, absentee ownership of land, economic dependence, or lack of resources and social capital. Yet, continued reliance upon extractive industry can generally be traced to structured and self-maintaining power (Gaventa 1980). Company power and influence can become so established and effective that social relations and perceptions are altered. Power is almost effortlessly perpetuated when the community begins to internalize notions of economic dependence and paternalism. I am interested in discovering what forms of power are at work in Alleghany County to create inaction regarding Westvaco's environmental impact.

Alleghany County is a largely homogeneous, lower class community with a historically low socio-economic status. It has been host to one of the top polluters in the state for over a century. Power manifests itself in Alleghany County and Appalachia in many forms, but the most striking and perhaps most effective forms relative to this case appear to be paternalism and economic coercion. Paternalism creates a parent-child relationship between the company and the laborers and residents that helps to ensure obedience, quiescence, and often ignorance in the face of inequality (Blatz 1994, Gaventa 1980). However, MeadWestvaco is in fact unionized, which decreases the power of paternalism and suggests that other mechanisms are present. Alternatively, economic coercion has the same effect of preventing action and dissent by creating a real or perceived lack of economic alternatives. For a variety of reasons, many Appalachian communities like Alleghany County rely entirely on one or very few industries. To cross the company's interests would be economic suicide. Economic dependence is not

particularly unique to Alleghany County, but if present with lingering paternalism, could translate into an interesting agglomeration of power working to maintain quiescence. Documenting how the paper mill utilizes both economic coercion and paternalism should uncover the complex dimension of power at play in environmental inequality.

This study seeks, first, to document that environmental degradation currently exists in Alleghany County; second, to explore the extent to which paternalism and economic coercion are sources of power utilized by the company; and third, to assess possible linkages between MeadWestvaco's use of power and the perpetuation of the environmental damage. I will rely on historical analysis to examine environmental damage in Alleghany County; local activism and unionism; and MeadWestvaco's impact on the environment and its response to activism. As Alleghany County is an under researched area and posited power relations between the company and the community are complex, I will extend my historical analysis to other pertinent areas of power and powerlessness in Southern industry. Paternalism and economic coercion have been well documented in Southern textile mills (McLaurin 1971, Hall 1987, Pope 1942) and Appalachian coal mines (Baratz 1993, Blatz 1994, Seltzer 1985) respectively. I will look to the Southern Piedmont's textile industry of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to explore the management model of paternalism with labor and mill towns. Likewise, to understand economic coercion, I will examine the Appalachian coal industry of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which provides an excellent example of economic dependence on a single industry, the growth of unionism, and management dealings with employees and unionism. An analysis of power and powerlessness in these neighboring industries should be helpful in understanding the operation of power and the presence of quiescence in Alleghany County

In the first section (Chapter 2), I provide a case study of Alleghany County. This covers basic information regarding the community, industries of the past and present, MeadWestvaco, environmental issues, and instances of community activism and unionism. In the second section (Chapter 3), I review literature that discusses Appalachia, environmental inequality ideology, the role of power in environmental inequality, and two specific forms of power: paternalism and economic coercion. The third section (Chapter 4) covers my methodology in detail. The fourth section (Chapter 5) includes my findings. The final section (Chapter 6), my conclusion, answers my research questions by relating my literature review to my findings and explains the implications of my conclusions.

This research of power and powerlessness in Alleghany County, Virginia is important for understanding how environmental degradation continues in lower class communities virtually unobstructed in an era of organized labor and increased awareness of and concern for environmental safety and sustainability. A community that has traditionally relied on exploitative economics will likely continue this pattern through institutional inertia and entrenched powerlessness until an alternative solution is necessarily embraced or sustainability ceases and the community fails. Like much of Appalachia, Alleghany County has seen a succession of industries that have been the sole economic support for the community and were exploitative of both the people and the environment. Powerlessness and environmental damage are issues that continue to concern many areas of Appalachia. Thus, it remains crucial to understand the complexities of Appalachian communities, industry, and inequality. This thesis seeks to explore the degree to which paternalism and economic coercion are present in

MeadWestvaco's relationship with Alleghany County and how their presence affects community quiescence regarding environmental inequality.

Chapter 2: Alleghany County, Virginia

Community Profile

Located in the Alleghany Mountains of Appalachia, Alleghany County is in southwestern Virginia and borders the state of West Virginia. The two major towns are Clifton Forge and Covington. Alleghany County comprises 452 square miles, 50% of which are national forest. Three main rivers transverse the county: the Jackson, the Cowpasture, and the James. The area has a history of settlers dating back to the 1700s. However, Alleghany County was not officially formed until 1822. Clifton Forge, initially the county's largest town, was chartered only in 1906. Covington, presently the larger of the two, was founded around 1817.

Alleghany County has historically been remote and almost entirely dependent upon one major industry. From the iron industry of the 1800s to the paper mill industry of today, the people of Alleghany County have had to rely on singular industries that are often environmentally detrimental and sensitive to change. As an extractive community, Alleghany County has relied on the removal of raw material from nature (excluding agriculture) in a position of dependence. Progress over the years, the many economic ups and downs, and the location of Alleghany County has deeply affected the residents of this community and their way of life. A quick look at the county's history will provide insight into how it became an extractive community.

Prior to the Civil War, Alleghany County's population was quite minuscule. The flourishing iron industry in the area sparked a population growth with the construction of a major road over the mountains in 1826 (Town of Clifton Forge 2004a). Oren F. Morton's 1923 *A Centennial History of Alleghany County*, a particularly helpful text that allows us a view of the county just past the height of its economic and social boom, tells us that the population in the entire county during 1830 was only 2,816. The area saw its first major growth as Alleghany County's population doubled between 1850 and 1860 with the emergence of the railroad. The ill-effects of the Civil War would consequently see a drop in the population of 1870 down to that of twenty years prior. Yet, the railroad's presence solidified in the area and Alleghany County's population increased by 75% between 1890 and 1900 to 3,212.

Today, Alleghany County holds a modest population size that is typical of other rural counties in Virginia. The 2006 U.S. Census shows Alleghany County's present population at about 16,600 (U.S. Census Bureau 2006a). Clifton Forge and Covington, the county's two major municipalities, are telling examples of feeble, or even stagnant, growth. The U.S. Census reports that in 2006, Clifton Forge's population rested at 4,659 (U.S. Census Bureau 2006b). This figure is 1,000, or 1/5, less than it was a century before. Just in the past ten years, Clifton Forge has lost 400 people (U.S. Census Bureau 2006b). In Covington, the population has dropped from 6,991 in 1990 to 6,073 in 2006 (U.S. Census Bureau 2006c). The loss of the railroad industry and the waning strength of the paper mill in Covington are generally regarded by residents as the

reasons for a decline in population. This fragile and undiversified economy is probably also to blame for Alleghany County's overall slow growth in modern times.

In 1922, Clifton Forge boasted a combined wealth of 22 million, a vast amount of money considering the town's rural, isolated, and impoverished location (Morton 1923). Today, Alleghany County residents earn largely below average incomes relative to the state and the nation. The median household income for residents as of 2006 is about \$38,000 dollars (U.S. Census Bureau 2006d). In Clifton Forge and Covington, the median incomes are about \$26,000 and \$30,000, respectively. When compared to the national median income in 2004 at around \$44,000 and the state median income in 2006 at over \$51,000, Alleghany County seems very far behind indeed (U.S. Census Bureau 2006e). The median household income in Covington in 2004 was 64% of the statewide median and Alleghany County was 75% of the statewide median (Conley 2008). Almost 13% of Covington residents are below the poverty line, while a whopping 19.4% of Clifton Forge residents are similarly situated (U.S. Census Bureau 2006d).

In 1840, 104 white persons aged 20 years old or more could not read or write in Alleghany (Morton 1923). By the time of Morton's writing, illiteracy had been largely wiped out in the industrializing community. Between 1910 and 1920, the illiteracy rate fell by half. In 1920, only 2.9% of all the children in Alleghany County were illiterate (Morton 1923). Today, a little more than three-fourths of the county's population have graduated high school (U.S. Census Bureau 2006d), which is about average in comparison to the nation as a whole (U.S. Census Bureau 2006f). However, less than 14 percent of the population possess a bachelor's degree (U.S. Census Bureau 2006d), whereas the national average is almost 25% (U.S. Census Bureau 2006f). This is interesting, considering that Clifton Forge hosts a popular community college that has operated for fifty years providing nearby affordable education.

As of 2008, unemployment in the county is 5.2% and in the city of Covington, 7.4% (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2008). Though largely rural, relatively few residents rely on agriculture. Manufacturing is the major form of employment in the community at around 32% of the labor force followed by health and social services (U.S. Census Bureau 2006d). With MeadWestvaco providing over two-thirds of all manufacturing jobs in Alleghany County, the area is over reliant on manufacturing, which is an economic domain that is declining nationally (Conley 2008). Alleghany County, like much of the United States, suffers a flight of capital and deindustrialization. The economic crisis of the 1970s and the 1980s led to a disintegration of relationships between labor and capital and the citizen and the state (Falk and Labao 2003). Consequences included a breakdown in employee bargaining power and decreased government support for citizen welfare. Further, the spatial division of labor created from the major industrial shift in non-metropolitan areas moved support services away from rural areas (McGranahan 2003). Industrial transformation and globalization imperil the rural competitive advantage in the United States. In America, many businesses are shifting from low-cost mass production to higher quality production. This alters rural communities as industry moves to cities with high human capital and factories leave the rural South. Yet, as industry moves out, service jobs, often considered to be less desirable, proportionately increase in rural communities (McGranahan 2003). The effects of national and global trends trickle into the mountains. As the U.S. Census Bureau shows, those who are not working for one of the major industries in Alleghany County are generally working the service sector (U.S. Census Bureau 2006d). As many as 44% of American rural inhabitants work service jobs (McGranahan 2003). Rural

industrial manufacturing is becoming increasingly unstable, endangering the community's sustainability.

The Historical Presence of Industry

The history of Alleghany County's industry and economy shows a clear dependence on a singular entity. Many of the other sectors employing residents are directly or indirectly related to the continued success of the paper mill in Covington. Also, due to location, small size, lack of human capital, and other reasons to be explored later, the community's ability to influence what industry operates in the area is minimal. Alleghany County has little choice but to depend on one industry, opening the door to possible exploitation of workers, the environment, and the community.

Pre-Industrial Alleghany County

Before industrialization began to influence Alleghany County's economy, the area depended greatly on agriculture. Morton (1923) reports that in 1840 there were 656 farmers. Poultry, corn, cereal, hay, potatoes, syrup, fruit were all major products in the early nineteenth century. Lumber, iron, and farm produce were transported on flatboats along several rivers flowing through Alleghany County. The early twentieth century saw 574 farms in all of Alleghany County, taking up over a third of the area. At that time, only a tenth of the county was improved (Morton 1923). The main agricultural crops of the 1920s were poultry, wheat, oats, corn, rye, buckwheat, potatoes, sugar, tobacco, dairy, orchard produce, and homemade goods. However, agriculture never took off as a major industry, largely due to the geographic difficulties with the county's mountainous topography. Not only was this an economic concern, but also a hassle for the community, as Clifton Forge had to import food stuffs:

Because of the broken character of the country around and the indifferent quality of much of the soil, the agricultural output within a six-mile radius is not enough to support more than a village. Some of the farm products consumed in the city are brought from beyond the eastern foot of North Mountain, a distance of about thirty miles (Morton 1923: 82).

Until the 1860s, Alleghany was largely agricultural. The railroad brought an increased population and increased interest in commerce and manufacturing, therefore depleting the need for and efficiency of agriculture in Alleghany County (Morton 1923). Clearly, with the onset of industrialization, agriculture was becoming less reliable and desirable for steady income. Morton explains the stress and competition felt by the agricultural community in the 1920s:

Here, as elsewhere, the rural neighborhoods tend to lose in population, notwithstanding the numerical growth of the county when considered as a whole. With the wages paid in the local industries the farmer cannot now compete, and all he can do is to mark time. But since there is everywhere a limit below which the agricultural population and the agricultural production cannot be permitted to fall, there will yet be a turn in the tide, and

with the assured advantage of a local market, the farming output of Alleghany is destined to be of more value than is the case now or hitherto. The local agriculture of tomorrow will be more intensive than now . . . (Morton 1923: 69-70)

Morton's prediction for an agricultural renaissance, of course, never came into being. As of 2000, only 157 (2.8%) of Alleghany County residents were involved in agriculture (U.S. Census Bureau 2006d).

As for other industry, the railroad boom of 1888-1890 allowed for several enterprises to launch in the county, but none proved permanent (Morton 1923). Some businesses did flourish briefly in first years of the twentieth-century. A silk business by the name of Southern Textile Co., for example, employed up to 200 women and girls. Deford Tannery employed 150 people, mostly African Americans. Today, much of the industry that propels the county offers low-tech and low-skill jobs or service jobs. Automotive Industries creates door panels, Acadia Polymers produces rubber products, CFW Information Services provides directory assistance, and Bacova Guild, LTD creates decorative home products. However, the largest industry that supports the area economy is MeadWestvaco, a paper mill located in Covington. Without this mill, it is unlikely that the county's economy could be sustained. And yet, Westvaco is only one of several major industries that have dominated the Alleghany County's economy through the years.

The Iron Industry

The iron industry proves to be one of the first major enterprises of the area within modern history. With as many as twenty iron furnaces in operation, this industry had a profound effect on the lives of Alleghany County citizens. The iron industry, which began to boom in the 1820s, remained the primary industry in Alleghany County for decades (Corron 1972). Alleghany County eventually became the capital of iron industry in Virginia. Inaccessibility and remoteness initially prevented any industrialization of the area, but road construction at the hands of slaves and prisoners allowed the iron industry to flourish. Prior to this road construction, the area depended heavily on a healthy river system for trade and accessibility. The iron industry actually continued to rely on the rivers for many years afterwards in the infancy of road transportation in the mountains.

The iron industry marked one of the first major industries in the area to strengthen the economy of the Alleghany County residents at the expense of the environment and worker safety. Environmental costs were certainly high in a time when environmental damage was of considerably less concern. The iron industry was far from frugal. Timber for furnaces had to be pulled in from farther and farther away as resources were quickly usurped. It took three tons of ore pulled from the mountainsides to yield only one ton of pig iron (Corron 1972). The rivers that were heavily relied upon for washing ore were also undoubtedly abused. Upon investigating the iron industry on the James River, Ann Woodlief speculated that, "The river must have literally boiled at their discharge pipes" (1985: 158). Air quality and the land around iron extraction sites were also imperiled. Ore was taken from open cuts and underground extraction and towering smokestacks belonging to ovens and furnaces across the county released near constant fume.

Yet, the industry certainly boosted the economy of the area and employed many people in the several furnaces, coal houses, bridge houses, bellows, and pot houses. Nearly one half of Appalachia was involved in the iron industry producing one fifth of the country's total iron in 1840 (Dunaway 1996). Additionally, Dunaway (1996) reports that nearly two-fifths of Appalachia's iron manufacturers were centrally arranged in mill towns which allowed for maximum exploitation of employees.

By 1880, Alleghany County's employed 2,000 people that created an output averaging 120 tons daily (Morton 1923). One of the major iron employers in the county, the Low Moor Iron Company, provided boarding, an employee club room for recreation, a Mason lodge, a church and Sunday school, and a company store for its 200-400 person workforce (Bagby 1880). Bagby notes: "The purpose of the Company is to provide amply for the mental and moral advancement of its artisans, clerk, and employees..." Yet, the early 1900's saw the death of iron industry in the Alleghany County area (Corron 1972). By the end of World War I, it had moved to the Great Lakes region, where iron ore was more accessible than it was in the mountainous terrain of western Virginia. Several furnaces and related buildings remain standing in Alleghany County today. These historic sites and town names like Clifton Forge, Longdale Furnace, and Iron Gate show an inextricable link with the iron industry of the 1800's.

The Railroad Industry

As the iron industry roared in Alleghany County, the railroad industry was picking up speed. The Chesapeake and Ohio Railway Company, colloquially known as the C&O Railroad, passed through Clifton Forge as part of a larger transcontinental plan. Falling short of this goal, the C&O did provide an important link between the rich Appalachian Mountains and the Ohio River. This railroad line immediately became crucial and profitable. Clifton Forge grew with the railroad and the industry fast became the community's essential economy as the iron industry began to wane into to the 1900's (Corron 1972). Clifton Forge held three divisions of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway Company with 24 tracks and one of the world's largest expansion bridges. Clifton Forge became not only a major railroad junction, but an important division point of the southeast (Morton 1923). The town's railroad hub also became the major maintenance facility for steam locomotives for the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad (Town of Clifton Forge 2004a).

During the railroad's boom, populations along the line increased by almost 60 percent (Eller 1982). In Clifton Forge, at least 2000 persons were employed by the industry (Town of Clifton Forge 2004a). Many jobs were created, but initially, Corron (1972) points out that pay was minimal: "... it is a cinch that working on the railroads in those days was one of the ways to keep from getting rich." Railroad wages in the mid-nineteenth century ranged from twenty to seventy-five dollars per month out of a total payroll of about 900 dollars which mostly went to non-employee expenses. Working conditions were hardly better than the pay. Hours were long and the working environment was extremely hazardous. Each day proved a worker's possible last: "When a man kissed his wife good-by to go on a run, he had about three out of four chances that he would return without being in a wreck" (Corron 1972).

Today, the impact of the railroad industry is quietly disappearing. The advent of the diesel engine in the early 1950s pushed the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad, then the mainstay of Allegheny County's railroad industry, to West Virginia (Town of Clifton Forge 2004a). The company took countless jobs with it. The downfall of the railroad was poignantly expressed during a school field trip to the railroad historical society in Clifton Forge. When welcoming the children, the tour guide asked students to raise their hands if they had a grandparent involved with the railroads. In response, almost the entire group raised a hand. When asked who had parents involved with the railroad, only one child raised a hand.

