

Reframing Solidarity: Company Magazine as Family Album

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Abstract

We are witnessing a time of shrinking labor unions across the globe. Among member states of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, rates of union membership have declined from 30% in 1985 to 20% today (McCarthy 2017). In the U.S., the current rate is just 10.7% (Yadoo 2018). We have seen along with this the concomitant reduction in working-class and middle-class standards of living. Technological, political, and economic factors have impacted this change, but there is a cultural dimension to it as well. From the moment industrial unions in the U.S. gained power, corporations began to counter working-class solidarity with alternative narratives that emphasized individualism, domesticity, and leisure. This article illuminates such efforts with a reading of one particularly sophisticated example from the mid-twentieth century, in which a steel corporation's company magazine used workers' own participation and self-representations in an effort to reorient notions of solidarity toward an identification with the corporation as family.

Keywords

Working-class self-representation, company magazines, photography, solidarity.

Introduction

For as long as there has been a working class, the notion of solidarity has powered the way working-class people come together to make their lives and communities better. Unions, at their best the institutional embodiment of this notion, have been and continue to be instruments through which working people fight for better jobs, job security, higher standards of living, and public policy that benefits the majority of people instead of corporations and the wealthiest citizens (Bivens et al. 2017). In the U.S., the recent success of the West Virginia teachers expresses the power of solidarity, while a case before the Supreme Court, *Janus v. AFSCME*, suggests its precariousness. The cultural dynamics of solidarity are highlighted in both of these examples. In West Virginia, a risky illegal work stoppage drew on a history of labor militancy in coal country (Robertson & Bidgoodmarch 2018). At stake in the Supreme Court case is whether workers should be required to help support the union that represents them. If the plaintiff wins, workers will be able to opt out of paying administrative fees to their unions, presenting what economists call the 'free ridership' dilemma and a likely drop in union resources (Thomson-DeVeaux 2018). If the union is legally obligated to fight in workers' interests no matter what, why should they pay? Both cases raise the question of how solidarity is fostered and undermined.

During the past 34 years in the U.S., the percentage of unionized workers has been cut nearly in half, from 20.1% in 1983 to 10.7% in 2017 (Yadoo 2018). With that has come greater wage inequality and lower standards of living for working-class and middle-class people (Freeman et al. 2016; Mishel et al. 2012; Shambaugh et al. 2017). A factor precipitating this decline is the concentrated effort corporations and their wealthy beneficiaries have sustained to undermine unions politically and culturally. One form of the cultural approach has been the company magazine, which addressed workers and proliferated in the U.S. alongside the growth of industrial unions. Looking back on worker-centered publicity from the days when unions were relatively strong can provide an indication of the kinds of cultural approaches corporate America took in efforts to push back on working-class identity and solidarity, and may shed some light on the multifarious ways today's corporate hegemony has been accomplished.

From the moment many working-class people achieved mass power through industrial unions, corporations worked to undermine the foundations of identity and solidarity that unions depend on. In the U.S., industrial unionism became possible on a large scale due to political reforms put in place during the Great Depression, and corporate pushback gained momentum after World War II. According to Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, the business community 'sought not only to recast the political economy of postwar America but also to reshape the ideas, images, and attitudes through which Americans understood their world. Employers hoped to restore the public's allegiance to an individualistic ethos that had been shaken by the travails of the Depression' (Fones-Wolf 1994, p. 285). Company magazines can be understood as an ideological tool in the corporate box. They have long been used by corporate publicity and advertising departments to represent a particular vision of the corporation to its employees, and a particular vision of the workers to themselves. While these magazines were often started with a stated goal of building 'communication' and increasing 'understanding' between management and the work force, the communication typically ran one way, from the company to its workers, and the goal was not so much that the company understand its workers, but that those workers understand the company and their position within it. This essay will look at a magazine with a more nuanced approach, one that solicited worker participation in its effort to reorient the notion of solidarity from workers' collective action toward a middle-class individualism centered around nuclear family and leisure activities.

The magazine we will be looking at, *Men and Steel*, was published in the U.S. by the Pittsburgh-based Jones and Laughlin Steel Corporation (J&L). The history of labor relations in steelmaking is key to understanding the emergence of this and other company magazines in the industry. From 1892, when the Homestead lockout effectively ended organized labor in the mills, until 1937, when New Deal reforms enabled the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) to re-organize the entire industry, individual workers were at the mercy of corporate prerogative. Despite periodic efforts by workers to unionize, most notably during the Great Steel Strike of 1919, steelmakers retained absolute control over workers, on the job and in the civic life of the many company towns that surrounded mills throughout the country. The steel corporations used all manner of repression to maintain their supremacy. It was not until 1935, when the CIO-supported organizing drive in steel began in earnest, that workers mounted a successful opposition. The industry giant, the United States Steel Corporation, recognized the CIO-affiliated Steel Workers Organizing Committee as the bargaining agent for its workers in March of 1937. The new steel union was strengthened after a successful strike in 1946 for wage increases to counter post-war inflation, and by the 1950s, the union had built up the power to effectively combat corporate interests on the shop floor and in national politics. Steel company magazines emerged in the 1930s to combat the threat of CIO organizing, and by the late 1940s

and 1950s had become an important way for companies to address a powerful workforce. J&L began publishing *Men and Steel* in 1947, ten years after the successful organizing drive.

