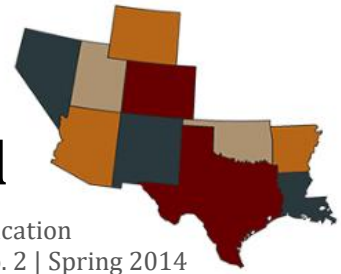


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The Parable of the Working [Class] Man: Strategic Tensions in Gendered Discourses of Striking Workers, 1950

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The post-War American advertising landscape was filled with the consumer legacies of wartime technologies, and re-positioned consumption within the “national interest” mindset the war emergency had produced. This new mindset would involve a vision of business and enterprise that had people “pursuing individualistic goals to secure a larger prosperity for the nation” (Cohen, 2003, p. 101). Within this developing post-war context, and strongly driven by economic and political motivations, The Texas Company took out full-page ads in the newspaper of Port Arthur, Texas—where workers at their largest plant were on strike—to deter workers from participating in the ongoing strike with messages promoting an ethic of individualistic, noncollective goals. Coupled with gendered “slice of life” messages that have the façade of gender role depictions typical of the era, these ads attacked the strike not as it would affect the work space but rather from within the home, presenting an image of striking workers as infantile, unsophisticated, and, effectively, emasculated. These ads present the Parable of the Working [Class] Man, a moral lesson presented in the guise of everyday life (Marchand, 1985). The Parable of the Working [Class] Man relied heavily on gendered notions of home and work spaces to subvert expectations and, thereby, to present the strike as antithetical to the moral character of the working man.

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**The Parable of the Working [Class] Man:
Strategic Tensions in Gendered Discourses of Striking Workers, 1950**

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Abstract

The post-War American advertising landscape was filled with the consumer legacies of wartime technologies, and re-positioned consumption within the “national interest” mindset the war emergency had produced. This new mindset would involve a vision of business and enterprise that had people “pursuing individualistic goals to secure a larger prosperity for the nation” (Cohen, 2003, p. 101). Within this developing post-war context, and strongly driven by economic and political motivations, The Texas Company took out full-page ads in the newspaper of Port Arthur, Texas—where workers at their largest plant were on strike—to deter workers from participating in the ongoing strike with messages promoting an ethic of individualistic, non-collective goals. Coupled with gendered “slice of life” messages that have the façade of gender role depictions typical of the era, these ads attacked the strike not as it would affect the work space but rather from within the home, presenting an image of striking workers as infantile, unsophisticated, and, effectively, emasculated. These ads present the *Parable of the Working [Class] Man*, a moral lesson presented in the guise of everyday life (Marchand, 1985). *The Parable of the Working [Class] Man* relied heavily on gendered notions of home and work spaces to subvert expectations and, thereby, to present the strike as antithetical to the moral character of the working *man*.

The post-War American advertising landscape was full of the consumer legacies of wartime technologies, and re-positioned consumption within the “national interest” mindset the war emergency had produced. This new mindset would involve a vision of business and enterprise that had people “pursuing individualistic goals to secure a larger prosperity for the nation” (Cohen, 2003, p. 101). Within this developing post-war context, and strongly driven by economic and political motivations, The Texas Company bought full-page ads in the newspaper of Port Arthur, Texas—where workers at their largest plant were on strike—to deter workers from participating in the ongoing strike with messages promoting an ethic of individualistic, non-collective goals. Coupled with gendered “slice of life” messages that have the façade of gender role depictions typical of the era, these ads attacked the strike not as it would affect the work space but rather from within the home, presenting an image of striking workers as infantile, unsophisticated, and, effectively, emasculated. These ads present the *Parable of the Working Class*, a moral lesson presented in the guise of everyday life (Marchand, 1985). *The Parable of the Working [Class] Man* relied heavily on gendered notions of home and work spaces to subvert expectations and, thereby, to present the strike as antithetical to the moral character of the working *man*.

The authors first present a history of the strike to provide the context of meaning for the advertisements in the spirit of content assessment, an approach that highlights historical and cultural context in analyzing media content (Phillips & McQuarrie, 2002; Thomas, 2013). Next, this research examines how The Texas Company sought to control the conversation about the strike through a series of advertisements in *The Port Arthur News*, with particular attention to the use of gender codes (Akert et al., 2004). Finally, the *Parable of the Working [Class] Man* is presented as an amalgamation of techniques borrowed from earlier eras and applied to the

tensions of the 1950s, post-war American worker—tensions that in no small part had to do with the historical distinctions of the gendered market, or the rational masculine/work/production sphere and the emotional feminine/home/consumption sphere demonstrated by previous scholars as framing gender roles in the marketplace (Bristor & Fischer 1993; Hirschman, 1993; Hollows, 2000; Neve, 2009; O’Barr, 2013; Scott, 2005).