The Pulp and Paper Industry

Presently, Allegheny residents are largely dependent for jobs on the MeadWestvaco paper mill, commonly known as Westvaco in Covington. The company has manufacturing locations across the southeastern United States and sales locations globally. At the time of Morton's writing, MeadWestvaco (then known as the West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company) was the epitome of industrial manufacturing (1923). Even as the railroad continued to flourish in Clifton Forge, most of Covington's residents were employed by the mill. The mill sits on both sides of the major river in Covington, the Jackson, and began active operations in 1900. By the 1920s, the West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company mill in Covington was one of the world's most complete mills of its kind (Morton 1923).

Rich with timber, minerals, and rivers, Covington appealed to Westvaco as a profitable location. The local economy exploded as the paper mill provided hundreds of jobs and purchased much of the timber locally. The company flourished in wartime and floated through the Depression without much hindrance. MeadWestvaco's Covington factory was the company's largest in terms of employment and production. By 1940, Westvaco was within the nation's top ten pulp and paper producers (Zieger 1982).

In this early part of the century, the mill ate an enormous amount of raw materials in order to produce 120 tons of paper daily. Morton reports that the mill consumed 200 cords of wood, 300 tons of coal, 80 tons of pyrites, 15,000 barrels of lime, and 10 tons of bleaching powder each day (1923). He also describes excellent wages and affordable housing for employees. Wages were higher than the national average for other manufacturing jobs and they were also relatively stable (Zieger 1982). Twelve hundred to 1500 persons were employed regularly in the 1920s, and until the 1930s, there was no labor union. Morton reports an annual payroll of 2 million dollars, an input of 1.1 million dollars into the local railroad industry in freight charges, and 95,000 dollars in taxes, making it the highest paying industry in the state at the time (1923). By 1920, the paper industry nearly doubled Covington's population from 3,000 to 5,600. By 1950, the population reached 13,000 (Zieger 1982).

MeadWestvaco and the Environment

Today, with over 1,400 employees, the mill is the largest employer in Allegheny County (Allegheny Highlands Economic Development Corporation [AHEDC] 2005c) and provides two thirds of all manufacturing jobs in the county (Conley 2008). Westvaco is also the largest

taxpayer in the county. Thereby, the community finds itself heavily reliant upon the success of the industry. However, dependence upon a single business is dangerous. Dependence upon a single business with an uncertain future is even more jeopardous. Westvaco had been operated by the Luke family since its founding. In 2002, the Mead Paper Company merged with Westvaco, forming today's MeadWestvaco (MeadWestvaco 2008a). John A. Luke, Jr., who was president of Westvaco at the time of the merger, became a figurehead as Chief Executive Officer. The switch from a family owned business and an ever-growing concern with globalization will likely create important emerging issues.

Environmental Degradation and the Gathright Dam

MeadWestvaco's environmental degradation in Allegheny County is unmistakable. For over a century, the paper mill has emitted pollution into the air, water, and land. Sulfurous clouds from the stacks, brown foaming water, and clear-cut forests are clearly visible to all residents. And yet, one of the most visible marks of the paper mill's influence on Allegheny County's environment is the Gathright Dam.

When the river was low, pollution stagnated; when the river was high, floods threatened. Beginning in the 1920s, plans were underway to dam the Jackson. Initiated by a Virginia electricity company, a timber broker purchased large tracts for the company in anticipation of construction. However, plans were abandoned during the Depression and the large tract of land became a valuable wildlife preserve. After the Second World War, the Army Corps of Engineers returned to the dam project. The lake to be created was promoted as a tourist attraction and revenue generator. However, the dam's practicality came into serious question and costs mounted. Millions of extra dollars were needed to build in the unstable rock facing of the dam site in Kincaid Gorge, quadrupling the authorized cost that was initially estimated (Schamber 1975). Increased tourism was criticized as impossible if waters were to be regulated, as regulated water meant unfavorable water levels for recreation. Further, at least one major tributary to the Jackson River remained downstream of the dam site, negating the benefits of flood regulation. Opponents to the dam construction criticized that the dam was little more than a subsidy to private industry. The EPA even suggested that Westvaco reimburse the government for the substantial costs of water quality and flood benefits that would directly benefit the company (EPA 1972, Swift 2001: 34). Eventually, the EPA took the issue to court. They were soon joined by other environmental organizations.

Despite reports in influential trade magazines such as the *Engineering News Record*, which denounced Gathright's construction as a "dam builder's nightmare," impossibly cave-riddled gorge walls, weak economic justifications, and court battles, the Gathright Dam was completed. The landscape was forever changed. Lake Moomaw filled the valley and destroyed the scenic gorge. Fish and wildlife populations suffered from habitat loss and changing water temperatures and quality.

Environmental Activism

While generally small and sporadic, some activist groups concerned with environmental protection or equity have spawned in Alleghany County. In the 1960s, a group of about 1400 members known as the Alleghany Crusade for Clean Air Inc. regularly agitated local and state governments (Coffey 1969). A decade later, the Gathright Dam controversy would generate another local environmental group: the Jackson-Gathright Defense Fund (Schamber 1975). Local chapters of the Izaak Walton League of America (an environmental defense group) were also vocal in their opposition to the dam (Taylor 1964). However, environmental activism in Alleghany County has been loosely organized, small, powerless, and short-lived. The overall insignificance of their impact makes the groups too irrelevant for further consideration. Today, the only major local group that remains active in Alleghany County is the Cowpasture River Preservation Association (CRPA) which encompasses several counties. The Cowpasture River is a largely unaffected river that merges with the Jackson River just outside of Clifton Forge, creating the James River. Little to no industry impacts the Cowpasture as it flows through a sparsely populated section of the county. Activism for a river that is largely left alone by powerful industry poses few risks for residents and might explain why a similar group is not present to speak for the neighboring Jackson River. However, these groups of yesterday and today do express a definite concern in Alleghany County for environmental equity and sustainability. An analysis of organized labor in the county will also show that Alleghany residents are indeed able to stand up for their rights as well.

MeadWestvaco and Unionism

Organized labor groups have had a difficult presence in Covington's MeadWestvaco. It took approximately two decades for the union to successfully take hold with the company. Even so, tension continued through the latter half of the twentieth century and continues to this day. As recently as 1978, mill employees went on strike. In 2008, workers even formed their own independent union. Hence, there has been a good amount of union activity in Alleghany County. However, none of this organization addresses the issue of environmental degradation. Surveying the history of unionization with MeadWestvaco and MeadWestvaco's dealings with labor organization can provide insight to what workers want, employee power, and MeadWestvaco control.

Table 2.1 Timeline of Relevant Events in Alleghany County, VA

Timeline of Relevant Events in Alleghany County, VA

- 1899 WVPP & Co. opens factory in Alleghany County, VA
 - 1933 Labor organization begins
-

-
- 1952 First functioning union forms
 - 1967 Construction of Gathright Dam begins
 - 1972 Dam construction put on hold
 - 1978 Dam completed & Westvaco strike (unrelated)
 - 2002 Mead and Westvaco merger
 - 2006-2008 Covington Paperworkers Union forms, rejecting USW
-

Chapter 3: Review of the Literature

Appalachia

When seeking to understand quiescence in Alleghany County, Virginia, it is first necessary to recognize that this community is part of the larger Appalachian region. As an Appalachian community, Alleghany County is host to many characteristics often attributed to the mountains. Many of these characteristics have been blamed for continued exploitation in Appalachia. I will explore a few of the major Appalachian attributes to uncover some contributing variables pertinent to what keeps Alleghany County quiescent in the face of severe environmental degradation.

In an area lacking formal educational institutions (education was thought to be the responsibility of the individual rather than the state), the people were further hindered politically, socially, and economically as industrialization took hold (McLaurin 1971: 20). Poverty, welfare, and biased local politics would ensure workers remained powerless and companies remained in control. Appalachian peoples were seen as an uneducated docile folk, poverty stricken, and easily absorbed into the company's paternalistic system (Pope 1942, McLaurin 1971). Eller explains:

Cast in this static role, mountain people have thus rarely appeared as conscious actors on the stage of American history, and almost never on center stage. They are acknowledged to exist somewhere in the background, as subjects to be acted upon, but not as people participating in the historical drama itself (1982: xvii)

In reality, those who controlled jobs also controlled and exploited the political system. Further, Appalachian peoples were indeed conscious actors. Yet this image of docility and obedience persists to this day. It might in turn shape how Appalachian people see themselves and influence action or inaction: "Where a positive self-image is not portrayed for a particular

group, that group may develop a sense of inadequacy about itself” (Eller 1982: 221). This image might also shape how the company sees the workers, further justifying an exploitative style of management and unequal power. This stereotype effectively places blame on the worker, rather than the forces creating the situation (Eller 1982, Gaventa 1980). Negative stereotypes, poverty, inequality, and inaction are not unrelated (Gaventa 1980). Quiescence will surely continue so long as powerlessness persists.

The Importance of Place and Geography

The stereotyped character of the mountain people is often dissected in the search for understanding powerlessness. As a region where place, people and history converge, some Appalachian people have maintained a strong connection to the land: “Southerners’ attachment to home—their sense of place—is perhaps the hallmark of their regional identity” (Smith 1990: 153). Place identity, a social group identity based on land and community (Prochansky 1983), is often used to describe this powerful connection in Appalachia. Place contributes to personal identity, self-worth, culture, and economy for the mountain peoples (Eller 1982). It also promotes intergenerational continuity in place. The importance of place in Appalachia should not be understated as it certainly impacts decision-making, action, and lack thereof.

Further, the physical geography of Appalachia intensifies this intangible connection to the land. Some areas of Appalachia, as with Alleghany County, are separated and isolated by the geography of this land. Alleghany in particular is relatively homogeneous in race, language, and culture. Alleghany remains largely white and working-class. Terrain and distance created a people that functioned through familial ties and distinct individualism. It is possible, then, that when the community identity has become substantially intertwined with the land that this connection could affect quiescence. A sincere tie to place and land could mean that residents would be unwilling to leave an affected area no matter the damage and inequality involved. However, a tie to place might also inspire those connected with the area to mobilize and take action (Fisher 1993).

Class and Poverty

Although Appalachia is now infamously and predominantly lower class, social stratification has been argued by some to be prominent in the mountains prior to industrialization (Dunaway 1996). Others say land was abundant then, and wealth was generally equally distributed (Gaventa 1980). Regardless of the pre-industrial distribution of the land, it began to slip out of Appalachian ownership as industrialization loomed on the horizon. In time, as the mountain land was gradually bought up by parties that lived outside of the region, these new managers became the new elite. Absentee owners, with no duty to or understanding of Appalachian needs, traditions, or values, would become problematic as the area modernized.

Industrialization and its effect on the economy further developed class formation. Three major classes emerged as land was sold to absentees and industry boomed. The highest class

consisted of the external elite, local mill owners, and other professionals who shared the same interests as company managers. Below this, there were the farmers, who persisted in working the land as they had before industrialization. Finally, there were mill hands, coal miners, and industrial workers who had become entirely severed from the land and wholly dependent upon the factory. Company employees, who lack the independence of the elites and farmers, found themselves on the bottom rung of this new social ladder (Pope 1942, Gaventa 1980). Company towns would come to strengthen the class differences, as they effectively isolated workers geographically and socially from the other classes (Pope 1942). Workers were literally often living on the “other side of the tracks,” while the elite company managers were many times living in “the big house on the hill.” Separation undoubtedly increased power for some and decreased it for others. Overcoming class, with its accompanying attitudes and power dynamics, would certainly be a major hurdle in any materialization of organization or action.

Appalachia, abundant with natural resources, is a rich region. Yet, its people are poor. Appalachia is often compared to a colonized third world country, wherein the people and land are exploited by absentee owners and the profits leave the area without benefitting the inhabitants. Appalachia has lagged in development and public institutions are lacking (Glen 1970 and Gaventa 1980). Even after the infiltration of modernization and the increased governmental policy aimed at aiding development, the area remains behind. Gaventa summarizes exploitation faced by generally powerless Appalachians: “They are not ‘on the outside looking in,’ but very much on the inside, at the bottom, looking up at the nation’s inequalities” (Gaventa 1980: 129). Appalachia’s poverty, underdevelopment, exploitation, and inability to reabsorb reaped wealth add to the difficulty of rebelling against those rich and in power.

Several structural and cultural Appalachian characteristics, then, might be expected to discourage rebellion. Fisher summarizes: “Collective resistance was further undermined by cultural traditions that stressed individualism, nurtured racial prejudice, and dictated passivity and acquiescence for women, and by the strength of local organizations, illiteracy, and poor transportation and communication systems” (1993:3-4). Regional culture, too, then, influences the consciousness and reactions of the community. Nonetheless, there has been extensive resistance in the region.

The Appalachian Industrial Experience

The Importance of History

When exploring environmental inequality, history continues to have a constant influence. It is important to understand the difficult situations that the Appalachian working-class has faced in the past, continues to face today, and why. History can include past events and circumstances, accumulated culture, and continuing tradition. A community’s history reveals important information about the development of present issues of environmental justice (Callewaert 2002, Salstrom 1994). Callewaert adds that understanding the mechanisms behind the inequality is crucial: “. . . in order to fully understand the formation of environmental

inequality one must redefine environmental inequality as a multi-dimensional socio-historical process rather than simply viewing it as a discrete event” (2002: 263). Again, it is essential to avoid simplifying the situation and ignoring the history of the community. Alleghany County certainly has a history of environmental injustice and there are many other factors presently fueling the situation. Attention should be paid to Alleghany County’s present, but also to the past that helped create that present.

What prevents resistance in the face of so much inequality in Alleghany County’s past and present? Instead of accepting that the lack of challenge stems from apathy or ignorance, it might be the case that challenges might be prevented from surfacing in the first place by entrenched power structures. Such power barriers need to be identified to explain a lack of challenge. In this regard, the history of the community and its industrialization should be considered.

Industrialization

Pre-industrial Appalachian and Piedmont regions relied quite heavily on agriculture as the primary source of income (Hall 1987). With the onset of industrialization, agriculture in mountains declined drastically overall and more so in areas of economic growth (Eller 1982). Agrarian living entailed a free and independent existence, and losing the farms would become a heavy weight on new factory workers (McLaurin 1971). The companies’ land ownership and other paternalistic controls prevented the workers from fulfilling their dreams of returning to the farm. When compared to the dependable pay found in the company towns, the unpredictability of the farm was less appealing. The company offered stability. In addition to this, Appalachian people lost more and more land to absentee owners with the onset of industrialization.

Industrialization is a dominant factor in the creation of environmental and social inequality present in Appalachia. Most contemporary power structures were created or entrenched during this period. Railroads came to the mountains, and the train, a symbol of the new order, new technology, progress, and civilization, brought new developments into Appalachia. The railroads opened up a previously isolated area, exposing the vast natural resources to exploitative commerce and ending what some analysts believe was the self-sufficiency and independence of Appalachian peoples (Gaventa 1980). Social leaders in the era welcomed industrialization, not only for personal profit, but in hopes of stimulating commercial and industrial growth. Churches also played a hand in promoting and accelerated incoming industry, likening it to religious idealism (Eller 1942, Hall 1987). Internal development, however, did not dictate development in Appalachia so much as the larger national economic trends (Dunaway 1996). Industrialization undermined the cooperative and familial social structure in the mountains (Hall 1987). Change came quickly without the benefit of a slowly evolving restructuring (Dunaway 1996). Values such as a common purpose, opportunity, and progress disguised inequalities and helped perpetuate power systems.

Southerners were separated from the means of production on farms and transformed into wage-earning factory workers. As a peripheral area of America’s modernization core, Appalachia experienced a short spurt in development followed by the lasting consequences of unequal power structures, dependency, and absentee ownership (Gaventa 1980). The peripheral

location of Appalachia has also led many to liken it to a third world country as the people and natural resources of Appalachia were routinely exploited by those living and profiting outside the area. Industrialization financially benefitted outsiders who utilized the land and labor of the Appalachian people. Appalachians were never fully incorporated into the processes of capitalism: independent production and full transition into the proletarian worker did not occur. The mountaineers would never own the means of production or reap equal remuneration for their labor (Dunaway 1996). For mountain people, industrialization created a dependence on the new market systems and powerlessness in decision-making venues. With the end of the boom created by the First World War, tariff policies, and foreign competition, the prowess of textile companies and other major employers of Appalachian factory workers waned. Slow to have experienced industrialization and never having experienced the full benefits, Appalachia lagged behind the progress of larger America (Dunaway 1996).

Absentee Ownership

A major consequence of industrialization in the South was the transference of land to absentee owners. Railroads opened up the area and local elites promoted sales to outsiders. Some mountaineers sold off land voluntarily. Other families lost land with negotiations that favored the outsiders. Those who refused to sell were often victim to shortcomings in record-keeping, the land buyers' greater knowledge of litigation, and other illicit or unjust measures (Eller 1982, Gaventa 1980). There was also a general belief that the land was plentiful and ownership was assumed to follow common use in the community (Eller 1982). The true value of the land and resources was not fully comprehended by most and the huge changes that would take place as absentee owners grabbed up land could not have been predicted.

Former landowners were uprooted from ancestral land, a devastating blow to the importance many Appalachians put on place. When Southerners lost ownership to the land, they lost power and control of the world around them. Resources and decisions were now controlled by absentee owners that lived miles away. Appalachians were now bound to the national economy of industrial capitalism. Human and land resources were expended and profits thereof were exported to absentee owners. The nearly complete ownership of the land by outsiders and local elites and landowners was shielded from Southerners, which helped perpetuate the paternalist relationship. Workers were led to believe that company owners shared the same local interests and they were together one single family unit (Pope 1942). Loss of land ownership was believed by the workers to be due to past ignorance or shortcomings rather than exploitation (Gaventa 1980). Some workers internalized their powerlessness as deserved or natural. There continues to be a deep connection between Appalachians and their land though much control over it has since been usurped.