This is also the same year that Congress passed the restrictive Labor-Management Relations Act (popularly known as Taft-Hartley) that put numerous limitations on the activities of unions and significantly curbed their power. The assault on organized labor continued throughout the decade in anti-union ‘right to work’ campaigns at the state level, and culminated in the passage of the Landrum-Griffin Act of 1959. Although many of the ‘right to work’ campaigns failed, both labor reform acts effectively limited workers’ ability to organize, and undermined the security of unions once established.¹ In steel, according to Jack Metzgar, ‘the battles would be fierce but civilized,’ fought with words, numbers and ideas instead of guns and clubs. During the post-war years, the steel industry resisted every advance the union demanded, but yielded bit by bit until, in 1956, the Steelworkers had everything they had wanted (Metzgar 2000, p. 53-54). The union was indeed powerful, as was organized labor throughout the country. But none of this was a given. Metzgar describes the situation of the Steelworkers in 1959—verging on the longest steel strike in history—as ‘hostile.’ Despite a superficial cordiality, every contract negotiation brought labor and management head to head, both struggling to win public opinion to their side. This dynamic also played out on the national level, as conservative business leaders led a fight for ‘labor reform’ that masked a challenge to the legitimacy of unionism per se. *Men and Steel* was founded within this political context by J&L’s new president and chairman of the board Admiral Ben Moreell, who had a reputation for good labor relations. Thus, we can see the magazine as both a cultural front within this nation-wide anti-union attack, and an effort to foster amicable relations between the corporation and an empowered adversary. A close reading of the inaugural issue unpacks some of the magazine’s rhetorical strategies.

‘To the Employees and Shareholders . . .’



Figure 1

In a personalized, signed letter introducing the first issue, Moreell established the publication’s goals of communication and understanding (fig. 1). Unlike many company magazines, which were addressed to employees, *Men and Steel* addressed employees and shareholders alike. In his letter, Moreell identifies himself with a ‘we’ that includes the producers of the magazine and addresses shareholders, workers, and management in the third person. He begins by explaining that ‘our purpose is to establish a medium whereby we can bring to the attention of employees and

of shareholders pertinent facts and the views of the management with respect to the past, current and future operations of the Corporation.’² Here, workers and shareholders are presented as equally important members of the audience. Moreell does not pretend that

¹ Specifically, Taft-Hartley banned closed (union only) shops, allowed states to ban union shops, and enabled Congress to issue injunctions against strikes with national impact (Serrin 1992, p. 246). Landrum-Griffin prohibited all secondary boycotts, drastically limited organizational picketing, and forced cumbersome requirements of conduct and disclosure on unions (Fones-Wolf 1994, pp. 276, 257-284). See also Metzgar 2000, pp. 29, 54, 88, 74-77, and 227.

² This and all following quotations from the Admiral’s welcome letter are from *Men and Steel*, November 1947, inside the front cover. For access to these issues of *Men and Steel* I thank Donald R. Inman and the Beaver County Industrial Museum in Darlington, Pennsylvania.

employees and shareholders have the same role in the company: ‘We believe that the shareholders, who are, in fact, the owners of this Corporation, should have such information as may be necessary for them to gauge the efficiency of our operations and the propriety of management’s actions in the conduct of the business.’ Implied is the notion that although shareholders own the company, as audience members they are on par with workers because, like them, they can glean all the information they need about the doings of the company from this magazine. This is, of course, misleading—shareholders received much more privileged information about the corporation than workers did, through annual reports and the like. Moreell continues the parallelism nonetheless: ‘We believe, too, that our employees have a vital interest in the operation of the Corporation and that they are entitled to know the essential facts concerning our operations and our plans as they may affect the welfare of employees.’ Both workers and shareholders enjoy the right to know of the company’s activities, and both will be equally well served by this new publication. Moreell continues by reminding readers what is at stake:

All employees are interested in the security of their jobs and in the ability of the Corporation to continue to pay salaries and wages which are in keeping with recognized American standards of living. . . . We believe that unless we can establish the Corporation on a firm foundation of security which will permit us to compete successfully in this highly competitive industry, we will fail in our obligations to our shareholders . . . and to our employees.

Ordinarily, when corporate propaganda reminds workers that their livelihoods depend upon the company’s security, it functions as a veiled threat that gains by labor could in the long run undermine the competitiveness of the enterprise, and is meant to dissuade workers from disruptive practices such as strikes. Here, the phrase ‘unless we can establish’ suggests that there is a pressing danger to the company, and may be referring obliquely to the major strike only a year past. In this case, however, with shareholders receiving the same message, the reminder seems less one-sided; shareholders may have to be prepared to make their own sacrifices in the interests of J&L’s security, in the form of reduced dividends.

With so much at stake, Moreell intends ‘that the information with respect to the operations of the Corporation, contained in these bulletins, shall be as complete as practicable.’ He assures readers: ‘it is my purpose to discuss our Corporation problems with you, fully and frankly, in future issues.’ It is this promise of frankness, of honest communication, of articles that did not merely tout the corporation but addressed ‘problems’ as well, that clinches the sense of unity on the part of the two reader groups and also sets the stated goals of *Men and Steel* apart from those of comparable publications, in which puff pieces and company progress narratives hold sway.