“You know the strike is NOT for more money”

When Charles E. Smitherman crossed the picket line during the 1950 strike at The Texas Company in Port Arthur, he did so reluctantly and with an acute knowledge of the costs—the possibility of alienating fellow union members and, as a pragmatist, the actual cost of the surgery his wife needed. He did not believe he had a choice. His wife needed a hysterectomy and he needed money to pay the medical bills accumulating from a two-week hospital stay, so he crossed the picket line—three weeks before the strike ended (Smitherman, 2002).¹

The labor strike at the Port Arthur, Texas, refinery was in its third month and no one, whether company representative, engineer, union official, CIO carpenter or IBEW electrician, had an idea of when the dispute would end. For Smitherman, he made the calculated decision to cross the picket line because he needed to pay his bills and because he did not like the trajectory of the strike (Smitherman, 2002). Smitherman’s story is part of a larger narrative of the ascension of labor entering the decade of its greatest gains in wages and benefits. Longer strikes than the 114-day stoppage would occur at the Port Arthur plant in 1980 and again in 1982 but the 1950 strike was the longest for the post-World War II generation of Texaco workers.

¹ At the conclusion of the interview, Smitherman removed a folded letter from his shirt pocket, producing a registered letter, dated July 15, 1950. It read: “In accordance with Article 11, Section 2 and 4 of the international constitution and by-laws, charges have been preferred against you. You will be given a trial by the trial committee on July 26, 1950, at 10:00 a.m.” Smitherman did not attend the hearing.

Organized labor met strong resistance to organizing in the South but the coastal regions from Houston, Texas, to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, proved to be the exception. By 1950, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) had the most members of any district (Local 23) in the country along the Texas and Louisiana coasts, which included The Texas Company refinery in Port Arthur (Priest & Botson, 2012).

With the largest membership of any CIO district, the Oil Workers' International Union (OWIU) in Port Arthur believed it had the leverage to negotiate a more favorable contract with The Texas Company in 1950. In late January, the union notified The Texas Company that its contract would end at 12:01 a.m. March 30. The primary areas of disagreement included negotiating for a 36-hour workweek at 40-hour pay, increasing the company's contribution to pension and retirement benefits, and a uniform contract for all Texas Company refineries throughout the country.

The local newspaper, *The Port Arthur News*, published a front-page editorial on March 21 urging the union and company to continue to negotiate. The OWIU scheduled a nationwide vote of its members for March 22 and March 23 to determine whether to strike on April 1. In its front-page editorial the day before the strike, *The News* opined: "It is a trite saying but a true one: Everybody loses in a strike. The company loses in production and profits. The workers lose in wages. The public loses in purchasing power and goods and services. The community loses in harmony and goodwill and neighborliness" (Editorial, 1950, p. 1).

The car dealers in Port Arthur agreed with the management of *The News* but for a different reason. The same day as the front-page editorial, a coalition of the Plymouth, Dodge, DeSoto and Chrysler dealers bought a full-page advertisement titled, "It may be LEGAL, but is it

LOYAL?" (Advertisement, 1950a). The advertisement targeted striking Chrysler factory workers but the message echoed the front-page editorial aimed at the OWIU and The Texas Company.

Advertising would play a pivotal role in controlling the message and marshaling public opinion both on the side of the union and on the side of The Texas Company. Each placed full-page advertisements strategically throughout the 114-day strike but in the third week in March, the focus was whether the union would vote to strike. Company President Frank L. Wallace sent letters to employees on March 18 and again on March 20. The letters notified employees that the company continued to pursue discussions for a new contract and outlined both the union's and the company's positions. *The News* reprinted both letters—verbatim—on the second day of OWIU voting (Wallace Writes All Texaco Employees, 1950).

On March 30, *The News* reported that federal mediators met with company and union officials in an effort to avoid a strike. The Associated Press quoted A.O. Knight, the president of the OWIU, "We're asking adjustment of wages and a more adequate pension plan and health benefits because we know we deserve those things" (Walkouts Legal After April 1, 1950, p. 1). The pension would become one of the primary areas of contention between the union and the company.