Theoretical Overview

Environmental sociology involves the study of interactions between the physical environment and humans (Dunlap 1979). It is a relatively new sociological area fueled by the growing awareness of the relationship between human activity and the environment (Laska

1993). The environment includes places where living, working, and playing take place (Lee 2002). Lee (2002: 142) adds that our environment can be natural, built, social, and cultural or spiritual. Explanations for environmental problems can be traced to two major theoretical models: ecological and political economic. However, environmental sociological theory draws on many disciplines. As Laska points out, allegiance to a specialty is less important than the sociological core (1993). Aside from the varying specializations in environmental sociology, there are several discourses. The justice discourse focuses on the right of every human to live and work in a healthy environment. For the purpose of this study, I will focus on environmental justice and specifically the social study of environmental inequality.

Environmental justice is the major focus of this research since residents of Alleghany County live with the second biggest polluter in Virginia, and thus live in an environment that is comparatively less healthy. Environmental justice theory is a relatively new paradigm that has emerged as a conglomerate of previous theories (Taylor 2000, Lee 2002). But as Taylor (2000) explains, the environmental justice paradigm is the first to link environment with race, class, gender, and social justice concerns in an explicit framework. It is an area that covers many issues and can be very complex (Pellow 2000). The environmental justice perspective focuses on distributive justice and corrective or commutative justice. This discourse is concerned with ecological principles, environmental rights, autonomy and self determination, corporate community relations, policy, politics, and economic processes, and social movement building (Taylor 2000). Environmental justice represents a desire for healthy, livable, sustainable communities (Lee 2002).

Environmental Inequality

The sociological study of environmental injustice often focuses on environmental inequality. Pellow (2000) defines environmental inequality as a focus on broader dimensions of the intersection between environmental quality and social hierarchies: “Environmental inequality addresses more structural questions that focus on social inequality (the unequal distribution of power and resources in society) and environmental burdens” (Pellow 2000: 582). Environmental inequality exists when a particular social group is targeted by or experiences unequally any form of environmental hazard. Previous research using this approach has shown that the working poor are extremely susceptible to a disproportionate burden of environmental hazards and externalities (Hannigan 2006). Appalachia is rife with such problems. Industrialization brought inequalities upon the Appalachian working-class that continue today.

When exploring environmental inequality, it is important to avoid oversimplifying. A good deal of research focuses on the existence of unequal outcomes without explaining how they come to be (Pellow 2000, Callewaert 2002). Investigating the socio-historical process, the complexities of multiple stakeholder groups, and the life-cycle of hazardous consumption and production are all crucial to properly researching environmental inequality (Pellow 2000). I will be exploring the history of Alleghany County and also the stakes and stake-holders relevant to my research questions. I will also explain the dangers of relying on a single industry that is severely detrimental to the environment. Pellow emphasizes that environmental inequality is a

process. When environmental inequality is researched in this manner, the workings of power in society can be uncovered. Relying on basic explanations (such as one group having another group do something they otherwise would not do, or one group controlling the decision-making and hence having power over the group excluded from the decision making) can hide these complex power structures. An in-depth approach will identify synergies between issues (Lee 2002, Callewaert 2002, Gaventa 1980).

Environmental Inequality in Appalachia

Environmental degradation is an unfortunate trademark of Appalachian economy. People in this region have always had a tie to the land, and this essential connection sets the stage for exploitation as the land was often the major resource available. In a generally isolated geographic location, resulting conditions required a reliance on the land to live. Trade in and out of the region was arduous and difficult, so residents became reliant on the farm, trees, and rivers to make a living. Before industrialization hit Appalachia, the environment was initially altered by Native Americans and settlers who hunted wildlife for fur to near extinction, burned forests to attract game, and overharvested herbs (Dunaway 1996). Timbering, at least, was generally selective: only choice trees in easily accessed locations were downed (Eller 1982). People were altering the land, but on a relatively small scale.

Industrialization, however, made much of the environment outright dangerous (Dunaway 1996). Aside from the massive consumption of natural resources by iron furnaces, timbering companies, and railroads, the environment was negatively impacted by forest destruction, mill dams, canals, channeling, and other alterations which caused flooding. Wildlife populations plummeted, soil was exhausted, water was polluted, and the overall ecological balance was disrupted.

Today, the continued lack of power, diversified economic alternatives, education, and money means Appalachian people must still rely on the land to support their economy. The significant difference between preindustrial Appalachia and industrialized Appalachia is that land is now mainly in the hands of absentee owners. Agriculture, timber, energy, and even recreation—all things that can be profitably taken from the land—have come under corporate control (Gaventa 1980). The environment is linked to the transition into capitalism (Dunaway 1996). This new economy relies on the commoditization of land and the restructuring of land ownership. Land destruction could appear excusable, as it provides the basis for agricultural and industrial development. Yet, as the economy changed, land transformed into a common marketable product. Appalachia's reliance on the land now seems to be feeding the requirement to exploit the land, and vice versa. As such, it will be difficult to create a switch to a more sustainable and less environmentally damaging economy. Appalachians cannot be expected to easily shake their exploitation of the land when this is the only means of sustaining economy.

Although some residents mourn the loss of land and suffer the resultant poverty and pollution, this Appalachian discontent is often experienced on an individual level (Eller 1982). Many communities are so influenced by the company's power that even a conscious awareness of this affront fails to materialize. Further, despite the environmental movement that began in the late 1960s and created an ideological foundation that defined and legitimized environmental

grievances (Fisher 1993), collective action remains uncommon in many pockets of the mountains.

Power Relations in Appalachia

The United States is a democracy, so, theoretically, oppressed Appalachians have a right to voice their concerns. However, democracy does not always exist as a popular rule: it can be undermined by those wielding unequal control. The uprooting of communities, the hierarchical nature of capitalism, and the concentration of wealth and power all create barriers to challenge and resistance. The result is powerlessness, cynicism, and neglected democratic aptitude that is both believed and real (Gaventa 1980). Power and quiescence are linked.

Power is an essential component for understanding acquiescence. Powerlessness cannot be explored without understanding the power controls that create it. Understanding environmental inequality requires an understanding of disparities in power. Accounting for the degree of unbalanced power is particularly useful when seeking to explain why victims so often take an apathetic or ignorant stance. Gaventa (1980) finds that the unequal balance of power in areas of environmental inequality can create a situation that makes its perpetuation nearly unstoppable. In areas where environmental inequality is particularly beneficial to some and detrimental to others, it seems to be the case that power is almost completely controlled by those receiving the benefits. Gaventa (1980) adds that this power can be so complete that issues involving environmental inequality can be effectively stifled. Often, the imbalance of power even has the affect of preventing a basic awareness of inequality or injustice.

Power manifests itself subtly in Appalachia and is multidimensional. The group in power can re-form values, wants, and needs in the powerless group to ensure unquestioned obedience. That group creates choices available to the powerless group, so that any independence the powerless exert is actually dependent upon the powerful group's interest in self-preservation and benefit. In this study, the group in power is the MeadWestvaco mill and the powerless group is the mill employees and, more generally, residents of Alleghany County community. Paternalism and economic coercion are two strategies of power. Both techniques serve to control employees and maintain powerlessness. Control can extend over the local elite, whose livelihoods also depend upon the company. Local politics, media, and social institutions, are sometimes manipulated by the group in power. According to Gaventa (1980), powerlessness is instilled in those without the power. Quiescence is therefore maintained. Issues cannot be voiced unless the company allows venue for that voice or allows for the voice to be conceptualized in the first place. Gaventa (1980) summarizes: "Power serves to create power. Powerlessness serves to re-enforce powerlessness." The company will exert effort to protect or increase power, while powerlessness feeds company control and perpetuates further powerlessness.

Hence, this relationship of power and powerlessness is self-sustaining. Groups with the power sustain it through active decision making, through the conscious abstaining of decision making, and the controlled allowance of decision making opportunities to those lacking the power. Group power is often so multidimensional that should one arm of power fail, others are in place to reinforce powerlessness in workers until power is fully restored (Gaventa 1980). Thus, communities are likened to colonies as they are owned and exploited by outside power holders. "Colonized" Appalachians, believing they had taken part in the decision making, adopt

the new order, adopt the wants and values created by the company for the company, and believe the misconception of shared interests and familial bonds. A colonized Appalachia is consequently dependent upon the colonizer.

Dimensions of Power

Gaventa understands power and powerlessness to exist as three dimensions which can stand independently and overlap. These dimensions are identified by “. . . specifying the means through which power influences, shapes or determines conceptions of the necessities, possibilities, and strategies of challenge in situations of latent conflict” (1980: 15). The first dimension allows for one group to prevail in decision making, the second dimension allows for the one group to develop barriers to certain participants and issues, and the third dimension safeguards power relationships as they are.

The first dimension of power is apparent when one party can cause another party to do something it would otherwise not do. This dimension is concerned with who participates in the decision making and who ultimately gains and loses (Gaventa 1980: 5). Power is observable and straightforward. It is measured by who prevails during conflict resolution. Relying on this dimension alone is problematic in that quiescence can be attributed to apathy, political inefficacy, or other shortcomings of the powerless. The complex and often hidden reasons behind maintained powerlessness go unexplored.

Within the second dimension, the decision making is not only controlled and maintained by the party with power, but that party is also understood to covertly exclude participants and issues (Gaventa 1980: 9). Conflict is prevented from arising and persons and groups from acting. Those with power control the agenda. Inaction can be tied to powerlessness as barriers are created to block the expression of grievances. Wielding a set of predominant beliefs and values, the second dimension of power can use force, a threat of sanction, an invocation of norms, and the creation of new barriers to maintain power and prevent rebellion. Less observable tactics, such as institutional inaction and an assumption of hopeless powerlessness, also work to maintain the power relationship.

Ultimately, however, Gaventa promotes the understanding of the third dimension of power as the most complete approach. This dimension focuses on power exercised through influencing, shaping, and determining the wants of those under power. This is often done in the absence of observable conflict and through the blocking of potential issues (Gaventa 1980: 12). Emerging from a combined sense of powerlessness experienced within the first and second dimensions of power, powerlessness can become a reaction to constant defeat and an internalization and socialization of the dominant values. Should rebellion emerge, the third dimension of power explains that resistance is particularly vulnerable to the influence of power. Issues remain latent or unrecognized (Gaventa 1980: 19). All three dimensions of power interrelate and reinforce one another and together create a system that makes dissent or even conception of change nearly impossible.

Quiescence

Power, then, can be wielded to create and perpetuate inequality. How does power influence employees to obey unquestioningly? Several one-dimensional explanations have surfaced involving substandard education, poverty, isolation, economic insecurity, and the like. Many of these situations may have a role to play.

A lack of education in the South is a common characteristic for communities involved in unequal relationships with the main industry (McLaurin 1971). In Alleghany, the working-class employees of Westvaco are from a community that has significantly low numbers of college enrollment and is also relatively isolated. Likewise, low-tech industries are disproportionately rural, and low education levels in these areas are likely to be the result, as there is little encouragement for education when low skill jobs are readily available (England and Brown 2003). A lack of skills adds to a vulnerability to industry's control (McLaurin 1971). Hence, a populace of low skill, education, and earning power has been incorporated into the industrialization of a modernized South.

Yet, inaction is not comprehensive. Appalachia is not immune to worker rebellion and Alleghany County is no exception. Westvaco was unable to shield its employees from the massive national movements that favored workers' rights in the early part of the 20th century (Zieger 1982). Westvaco employees organized over a two-decade period in the thirties and forties for more stable wages and employment (Zieger 1982). This intense fight for unionization shows that Alleghany County is not far enough removed from the social and economic changes of the post war era to prevent agitation for workers' rights. However, little action has been taken in the following years regarding the environmental damage inflicted by the company. The workers' propensity for action debunks the importance of low education and skills and presses us to look further to understand what is perpetuating the perceived apathetic attitude to environmental inequality that currently plagues the community. I will explore the possibility that, in addition to the reasons above, the characteristics of paternalism and economic coercion may also be in Alleghany County.

Lack of education, poverty, and isolation are not unique to Alleghany County. What else is working to prevent present day rebellion against environmental inequality? Surely as the employees live, work, and recreate in the community that has been fouled by constant billowing sulfur clouds, toxic chemicals, and deforestation, there must be an appreciation for the right to a healthy environment. Reasons for the absence of rebellion are not straight forward, but rather are complex and generally hidden. I will explore the possibility that, in addition to the reasons above, the characteristics of paternalism and economic coercion may also be present in Alleghany County.

Paternalism

While there are many factors that contribute to quiescence, an important strategy of power that works to maintain this quiescence in mill communities is paternalism. Paternalism appears to surface as a means of ensuring institutional inertia through self-protecting values (Gaventa 1980). Industries exhibiting a paternalistic relationship with the host populace are

able to prevent disquiet over issues such as environmental inequality. Such a relationship exists when the industry exchanges protection or benefits for dependable labor (Alston and Ferrie 1999). Alston and Ferrie further define paternalism as a “. . . relationship involving employer provision of a wide range of goods and services in exchange for loyal service – a long-term commitment to an employer that transcends the textbook impersonal exchange of labor services for cash- and a measure of deference” (1999:13). This idea of deference is key to the paternalist relationship. Deference is particularly useful in preventing insurgency among employees. This sense of loyalty and obedience can be strong enough to prevent issues from even being recognized by employees.

Paternalism had its beginnings in the south with the dichotomy between plantation owner and slave. The post-bellum crop lien system reestablished this system when it pitted impoverished and indebted sharecroppers against powerful landlords and bankers (McLaurin 1971). This historical pattern created a workforce easily manipulated by industrial capitalists. However, it was not always seen as exploitation by slaves and sharecroppers, but rather a win-win relationship between dutiful worker and benevolent employer.

Paternalism has traditionally been perceived by employers and, in some cases, employees as a bargain made between two rational parties (Alston & Ferrie 1999). Powerful patrons are thought to shield workers from the adverse economic and social conditions that made it difficult for the lower classes to subsist. It is true that factories in the South offered freedom from the constant labor of the farm with its oftentimes unpredictable and unreliable returns (McLaurin 1971). However, paternalism ultimately favors the employer, who holds the upper hand. The thoroughness of paternalism goes so far as to prevent any such recognition of an unequal deal. Inevitably, efficient, constant, and profit-maximizing production is the main goal of the company rather than altruistic benevolence and protection (Pope 1942).

The ideology of paternalism, like so many other unequal institutions, has been seen as a natural relationship (Eller 1982). Laissez-faire economics reigned: what the company owner obtained was what he had rightly earned (McLaurin 1971). Social Darwinism claimed that company owners and managers worked for and deserved their position on top. Workers, lacking this capability, were therefore inferior and wholly dependent upon the charity of the owner. By allowing the worker to labor in the factories, the owner did a justice to the workers by instilling values, improving quality of life, and providing income (Hall 1987)

The Reconstruction of the South has also been used to explain the necessity of paternalistic relations (McLaurin 1971). It was not only the job of the owner to shield and protect the worker, it was also his job to do whatever necessary to bring the South up by the bootstraps by providing jobs and stimulating the economy (Hall 1987). He was doing well by his workers, he was doing well by his community, and he was doing well by his nation. He was doing what he was born with the superiority to accomplish. These justifications of individual superiority, inevitability, and natural consequence made paternalism difficult to penetrate. Although paternalism had its roots in the institutions of slavery and sharecropping, as textile mills began to take over the Piedmont, the normalized paternalistic system continued and became the favored management style of mill owners.

The Southern Cotton Textile Industry

A well researched illustration of paternalism is found in the cotton mill communities in the industrializing South. The cotton textile industry dominated the Piedmont areas of Virginia, the Carolinas, Alabama, and Georgia from the years following the Civil War until well into the 20th century, and this boom pushed Southerners into a modern industrial capitalist economy (Hall 1987). In the hard times of the post-bellum south, many turned to the mills to escape the downfalls of the traditional farm (McLaurin 1971). Trapped in the crop-lien system, many farmers welcomed the new mill system.

Yet, the mill system was not without its own problems. Conditions in the mill towns that housed workers were notoriously cramped and unsanitary. Conditions inside the mills and factories were understandably worse. Farm hours applied in the mills, as employees were expected to work from sunup to sunset (McLaurin 1971). Southern workers leaving their farms for the factories were accustomed to long work hours but were not prepared for the strict and encompassing schedule of mill work. Injuries and illness, both acute and chronic, were typical in mills as laborers handled dangerous chemicals and machinery, breathed in massive amounts of dust and fumes, and endured high levels of physical stress. Child labor and sexist policies were also standard for mill operations (Hall 1987). Wages were unstable and rarely liberal. Mill workers in New England made about two times that of their Southern counterparts (McLaurin 1971: 28). Supervision was hierarchical and all-encompassing. Every aspect of the worker's home and work life, family, and community was closely controlled.

Once absorbed into the mill system, it was difficult for the worker to break away. Unable to see any alternative, most employees would accept the circumstances (McLaurin 1971). Communities dominated by cotton industry were similar to that of a family unit (Hall 1987, McLaurin 1971). The industry took on a father like role and the workers and community became the children. The employer was the protector and provider. In return, the company expected obedience. Mill hands, manipulated to believe that the company knows what is best, went so far as to express gratitude towards the company. There was a feeling of trust and an obligation to behave well. At the root of this idea of family, however, there is a concern for the continuance of inequality. As we have seen, the family-like relationship between employer and community is a method for maintaining the status quo, sustaining the unequal relationship, and repressing those filling the dependent roles.

By the turn of the century almost all Southern textile families lived in towns owned and operated by their employers (Hall 1987). The mill town was an efficient tool to maintain a paternalistic relationship between mill bosses and mill hands. Through this system, the company could hold a near complete control over the workers (McLaurin 1971). This included where they lived, shopped, played, and worshiped. Mill towns created an essential stability and obedience (Eller 1982).