The majority of informative news pieces in the issue does conform to the progress narrative model established by prior company magazines, Moreell’s promise of frankness notwithstanding. As was typical in steel industry magazines, safety was a favorite topic. One article was devoted to announcing a safety essay contest, and another proclaimed ‘Otis Wins Safety Awards,’ and was illustrated with photos of a banquet. Another article carried the headline ‘Accident prevention—an important management function.’ This statement reflects a new attitude on the part of management, as well as Moreell’s personal preoccupation with the topic, in contrast with the more typical approach in which workers bear all the responsibility. The article outlines safety programs management has instituted, including helping to organize

the National Safety Council.³ Other articles advertise a new product used in oil exploration, ‘known by the unique name of “Integral Joint Rolled Thread Shot Hole Casing,”’ and the way ‘J&L Utilizes Employee Thinking Power’ through a suggestion/reward program. Finally, readers are kept apprised of management personnel changes, and in a recurring feature ‘This is What We Did,’ the company presents its records for production tonnage.⁴

Although positive stories are the norm, two articles in this issue stand out as exceptions and seem to support Moreell’s claim to ‘discuss our Corporation problems with you, fully and frankly.’ One, headlined ‘Problems We Face in J&L: The Challenge of Our Blast Furnace Relining Program,’ seems to get right down to the difficult business of addressing company troubles. However, readers braced for the worst might be cheered when they realize that the so-called problem is that ‘demand for steel has continued to be greater than the supply.’ This is the kind of ‘problem’ that keeps both workers and shareholders happy. The difficulty is that relining the blast furnaces, a necessary maintenance routine, reduces the number of available furnaces for production. The article then describes fluctuations since V-J Day that have resulted in delays and shortages, illustrated with a graph. Readers are assured, however, that ‘no stone will be left unturned to keep our production at the highest possible level during this period of peak demand for steel.’⁵ In this instance, the frank confrontation of J&L’s ‘problems’ resulted in an upbeat promotional account nonetheless.



Figure 2

The nature of the contrast between article headline and content is reversed in our second example. Headlined ‘We Move Ahead,’ this article seems to promise the typical progress narrative. Illustrated on page one with an impressive panorama of J&L’s Pittsburgh works, the image and title together seem to proclaim a glorious future for the company (fig. 2).⁶ However, the following seven pages of text do not meet these expectations. Although the article is all about improvements being made in various plants, the tone is defensive:

It is currently popular with some people to insist that the steel industry is not moving fast enough—that productive capacity must

³ Ibid., pp. 9-11.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 15, 16, and inside the back cover, respectively.

⁵ Ibid., p. 14.

⁶ Ibid., p. 1. The photograph is ‘Steel at Twilight,’ made by Arthur d’Arazien in 1947. This image ended up circulating rather widely, within the corporation and without, over many subsequent years, and marked the beginning of a long a productive relationship between the photographer and J&L.

be increased rapidly to meet assumed demands. How this could be accomplished within the near future in the face of fuel and scrap shortages, which are curtailing production in existing plants, has not been explained.

As it continues, the narrative even begins to sound a little gloomy: ‘Like the farmer who starved his family to save potatoes for seed the following spring, the building of new steel making capacity might likewise starve many businesses for the very steel which they were being denied in order to achieve an eventual increase in production.’ This is the lead article, and a long one. It goes on to discuss various phases of production—coal, iron ore, the central boiling house, blast furnaces, flat rolled products—where the company is facing difficulties and addressing them by expensive improvements. The author repeatedly emphasizes how much money was being spent: ‘The expenditures for which this corporation is committed represent the maximum effort that can be made at this time to improve our properties and continue their operation at peak production levels.’ By the end, the unfortunate author sounds quite put upon; if he has not alienated his readers with the defensive tone, he may well have their sympathy for being so beleaguered.⁷ As if in tacit admission that this article was a bit of a downer, it is immediately followed by a full-page cartoon with the caption ‘Plant Improvements Push Production Up.’

Addressing company problems in this way is a nuanced approach to drawing workers into an identity with the corporation. Instead of merely playing on employee pride by associating readers with a great and powerful enterprise, J&L tries to have it both ways. Paying attention to points at which the company struggles humanizes the corporation, and also sparks a reader’s awareness to considerations beyond his or her own needs. Perhaps the editors hope that in reading about the vast expenditures the corporation is making to improve plant facilities, unionists might feel less compelled to dig in their heels for that extra 18 cents per hour when the next contract negotiations roll around. This may be wishful thinking on the company’s part, but there is a possibility that including workers in discussions of J&L’s problems could increase their sense of investment in the corporation’s affairs, and make worker-readers feel privy to some of the information previously only available to shareholders. At the very least, they may be less inclined to feel condescended to.

In addition to the informative articles about corporate activities, the first issue of *Men and Steel* exhibited a personal side. At the very center of the magazine, on pages numbered 8A-D, a section detailing local news was inserted into each issue of the periodical. This would be a recurring feature in *Men and Steel* through April 1952. So, while pages one through seven and nine through 16 were the same for all readers at J&L work sites across the country, varying numbers of lettered pages at the center address specific localities, for instance Aliquippa, Pittsburgh, McKeesport, or the Otis works in Cleveland. The special section for Aliquippa includes news about recent promotions, three workers who are the first graduates of a new apprenticeship program, several retirements, and a meeting of the labor-management committee. These pages are copiously illustrated with photos, including a nice portrait of one old-timer retiring, a group shot of people gathered for a promotion ceremony, a picture of the apprentices getting their cards from their supervisors, and a picture of the cards themselves. There is also a two-page ‘meet the staff’ spread (fig. 3). Headshots of each staff member are

⁷ The article is credited to A. A. Archibald, Assistant to Vice President, Plant Development and secretary of the Plant Development Committee.

arranged in a circle, within which are printed little bits of personal information—hobbies, etc.—about each person, including their job in the mill.⁸



Figure 3

The inclusion of these local sections is key to the balanced dynamic of the magazine, and becomes even more important in subsequent issues. The special Aliquippa section in the first issue shows the personal side of workplace news, and functions to ground the reader in a sense of place and community. This effect would become even more personalized in subsequent issues, as workers took on greater involvement in the magazine's content. However, even at this point, with the focus exclusively on the work-related news of the local plant, we can see how this feature of the magazine rounds out its rhetorical strategy. The three-pronged approach established in this issue—direct messages from the chairman himself, substantive informative articles on the business that are more than mere puff pieces, and a local section connecting specific mill sites to the greater whole—reveals *Men and Steel* to be a highly sophisticated public relations endeavor. Even so, the communication ultimately only goes one way, from the company to the readers.