Ernest Askew, who was hired on permanently with the company in 1939, recalled that the pension and savings plans dominated discussion in the union hall.

...the only strike that I ever think that the company was wrong and the union was right was that 1950 strike. And because they had tried to bargain a savings plan with them, and they just said 'no.'...And at the end, they promised them the savings plan and they settled. That's when I think the union gained a lot right there (Askew, 2002).²

² Ernest Askew, interview with John R. Tisdale, June 19, 2002. Mr. Askew worked briefly in 1937 for The Texas Company but left to work as a police officer. He returned to The Texas Company as a full-time employee in 1939.

In late March, however, the lines of demarcation between union demands and company resolve could not be settled. By the first week of April, the strike had begun. At 11 a.m. April 4, the Oil Workers' International Union walked off the job. The *Beaumont Journal*, the afternoon newspaper fifteen miles north in Beaumont, reported that a "Slow paralysis crept over one of the world's largest refineries after locals of Oil Workers' International Union, CIO, began a strike..." (Strike Closes Texaco Plants, 1950, p. 1). On its editorial page, the *Journal* management echoed the view of *The Port Arthur News*. Its editors wrote: "The Texaco strike is bad from every viewpoint. No one wins, and this one promises to be long and costly to the workers, to the company, to business in general throughout the area... Wednesday, April 5, is a day to mark. It is an evil day" (That Strike, 1950, p. 8).

Less than two weeks into the strike, the union asked for the National Labor Relations Board to investigate The Texas Company because it had "refused to bargain collectively with the authorized representatives" of the OWIU. The union also alleged that the company had established "a pension plan and welfare plan without bargaining with the agents" of the union (Union Asks Probe Of Texaco, 1950). The next day, the company filed a \$500,000 damages lawsuit in federal court in Beaumont against the OWIU, alleging that the union (Local 228 at the Port Neches Texas Company asphalt plant) "breached collective bargaining agreements and contracts with the company" when the union walked out April 4 in support of Local 23 (Texaco Files Suit For \$500,000, 1950, p. 1).

Any hope of a quick, harmonious settlement quickly evaporated near the end of April. The merits of the strike would be heatedly debated between letter writers on the "The Letter Box" page (or pages) each day in *The Port Arthur News*. By the last few weeks in April, the newspaper management reminded readers that letters should not exceed 200 words and "let us

repeat—again—that anonymous letters are NEVER published in this space. If a writer doesn't care to have his signature appear, he should so state, and it won't be printed. However, the News MUST KNOW THE NAME AND ADDRESS of every writer, as an evidence of good faith" (The Letter Box, 1950, p. 22).

Less than three weeks into the strike, some workers' spouses defended the union's strike. "This is to Mrs. Home-Maker. So you have come out and spoken your piece. I wonder where you were before the strike—probably sitting on your plush cushion waiting for the fat paycheck your husband brought home, thanks to the efforts of organized labor" (Union Wife's View, 1950, p. 17). As would be evident in The Texas Company advertisements, the company and the union took their strategies from the work and public spaces, infiltrating the home through the appeals to the "wife."

Knight, at the OWIU offices in Denver, issued a back-to-work order on April 25 for workers to return to work at The Texas Company facilities in Port Arthur and Port Neches the next day. The workers quickly gathered and voted to report to work April 26. The company, however, did not open the gates that morning because "the management was unwilling to risk reopening...without procedures for an orderly reopening being first worked out and without assurance from the unions that operations will be maintained for a reasonable period of time." Whether the back-to-work order was sincere could be debated. Immediately after the workers walked away from the main gate at the end of Houston Avenue that morning, most headed toward the Texas Employment Commission offices to file for unemployment benefits (Texaco Wants Union 'Guarantee', 1950, p. 1).

After three weeks without work, the union's plan for unemployment benefits merited a response from the company, which announced on April 26 that the company paid group-life and

hospital insurance premiums for all employees for April and would again pay those premiums in May. By contending that workers had been locked out, the union argued that workers were now eligible for unemployment (Texaco Keeps Up Insurance, 1950, p.1). As April turned into May, the negotiations became infrequent but the heated rhetoric, the disharmonious letters to the editor, and the angst of a city with more than 5,000 idled workers caused both the union and company to take their messages directly to the residents.