Initially, these towns emerged out of the company's economic interests in the avoidance of city taxation, the housing of thousands of incoming employees, and the maximum exploitation and control of these workers in the typically isolated locations of mills (McLaurin 1971, Dunaway 1996, Pope 1942). Centered on the mill, towns were typically shoddily or hastily built and provided few luxuries. Many times, homes were small and crowded: sanitization was often

an issue (McLaurin 1971).

By containing workers in a mill-owned village, the company was able to access all members of the family and create a self-perpetuating workforce (Hall 1987: 129). Ultimately, by controlling the living conditions of the workers, the company's ownership of the mill towns became a powerful means of curbing rebellion (Gaventa 1980). Organizing and union activity were many times squelched with the threat of eviction or closing of the company store (McLaurin 1971). This further crippled any organizational desire or success (Pope 1942, Gaventa 1980). Mill towns would not diminish until the New Deal era which brought increased transportation, labor surplus, legislation such as the Fair Labor Standards Act, and new agricultural policies which undermined the potency or necessity of physically concentrating and controlling workers (Hall 1987, Pope 1942).

Mill employees were often pacified by company welfare work that beautified the town and provided sports teams, YMCAs, and the like. The company's true purpose, however, was generally to create a sense of home and to strengthen the workers' dependency, loyalty, and obedience (Hall 1987). Provided as a reward, companies hoped welfare work would reinforce the parent-child relationship, cut out the influence of outside parties, and prevent job emigration.

Dependence was further instilled by forcing workers to patronize company stores. Through the stores, mill owners were not only reabsorbing lost capital: they controlled workers through intentional debt peonage (Dunaway 1996). Rather than receiving cash, workers were often paid in vouchers valid only in company stores. Unfairly high prices on store goods also helped perpetuate debt. Legally, a worker could not leave the employer with an unsettled debt. Yet, so long as the worker shopped in the company store with company vouchers, the worker was unlikely to be debtless.

Company superintendents and policemen even provided surveillance over the town (Hall 1987, McLaurin 1971). Any activity that threatened worker morality or created conditions for organization or rebellion would not go unseen. Drinking, prostitution, radical religious sects, and gambling were often banned. Nearly every aspect of a workers life was accounted for. The mill town, then, effectively left little room for organization or rebellion to grow and molded the residents into ideal employees. All activity both on and off the jobsite were under the company's control.

Churches were not exempt from company manipulation. The church played a large part in the thoughts and actions of company employees and greatly influenced their social lives (McLaurin 1971, Eller 1982). Companies often built the churches in mill towns, paid the clergy, and funded church upkeep. (Pope 1942) As employees certainly lacked the funds or access to land to build their own church, the church construction, growth, and even the choice of denomination relied almost entirely upon the company. This company support was hidden from workers, who many times saw the church as a refuge from mill life. Keeping the company subsidy of the church secret maintained the workers' undoubting respect and support for the church. Providing the church as a supposed outlet for autonomy pacified any idea of rebellion. (Hall 1987) Revivalists, fundamentalists, or other sects that could threaten the status quo were banned from mill towns. Further, clergy, whose livelihood depended upon the company, were not likely to criticize company practices. Regardless of motive, however, ministers and churches generally lacked the background to interpret the mill system for the exploitative system that it was. The clergy would come to act as moral supervisors for the company, knowingly or not, by

denouncing an affluent lifestyle or other temporal values and promoting stability and docility (McLaurin 1971, Pope 1942). Hence, churches became an extension of the company town by equating the paternalistic system of the mill town to Christian principles. Ministers were expected to sanction the rightness of things as they were and to teach values that benefited the company, thereby aiding the continuance of paternalism in the mill town. Reliant on the generosity of the company and trapped in a paternalistic relationship itself, the church made employee rebellion difficult when criticism had become not only irrational but also immoral (McLaurin 1971).

Like churches, schools in mill towns also became extensions of company influence. Schools were most often established and run by the company. Teachers were selected and paid by the mill. Values taught and opportunities provided or withheld ensured children would follow their parents into the mill in adulthood (Hall 1987). In the height of the mill town era, education was limited. Education surpassing the seventh grade required tuition, a luxury few impoverished Southerners could afford. While education is now free to all citizens, company influence is not absent from the classroom. Company donations, sponsorship of school teams, and internships are all indirect means of exerting influence. Hence, the company had a near complete control over the entire employee community.

Organization and rebellion failed repeatedly in Appalachia and the South because the company actively worked to prevent it. Management succeeds when workers fear reprisal, accept powerlessness, or are blind to the inequality all together. The powerless are often blamed for their shortcomings, thereby ignoring and nullifying the power systems in play. The benefits for maintaining status quo for those in power are great, while for the relatively powerless, the consequences of dissent can be monumental.

While unions were gaining victory outside the mountains, the South was many times exempt from this progress. Union activity was sometimes seen as conspiracy, infiltration by competing companies, or a threat to the company's rights in running a business. Most importantly, unionism was seen as a potential destruction of the parent-child relationship established in company towns. Several tactics were overtly and covertly applied to maintain the unequal relationship. Intimidation, eviction, red-baiting, and force were often utilized (Gaventa 1980, Hall 1987). Companies sometimes encouraged foremen to hinder unionists. Race and class difference among workers were accentuated. Workers were often divided by race or skill, further hindering alliance (Zieger 1982, Glen 1970, McLaurin 1971). Mill towns, as we have seen, also worked to create separation by physically segregating mill workers from the rest of the community. Similarly, the companies operated by a hierarchy with top-down representation: grievances rarely reached the top of the chain successfully (Zieger 1982). The company had control over the community and the free spaces (churches, schools, and other voluntary associations) where non-issues could become issues, voices could be heard, and challenge could otherwise manifest. Community has the potential to develop democracy but company control over the community stifles this ability. Workers became separate from the political process.

Poverty, isolation, and lack of strong local organizations were also at work (Gaventa 1980). Lack of communication between communities created a lack of awareness regarding labor rights, unionism, or ongoing activism. Some also argue that lingering individualism of Appalachian people and the lack of an industrial tradition are particular hindrances to rebellion (Zieger 1982, Glen 1970, McLaurin 1971). Union or movement organizers found difficulty

uniting the workers and relied on loyalty based on shared plight or southern heritage. Often, Appalachians were suspicious of institutions, even in the form of unionism. Coming together for mutual benefit was particularly trying.

Even when company power structures are weakened, internalized powerlessness can continue to hinder workers (Gaventa 1980). Management held tight control over all decision making and was able to prevent contradictory decisions from being voiced or conceptualized. Obedience and loyalty to the company was rewarded while misbehavior was punished. Should one arm of the company's power be breached, the countless other manifestations of control would compensate.

However, paternalism began to lose strength as the nineteenth century came to a close. Unionism implies a degree of employee independence from the employer and a willingness and ability to act. Alleghany County began unionizing in the early thirties. Therefore, other forms of power should be investigated to understand why quiescence might continue in Alleghany County. In an era where unionism has also become a norm, it is necessary to look beyond paternalism to understand quiescence.

Economic Coercion

As unionism expanded at the turn of the twentieth century, Appalachian coal miners were leading the national labor movement. If workers are willing to organize, they are manifestly not less concerned about upsetting the parent-child dichotomy of paternalism. One major function of the union is to protect job security. The presence of unions, then, may not simply mean a complete readiness to rebel, but rather a strong acknowledgement of that economic dependence. The employment opportunities offered by power-holding industries where little other employment is available can be a major reason for the lack of resistance (Fisher 1993). Hence, a form of economic coercion on the part of the company is created. In communities where one industry makes up the majority of employment, the option to work independently becomes significantly less viable. Companies may go so far as to block other industry from forming in the area or alter other industries to suit the company's needs. Additionally, in modern times where the age of the family farm has passed and self-sufficiency has become almost impractical, the worker has less and less clout when choosing to accept or reject compliancy to the employer.

Often, these dependent communities are relatively impoverished. This creates an added reliance on the industry for survival. Economic insecurity is a constant burden. Under these circumstances, the employee will have little choice but to accept the bargain laid by the employer. In this situation of dependence, it can hardly be expected, then, for the employer to feel particularly obliged to consider the interests of those workers and their community.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, power relations began to change as the labor movement extended across the country. Old modes of power were being challenged, unions organized, and managers and company owners were relying on other forms of power to maintain control. The coal miners of Appalachia were on the forefront of the labor movement in this period. The struggle for power in these communities highlight the efforts of management to instill quiescence. The Appalachian coal industry is a prime example of economic coercion as a second strategy of power.

The Appalachian Coal Industry

The Appalachian bituminous coal industry from the late nineteenth century into the early twentieth century shares many of the exploitative characteristics with other Southern industry. As much as 70% of the national output of coal came from Appalachian mining operations (Baratz 1973). Areas where the coal activity was present were generally heavily or wholly reliant on that single industry. As a non-union region, resources could be withdrawn cheaper and with fewer restrictions causing significant interregional competition. The regional differences within the national coal industry were particularly severe, as Appalachian coal was derived so cheaply from nonunionized firms. Also, like many other Southern industries of the era, employees generally lived in company towns, land was owned by absentees, and work was hazardous. Respiratory illnesses such as Black Lung Disease were not uncommon, nor were cave-ins, explosions, and other devastating work-related injuries.

However, the Appalachian coal industry holds many distinctions that separate it from other Southern industries. Coal miners were originally paid piece rates and set their own hours and pace. While these privileges would diminish with industrialization, the ethos of individualism remained with the coal laborers. Also unique to coal was the chronic oversupply of product. This would undoubtedly create tensions with wages, as these were the coal operator's highest cost. Mechanization, too, was especially severe in its impact on the coal industry. Labor was reduced to a fraction of its previous numbers as machines replaced miners by the thousands (Baratz 1973).

While other areas of the North were generally unionized, the Appalachian coal operators resisted unionization for years. Among miners, the fear of job loss was powerful in preventing rebellion. This is particularly true in coal towns, as one company alone provided employment in the community. Many companies discouraged other economic outlets which might compete with the coal operator's control over the area (Seltzer 1995). Hence, if work with the company was lost, work was difficult to find elsewhere. Alternatively, dissenters and organizers could be bought off. In an area of great poverty, this was a particularly powerful tool for management (Fisher 1993). Zieger (1982) explains the vulnerability of employment:

Company personnel policies, however, provided the greatest antagonisms. Workers complained of favoritism and arbitrary treatment in hiring, layoffs, and promotions. Supervisors freely ignored seniority and even job performance in choosing, releasing, and retaining workers. Until late in the 1920s, there was no central system of recruitment and even into the 1930s acquaintance with a foreman or company official was necessary for being hired..." (Zieger 1982: 54-55).

Should workers unionize, coal companies large enough to own several coal reserves might pack up and move to other nonunion locations. Should workers strike, coal companies might hire nonunion workers (Seltzer 1985). Also, as the industry progressed into the twentieth century, technological change and machinery reduced the need for jobs and increased worker precariousness. These economic realities made successful rebellion extremely difficult (Fisher 1993).

Relevance of Literature to Research Questions

The review of Appalachian literature highlights aspects of Alleghany County that are relevant first and foremost because of Alleghany County's physical location. Many aspects of Appalachia are relevant for understanding Alleghany County, such as the strong connection to place, a shared history, a shared experience of industrialization and absentee ownership. Also, the literature has highlighted many assumptions and stereotypes of Appalachia (homogeneity, poverty, backward thinking, stagnation, etc.) which are important if only to understand how these perceptions, however erroneous, impact how Appalachians (and, by extension, residents of Alleghany County) view themselves and how outsiders interact with the region's people. By emphasizing particularities of physical location, literature regarding Appalachia can help explain how Alleghany County came to be in the state of general inaction and how this inaction is maintained.

Further, the brief review of environmental inequality provides a framework for exploring my research questions. Environmental inequality is characteristic of Appalachia and Alleghany County, whose natural resources have long been exploited. Literature regarding power relations in Appalachia (John Gaventa's work in particular) is instrumental in providing a possible explanation for inaction towards the environmental inequality in Alleghany County. Specifically, the literature on paternalism and economic coercion as methods of power provide a means to explore how power manifests itself in the Alleghany County community. The Southern Piedmont textile mills and the Appalachian coal mining literature point to key ideas about paternalism and economic coercion, and I extract indicators for said methods of power from this literature and apply them to the Alleghany County case study. Based on this, my research questions are (1) Does environmental damage exist in Alleghany County, Virginia? (2) To what extent are paternalism and economic coercion present in MeadWestvaco management relations with workers and the community? And finally, (3) to what extent is quiescence towards environmental degradation related to said paternalism and economic coercion? In answering these questions, I will contribute to our understanding of the environmental situation in Alleghany County while also using this case study to add to the literature on models of power.

Chapter 4: Methods

Methodology

I use historical analysis to approach my research. My methodology presumes that the complexities of quiescence in Alleghany County cannot be understood without exploring the community's past relationships with industry or without drawing upon comparative situations in other Southern industries which have been more heavily researched and more clearly demonstrate paternalism and economic coercion and their impact on the community. Hence, my historical analysis will utilize a two-fold approach to the research questions: First, I will attempt to understand Alleghany County in its own context by analyzing historical materials relevant to

this unique case. Very little research has been done on the topic, so this aspect of the research is particularly necessary.

Secondly, I will utilize historical analysis by uncovering indicators of paternalism and economic coercion in Alleghany County that are present in the more thoroughly researched areas of Appalachian coalmines and the Piedmont textile mills. It is my assumption that a historical analysis will expand on the limited amount of research already available regarding Alleghany County and the limited amount of research that I am able to perform with this project. Historical sociology bridges the narrative nature of historical research and the analytic nature of sociological research (Abrams 1982). It is an attempt to take the factual aspects of history and determine a higher sociological explanation behind the events. Historical analysis, specifically, allows the researcher to observe changes over time in order to understand contemporary situations. Historical analysis assumes that understanding the present is not possible without exploring and understanding the past. This approach is also useful for understanding historical situations in their own unique context. As Gringrich (2000) summarizes: "Historical analysis can develop a critical approach to the study of the past, present, and future. It can illuminate the varieties of cultural and social diversity that have existed, and show how changes in these have occurred." Historical analysis can be approached in several ways. The case study is one approach in which one particular area or situation is investigated. Historical sociology is a very broad area with numerous subsets, methods, and debates. For the purposes of this study, a very general understanding of historical analysis will be utilized.

My historical analysis of data unique to Alleghany County will be very general: using indicators of paternalism and economic coercion gleaned from the coal mines and textile mills, I will search Alleghany County data for indicators of paternalism and economic coercion. I will also use the research regarding mines and mills to understand and explain the situation in Alleghany County. To test the relationship between Westvaco's paternalism and economic coercion and Alleghany County's quiescence, I will first determine that environmental damage does exist in Alleghany County. Next, I will ascertain that paternalism and economic coercion exist to some degree in MeadWestvaco management relations with workers and the community. Finally, I will show that persisting quiescence regarding environmental degradation is related to both paternalism and economic coercion in MeadWestvaco management strategy.

To determine that environmental damage exists in Alleghany County, I will examine Westvaco's impact on the environment in the area since the founding of the company in the late nineteenth century. However, I will focus on present implications of Westvaco operations in order to determine whether or not there is current environmental degradation that affects the county residents. To demonstrate that Alleghany County residents endure unequal environmental compromises, I will briefly compare Westvaco impacts with that of Virginia as a whole. I will look at several newspaper articles and books which are both historical and contemporary, MeadWestvaco reports, EPA reports, and documents regarding the Gathright Dam controversy (Table 4.3). I expect to find that Alleghany County is unequally affected when compared to other communities in Virginia.

Having shown that MeadWestvaco does indeed have a negative impact on Alleghany County's environment, I will next explore how this is accomplished without community protest. I am investigating the prevalence of two modes of power: paternalism and economic coercion. Because MeadWestvaco is presently unionized, it cannot be assumed that paternalism alone is

responsible for the community's inaction regarding MeadWestvaco's environmental damage. And yet, economic coercion is not unique to Alleghany County; many communities must rely on one or few major industries. However, I believe that Alleghany County is unique in that it exhibits the characteristics of economic dependence and also the lingering effects of paternalism. Modes of power behind quiescence are rarely clear cut, and may even overlap. I assume that an examination of Southern industries with similar and better documented experiences will help unravel the relative inaction in Alleghany County.

In order to determine how MeadWestvaco utilizes paternalism, I will rely on analyses of the cotton textile industry of the Southern Piedmont in order to define and recognize it. I will draw on the period between the late nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century when paternalism in the Piedmont was at its height. Paternalism exists when the community exhibits obedience to or even adoration for an authority figure that feigns a paternal concern (Blatz 1994). Looking at paternalism documented in the textile industry, there are several indicators for industrial paternalism. The company town, where everything from employee housing to stores and churches are under company control, is a main indicator. Another common indicator of paternalism is the company's provision of welfare work (Eller 1982, Hall 1987). Town beautification, sponsorship of town sports teams, church building, and creation or support of youth programs are all common examples of welfare work. Company policing of the community and monitoring of morals also indicates paternalism, whereby the father-like company is always watching even off the factory floor. Company hired community policemen or watchdogs are examples. On the job in a paternalistic situation, hiring, firings, and promotions are many times arbitrary or a result of favoritism. Entire families are often incorporated into the company either through direct employment or company-influenced school tracking towards future employment. In the community, the company may depict itself as benevolent and nurturing. These are all examples of paternalism and how it works to prevent action. However, should quiescence waiver, there are also indicators of paternalism when power structures are threatened. Unionism is considered a challenge to company authority and is fiercely obviated. Red baiting, intimidation, eviction, and physical force or threats are indicators of paternalism when existing power structures are threatened.