We shall see, however, that this dynamic rapidly becomes more complex. *Men and Steel* soon developed into a magazine with a high level of worker participation. Not only did the company represent itself through the magazine, but workers began to represent themselves, as well. This occurred in several different ways, such as the submission of original art work, but primarily through the medium of photography. This increasing worker participation immediately starts to change the tone of the entire magazine, and this change becomes evident in the very next issue.

⁸ *Men and Steel*, November 1947, pp. 8A-D.

‘They have said they like it, and we like their way of showing it’

The difference in tone between the second issue, which came out in December 1947, and the first was evident from the very first thing readers saw—the front cover. The cover of the November issue was a magnificent black and white image of a dramatic part of the steelmaking process in which molten metal is poured from a giant ladle into the open hearth furnace (fig. 4a). The December cover, in contrast, is a holiday photo—a staged image of young men singing on a set built to look like a snowy village street (fig. 4b). Unlike later issues, which always provide a credit and explanation for the cover photo, neither of the first two cover images is captioned in any way. Although the festive street scene on the December cover is easily explained by the holiday season, it also suggests a less businesslike tone, and this is reflected in the content of the issue.



Figure 4a & Figure 4b

Of course, much of the material is similar; there is the Admiral’s letter, again on the inside front cover, this month about safety. There is a big article about fabricating at the McKeesport mill, and the recurring features, ‘This is what we did’ and ‘Problems We Face in J&L.’ There is also the local section, although it is now much bigger—twelve pages, as compared to last month’s four. The news covered is also a bit different. Though still covering plant-related personal news like retirements and awards, there is also more personal material from workers’ lives outside the mill, such as birth and wedding announcements. There are more photographs in general in the section this month, a couple of which are from workers on vacation. One of these is captioned ‘John Cohenour, soaking pit Millwright, with two “dandies” caught in the Trent River, Canada’ (fig. 5).⁹ The ‘dandies,’ of course, are two big fish, which Mr. Cohenour displays proudly.

⁹ *Men and Steel*, December 1947, p. 8.



Figure 5

Some insight about these changes can be gleaned from a section discussing the magazine itself: ‘First Issue of Men and Steel Draws Reader Congratulations.’¹⁰ The editors explain that ‘Employees at the plants and in the offices have shown their interest by sending in stories and photographs to the Reporters and Editors of their own plant sections. They have said they like it, and we like their way of showing it.’ The editors clearly encouraged reader involvement, and the readers responded. As they did so, the overall tone of the magazine lightened considerably between the inaugural and following issues. While the substantive articles remained substantive and the commitment to sharing ‘Problems We Face in J&L’ persisted, a lighter feeling came from more personal news and more photographs of individuals contributed by employees. Worker involvement in the early stages appears to have helped shape the form taken by the magazine.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 15

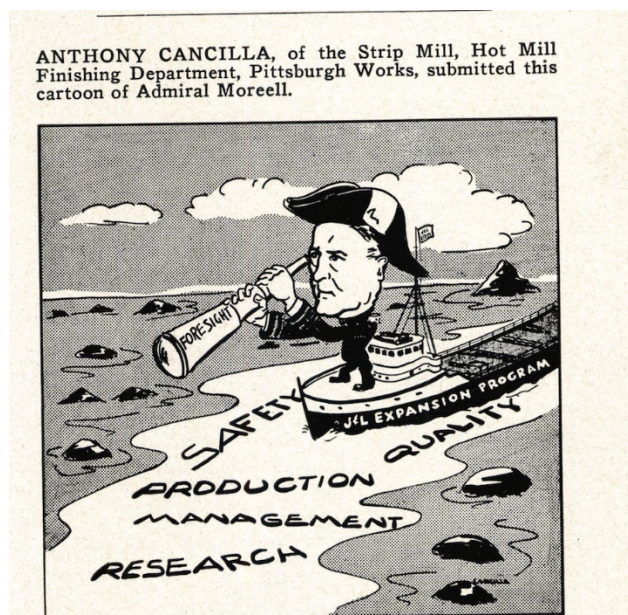


Figure 6

The most apparent mode of reader participation is through the contribution of visual materials. Sometimes these contributions came in the form of original artwork, such as this cartoon illustrating the chief executive's role in an on-going expansion project (fig. 6). In the majority of cases, however, readers contributed to the magazine by submitting photographs—most often, family snapshots. The impetus for this sort of participation is unclear; although editors did encourage it through special features at the local and company-wide level, it may also be the case that these features were suggested by readers, or at the very least inspired by contributions they were already making. For example, the third issue introduced two new features that encouraged readers to send in their photos. At the local level, in Aliquippa, the plant-based editors invented 'Camera Corner.' Presenting a worker-submitted photo, the editors explain, 'this is the staff's choice of the most interesting snapshot submitted this month. Each month, this corner will feature the most interesting snapshot received, with or without an accompanying story. All entries will be returned. Just turn your picture in to your department reporter.'¹¹ Although the editors do not elaborate on what they mean by 'interesting,' their choices suggest a particular interest in children. The first winner is a picture of a little boy in a cowboy suit on a pony, and subsequent winners are similarly domestic (fig. 7). The 'Camera Corner' feature complements and builds upon the employee participation that had already begun in the previous issue, increasing the number of personal snapshots in the local section. Local editors at other mill sites established similar features, such as the Pittsburgh local section's 'Pensioners' Photographs' column, featuring pictures sent in by 'old timers.'