“We, the management, would like to say...”: The Texas Company Message

On Sunday, April 30, 1950, The Texas Company began a series of ads to run every Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday through May 11 presented not through the voice of the company but instead casting the “worker’s wife” as spokesperson (See Appendices A and B). Each ad includes a dominant one-third to one-half page sketch of husband and wife, a headline attributed to the wife, followed by a dialogue between the two, and concludes with the authoritative voice of “the management” of The Texas Company.

These advertisements adopted various conventions that by the 1950s would be easily recognizable to readers. In particular, the ads used conventions of gender representations that, on the surface, seem typical of mid-20th Century advertising and reminiscent of the “social tableau” representations of the 1920s and 1930s. Such ads present a reflection of society or a social norm by depicting those in the ad “in such a way as to suggest their relationship to each other or to a larger social structure.... The social tableau advertisement usually depicts a contemporary ‘slice-of-life’ setting rather than a work of art or a legendary scene” (Marchand, 1985, p. 165-166). Advertisements in this genre would rely on stereotypes as heuristics for the audience, and gender codes would serve as some of the most prominent displays of relationships in the larger social structure (Jhally, 1990; Marchand, 1985).

Yet in ways telling of both a complexity not typically acknowledged in advertising critiques of the 1950s, as well as of the circumstances of striking workers in Port Arthur, Texas, these ads assume the posture, but not the practice, of typical gender roles in advertising of the era. The fact that The Texas Company ads reflect strategies found in 1920s and 1930s ads as well as those post-war is not explained simply as accumulation of strategies; rather, it is reflective of an attempt by the company to leverage underlying tensions in cultural codes of gender to undermine the stance of the union and suggest striking workers were not fulfilling their masculine duty to fuel the free market.

Gender as Strategic Resource

The 1940s and 1950s advertising landscape presented a variety of shifting gender norms reflective of broader cultural shifts. Scholars examining the construction of gender roles throughout American history point to the “acute crisis of manhood” felt in the midst of the Great Depression that was averted only through the revival of heroic masculine ideals in the face of World War II. It is worth considering that this crisis of manhood has been noted in various historical moments associated with economic and cultural rifts before and since the period under investigation in this paper, and in American history the crisis tends to be resolved through market ideologies (Holt & Thompson, 2004). Advertisements of the late 1940s and 1950s, “unlike those of the 1930s which often depicted men as weak, portrayed boys coming of age while in the process of saving the market system and making it strong again after the war” (Grandstaff, 2013, para 28). The free market system, buoyed by mass consumerism, was depicted as the “American Way” for which men fought and died in World War II (Grandstaff, 2013).

While men in advertising were recapturing their lost masculinity, women were finding themselves straddling the traditional home space where they do their “work” of consuming and

the production space vacated by men leaving for war, as they were called to fulfill their patriotic duty (Bristor & Fischer, 1993; Marchand, 1985; Scott, 2009). But by 1950, with men having returned from war and reclaiming jobs that women had held in their absence, “women’s role in the tableaux,” as Marchand (1985, p. 186) argues, “came full circle” Yet this characterization of representations as coming full circle is misleading insofar as it suggests a return to pre-war gender roles and codes as depicted in advertising. While advertising may have presented a woman back in the home, where her job would be to consume and to create a safe haven for her husband or future husband, the prominent social changes in gender norms and relationships that were manifest during the Depression and World War II were not to be undone. While much post-War advertising depicted Mrs. Housewife, there were indications, such as those in The Texas Company advertisements, that the “crisis of masculinity” was still quite salient and that women could still “wear the pants” (Marchand, 1985, p. 186). In infiltrating the home, and through a disturbance of conventional gender norms as presented through the dialogue, The Texas Company ads leveraged the saliency of the “crisis of masculinity,” and demonstrated the disruption not only of the labor force production sphere but also of the safe haven of the home.

“While Joe thinks about that....”

Each of the six advertisements run by The Texas Company (The Texas Company, 1950b, 1950c, 1950d, 1950e, 1950f, 1950g) contained dialogue between the wife, Mary, and the husband, Joe.³ In every case, Mary controls the home space where the ads are staged and the conversation. The sketches present Mary in action—whether through gestures suggesting she is talking or work she is doing, such as hanging clothes, cooking the meal, or gardening—and Joe

³ The names Joe and Mary were among the top ten most popular baby names between 1920 and 1930. They further signify religious messaging that, while interesting and important to the broader story, is beyond the scope of this article.

as stagnant. While he sits with Mary at the table or stands in the garden with her, leaning on but not actively using a hoe, or sits on the porch or in a chair watching her conduct the business of the house, in each case the reader is given the impression that he is idle. While it is not surprising that Joe would be depicted at home (readers can understand that he was, after all, on strike from work), his idleness is more than a practical representation of the circumstances of strike. In juxtaposition to the conversation of this couple, to which readers are privy, it is clear that he is passive and uncertain of action.