I expect to find more prominent indicators of paternalism (Table 4.1) in Alleghany County in the early part of MeadWestvaco's years in the community before functioning organized labor. I will also review instances that highlight potentials for paternalism: the twenty year struggle for unionization, the strike of 1978, present day labor tensions, and present company interactions with the community. Some examples of paternalism that I might find in Alleghany County include company sponsorship of the local sports teams, company oriented courses created in local schools, and benevolent and parental self-descriptions in the local media. Examining paternalism in the company's history with the community and present union tension will provide a brief overview of the potential for paternalism in the area. To explore paternalism and its relationship to environmental degradation in Alleghany County, however, I will primarily look for paternalistic indicators in the Gathright Dam controversy. I expect to find several of the indicators for paternalism from the Southern Piedmont textile mills also present in Alleghany County. I expect to find that paternalism has historically been a tool utilized by the MeadWestvaco that continues to function to some extent today. Further, I also expect to find indicators of paternalism in the controversy surrounding the construction of the Gathright Dam.

Table 4.1 Common Indicators of Paternalism

- Worker obedience to employer out of respect, appreciation, or fear of punishment
 - Company town (company housing, churches, store)
 - Welfare work (Recreation, town beautification, etc.)
 - Company policing and monitoring of morals outside workplace
 - Hiring, firing, and promotions arbitrary and personalistic
 - Incorporation of entire family into company family
 - Benevolent self-descriptions in local media
-

Extending my investigation regarding power structures in Alleghany County, I will look to the Appalachian coal industry to define and determine economic coercion. I will derive my analysis of Appalachian coal from the late nineteenth century when unionism first began to take shape to the early twentieth century when coal growth slowed or stagnated, the black lung movement and other tensions were growing, and unionism was establishing. With a lingering spirit of entrepreneurialism, Appalachian miners relied as much, or more, upon the national coal prices and demand as they did on company management. This individualism is contrasted with situations of paternalism, whereby workers lived and labored within a self-contained family unit. Albeit, the coal industry prior to heavy unionization did exhibit many indicators of paternalism, but coal mining in Appalachia is particular in that unionism has had a strong presence. Coal suffered a constant state of oversupply, leaving jobs and wages, which accounted for 70% of the cost of coal production, easily exposed to cuts (Seltzer 1985). The intense competition between mining regions and firms and a shift towards mechanization also caused tensions. This tentative situation imposed upon labor created an economic dependence that discouraged action: “Your employer was bringing in machines and cutting jobs. More than likely you were laid off, with no prospects and few marketable skills. If you were lucky enough to be working, you quickly learned the new rules of the game. You kept union talk down. You didn’t cause trouble” (Seltzer 1985: 85). Oversupply and interregional tension was out of the mining operators’ hands, but the operators’ real or threatened reaction through labor cuts was under their control. This near-constant instability of jobs and wages was a powerful form of economic coercion.

As Appalachian coal shows us, economic coercion creates a community dependence upon the company. Economic coercion can be present when there is a lack of other industry in the area. The company may even actively discourage other economic activity in the area. Without alternative, the community must then rely upon that industry for survival. In this situation, the community has little incentive to break quiescence. With economic coercion, unionism is not necessarily uncommon. As opposed to entirely paternalist systems, where unionism is seen as undermining the company’s paternal rule, companies utilizing economic

coercion may encourage unionism as a potential tool to further company interests. This could be seen in the promotion of company unions, providing favors to one union over another, or supporting a factionalized workforce. Of course, should the union goals become adverse to company interests, an economically coercive company will not hesitate to block union activity or threaten jobs or wages. In systems of economic coercion, the company might also solicit support from local, state, or even national government. Thereby, a company's economic coercion becomes particularly powerful when workers, unions, and also the community at large come under the company's control or influence.

In Allegheny County, I expect to find prominent indicators of economic coercion during the MeadWestvaco's post-union years from the 1930s to the present. As with paternalism, I will be looking for indicators of economic coercion (Table 4.2) mainly during the Gathright Dam controversy. I will look at basic indicators of economic coercion, such as the degree to which the community is economically dependent upon MeadWestvaco and exploitation of unions. I will also investigate any connections between the paper mill and local, state, or national governments. Should MeadWestvaco have discouraged any new industry in the area, I would also see that as an indicator of economic coercion. I will look for situations that are outside of the company control that the company wields to coerce employees. I expect to find that Allegheny County is indeed economically coerced by MeadWestvaco.

Table 4.2 Common Indicators of Economic Coercion

- Company seeks to minimize employment alternatives for workers
 - Unionization combated as threat to authority (Red baiting, intimidation, eviction, etc.)
 - Unions may be utilized to company advantage by promotion of the company union, special consideration of one union over the other, or promotion of factionalism
 - Disagreeable community, employer, or union activity countered by threats to jobs and wages or company relocation
 - Situations outside company control (i.e. globalization, national product prices) wielded to coerce employees
-

Having verified the existence of environmental degradation and pointed to probable indicators of paternalism and environmental coercion in Allegheny County, I will next attempt to link the environmental issues to paternalism and economic coercion. Though labor activity has persisted throughout Westvaco's history in the community, environmental quality has rarely been on the agenda. I will extend findings regarding paternalism and economic coercion in Westvaco to account for environmental degradation. Power serves to maintain power by creating self-sustaining powerlessness in other groups (Gaventa 1982). Having shown that Westvaco's power is likely present in the form of paternalism and economic coercion, I will show that it is also likely that inaction regarding environmental degradation is a result of this created powerlessness. Perhaps most useful to understanding how Westvaco's utilization of power might be responsible for unchallenged environmental damage is the controversy

surrounding the construction of the Gathright Dam in the early 1970s. Although only indirectly tied to Westvaco, the Gathright Dam project marks the only notable organizing in Alleghany County regarding environmental destruction. The majority of protest against the dam's construction came from outside organizations and a handful of loosely organized locals. The justifications for dam construction were shaky and appeared to be mainly to MeadWestvaco's benefit. The Alleghany County community, however, accepted the plans for the dam, and construction was completed in 1978. Examining how the Gathright Dam controversy unfolded can provide clues to how Westvaco's power affects community behavior and agenda. I will look for references to paternalism and economic coercion when analyzing the Gathright Dam controversy. As Gaventa has explained, power can influence quiescence (Eller 1982). I expect the Gathright Dam project to be a prime example of environmental degradation allowed to materialize and persist because of MeadWestvaco's successful utilization of paternalism and economic coercion.

Data

As this research relies on historical analysis, I will mainly utilize historical records. I have referenced newspapers from Alleghany County, the larger New River Valley community, the state of Virginia, and also from national news sources. I have also used books both period and modern as data sources. I have referenced union websites, government documents, and MeadWestvaco publically-provided information. To locate the majority of my data, I utilized search engines such as Google, the Virginia Tech library catalog search, Jstor, Newsbank, and LexisNexis. I also used several secondary sources.

I will base a large part of my analysis on the Gathright Dam controversy as this was an instance in which there was great potential for environmental activism due to the solid support from outside organizations such as the EPA and CAP. As shown in Table 4.3, I will draw on several government documents, including EPA notes and the U.S. Corps of Engineers statement on the dam project. I will also employ more than a dozen period newspaper articles that span from the conception of the dam project, through the height of the controversy, and to the project's completion. Finally, I will draw on several journal and newspaper articles since the dam's completion which relate to the impact of the dam on the community.

Table 4.3 Data Sources (Numbers in Parentheses)

-
- Newspaper articles (mainly from Virginia papers), contemporary and historical (29)
 - Recent MeadWestvaco reports and publications (6)
 - EPA documents (3)¹
 - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, CAP, and Alleghany County Chamber of Commerce statement on the Gathright Dam project
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- Other primary sources [CRPA newsletters (2), magazines (2)², and court proceedings (2)]
 - Literature from unions active with Westvaco past and present (3)
 - Media [Postcards (2), photograph (1), videos (2), and advertisement (1)]
 - Economic surveys of Alleghany County (2)³
 - Secondary sources (6)⁴
-

¹*Comments by EPA Region III on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Gathright Lake, Virginia Prepared by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Norfolk District (1972); 2001 Toxics Release Inventory (2001); “EPA Region 3 Enviro-Bytes” (2001)*

²*Southern Loggin’ Times (2000) and Alleghany Living: Alleghany Highlands, Virginia 2007-2008 (2007)*

³*An Economic and Social Survey of Alleghany County (1936) and Economic Study of Alleghany County, Virginia (1961)*

⁴*Historical Sketches of the Alleghany Highlands (1923); A Centennial History of Alleghany County, Virginia (1958); “The Union Comes to Covington: Virginia Paperworkers Organize, 1933-1952” (1982); Rebuilding the Pulp and Paper Workers’ Union (1984); In River Time: The Way of the James (1985); and Journey on the James: Three Weeks through the Heart of Virginia (2001)*

Chapter 5: Findings

My research questions were, (1) Does environmental damage exist in Alleghany County, Virginia? (2) To what extent are paternalism and economic coercion present in MeadWestvaco management relations with workers and the community? and (3) To what extent is quiescence towards environmental degradation related to said paternalism and economic coercion? To explore these questions, I focus specifically on the years since MeadWestvaco began operation in 1899 until present day to show instances of environmental damage, paternalism, economic coercion, and points where these three conditions converge. I will emphasize the Gathright Dam controversy, which I believe to be a primary instance in which environmental damage, methods of Westvaco’s power, and quiescence come to light. These questions are addressed by analysis of historical sources such as newspaper articles, reports, and other published materials produced primarily during the years of controversy over the Gathright Dam project. I have drawn on findings from similar situations, the coal and cotton textile industries, in order to pinpoint relevant data.

“Dilution is the Solution to Pollution”: Environmental Degradation

Any concerns about water quality were answered with the pat phrase—“Dilution is the solution to pollution.” Ideally, the river would be kept within reasonable boundaries, neither excessively high nor low but consistently high enough to flush out waste and heat and keep clear a deep navigational channel. (Woodlief 1985: 165)

Despite growing national concern with pollution and progressive governmental policy, Westvaco’s impact on the environment is unquestionable. MeadWestvaco has historically been very devastating to the land, air, and water. Large amounts of natural resources were usurped daily and pollution emitted constantly: “An independent and unbiased Baltimore engineering firm reported in 1949 that the river downstream of Westvaco was afflicted by massive sludge deposits and terrific deoxygenation” (Woodlief 1985: 163). MeadWestvaco pollution remains a critical issue today. In 1988, a Sierra Club study ranked Westvaco second of all toxic air polluters in the state of Virginia. These air pollutants measured have been known to cause serious health risks as well as environmental damage (Edwards 1990). An EPA study in 1990 cited similarly disturbing findings regarding chloroform, a suspected carcinogen: “The EPA listed Westvaco’s Covington plant as one of 52 in the country whose air releases were at levels that provided one in 1,000 risk of cancer to those spending their lives closest to the plant” (Edwards 1990: B11). In 1994, Covington’s MeadWestvaco released the most toxic pollutants of all industry in the state of Virginia. Considering that Virginia ranked only 15th for toxic pollution that same year, MeadWestvaco is indeed a major polluter (Associated Press 1996). In 2001, MeadWestvaco dropped to a very close second, emitting over 4.5 million pounds of pollution annually (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [EPA] 2001a, Swift 2001).

Perhaps one of the more tragic consequences to housing the paper mill industry is the detrimental effect on local waters. Both Westvaco’s pollution and the Gathright Dam’s regulation heavily impact the Jackson River. MeadWestvaco’s main building covers 1.5 million square feet, and the industry usurps 150 acres on both sides of the Jackson River (AHEDC 2005c). Despite recent clean-up efforts, the water flowing from the mill is altered in color and smell:

The factory’s effect on the river is just as startling. Clear, cold mountain water is sucked into its intakes, put to use making the stiff paper in food and cigarette packaging, and pumped back out in a substantially modified form. The water goes through a lot of cleaning before rejoining the river; even so, the Jackson turns a deep, opaque sepia, not unlike weak coffee. It smells of detergent. It’s warmer, meaning that it can’t hold as much dissolved oxygen, on which fish depend. It bears little resemblance to the river I sampled in my spill at Gathright. It looks spoiled. Beaten. (Swift 2001: 49)

Swift, a reporter for the *Virginian-Pilot*, followed the Jackson’s course, taking note of physical and historical changes through the years. While the impact of MeadWestvaco’s pollution was undeniable, we see another major encounter with industry further upstream. The Jackson River courses through Westvaco after passing through the tightly controlled Gathright Dam. The dam has obviously altered water temperature, flow, and quality to an extreme. This has destroyed

wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities. Native trout and canoeing, both integral parts of Alleghany County culture, are traded for stocked fish and boating which is already readily available in several nearby communities.

MeadWestvaco's impact on the community's water also has dangerous health risks. One of the major pollutants released into the Jackson River is dioxin. Dioxin, a chlorine byproduct, has been linked to cancer, skin disorders, and problems with the immune system. Dioxin was found in the sludge emitted from Westvaco's waste treatment plant and in fish downstream of the plant (Edwards 1989). The EPA now requires reductions in chlorine release for pollution permits. Not long ago, the EPA rejected a proposed permit for Westvaco as it failed to address dioxin pollution (*The New York Times* 1989). The mill had been battling to raise the dioxin release limit to many times that of the EPA standard (Kittredge 1989). Only recently, MeadWestvaco ceased dioxin dumping (Swift 2001). The water that runs away from Westvaco is now discolored and has lost nearly all recreational and environmental value from years of pollution. Globally in 2002, 1.8 tons of biochemical oxygen demand and 3.1 tons of suspended solids were released into water by the company (MeadWestvaco 2003).

The most striking feature of MeadWestvaco is the vast amount of waste pumped into the air every minute of every day. Swift comments: "Then I notice a smell—just a hint, carried on an occasional southerly gust. Akin to boiling sauerkraut, but smokier, slightly sulfurous. A while later I notice that a white haze obscures the upper reaches of the riverside bluffs. It is a foreshadowing of the pristine Jackson's first meeting with heavy industry." (Swift 2001: 47) While much of the material leaving the smokestacks is, in fact, steam, much of it is also pollution. The chemicals that constantly billow from the factory emit a malodor that can be detected several miles away. The mountains that encircle Covington prevent much of the emissions from dispersing sufficiently. The pollution falls back to the earth in the form of acid rain. The paint on employees' cars is routinely eaten away as the vehicles sit under the stacks.

While nearly unbearable today, MeadWestvaco's emissions are noticeably improved from previous years. In the late 1960s, a writer for a Virginian newspaper reported that a "thick bluish haze" over downtown Covington turned Main Street into "a blurred image like a faded, aging, photograph..." (Coffey 1969). The author adds: "...there comes a sense of claustrophobia. You can't get away from the smell, the haze, the feeling that your lungs are swallowing in some vaporous disaster. As if you stepped into a room where a hundred chain smokers had just held a two-hour meeting." Local doctors noted a considerably higher incidence of respiratory troubles among residents. Fallout even dissolved shoes. One resident was reported to have boxed up the mill fallout and mailed it to the mill's absentee owners (Coffey 1969).

In more recent years, MeadWestvaco factories have emitted a combined 6.25 pounds of sulfur dioxide into the air per ton of product in 2006 with similar figures for the past several years (MeadWestvaco 2008b). Other forms of air pollution such as particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, and carbon monoxide are also emitted in comparable amounts. Temperature pollution is not accounted for in Westvaco reports. Temperature pollution in the air undoubtedly has its effects and has even been known to alter local weather. Globally, in 2002, 2.3 tons of toxic materials were released into the air (MeadWestvaco 2003). The mill has complied with environmental regulations to lessen the impact of industry and appears to work towards sustainability (MeadWestvaco 2008b), but the problem is far from solved. The EPA reports that

biochemical oxygen demand, temperature, color, and chronic toxicity outputs are outstanding issues in for the company in 2001 (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 2001a).

MeadWestvaco operations also significantly impact the land. With the construction of Gathright Dam, hundreds of acres of valley were covered as the Jackson backed up. The uniquely scenic Kincaid Gorge was obscured, a major wildlife habitat was lost, and important archeological sites were inundated. During dam construction and prior to the filling of the lake, one archeological survey was funded by the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries and another by the National Park Service (Iroquois Research Institute 1979). The surveys found 31 Native American sites that contained several houses, countless artifacts, and dozens of human burials. One large fortified village was also located. The excavation team determined that the area to be covered by the lake was occupied off and on from 7,000 B.C. to 1600 A.D.

Aside from the dam, other practical issues of paper production threaten the land. Almost half of the fuel sources for the company come from non-renewable resources (MeadWestvaco 2003). Furthermore, a pulp and paper plant requires trees by the ton. In the early years of mill operation, trees were felled locally and transported by river. One landowner, aggrieved by severe riverbank damage on his property caused by log driving, took a logging company that supplied Westvaco to court in 1906 and 1909 (Cox 1980, Loving v. Alexander 1984). Today, logging trucks are a common sight on highways and back roads of the county on their way to the paper mill. MeadWestvaco's 2003 *Stewardship and Sustainability Report* claims to invest a good deal into renewing forests, but replanted forests are generally not particularly environmentally beneficial or suitable for wildlife habitation as they are usually comprised of one species of trees arranged in straight lines. MeadWestvaco continues to purchase lumber locally as well. Mike Tankersley, in his *Southern Loggin' Times* article explains Westvaco's Cooperative Forest Management program: ". . . Westvaco helps the landowner manage and sell its timber. Ideally, this program works to Westvaco's advantage in that it has the inside track to purchase the pulpwood from a tract when a timber owner decides to sell some sawtimber" (Tankersley 2000). In a rural and impoverished area, it can be expected that more and more private land owners will sell their timber. Logging roads and cleared forests patch and scar the surrounding mountain faces. Furthermore, the mill has a 66-acre landfill in Alleghany County approved by the Board of Supervisors in 1995 which has worried residents with its proximity to homes and the Jackson River (McCue 1995). Hence, the paper mill impacts Alleghany County's water, air, and land in daily operations and also with singular or irregular alterations.