¹¹ Ibid., p. 8-K.



Figure 7

The other photographic feature introduced in this issue was the company-wide ‘Photo of the Month.’ The feature is tied in with the recent organization of J&L Camera Clubs at several of the works, plants, and mines, in the hopes that ‘selection of a ‘Photo of the Month’ might encourage the members.’ Readers are assured ‘the selections will be made by competent judges and will be reproduced when space is available—which it is expected will be quite often.’ The contest becomes even more exciting when readers learn that ‘the Corporation will pay \$25 for any photograph submitted that is used as a cover illustration for *Men and Steel*.’ The editors go on to describe what kinds of photographs will stand the best chance of winning: ‘seasonal pictures might be acceptable, but there is nothing so interesting to people as other people. Story-telling pictures of people, especially children, would make good covers for the magazine’¹² Here again, the emphasis is on personal, leisure, and domestic themes.

¹² Ibid., p. 17.

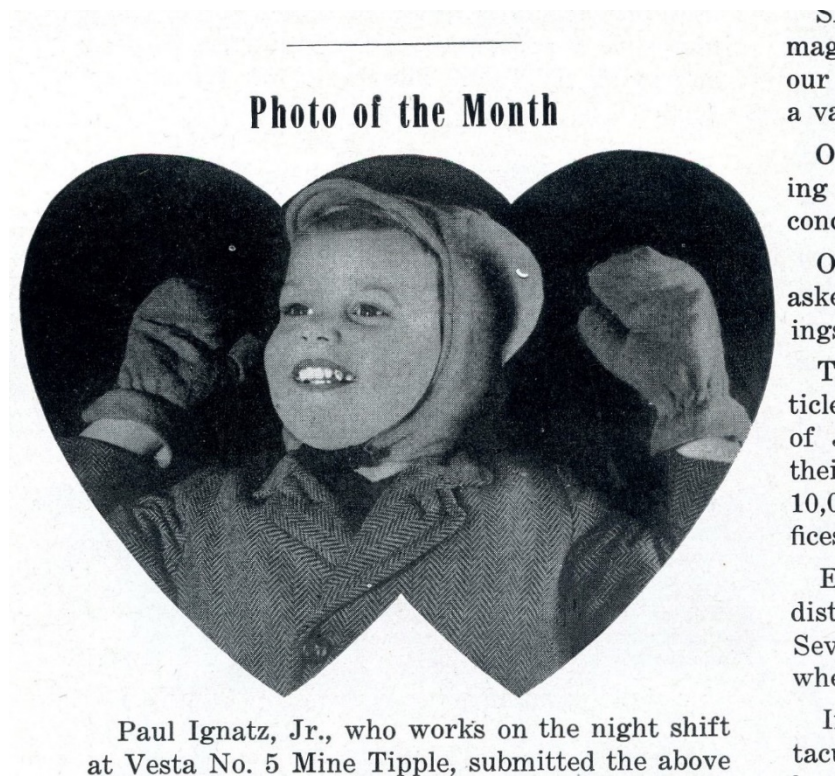


Figure 8

Readers responded readily. The very next issue, February 1948, features a ‘photo of the month’ that had been sent in by a worker from the Vesta #5 mine tipple (fig. 8). The picture was of the mineworker’s son. According to the editors, the judge ‘felt that both the appeal of the boy’s smile and the interlocked heart treatment made the winning entry particularly appropriate for St. Valentine’s Day.’ Unfortunately, the editors wrote, ‘the proportions of the photo would not permit its use as a cover.’ In March, the ‘photo of the month’ did end up on the cover; it was one of three baby pictures that had been sent in by Fred Engle, of the Pittsburgh Works labor department (fig. 9). According to the editors, Engle’s wife was actually the one who had taken the photograph, but the couple shared an interest in photography, and Engle was a member of the Pittsburgh Works Camera Club. Readers began submitting family photos for the cover competition regularly; in 1949 alone, fully one third of all the *Men and Steel* covers were ‘photo of the month’ winners focusing on domestic themes. Leisure was another favorite cover photo theme. In July of 1951 the cover showed two children playing with a garden hose (fig. 10). The August cover that year was one that a worker—a ‘Bottom Maker Helper’—had taken of McConnell’s Mills, a popular swimming hole near Aliquippa. In December, the winner was a ‘rougner’ in one of the mills, who had taken a festive photograph of his female neighbor, dressed for a skiing trip, posing amongst snow-covered trees.¹³ In addition, the local sections continued to get many snapshots of home and vacations, until at some points *Men and Steel* looked more like a family album than a company magazine (fig. 11 and fig. 12).

¹³ A ‘bottom maker’ relines the bottoms of ingot-soaking pits with coke dust to retard formation of oxide scale on hot ingots. A ‘rougner’ is in charge of taking the steel ingots and reshaping them into the proper semi-finished shape. For more information on these and other steel industry jobs, consult the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* at www.occupationalinfo.org.