Joe's dialogue is characterized by frequent use of words such as "gosh" and "maybe," or "it's hard to explain" and "I think" and "I guess." His is not the voice of reason usually reinforcing masculinity in contrast to feminine emotion in the advertising tableau. For example, in the first ad dated April 30, 1950 (The Texas Company, 1950b), Mary pleads with Joe to "look at the strike OUR way." She asks, "Just what does it do for US?" Joe responds, "Gosh, Mary, that's hard to explain."⁴ In the May 7 ad (The Texas Company, 1950e), Joe admits that it is not just hard to explain but rather, "It's really hard to say what we gain." Later, to Mary's questions about whether life insurance companies and not The Texas Company actually operate the pension plan, one of the major points of the strike, Joe answers, "That's right, Mary, I think they do. But maybe the Union wants the right to select the life insurance companies." Mary asks, "Does that make sense, Joe?"

In contrast to Joe's dialogue undercut with uncertainty, Mary's is punctuated with reason and knowledge—at least in asking all the right questions to develop Joe's uncertainty. Neither Joe nor Mary, however, has the voice of authority given to the management of The Texas

⁴ Interestingly, readers might note that the capitalization of US in the ads reads not only as "us" but also as "U.S.," offering further possibilities for interpreting the connection between masculinity and the ideals attributed in advertising to the United States, including freedom of persons and of the market.

Company. Each ad concludes with the moral of the story, presented by the company. Notably, while the dialogue of the husband and wife in no subtle way suggests that the striking workers do not really understand and cannot explain why they are striking, causing tension cast in gender roles at home, the copy attributed to the management, in contrast, is of a voice of reason. For example, “The management would like to clear up the point raised by Joe and Mary. There is a catch” (The Texas Company, 1950e, p. 21). This is followed by “facts” to demonstrate the knowledge of management.

Management represents the work environment, typically the space in advertising where masculinity is most clearly articulated, and the subversion of gender roles at home through Joe’s passivity and Mary’s activity further serves to illuminate the message that the matter at hand is not only one of action, but also one of ideology. Joe’s masculinity is threatened both by his choice to participate in the strike (and, thereby, not in the masculine work space) and is threatened at home where his authority over work and home matters is being questioned. Herein lies the parable of the working man.

The Parable of the Working [Class] Man

Marchand (1985) writes of parables that “these advertising stories employed stark contrasts and exaggeration to dramatize a central message. And, like the parables of Jesus, they sought to provoke an immediate decision for action” (Marchand, 1985, p. 207). The Texas Company advertisements used “slice-of-life” imagery that, on the surface, would appear typical—or stereotypical—of the gendered relationships in the advertising landscape. However, analysis of these advertisements in historical context—including the local context of the strikes and the broader post-war redistribution of meaning for gender—suggests that The Texaco

Company was leveraging reminders of the previous “crisis of masculinity” through the subversion of gender roles evident in the interplay of visual and dialogue in the ads.

Specifically, “Masculine images typically convey power, strength, virility, athleticism, and competitiveness whereas feminine images show beauty, submissiveness, nurturance, and cooperation. Such themes appear repeatedly in popular culture (including advertisements) and are often accepted by those who see them as natural aspects of the human condition (O’Barr, 2006). While expressions of masculinity are complex, often conflicted, and intersect with issues such as race and class (Holt & Thompson, 2004), when the message in the advertising tableau does not adhere to these themes, even if subtly, the relationship presented seems unnatural, creating tension and persuading for action to resolve the tension. That is, The Texaco Company advertisements played on fears that the workers might lose in the renegotiation of gender roles, attempting to reconcile traditional, “comfortable” notions of masculinity with the movement of women outside of the home. The moral of the parable of the working [class] man was to reclaim masculinity, in the face of contradictions imposed by modernity, by pursuing individualistic (“what’s in it for US?”), productive, market-driving goals—the action by which they could accomplish this would be in support of the stance of The Texaco Company and in diffusing the strike that threatened to emasculate them when traditional ideologies of American masculinity had only just been regained.

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The Texas Company (1950b, April 30). Let's look at the strike OUR way, Joe...

[Advertisement]. *The Port Arthur News*, p. 21.