Environmental Degradation during the Gathright Dam Controversy: 1967-1972

The mill is accused by many as responsible for the extensive environmental damage resulting from the construction of the Gathright Dam. Accepting this possibility, the Gathright Dam is perhaps the most prominent instance of environmental damage inflicted on Alleghany County for the sake of MeadWestvaco's interests. During the controversy surrounding the dam's construction, several organizations, most notably Citizens Against Pollution, Inc. (CAP) and the EPA, pointed to MeadWestvaco as the primary benefiter. In doing so, these groups emphasized the extensive Westvaco pollution already present and asserted that responsibility to this pollution would be unfairly relieved of the paper mill upon the completion of the dam:

Upstream from Covington, Virginia (the first town on the river) the river is clear, sparkling, and colorless. It is of drinking water quality. From the point where Route 39 crosses the Jackson River it can be canoed all the way to its confluence with the Cow Pasture. It is one of the most beautiful if not the most beautiful white water streams in the State of Virginia [...]. The town is dominated by the gigantic Westvaco pulp mill which rests on the flood plain at the banks of the river. The Jackson River enters one side of the plant crystal clear, sparkling, and colorless and emerges from the other side a black, foaming abomination. The plant itself fills the small valley with dense smog, copious quantities of fly ash, and the typical reduced sulfur odor and pollution of a paper mill. [...] All of the stream within the Gathright Wildlife Management Area will be flooded and some small stretch of the river upstream from the refuge will also be flooded. The chief area to benefit from this desecration is the floodplain around Covington where the Westvaco paper mill is located. The Westvaco paper mill itself is the recipient of most of the flood protection benefits and virtually all of the water quality control benefits attributed to the Gathright Project. (Skeppstrom 1972: 2)

A great deal of attention has been focused on the dissolved oxygen problem downstream from Westvaco. However, there are several other respects in which Westvaco is in apparent violation of steam standards which are amenable only to treatment and are not eliminated by dilution. These include discharges of colored substances and toxic compounds. Virginia water quality standards forbid for all waters and all times “substances attributable to . . . industrial wastes . . . which . . . interfere directly or indirectly with beneficial uses of such waters.” Uses of the upper Jackson are defined to include “secondary contact recreation, propagation of fish and other aquatic life, and other beneficial uses.” (EPA 1972: 10)

These descriptions lend more evidence to the existence of pollution in Alleghany County. Furthermore, linked to the construction of this dam, Westvaco is also linked to one of the single largest environmental devastations to occur in the community. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers did not deny that regulating the Jackson River’s flow for the sake of industry was a primary motivator in the proposed dam project:

The wastes originating in the Covington area are primarily industrial. At the time of the U.S. Public Health Service study, it was found that these wastes were undergoing an extensive and unique secondary treatment process; a pioneering effort in the treatment of paper mill wastes. [...] However, the U.S. Public Health Service did not feel that stream objectives could be met by this method alone even after the new processes had been perfected. [...]

As a part of the Corps of Engineers’ Comprehensive Study of the James River Basin, Environmental Protection Agency reviewed the water quality problems of the James River Basin. [...] However, these studies do not rule out the use of low-flow augmentation as a means of enhancing water quality in the Jackson and James Rivers. (U.S. Army Engineer District, Norfolk, Virginia 1973: 5-13-14)

It was not only industry in general that served to benefit from controlled water, but specifically Westvaco. Several newspapers of the time picked up the controversy over the proposed environmental damage for the benefit of the paper mill such as the *Ledger-Star* and the *Virginian-Pilot*:

The Westvaco paper mill and other occupants of the Jackson's flood plain are expected to receive protection from periodic flooding.

Westvaco also hopes to have the reserve water it needs to keep the Jackson's flow vigorous enough to absorb its waste products and keep it in compliance with state and water quality standards.

[. . .] At such periods of low flow the river's usefulness as a diluter of pollution and as a municipal water source is seriously impaired.

The Jackson River runs cool, clear and pure drinking water until it reaches Covington. There, wrapped in a shroud of vapors the big Westvaco Bleached Board Division plant hovers over the river's banks, discharging into it an effluent that turns the clear waters black and flecks the surface with foam.

[. . .] Without the Gathright reservoir to free stored up water during dry seasons, Westvaco could not, with its present equipment, meet State Water Control Board standards at Covington during periods of extremely low flow. (Owens 1972)

The Engineers [sic] originally figured dilution of pollution downstream, notably the Westvaco paper plant in Covington, as an economic return for the dam.

Recently, however, the federal Environmental Protection Agency has ruled that pollution must be cleaned up, and that no economic benefit can be claimed for diluting it. (Associated Press 1973)

Whether or not MeadWestvaco was specifically or wholly responsible for pushing the project, the dam was finished by the end of the 1970s. The construction of the dam meant a huge loss of natural formations, archeological sites, and wildlife habitat. The Jackson River, the Kincaid Gorge, and the river valley were altered irrevocably.

Since the dam's completion and the natural devastation that followed, MeadWestvaco's impact on the environment remains a significant issue. As a top polluter in the state of Virginia (Associated Press 1996, EPA 2001a), MeadWestvaco's active presence in Alleghany County makes the community unequally impacted by pollution. The community's air, water, and land are all negatively impacted presently and have been significantly in the past.

“A Most Commendable Civic Spirit”: Paternalism from MeadWestvaco's founding through

Unionism: 1899-1952

Without intending the least discrimination against the other industries of the county seat, it must in fairness be added that during the twenty years past the West Virginia Pulp and

Paper Company has shown a most commendable civic spirit. It has placed on one and the same level its own interest with the interests of its employees. (Morton 1923: 78)

Instances of paternalism seem to be most prominent in the early years of MeadWestvaco's relationship with Alleghany County. From the Southern textile mills, we have seen that a major indicator of paternalism is an obedience and loyalty on the part of employees and community members toward the company. MeadWestvaco had been a family enterprise since its inception (Zieger 1984). There is evidence that this family structure in the ownership and management was spread to encompass employees and community members as well. Local historian Oren Morton described a great community pride in the industry's superb civic spirit and interest in employees. He also described excellent wages and affordable housing for employees at any cost to the company: "If a workman wishes to rent a house belonging to the company, the rate charged is simply what will cover interest, taxes, and other legitimate charges. If he wishes to build a cottage, money is advanced for the lot and for building purposes" (Morton 1923: 78). Company housing, of course, is often symptomatic of paternalist relationships. In this instance described by Morton, the company takes on a fatherly role of protector and provider.

Further, until 1952, there was no functioning union in the mill. Morton asserted that the community seemed to believe that the quantity and quality of work benefitted from this absence (1923). Morton's description of MeadWestvaco operations in the years before unionization is very telling. Unionism, of course, represents a threat to employer authority. Company run unions were sponsored and promoted. Before 1952, all unions, company-sponsored or not, were plagued with controversial ties to the mill and there was a high turnover rate of organizations.

In the earlier years, MeadWestvaco partook in a significant amount of welfare work. Two notable examples are a multi-purposed baseball field (Figure 5.1) and a country club with golf links (Figure 5.2). The company also worked to create a benevolent self-image in local media outlets. So much so, that the community newspaper, the *Virginian Review*, was accused of bias (United Paperworkers of America ~1979). Several postcards of an earlier era depict the paper mill in a harmonious existence with nature and the community. Figure 5.3, for example, depicts a cheerfully bright MeadWestvaco amidst lush mountain scenery. The sulfurous smoke, which, in reality, releases from the mill stacks constantly, is conspicuously absent. Images such as these no doubt fostered the appearance of a positive community figure and lessened the significance of environmental damage.

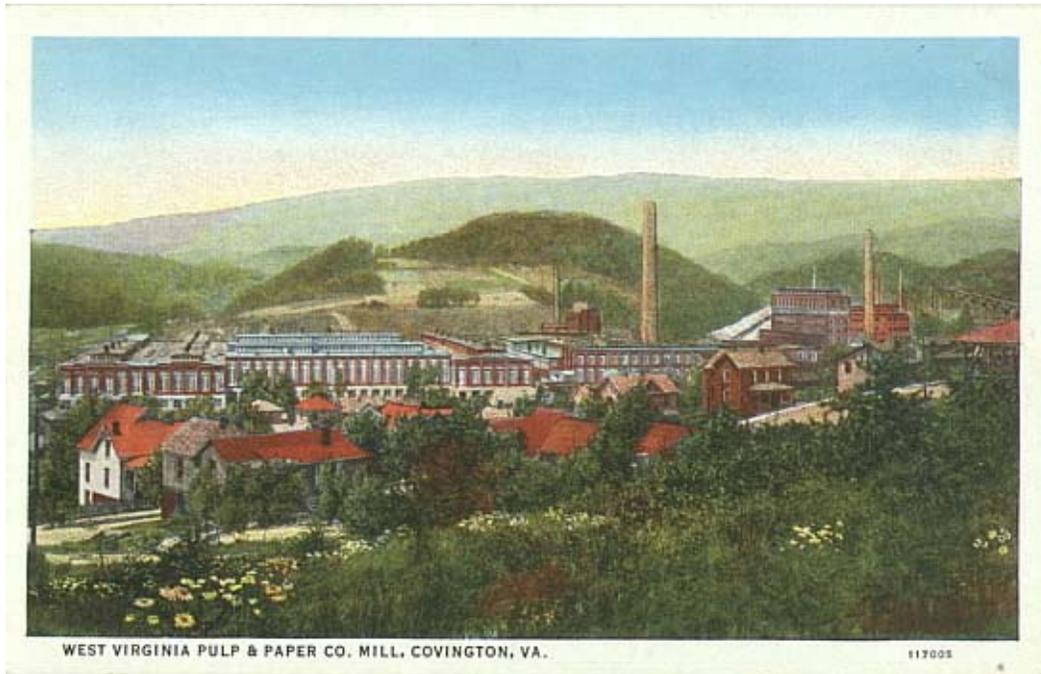
Figure 5.1 Westvaco Baseball Field (Date Unknown) (Nicholson 2000a)



Figure 5.2 Westvaco Country Club and Golf Links (Date Unknown) (Nicholson 2000b)



Figure 5.3 Historical Postcard of MeadWestvaco (Date Unknown) (Nicholson 2000c)



Paternalism during the Gathright Dam Controversy: 1967-1972

The Army Corps of Engineers cited three major justifications for the construction of Gathright Dam: Flood control, increased flow for downstream water improvement, and recreation. These reasons were sharply criticized by dam opponents.

We are than [sic] left to conclude that the major and probably the only tangible beneficiary of the expenditure of \$39,400,000 in public funds will be the Wesvaco [sic] pulp mill in Covington which is part of a multi-billion dollar corporation manufacturing paper products in several areas throughout the country which operates out of an impressive multi-story headquarters building on Fifth Avenue in New York City. The Wesvaco [sic] operation in Covington has historically been one of the major air and water polluters in the State of Virginia. It is not currently in compliance with air pollution and water pollution regulations promulgated by the State of Virginia . . . (Skeppstrom 1972: 5)

However, the Corps of Engineers, backed by the Alleghany County Chamber of Commerce, pressed that the byproduct of MeadWestvaco's gain could only be a useful gift for the community:

Social and economic changes will be evident among the area residents. In a relatively short time, a large lake will appear in their midst, something they have not had locally

before. There will occur, then, a whole new field of activities, not only for recreation, but also for possible investment in concessions and allied services. (U.S. Army Engineer District, Norfolk, Virginia 1973: 6-1)

In effect then, Gathright Dam and Lake Moomaw would be one massive example of welfare work for the community as it would supposedly beautify the area and provide limitless recreational opportunities. The Alleghany County Chamber of Commerce perpetuates this idea of “enhancing” the community:

We reject out of hand the assumption that we are destroying something that is beautiful, unique and irreplaceable without creating values that more than compensate. We have shown that it is neither unique or irreplaceable. [. . .]

The lake [. . .] will be a thing of great scenic beauty. [. . .] It’s beauty and charm will make it one of the brightest jewels in Virginia’s crown of natural resources. By making these things readily available to more of the people of Virginia and nearby West Virginia, we are enhancing the human environmental quality of this section of the two States. We are convinced that in this instance we are creating far more environmental and aesthetic values than we destroy. (Moomaw 1972: 9)

Yet, opponents were skeptical that yet another man-made lake would draw any significant tourism dollars. Soon after the dam’s completion, author Ann Woodlief commented:

What is currently advertised is the opportunity that Moomaw Lake offers for a tourism bonanza in this remote economically depressed region. The federal government, however, needs to find another \$8 million to build up the recreation potential. [. . .] To me, the tall dam looming across the gorge, with water lapping at its foot, looked like an ugly monument to the great American boondoggle and human inability to cope with natural processes. [. . .] Projects like this make me wonder how the Corps can be so confident about its ability to calculate all the costs and benefits. (1985: 173)

Defenders of MeadWestvaco’s influence oftentimes cited the company’s supposed concern with the community’s environmental wellbeing. They displayed a certain hesitancy to question the company’s connection to the project. A prominent member of the Alleghany County Chamber of Commerce and a leading promoter of the project, Benjamin Moomaw commended the company’s benevolence and minimized any iniquitous suppositions: “Westvaco Corporation has taken the lead in developing and installing facilities to reduce liquid wastes and has reduced them by 85%. In any event, the discussion is largely academic. [. . .] In any event, the dilution of pollution of any kind by increase in stream flow can only be beneficial” (Moomaw 1972: 4). The dam project was not only claimed to be supported by the Commonwealth of Virginia, but also the local people (U.S. Army Engineer District, Norfolk, Virginia 1973: 8C-4). Yet, critics such as the EPA pointed to tremendous loss that the community would suffer for the benefit of the paper mill:

The cost of doing business in the flood plain should not be subsidized by the public at large. Criteria both of social equity and of economic efficiency would be violated by such a subsidy to the detriment of public welfare. [. . .] The flood control benefits to this one plant represent almost half, 40%, of the total project flood control benefits. The corresponding fraction of project cost allocated to flood control should be reimbursed by Westvaco. Annual costs to be reimbursed should be calculated using the rate of return on private capital investment, 10%, to properly reflect the cost to the nation and Westvaco's gain. The amount of this payment [. . .] is \$300,000 annually. (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 1972: 28)

If the EPA estimates are taken into consideration, the paper mill stands to save a considerable amount of money at the expense of taxpayers and community members. To this point, the EPA added further injustices which included:

. . . loss of economic welfare and violation of standards of social equity; possibly, perpetuation of flood risk through unwise use of the flood plains; and encouragement of environmentally harmful "external" effects of the pulp and water industry such as air pollution, aggravation of the solid waste problem and promotion of single purpose use of the nation's forests (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 1972: 8A-21).

The Engineering Corps maintained that Westvaco would not be the main beneficiary of the project and instead promoted claims that the dam would improve the desirability and appeal of the water environment, the esthetic quality of the Jackson and James rivers, the stream fishery habitat, and the opportunity for recreation (U.S. Army Engineer District, Norfolk, Virginia 1973: 8A-26). The court decision of 1972 backed the Corps of Engineers, allowing the project to proceed. The promotion of the Gathright Dam and Lake Moomaw as a great community improvement is probably the most severe instance of environmental damage to ensue in Alleghany County as tied to paternalistic relations with MeadWestvaco industry.

Paternalism Today: 2002-2008

After a century of almost total economic domination in Alleghany County, MeadWestvaco continues to enjoy an almost reverential respect from the community. The massive environmental damage and usurpation of natural resources generally remains unquestioned or exalted as a willing sacrifice for the paper mill's requirements. In a promotional video for the city of Covington, town manager Claire Collins states: "Many of Covington's major industries are linked to the abundant forests lands enabling our region to become an international provider of paper products thanks to MeadWestvaco, a producer of packaging solutions" (City of Covington 2008a). In this case, the company is literally thanked for the exploitation of natural resources. Further, when promoting the city's recreational opportunities, the town manager actually invites us to learn how the paper mill is an important part of the town's heritage (City of Covington 2008c). Hence, the paper mill is seen as a benevolent, all-

encompassing figure that both takes care of the community and is inseparable from the community.

MeadWestvaco continues to invest in benevolent self-image advertising. As common with paternalism, the company partakes in extensive welfare work. In this case it is self-described:

The Covington Carbon facility contributes to the community through involvement in activities, including the Greater Allegheny United Fund, Chamber of Commerce and youth and civic organizations in Covington and Allegheny County. The facility purchases a science program that meets SOL requirements for all area middle schools and helped to defray the purchase cost of a “bomb” sniffing dog for the Allegheny County sheriff’s department. (MeadWestvaco 2008a)

Such welfare work creates an impression that MeadWestvaco is caring for the community, creating growth for the community, and rewarding the community. The mill’s support of local groups even goes so far as funding one of the few environmental programs and groups exist in Allegheny County. MeadWestvaco provides a substantial amount of funding to the Cowpasture River Preservation Association (“CRPA is Thankful For . . .” 2008). MeadWestvaco also sends out Christmas cards to employees featuring the winning design from the annual community contest they sponsor. From Christmas art contests to funding science programs, MeadWestvaco works hard to create a benevolent image in the community.