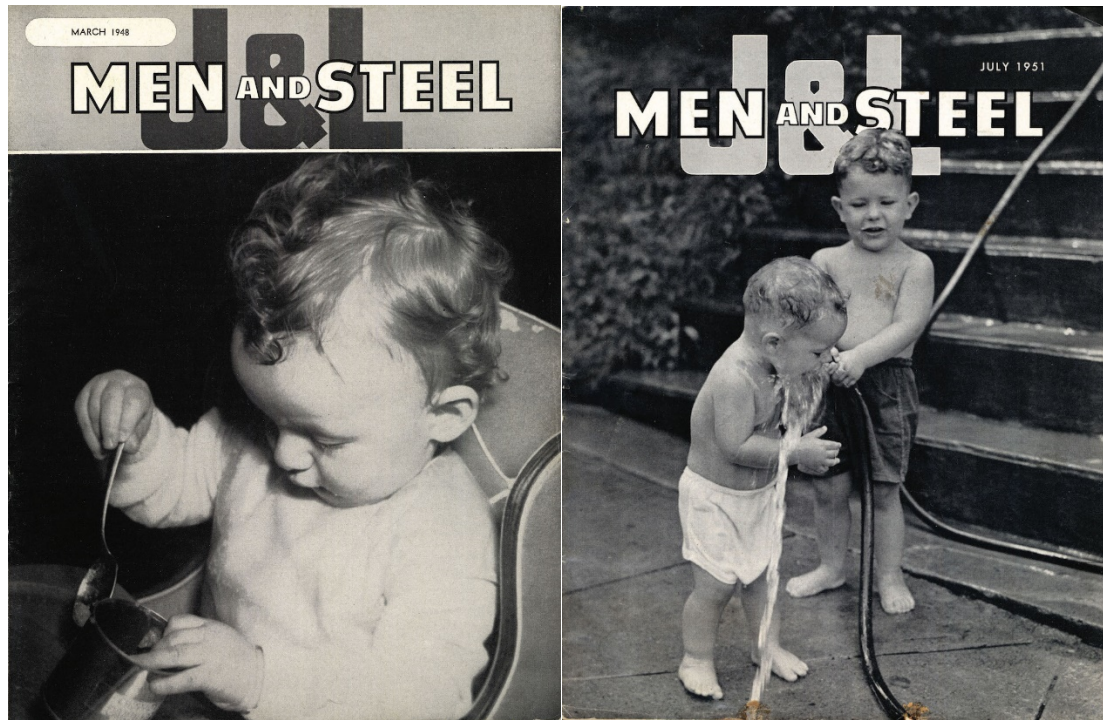


Figure 9 & Figure 10

W. Aaron Is Their Dad

The 'Eyes' Have It

Jimmie Looks Like His Dad

'I've Got a New Sister'

SOLORES BAINE SCODOPY, two-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Albert C. Scodopy, Carter Township, is a very happy little girl these days. The reason? She's got a new little sister who was born on December 29. The new sister, who has been named **PATRICIA**, weighed six pounds, nine ounces at birth. The mighty proud father of the girl, is an Apprentice Benchhand in Allegheny Works Division.

Little Joan Elaine Smiles

A Group of Relatives

THOSE great big beautiful eyes belong to Sharon, Charles, and William. They, Jr. children of Mr. and Mrs. William Hyre. Their father is employed as a Sensus Clerk in the Tin Plate Department. They are a nice bunch.

I love these little people; and it is not a slight thing, when they, who are so fresh from God, love us.—Dziobrowski

Look what I See, Daddy!

'Smile, Frankie, Smile'

FRANK HELMS, JR., six-month-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Helms, really knows how to turn on the charm for a photographer. Frankie's father is employed in the Steelmen Table. The lad is the grandson of L. Helms, North Baker House. We hope you keep on smiling, Frankie.

A Pretty Picture—

PRETTY as a picture is eight-month-old Kathleen Susan Cain, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Cain, Allegheny. Her father is employed as a Stock Checker in the Tin Plate Department.

A Personality that Shines

THIS LOVELY "personality smile" belongs to cute little Kathy Jo Bards, three-month-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Stone of Allegheny. Her father is employed as a Machinist in the Tin Mill Machine Shop. Keep on smiling!

Little 'Miss Bright Eyes'

LOOK at the beautiful big eyes of little Betty Joan Follmer, seven-month-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Follmer, Allegheny. The pretty youngster, whose mother is the former Rose D'Agostino of Allegheny, is the niece of Christy D'Agostino, Tin Plate Department; and Joe D'Agostino of the Maintenance Department.

Meet the Johnston Twins

WHICH ONE has the "fancy"? These pert little misses are the twin daughters of Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Johnston. The eight-year-old girls were born at the Pointe à la Peste Hospital. Their father is employed in the Tin Plate Department.

Tom Has Two Birthday Gifts

THREE YEAR-OLD Tom Cheuvron, son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Cheuvron, had an especially fun birthday not too long ago. For gifts, he received both a baby brother and a baby sister. His father is employed in the Wire Mill as a Trencher. Keep on smiling, Tom.

She's now Two Years Old!

ELIZABETH BROWN, daughter of Joseph E. Brown, now is two years old and already is one of the cutest little girls in her neighborhood. Her father, who is very proud of his little girl, is employed in the Bleeding Mill Department as a Maintenance Man Helper.