The Texas Company (1950c, May 2). Frankly, Joe, what's in this strike for you and me?

[Advertisement]. *The Port Arthur News*, p. 11.

The Texas Company (1950d, May 4). What'll we get out of this strike, Joe? [Advertisement].

The Port Arthur News, p. 29.

The Texas Company (1950e, May 7). How much do WE GAIN from this strike, Joe?

[Advertisement]. *The Port Arthur News*, p. 21.

The Texas Company (1950f, May 9). I ask you, Joe, what will the strike do for US?

[Advertisement]. *The Port Arthur News*, p. 11.

The Texas Company (1950g, May 11). If the Union wins this strike, Joe, what will WE win?

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Union Asks Probe Of Texaco (1950, April 7). *Beaumont Journal*, p. 1.

Union Wife's View in "The Letter Box," (1950, April 20). *The Port Arthur News*, p. 17.

Walkouts Legal After April 1, Leader Asserts (1950, March 30). *The Port Arthur News*, p. 1.

Wallace Writes All Texaco Employees Outlining Texaco Proposals to CIO (1950, March 23).

The Port Arthur News, p. 5.

Appendix A

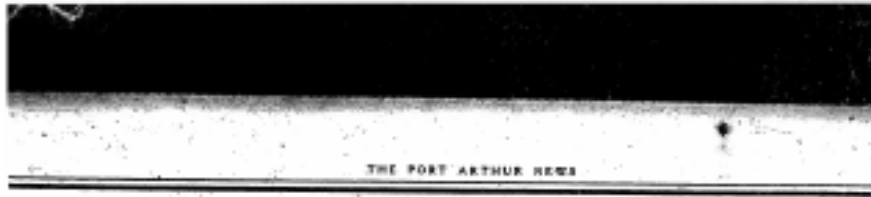
Ads were collected by one of the authors, who examined every page of The Port Arthur News from first to the last day of the strike. This survey of the newspaper revealed the six advertisements under critique here, running between Sunday, April 30 and Thursday, May 11, 1950.

Ad Run Date (1950)	Newspaper Page #	Scene	Headline
Sunday, April 30	p. 21	At the table for a meal	"Let's look at the strike OUR way, Joe..."
Tuesday, May 2	p. 11	In the garden, husband holding hoe, wife kneeling, maybe weeding(?) and talking.	"Frankly, Joe, what's in this strike for <u>you</u> and <u>me</u> ?"
Thursday, May 4	p. 29	Living room. Wife in chair next to husband, sitting in large chair, holding newspaper.	"What'll we get out of this strike, Joe?"
Sunday, May 7	p. 21	Back at meal table. Same artwork as previous Sunday.	"How much do WE GAIN from this strike, Joe?"
Tuesday, May 9	p. 11	Husband in chair turned backwards in kitchen, idle and watching wife at stove cooking	"I ask you, Joe, what will the strike do for US?"
Thursday, May 11	p. 29	Man and child sitting on steps of porch. Wife hanging laundry on the line.	"If the Union wins this strike, Joe, what will WE win?"

Appendix B

Sample Advertisement, *The Port Arthur News*

Tue May 9, 1950 p. 11



"I ask you, Joe, what will the strike do for US?"

"I ask you, Joe, just what will the strike do for US?"

"Well, Mary, it's not for more money. We've already mentioned that. But there's some dispute about job classifications."

"What's that, Joe?"

"It's something like this, Mary. If a foreman on a job saw a loose bolt on a machine that needed to be tightened up—he might pick up a wrench and tighten the bolt himself . . ."

"So what, Joe?"

"Well, the Union is against that. They want it written into the Contract that he can't do that. He must call another workman, who's paid for tightening bolts and have HIM do it."

"Say, Joe—"

"What, Mary?"

"Doesn't the foreman get paid more money than the man who tightens the bolts?"

"Oh, sure."

"Then I don't see why the Company would want the expensive foreman to spend his time on the other man's work—unless it was some kind of emergency and didn't take too long . . ."

"But Mary, the Union wants to make a hard-and-fast rule, and have it written down . . ."

"Seems to me Joe, it would be pretty hard to run ANY kind of a company that way. And by the way, who's supposed to RUN the Port Arthur Works anyway—the Union or the management?"

"And one other thing, Joe, what'll WE get out of this strike?"

* * *

The management of the Port Arthur Works is and has been willing all along to negotiate the issue of this strike—over the bargaining table with the Union.