MeadWestvaco also takes an active role in the area’s education. In reference to the local community college, Dabney S. Lancaster Community College (DSLCC), *Allegheny Living Magazine*, a promotional publication of the Chamber of Commerce, proclaims: “The college is especially attuned to the employment needs of its area and many offerings reflect this” (Kelly 2007: 14). Programs, like the Virginia Packaging Applications Center (VPAC), are designed to track and prepare community residents for a career with the dominating paper mill industry. The president of MeadWestvaco is quoted in the magazine as finding the development of employees through these training programs to be most critical. He adds: “VAPAC is a wonderful resource designed to help our mission at MeadWestvaco. (Kelly 2007: 10). This mission must certainly include increasing the area’s dependence on the company and fostering an image of paternal responsibility and care for community students. Likewise, another indicator of paternalism is the incorporation of the family in mill employment. It is widely accepted in Allegheny County that relation to a mill employee will nearly guarantee employment with the mill. Further, countless children of mill employees are hired during the summer months in entry-level positions. Critical instances within the mill itself are also indicative of paternalism. Until 2002, Westvaco was a family owned business. Despite the merger with Mead, the Luke family maintains a powerful leadership role, continuing the familial image.

After All, It is Our Most Valuable Economic Resource: Economic Coercion after Unionism:

1952-1967

There have been floods – 1913, 1936, for instance, when substantial damage was done to the paper mill along with families and business interests in Covington and Alleghany County. We think it is right that Westvaco should share in the general benefit. After all, it is our most valuable economic resource. It provides approximately 50% percent [sic] of support for the area economy, giving a means of livelihood to some 3000 families. Shutdowns, delays, etc. effect [sic] all these people as well as the Company and we are anxious to prevent them. To the Company they mean temporary loss of production. To its employees they mean temporary loss of their means of making a living. (Moomaw 1972: 4)

As MeadWestvaco has long been the major employer in Alleghany County (Kelly 2007), economic dependence is presumed. As far back as 1914, only 15 years into operation, the *Alleghany County Gazette* named the WVP&P Co. the principal source of its prosperity and growth in Covington with several hundred employed. Several years later, Morton described the paper mill as easily being the leader of Covington industry at the time of his writing (1923: 77). Even in the earlier part of the century, the number of employees equaled that of today, averaging between 1,200 and 1,500 persons. After the demise of the railroad industry in the 1950's, MeadWestvaco's impact moved beyond the city of Covington. A 1961 economic survey cited the paper mill as the basis of the entire county's economy (Virginia Electric and Power Company 1961). Hence, to organize or voice opposition to management would be economically risky.

When labor organization first began to form in Covington, there was immediate company opposition. This included delayed decision making, intimidation of employees, arbitrary firings, spying on union meetings, and taking of license plate numbers parked outside (Zieger 1982). Westvaco regularly employed intimidation, harassment, and manipulation towards unionists. Verbal and physical abuse was not unheard of. Meetings were monitored by Westvaco supervisors and names were taken (Zieger 1982). A 1919 strike in another WVP&P mill involved eviction from company housing, blacklisting, and armed company guards that target practiced on company grounds (The United Paperworkers of America [UPA] ~1979). Westvaco company executives also met with and paid off government agencies, consistently battling unionization well into the 1950s (Zieger 1982). Westvaco further undermined and discredited the union by maintaining a policy of obfuscation, delay, and the affording of only minor concessions. A lack of union knowledge or strength was hard pressed to compete with company policy. Unions in areas that were previously non-unionized were often inexperienced and lacked knowledge of organization. This was certainly the case in Covington, as union leaders turned to the nearby railroad unionists of Clifton Forge for advice and guidance. In Alleghany County, like many in the South, union resources were limited and substantial leaders were far and few between.

Public voice was also limited. In Alleghany County, the main local medium, the *Covington Virginian*, and other published media praised Westvaco practices on a regular basis and celebrated the absence of unions (Zieger 1982). Another obvious problem to organization

was the large pool of readily available workers that could break strikes (Pope 1942). As mill work was largely unskilled, workers were easily replaced. Companies might shut or lock down the mill or fire great numbers of workers (Hall 1987).

Covington's labor organization began in 1933, sparked by the Great Depression and the new National Industrial Recovery Act. The first organized labor group to function in Westvaco was the International Brotherhood of Pulp, Sulphite, and Paper Mill Workers (IBPSPMW) Local 152. Westvaco reacted with a company union, the Employee's Protective Association. Local 152 would eventually win out. However, within a few years, the IBPSPMW was accused of becoming too cozy with Westvaco management. In 1944, Westvaco production boomed and employee hires were high as the Second World War progressed. With growing tensions over grievance handling and national representation, the Paper Workers Organizing Committee (PWOC) defeated IBPSPMW Local 152. PWOC Local 675, however, met difficulties making agreements with the company over contracts. In 1945, Covington workers, along with workers in other Westvaco mills, walked out. After federal intervention, the workers returned to work on the condition that negotiations resume. The result was an improved contract that represented a union victory.

Functioning unionization finally took hold after a major strike in 1952. Again, Westvaco had the advantage of the community newspaper, which maintained a generally anti-union bias. The company also had the resources to continuously take out anti-union advertisements in the paper. However, the union did prevail, winning bargaining rights, solidarity, and strength (UPA ~1979).

In 1978, Westvaco workers held their most recent strike. The strike lasted approximately 80 days beginning in November 18th. Major issues were working conditions and grievance procedures. The union rejected the proposed contract which they believed undermined union power ("Westvaco Union Local" 1978). Westvaco continued operations with the help of some salaried employees and approximately 250 volunteer employees from other plants. The strike ended on February 5th in 1979 with a union victory. Westvaco agreed to grant amnesty to strikers and issues were resolved.

Union or community organization over environmental damage, however, remains largely non-existent. The overwhelming economic dependence on the paper mill creates a situation in which the community would be likely to accept significant consequences to keep the mill productive: "The Westvaco mill has brought millions of dollars to the area's economy. In turn the mill has asked for and received the cooperation of many grateful members of the community" (Coffey 1969). Again, presuming that MeadWestvaco is linked to the Gathright Dam's construction, the dam would be a prominent example of the company's economic coercion.

Economic Coercion during the Gathright Dam Controversy: 1967-1972

The Gathright Dam was touted by the U.S. Corps of Engineers and the supporting local elite, local government, and Westvaco as an economic necessity. Promoters believed the dam would improve water quality, increase tourism, and prevent flooding. The past damage caused to property in the Jackson River flood plain from sporadic floods was emphasized: "In addition

to the demoralizing effect on the people, there is the tremendous economic loss in damages to residences, commercial establishments, industries, public buildings, agricultural crops, roads, and utilities” (U.S. Army Engineer District, Norfolk, Virginia 1973: 2.6). Specifically, though, flooding meant costly inconveniences to the paper mill, a major inhabitant of the flood plain. Low water levels of drought were also a concern: “While not as damaging as floods, extremes of low water are nearly as objectionable. These occur periodically and are more protracted than floods” (U.S. Army Engineer District, Norfolk, Virginia 1973: 2.11). Clearly, as the paper mill is critically dependent upon water for daily operation, MeadWestvaco had much to gain from the regulation of the Jackson River.

Countless alternatives were suggested by government organizations and non-profit organizations. All were soundly dismissed by the Corps of Engineers, who seemed determined to continue as planned with construction. Given the critics’ suggestion to operate the Gathright as a dry dam, the Corps of Engineers flatly dismissed the plan as would not provide “dependable stream flows for water quality control” (U.S. Army Engineer District, Norfolk, Virginia 1973: 5.3). One can assume that a dry dam would not be especially profitable for a paper mill. When presented with the suggestion to enforce flood plain zoning, the Corps of Engineers retorted:

They are of little immediate value in reducing damage to property existing on the flood plain. Therefore, existing development will continue to sustain damage unless positive structural measures are taken. Furthermore, flood plain zoning does nothing to increase flows during drought periods in the Jackson and James Rivers. (U.S. Army Engineer District, Norfolk, Virginia 1973: 5.7)

Here, again, it seems the needs of the paper mill are made priority. Flood plain zoning would not be of any benefit to MeadWestvaco which was already located in the flood plain. Neither would this zoning regulate the water needed for the mill’s operations. Further, in response to the suggestion to flood-proof areas in danger, the Corps of Engineers cited:

For structural reasons, many of the structures do not lend themselves to floodproofing measures. Floodproofing of others would not be practical because of the costs involved. [...] Furthermore, such a plan would not increase the flows during drought periods in the Jackson and the James Rivers.” (U.S. Army Engineer District, Norfolk, Virginia 1973: 5.8-5.9)

Here, MeadWestvaco, one of the major inhabitants of the floodplain, is not expected to accept responsibility for the risk of business in an area susceptible to flooding. And, again, the Corps cite that flood-proofing would do nothing to regulate the water. Hence, it becomes apparent that alternatives that did not take into consideration the needs of the paper mill were dismissed. The EPA explains:

Without the Gathright Project, Westvaco would have to meet State Water Control Board standards for their aqueous effluent by curtailing their operation at times of low stream flow, by adopting some form of tertiary treatment for their waste when stream

flows fall below certain critical levels, by treating and re-cycling their waste water so as to avoid any discharge to the Jackson River, or by some combination of those practices.

Any of those alternatives would result in reduced loading of the Jackson River with non-biodegradable wastes. [. . .] Many of the non-biodegradable products are known to be carcinogenic or to cause alteration of genetic material in moderate concentrations. [. . .]

With the Gathright Project in operation, Westvaco will be able to meet State Water Control Board standards (with the exception of color) with only secondary waste treatment which will permit a much heavier loading of the Jackson River with non-biodegradable waste. (Skeppstrom 1972: 10)

If the EPA's accusations are taken into consideration, it can only be assumed that Alleghany County's environment was seriously compromised for the sake of MeadWestvaco with the construction of the dam.

At times, the dam planners could not deny that the mill would certainly benefit. However, these benefits were generally downplayed or distracted with other reasons cited for construction: "Westvaco will benefit from the project as will the other industries and communities along the Jackson and James Rivers. The major beneficiaries are those people who will be able to enjoy a stream of higher quality" (U.S. Army Engineer District, Norfolk, Virginia 1973: 8C-24). Further, in response to accusations that Westvaco was not in compliance with air and water pollution regulations for Virginia, the Engineering Corps admits:

There are many instances of non-compliance with the State water quality standards (adopted in 1970) and air quality standards. For several years Westvaco has operated under air control programs approved by the State Air Pollution Control Board and expects to be in full compliance with its regulations within the time limits specified by the Board.

The Virginia Water Control Board and the Virginia Air Pollution Control Board are pressing all municipalities and industries to comply with the law, and there is no doubt that all of them will strive to meet the law's objectives. Abatement schedules recognize the reality of the needs for time and funds for development and construction of pollution control facilities. (U.S. Army Engineer District, Norfolk, Virginia 1973: 8C-19)

Here, the dam planners themselves allude to the fact that the Gathright would help the paper mill meet said standards. This can be taken as evidence for probable economic coercion. MeadWestvaco is the major employer and taxpayer in Alleghany County and the community will do what is necessary to keep business running.

Direct sources from Westvaco regarding the dam project are scant and not particularly incriminating. In the appendix to their final statement on the dam project, The Corps of Engineers include one official statement from Westvaco in which the company makes clear their support of the dam project and denies any profit-gearred tie to the venture (1973: 8D-24). The company insisted that augmenting the Jackson's flow could only enhance their minimum treatment of the water as regulated by law and furthered:

The Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972 require that point sources meet certain effluent standards and any pertinent water quality standards by target dates of 1977, 1983, and 1985. It is our considered opinion that Westvaco can meet the standards as currently interpreted without flow augmentation. However, we recognize the dynamic nature of water quality standards, and believe that the Gathright Dam may be essential to meeting future requirements with the least impact on the total environment. (Adams 2008d)

Here the company also assumes that the dam is needed to meet hypothetical requirements of the future, which would be against afore mentioned amendment which made flow augmentation for the purpose of meeting water standards illegal. Regardless, this Westvaco public statement makes clear their preference in the controversy. This, along with their long-standing near monopoly over the community's economy creates a coercive atmosphere in itself. Citizens are reminded that the paper mill might not be able to function in the future without this dam. Taking into account other accusations and indirect connections, there seems to be strong evidence for MeadWestvaco's economic coercion during the controversy over the dam.

Economic Coercion Today: 2002-2008

Alleghany County remains today as dependent as ever on the paper mill. A 2008 study funded by the Alleghany Foundation reported that the area was overly reliant on MeadWestvaco, which was responsible for two-thirds of all manufacturing jobs in Alleghany County (Conley 2008). A reporter for the *Roanoke Times* summarizes MeadWestvaco's presence in the area:

About 1,400 people work at the paper mill and other MeadWestvaco facilities nearby. The company is the largest taxpayer and employer for Covington and Alleghany County. The sprawling plant's operations also support businesses in the larger region, including many small, independent operators who supply pulpwood. (Adams 2006a)

Not only paper mill employees, but also the community at large, relies on the paper mill for economic survival. There is also rumor that MeadWestvaco maintains this economic dependence in blocking other industries from establishing in the county. There were rumors that a Coors beer plant had intentions to build a factory in the county, but the plans were reportedly blocked by MeadWestvaco. This supposedly took place in the late 1980s or early 1990s, but I was unable to document this. The plant eventually settled in Elkton, Virginia. Elkton also resisted the new plant on grounds of competition with the already present industry (Associated Press 1988). Also, we have seen that MeadWestvaco invests in educational programs meant to track the community youth into mill employment. Sponsorship of student programs and providing student employment ensures future community dependence. Further, MeadWestvaco's probable paternalistic presence in the community also creates a coercive situation.

Recent union tensions provide further indicators of economic coercion. In the strike of 1978, strikers feared loss of employment. Over two hundred employees from other mills were brought in to operate the mill during the strike. One of the terms on ending the strike was amnesty for strikers (“Westvaco Union Local Votes . . .” 1978). As the coal industry has shown us, economic coercion is often present when disagreeable union activity is countered by threats to jobs or wages.

Labor unrest continues today as MeadWestvaco strives to remain competitive in a globalizing economy at the expense of the employees. Prior to the expiration of the United Steel Workers contract with MeadWestvaco that would eventually culminate in the creation of a new, independent union (the Covington Paperworkers Union), USW members complained of employee quiescence and company aggression: “One thing I want everyone to take away from this is that I am terribly alarmed by the lack of discord and upheaval towards the company. People, our contract runs out December 1st, 2006. The company has ignored us. The company has insulted us. And the company has attacked us” (Hall 2006). Here, Roy Hall, a MeadWestvaco employee and USW union member reports a situation where the company is combating the union’s threat to their authority and employees are either too afraid or unaware to act. Furthermore, as the United Steelworkers (USW) Local 8-675 contract with the mill expired at the close of 2006 and progress in negotiations for a renewed contract was slow, there were fears that MeadWestvaco was indirectly reprimanding employees for union action. In the summer of 2007, amidst continuing contract disagreements, MeadWestvaco hired an outside contractor for paper mill maintenance work. Many employees viewed this as a warning to organizers and many speculated that the mill’s hiring of independent contractors for some work duties was a direct threat to union members (Adams 2007c). It appears, then, that there remains a degree of resistance to unionism and union activity in the mill which is indicative of economic coercion.

Local 8-675 included about 964 members from an employee population of nearly 1500 (Adams 2007a). After rejecting several labor contracts with over a year of failed negotiations, several Westvaco employees parted with the United Steelworkers and formed their own organization: Covington Paperworkers Union (CPU) Local 675. In March of 2008, the CPU won the right to represent MeadWestvaco employees by a narrow difference 14 votes. This split has been criticized as further weakening labor power and losing the crucial resources that the larger USW could provide. As of this writing, United Steel Workers has appealed the vote.

Another indicator of economic coercion derived from the coal industry is a manipulation of situations that are outside of the company’s control to influence employees. In the case of coal, national prices and demand for coal were used to coerce employees and unions. In MeadWestvaco’s case, it appears that globalization and the resulting need to compete are utilized to influence employee behavior. Then president of the USW Covington chapter, Ron Brown, warns: “In a world of global challenges, if we are to succeed in Covington, we as union members and the Local leadership as a whole recognize this fact. I say this with a great deal of caution to our members to not embrace all company changes that present a serious threat to the memberships security and long term survival” (Brown 2006). Here, Brown emphasizes that globalization is certainly critical, but employees should be wary of how the company utilizes this issue to control the workplace. Another indicator of economic coercion is the utilization of unions when it is to the company’s advantage. There is evidence of this in the early years of

Westvaco organization, but also appears to continue to some degree today. After the success of the CPU, the USW appealed the election. In doing so the CPU retorted that the USW had been unequally catered to by the paper mill. MeadWestvaco had to address the following accusations in an appeal after the CPU victory:

To gain further advantage in its organizing effort, the USW made additional requests to MeadWestvaco to gain access to employees. For example the USW requested from MeadWestvaco a listing of all bargaining unit employees, their addresses, telephone numbers, and shifts so that the USW could conduct home visits. (T.1323-25; Er. Ex. 4-8). USW International Representatives also asked for unprecedented access to the Company's property, to allow non-employee union organizers to post notices on company bulletin boards and to distribute campaign literature at the Company's gates. (T. 1325-26; Er. Ex. 5). The Union also sought permission for non-employee union organizers to have meetings with employees on Mill premises at the training center and firehouse. (T. 1322-34; Er. Ex. 9-10). MeadWestvaco granted all USW requests for assistance but extended no similar accommodations to the CPU. (T. 1328, 1334-35). ("Employer's Post Hearing Brief . . ." 2008).

This apparent favoritism stands in contrast to MeadWestvaco's public statements about the union rift. MeadWestvaco reported to the *Roanoke Times* that the company was maintaining impartiality (Adams 2007d). In their briefing, MeadWestvaco explained that the USW was afforded ". . . every advantage due to its status as the certified representative . . ." ("Employer's Post Hearing Brief . . ." 2008: 29) Yet, in this brief, MeadWestvaco does accept that USW lost, and urges all involved to respect the election results and proceed with collective bargaining. The *Roanoke Times* speculates that factions left in the aftermath of the close vote that ousted the USW would be desirable to the company as it would weaken employee organization. Others suggest that the succession of the locally originated CPU will weaken employee bargaining power as the professional services of the USW are lost (Adams 2008b). Support of union activity when it is beneficial to do so, an indicator of economic coercion, might be seen in MeadWestvaco's flip-flopping on its support for one union or the other and its position to benefit from the USW/CPU conflict as a whole.