Figure 11 & Figure 12

The readers' photo section was not unique to *Men and Steel*, but the extent to which the magazine used readers' photos was. Also distinctive was the number of personal photos and family snapshots. A comparison with Republic Steel's magazine is illustrative (fig.13). This 'Favorite Photos' page from *Republic Reports* features photographs sent in by readers.¹⁴ The

¹⁴ *Republic Reports*, January 1948, p. 13.

contrast between this photo page and *Men and Steel's* Camera Corner (fig. 7) is striking. With the exception of the spoof 'Teddy,' featuring a dog in glasses and a mortar board, the photographs in *Republic Reports* are artistic compositions rather than portraits or family snapshots. Another point of contrast is who is submitting the photos. Each photographer is identified by name, and all but one are also identified by their position or department. In each of these cases, the employee holds a white collar, salaried, or managerial job. 'Winter Haven' was taken by J.P. Roth, from accounting; 'Farm Construction' was taken by 'Republic's agricultural engineer,' E.D. Anderson; 'Teddy' was taken by J.W. Lowry of General Office Purchasing, and 'Summer Blackout' was taken by Sherman Roney, assistant industrial relations manager.



Figure 13

This narrow cross section contrasts with the much broader array of readers submitting photos to *Men and Steel*. Although the latter employees are often identified simply by department, which makes it difficult to evaluate what kind of work they do, they are just as often identified by a particular job. Among the cover contest winners we have seen or discussed are a rougher, a bottom maker, and employees from the labor and metallurgical departments.¹⁵ Contributors to the 'Camera Corner' example (fig. 7) include a metallographer, a metallurgical inspector, two crane operators, and a 'Tin House Turn Forman'.¹⁶ Other contributors (fig. 11) include a patrolman in the plant guard, an apprentice bench hand, a shipper in the wire mill, a shear man, a tin plate sorter, and a bonus clerk.¹⁷ A stock checker, a machinist, a tractor repairman, and a maintenance man's helper sent in baby pictures in yet another issue (fig.12).¹⁸ With the

¹⁵ December 1951, August 1951, March 1948 (fig.9), and July 1951 (fig.10) respectively.

¹⁶ *Men and Steel*, March 1948, pp. 8-L.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, March 1952, p. 8-G.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8-F.

exception of the metallographer, metallurgical inspector, and turn foreman, these jobs are all wage-earning positions as opposed to salaried managerial or professional roles. We can see from this accounting that when *Men and Steel* looks like a family album, the family being projected is one consisting of mostly wage-earning employees. Although shareholders are supposed to be as much the audience of the magazine as the workers are, they do not participate in it in the same way—a close reading found no photographs submitted by shareholders printed in *Men and Steel*. This suggests that the *real* target audience for the company magazine is, like others in the industry, primarily wage-earning employees.

Conclusion

Working-class readers of *Men and Steel* represented themselves in the company magazine as family people with the ability to support hobbies and take vacations. This is a powerful, celebratory self-representation that reflects workers' hard-won victories: the income to support their families securely and with a relatively high standard of living, and a bit of leisure time to spend with them. At the same time, this emphasis on domesticity and leisure was overdetermined. When the editors solicited workers' photos, they did not ask for 'any photographs you want to send.' Rather, they encouraged, specifically, 'storytelling pictures of people, especially children.'¹⁹ When readers looked at the editors' 'Camera Corner' choices for the most 'interesting' photograph of the month, they saw adorable pictures of babies and boys on ponies. Readers were not asked to bring in pictures of their work crew or their buddies from down at the union hall. Clearly, the magazine encouraged a domestic emphasis in reader contributions. In this way the company's purposes and the working-class readers' purposes dovetailed. Workers celebrated their achievement of security, free time, and a middle-class standard of living, while the company was able to promote safe working-class self-representation that appeared apolitical and images that were easily assimilated to the corporation's messages.

Men and Steel conveys the corporation's messages in a variety of ways, but was most explicitly ideological in the 'Admiral's Letter' section, which opened every issue from the magazine's beginning until Moreell's retirement in 1958. Often, Moreell would focus on issues specific to J&L such as plant safety, management changes, or the need to provide more dividends to shareholders.²⁰ Just as often, however, he would address broader political issues. In one column, entitled 'Jones & Laughlin and Politics,' he asserts, 'no employee of Jones & Laughlin shall, with respect to his employment, be penalized on account of or shall derive benefit from his political affiliation.' But at J&L, as well as elsewhere in the Cold War United States, there were limits to this political freedom. Moreell continues:

The only variation from this basic policy is where an employee promotes doctrines which are contrary to recognized American principles, or advocates policies and actions which are patently inimical to our national interests and welfare. In these cases, persistence in such conduct . . . will result in disciplinary action within the limitations of contracts and applicable laws.²¹

¹⁹ Ibid., January 1948, p. 17.

²⁰ Ibid., December 1947, July 1951, March 1952, February 1948 respectively.

²¹ Ibid., March 1948.

This column appeared in 1948, only a year after Taft-Hartley amended the rights given to labor organizations by the Wagner Act and forced union members to sign anti-Communist affidavits (Wollman & Inman 1999). Essentially, a worker who avowed left-leaning politics did not truly have job security.