MeadWestvaco's Management and Quiescence

As explained by John Gaventa (1980), companies can employ various methods of power to create and maintain quiescence. I have proposed that MeadWestvaco's paternalism and economic coercion have been instrumental in maintaining Alleghany County's inaction regarding environmental degradation. It appears that both forms of power, paternalism and economic coercion, are present to some degree in the community. It also appears that these forms of power co-exist with the community's lack of issue with the mill's negative impact on the environment.

In the 1960s, the short-lived Alleghany Crusade for Clean Air Inc. made news when they complained that Westvaco was neglecting air pollution control. The group accused the Air Pollution Control Board of having biased ties to Westvaco. Several members of the board were

said to be affiliated with Westvaco and the paper mill industry (Coffey 1969). In this same decade, Westvaco would again come under fire for using their power to manipulate the community into accepting environmental degradation. The Gathright Dam controversy is the most significant instance of environmental damage in the county. And, as it was highly controversial, it is also an instance that was heavily discussed through reports and correspondence. Focusing on this era, from about 1967 to 1972, there are several hints that the paper mill was working to create quiescence about the environmental damage being done for the company's benefit. The Corps of Engineers reassured the public: "Westvaco has always supported the Gathright Dam project because of our interest in the future of the entire James River Basin" (U.S. Army Engineer District, Norfolk, Virginia 1973: 8D-24). The Corps of Engineers would have us believe that the paper mill supported the project for the betterment of the river and not for gain. Supporters of the dam continually cited the benefits of flood-prevention, tourism, and water improvement with the dam construction.

Outsiders remained skeptical and emphasized MeadWestvaco's potential benefits from the environmentally costly dam. Historically, plans for the dam construction were more blatant about their purpose:

Alleghany County has more undeveloped water power than any other section of the State of Virginia. The Jackson River, the river on which the West Virginia Pulp and Paper Mill of Covington is situated, runs through the central part of the County and has a drainage area of 409 square miles. [. . .] The . . . streams of the County . . . if developed, would give cheap power for many industrial operations.

There have been several projects under consideration for the development of the water power resources. Notable among these is the plan of the Virginia Public Service Company for the building of a dam in the Kincaid (Flynn) Gorge near the Bath-Alleghany County line. (Walker 1936: 24)

This 1936 economic survey notes the willingness of the county to forgo environmental quality for critical industry with the example of the paper mill and the Jackson River and also through the promotion of Alleghany County rivers and streams. This survey also specifically cites the potential dam as an opportunity for industrial development. Despite the arguments, the bottom line was monetary. The dam was the most economical and profitable tactic: "...it was concluded that stream objectives could be met most economically by a combination of stream flow regulation and adequate treatment of waste at the source" (U.S. Army Engineer District, Norfolk, Virginia 1973: 5.11). Tellingly, Alleghany County residents were conspicuously silent regarding this controversy. The battle over the dam was fought mainly by outside organizations. The overall silence in Alleghany County is a major indicator of quiescence.

As a generally under-developed community, Alleghany County historically has been reliant on single industries. Industrial leaders thus have been in a position to use economic coercion to convince the community to compromise the environment. In fact, before settling on Covington, Virginia, the West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company attempted to build the paper mill in two other locations in the neighboring states of West Virginia and Maryland. Both attempts were blocked due to citizen protests concerning the mill's pollution. However, an accomplice to the mill's founding suggested Covington, pointing to the willing character of the

people and area. He cited a river (the Jackson) already polluted from iron making and other industries (Arritt 1958). Hence, from the conception of MeadWestvaco, the community was prepared to sacrifice environmental quality for the paper mill's promise of economic benefit.

In the early 1990s, MeadWestvaco proposed the closing of a section of the Jackson River surrounding the mill from the public. Many locals were not happy with the hindered recreational access and were suspicious that the mill had something to hide (McCue 1994a). However, the blockage was approved and even outspoken citizens cited an appreciation for Westvaco's business, a wariness to cross paths with the mill, and a recognized economic reliance on the company (McCue 1994a and McCue 1994b). A 1990 *Roanoke Times* article covering Alleghany County's ailments focused on the impact of Westvaco's environmental damage. Here, both paternalism and economic coercion are alluded to: "Locals affectionately call it 'the smell of money' because the mill employs 1,750 people and is the area's biggest employer" (Bishop 1990: C8). This article describes an appreciation for Westvaco's care of the community despite obvious pollution. This affection points to quiescence regarding environmental degradation that is maintained by Westvaco's paternalist influence. Further, the Alleghany County Chamber of Commerce retorts to complaints of pollution with claims that Westvaco has drastically improved its pollution output and a reminder that without the industry there would be no city of Covington (Bishop 1990). These comments contain elements of both paternalism and economic coercion. Some locals seem to assume that the mill is altruistically reducing pollution (a possible indicator of paternalism) and also a potential loss of their major industry without an acceptance of the pollution (an indicator of economic coercion).

Today, MeadWestvaco continues to create a paternalistic image of environmental stewardship. Through advertisements, sponsorship of environmental groups and programs, and emphasis on company improvements on operations that impact the environment, MeadWestvaco creates an impression of concern for the environment. This impression has the ability to overshadow the necessary daily damage being done as part of paper production. A full-page advertisement in the *Alleghany Living* magazine paid for by MeadWestvaco is the perfect example. The advertisement depicts a young girl on a rope swing sweeping across a lush backdrop of foliage. It reads: "We don't just plant trees, we plant playgrounds. As a company, we know the value of forests. As part of the community, we know their recreational value as well. That's why we believe in sustainable forestry practices" (MeadWestvaco 2007). Here, the company emphasizes environmental and community responsibility and care. In this advertisement, the fact that MeadWestvaco is one of the top polluters in the state is completely obscured.

Hence, throughout MeadWestvaco's operation in Alleghany County, both paternalism and economic coercion have been utilized to some extent to maintain a community quiescence regarding the mill's negative environmental impact. MeadWestvaco is viewed as a paternal figure worthy of gratitude that is not to be disobeyed. The mill is also the major employer and there is substantial economic risk involved in crossing the company. Therefore, environmental damage is often downplayed or seen as necessary.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis has sought to research three questions: (1) Does environmental damage exist in Alleghany County, Virginia? (2) Does MeadWestvaco utilize strategies of power to create and maintain quiescence? Particularly, to what extent is paternalism and economic coercion utilized? And finally, (3) is quiescence towards environmental degradation related to MeadWestvaco's paternalism and economic coercion?

Alleghany County, a sparsely populated, impoverished, and isolated region, is host to one of Virginia's major polluters. Historically, the county has relied on a single industry in a cycle of boom and bust. From the iron industry to the paper industry, throughout each cycle, Alleghany County has sacrificed environmental equality for industry through a combination of necessity and influence. As we have seen in the brief explorations of the Southern textile mills and the Appalachian coal mines, the major methods of power present in Alleghany County, paternalism and economic coercion, are common elsewhere. Modernization in this region paved the way for massive exploitation. Industrial power institutionalized and began to create and maintain communities. Multi-dimensional forms of power can both create and maintain quiescence. Specifically, paternalism and economic coercion, as tools of power, have the ability to instill quiescence. I use the indicators of paternalism in the textile mills and economic coercion in the coal mines to gain a clearer understanding of the power present in MeadWestvaco's relationship with Alleghany County.

Overall, I find some definite indicators of paternalism in Alleghany County. Some of these indicators, such as company housing, blatant welfare work, arbitrary hiring, firings, and promotions, are more prominent during the earlier part of the company's operations in the community. However, even with significant modernization in the area, several aspects of paternalism seem to remain, as seen in the construction of the Gathright Dam.

Promoted as a community gain that would beautify the area, minimize floods, and add recreation, the dam represents a massive example of company welfare work with major environmental costs. In the years since the dam construction, paternalism continues in other forms. MeadWestvaco seems to spend a great deal of its resources to create a positive and benevolent public image in the community. Local college programs that track students into employment with the company, summer job opportunities for employee children, a yearly art contest for company Christmas cards, and sponsorship of local civic groups are all primary examples of an attempt to create a family-like relationship between the company, employees, and area citizens.

A few typical indicators were not found in the extent of my research regarding Westvaco. These included the company's moral policing of the community, company churches, and company stores. However, these indicators were present in my review of previous industry in the area. Given that the majority of the indicators for paternalism gleaned from Southern textile mills were found present in Alleghany County in some form, I believe that paternalism is present to some extent. Alleghany County obeys MeadWestvaco out of esteem and fear of reprimand.

Economic coercion is also present to an extent in Alleghany County. As a community that is almost entirely reliant on the paper mill, Alleghany County must be extremely attentive to MeadWestvaco's needs in order to protect economic sustainability. Major indicators of

economic coercion derived from the study of the Appalachian coal industry are also present in Alleghany County. An over-reliance on the paper mill and discouragement of competing business (as with the Coors plant) is indicative of economic coercion. Again, the Gathright Dam controversy provides another example of MeadWestvaco's economic coercion. The company was blamed outright for its influence over the project. Many supporters dismissed this accusation, while others accepted and defended it. The Gathright Dam was good for the paper mill's business, and the community believed that what was good for the paper mill was good for them. Further, conflicts with union activity reveal several more indicators of economic coercion. Hostile opposition to unionization in the earlier part of the twentieth century, threats to job security during strikes, support of unions when it was beneficial to do so both in the past and currently, and manipulation of outside influences such as globalization to dictate negotiations are all examples of the company's coercive tactics.

Some indicators of economic coercion were not plainly identifiable. I did not find any direct threat from MeadWestvaco to relocate as a way to coerce employees to remain quiescent. However, I did find several instances where MeadWestvaco or local government officials implied that the mill would not be able to continue business in the future without certain compromises to the environment. Likewise, there was no definite source to verify the possibility of the Coors plant opening in Alleghany County. Nevertheless, there are several indicators of economic coercion present in Alleghany County which would imply that the community obeys MeadWestvaco for fear of the economic risk involved.

Finally, the two major forms of MeadWestvaco's power in question, paternalism and economic coercion, can be linked to environmental quiescence in several instances. The major link, of course, is the Gathright Dam controversy. The construction of the dam and lake meant immense environmental costs to the citizens of Alleghany County. And yet, the project was criticized primarily by non-resident organizations instead of locals. The majority of action taken against the project was done by outsiders. The community itself was largely silent. Most residents did not act, nor did they speak out. This silence is perhaps one of the major indicators of MeadWestvaco's power maintaining quiescence. The Alleghany County community was told that the dam would be a great endowment and would benefit business. The community obeyed: both grateful for the apparent gift and lacking awareness of any feasible alternative. With the construction of the dam, MeadWestvaco had massive financial savings at stake in the form of reduced flood risk, regulated water for production, and less investment in pollution treatment. Local government was primarily concerned with aiding the sustainability and contentment of the county's major economic entity. Residents also had the preservation of their economy at stake, but their right to environmental equity was also on the line. To this day, MeadWestvaco's steady environmental damage that spoils Alleghany County's air, water, and land remains largely unquestioned or unattended. Without any direct evidence, it is difficult to say with certainty that quiescence regarding environmental damage is maintained by MeadWestvaco's paternalism and economic coercion. However, the reasons given by MeadWestvaco and local government officials for the paper mill's environmental impacts, the community's failure to act against these impacts, the reasons the residents state for said inaction, or even an overall silence among residents points to a very probable connection between MeadWestvaco's power and environmental quiescence.

It can be concluded, then, that MeadWestvaco likely does influence Alleghany County's awareness of environmental damage and ability to act. I have found that environmental damage does exist in Alleghany County. I also found that paternalism and economic coercion are present to some extent in MeadWestvaco management relations with workers and the community. Finally, I have found a probable connection between quiescence towards environmental degradation and said paternalism and economic coercion. Both economic coercion and paternalism appear to be present in similar degrees. While it is true that paternalism was more prominent in the days before unionism, it is clear that MeadWestvaco continues to foster a familial atmosphere in the community. At the same time, economic coercion appears to have been utilized by the company in the form of naked force. Instances of paternalism and economic coercion often overlap, and the two strategies of power are interrelated. At times it is difficult to distinguish the two. And it may well be that they are both intertwined and complementary, with one form becoming more effective in some contexts, and the other emerging when the first fails.

There is a compelling history of environmental destruction in the community that has been routinely ignored or deemed necessary. MeadWestvaco, the major economic provider for over a century, has assumed a fatherly figure that cares for the community and also a coercive figure that feeds economic dependence. Alleghany County does not organize against environmental damage because the community is grateful, afraid to do so, and/or because it sees little choice. Alleghany County faces a devastatingly unequal situation and, under the company's imposed and maintained quiescence, remains powerless to improve or rectify the situation.

Environmental activist groups in Alleghany County have existed in the past and the present. However, these groups have been small and limited in impact. The only major group functioning in the county today is the Cowpasture River Preservation Association. This group, as I have mentioned previously, is concerned with a river that is not navigable and is privately owned. Clearly out of MeadWestvaco's realm, protecting the Cowpasture presents no risk of reprimanding. No such group exists for Alleghany County's Jackson River. With Douthat State Park, the Jackson River National Forest District, and the excellent natural resource department in Dabney S. Lancaster Community College working to raise environmental awareness and appreciation in the community, the Jackson River's needs are conspicuously ignored.

Why is there no organization or action taken to preserve or protect the Jackson River? Why has the river been allowed to fall victim to extensive damming, pollution, and other alteration? Why do residents tolerate massive plumes of poisonous smoke that billow from the stacks non-stop? I argue that the community is exhibiting both obedience and fatalism as a result of a relationship with MeadWestvaco that is both paternalistic and economically coercive. MeadWestvaco controls the community, excludes issues, and further influences visibility of issues impacting Alleghany County residents. This all-inclusive three-dimensional power ensures that MeadWestvaco can profitably continue business as usual on the Jackson River, pumping massive amounts of pollution into the countryside unquestioned and at the expense of the Alleghany County community. Residents, with an understandably strong tie to the land, remain in the area but also remain locked in an unequal situation that they are often powerless to challenge. Alleghany County residents are not ignorant, they are not uncaring, and they are not

weak or lazy. Alleghany County has been incorporated into a system of MeadWestvaco's institutionalized power that shapes the behavior of employees and community members.

This research has highlighted the environmental inequality that is so often found in Appalachian communities. It has shown how quiescence towards inequality can be created and maintained by major stakeholders in power. Further, we see that strategies of power may not be independent of one another or complete in their influence. Importantly, my findings relieve much of the community's self-blaming and defeatism regarding the environmental damage in Alleghany County. The connection between environmental degradation and power might be made clearer if interviews of community members, employers, and other stakeholders were conducted. Particularly, interviews would give voice to Alleghany County residents, who have been largely silent during critical incidences of environmental degradation and contestation. This thesis has utilized the research of turn of the century Southern textile mills and the Appalachian coal mines. However, it would be interesting to compare Alleghany County to other present-day Appalachian or Southern communities in similar situations of environmental inequality. This might uncover patterns of maintained quiescence or perhaps alternatives to inaction.

Limitations

It is difficult to understand the effect of company power over a community without taking into consideration the social attitudes within the community. It would thus be useful to interview key individuals in the company, the union, and the Alleghany community. However, to keep the project of a manageable size, I have relied upon the established research of paternalism in the Southern Piedmont textile mills and economic coercion in Appalachian coal mines. The power structures in Alleghany County are currently very under researched (another limitation in itself), and I have found a solid framework for my investigations utilizing research undertaken in neighboring Southern industry. I can only use this framework to define paternalism and economic coercion and their effects, how their existence can be discerned, and how MeadWestvaco's relationship with Alleghany County might fit these models of power. While all communities are unique, I believe that the creation and maintenance of paternalism and economic coercion on both the part of the company and the community in the textile mills and coal mines respectively are likely very similar in Alleghany County.

Furthermore, paternalism and economic coercion are rarely mutually exclusive of one another. The presence of these modes of power is often complex and overlaps. It is difficult at times to separate indicators for each form of power. Likewise, it is difficult to precisely say which method, paternalism or economic coercion, is at work at any particular point, or which method is more predominant.

Additionally, it is tricky to rely on historical information to explain a present and ongoing instance of quiescence. Again, in order to keep the project to a manageable size, interviews were not conducted. Evidence linking paternalism and economic coercion to quiescence regarding environmental degradation has been indirect. And, as Alleghany County is under researched, I relied on previously documented cases of power in other Southern industries which may overlook differences between these locations.

Finally, I acknowledge a personal investment in this research. As a long time resident of Alleghany County, I have been witness to the severe environmental degradation. I have breathed the poisoned air, I have been afraid to swim in the Jackson River, and I have seen a devastated mountainside after a clear cut bound for MeadWestvaco. I have grown up in a household that was largely cynical of MeadWestvaco's impact on the community. I have gone to school with classmates who all had family members working for the mill. I have heard the disgruntled complaints of mill workers with injured bodies and souls who seem to place blame on each other or on fate. I have a deep connection to the area and a suspicion of MeadWestvaco. I have acknowledged this association and have attempted to conduct this research fairly and openly.

It is my hope that the Alleghany County community will regain command over its natural resources and take action against the environmental sacrifices that are so often made for the sake of industry. True, Alleghany County has suffered a devastating amount of environmental destruction over the past century, but there is still a great deal remaining that is worth preserving and protecting. Perhaps the future will bring economic diversity to the community, a decreased reliance on MeadWestvaco, or a greater appreciation for the county's natural resources via tourism and recreation. Until then, the residents of Alleghany County, who so proudly battled for unionism in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, might be able to break through MeadWestvaco's long-standing strategies of power and challenge the environmental inequality that has plagued them for so many years.

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