Moreell expressed his view on what constituted ‘American principles’ regularly, in both his columns and various other public venues. He was well-known as an economic and social conservative and devout Christian. Free enterprise and individualism were frequent topics of comment, and he would often speak of these values in moralistic terms and link them with Christian values. One ‘Admiral’s Letter’ is exemplary:

We at Jones & Laughlin believe in our free enterprise system because we believe in people. The basis of the free enterprise system is freedom for the individual to make his own choice on how he shall live his life. The importance of the individual and his personal liberty is the foundation stone of our concept of government as *servant* of the people—not their *master*. With this basic concept we have become a great nation because each person could enjoy the fruits of his own labor in the form of spiritual and material rewards [*italics original*].

Moreell goes on to share his belief that such premises were ‘based on the moral law of Christianity . . . [as] the teachings of Christianity invariably deal with the status of the individual. It is only the individual who can feel and live by religious faith. And it is only when individuals live by God’s moral code that they can obtain and enjoy life’s rich rewards!’²² By the end of the piece, Moreell has successfully equated free enterprise with the highest of authorities for religious believers: ‘God’s moral code.’

The ‘Admiral’s Letter’ column set the ideological tone of the magazine, and it is within this context that we must consider the meanings of the company magazine as family album. Workers were rightfully proud of their families, the recently increased free time that they could spend with them, and the bigger paychecks with which they could better provide for them. This is reflected in their enthusiastic participation in the company magazine, within which they represented themselves primarily through images of domesticity, leisure, and consumption. Workers see themselves in the magazine enjoying a middle-class standard of living—one that had been won by the union, but in the context of *Men and Steel* is associated with the corporation. The concept of individuality affirmed throughout the chairman’s columns and elsewhere in the magazine is reiterated in the workers’ snapshots, focusing as they do on the nuclear family to the exclusion of other forms of community and solidarity. Further, the idea of the nuclear family celebrated in so many of these photographs takes on a darker tenor when considered in relation to the relatively recent history of the non-union era. Because of the blacklist, workers with families were more vulnerable to company repression; they could not afford to lose their jobs, and therefore were more easily kept in line.²³ The Taft-Hartley Act undermined the political freedoms asserted by the Wagner Act, and although it did not bring back the steel corporations’ own blacklist, it substituted a government-sponsored one (Hinshaw 2002). Workers with families still could not afford to express dissident political views. Seen in

²² *Men and Steel*, 4.9 (September 1951), 2. *Ibid.*, 2-3.

²³ One US Steel worker’s recollections are representative of a widespread perception: ‘They went after the guys with families, the guys who couldn’t afford to lose their jobs. If you let them know you were afraid for your job, they owned you. They owned your job, and that meant they owned *you*’ [*italics original*] (Metzgar 2000, p. 33).

this light, the celebration of workers' families could have, for a few, functioned as a subtle warning, reminding them of what they stood to lose.

The company magazine as family album seems like it could have been a successful approach for the publishers of *Men and Steel*. It encouraged workers to represent themselves in a non-threatening way, promoting a vision of the corporation as an extended family of sorts. Workers' participation in the magazine undoubtedly fostered an increased sense of ownership in *Men and Steel*, and perhaps by extension a deeper sense of investment in the corporation. Potential effects on hearts and minds notwithstanding, there is no evidence that the magazine ultimately caused the workers to pull their punches. Union militancy continued throughout the fifties, despite the limitations put on organized labor by Taft-Hartley, culminating in the 116-day strike of 1959—the largest work stoppage in U.S. history (Smemo et al. 2017). J&L workers went out along with the rest of their union in 1959, although it must be noted that the family album character of *Men and Steel* had already disappeared by then. Citing the need to reduce expenses, the corporation minimized the magazine after the April 1952 issue, shrinking it in both size and content, turning it into a bi-monthly, and eliminating the special locally-edited sections.²⁴ Reader participation declined steadily thereafter.

Despite the brevity of this experiment, the family album era of *Men and Steel* is an example of the ways corporations used cultural representations to try to undermine labor solidarity. In the Admiral's introduction to the first issue, he expressed the hope that the magazine would foster among shareholders and employees 'a strong feeling of mutual interest,' and a 'more complete understanding between employees, shareholders, and management.'²⁵ It is likely that *Men and Steel* accomplished this more effectively than its steel industry cousins, the businesslike *US Steel News* and the more overtly propagandistic *Republic Reports*. It is also true that these goals, for all of *Men and Steels'* more democratic address to shareholders and employees together, were exactly the same as those of the other magazines. The 'strong mutual interest' Moreell refers to is a shared interest in the success of the corporation; workers' interests were not always identical to those of the corporation, yet the magazine set out to make it seem so. The treatment of potentially divergent material interests is subsumed into the warm and fuzzy category of 'understanding,' which works differently for employees than for shareholders. Shareholders' interests are promoted in the chairman's column and throughout the magazine; workers' interests are limited to cultural matters—home and family, fishing and sports. The 'understanding' workers were supposed to take away is that shareholders own the company, and what is good for those owners is good for everybody. Shareholders would have come to understand that workers love their families and value their vacation time. The idea of 'understanding' de-materialized the matter of 'interests,' and in that very process we can find the magazine's central purpose.

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²⁴ The reasons for the down-scaling of the magazine are likely more complex than the mere need to reduce expenses. The format changed while the magazine was on hiatus during the 1952 strike; acrimony on both sides of this conflict may have influenced the decision to eliminate so much of the participatory quality. Additionally, the PR department may have diverted funds to support the commissioning of Roy Stryker, famous for the great Farm Security Administration photographic project of the 1930s, who was hired to create a documentary photo file for the company—a set of representations of workers that required less of their active participation.

²⁵ *Men and Steel*, November 1947.

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