

Appendix 3: Brief History of Union Organization in the Bienfait/Estevan Coalfields, Sask. 1907–1998
(Mainly from Glen Makahonuk in *Saskatchewan History*, Spring 1978)

1907: United Mine Workers of America, District 18, organized Local 2672 in the Roche Percée area.

1908: UMWA District 18, organized Local 2682 in Estevan and Local 2648 in Taylorton. After a short strike and some gains, the UMWA was frustrated by the companies and withdrew from the field in 1909

1915-1917: Sporadic strikes in the coal pits during wartime made some wage gains, but did not result in union organizations being formed.

1920: One Big Union sent in an organizer who was kidnapped and run out of town by vigilantes.

1931: Workers' Unity League/Mine Workers' Union of Canada sent organizers from Winnipeg and Calgary. They signed up 600 miners and formed Local 27 however the operators refused to negotiate with a 'Red' union. After a 30-day strike the miners gained a number of temporary concessions but went back to work without union recognition.

1938: United Mine Workers of America, District 18 (CIO): sent John Stokaluk to Bienfait and within a week the majority of miners were signed up into Local 7606 of the UMWA. Vincent Clark, a miner and United Church elder, was elected president. After a conciliation board report favourable to the union was ignored, the UMWA conducted a two-month strike in 1939.

1939: Mineworkers Central Union of Estevan & District: this was still the UMWA but for the duration of the Second World War the UMWA technically withdrew from the field in return for a signed agreement with the operators of all mines except Western Dominion Coal Mines.

1945: United Mine Workers of America, Local 7606: re-entered the field and in a vote conducted by the Wartime Labour Relations Board, won recognition as the bargaining unit for the Manitoba & Saskatchewan Coal Co., and other mines except those controlled by J. R. Brody. The Mineworkers Central Union was dissolved. Local 7606 conducted an 11-week strike in 1948.



1998: United Mine Workers of America, Local 7606. After Luscar Corporation became the sole operator in the coalfields a vote among the unionized workers settled on Local 7606 to represent all the miners in the field.

1932 Saskatchewan Mine Workers Association: this was a local, independent union fostered by an official of the provincial Department of Labour to counter the influence of the Mine Workers' Union of Canada. It was largely a paper organization.

1938: Saskatchewan Coal Miners Union, a company union, formed the previous year, was granted a closed shop with a dues checkoff in J. R. Brody's Western Dominion Coal Mines and the Bienfait Mine No. 2 owned by A. C. Wilson. This union affiliated with the Canadian Federation of Labour.



1957: Saskatchewan Coal Miners Union becomes a direct charter, Local 331 of the Canadian Labour Congress with a closed shop and dues check-off at Western Dominion Coal Mines, where Charles Doerr is the manager.

1958-1990: Saskatchewan Strip Miners Union, Local 1573, replaces Local 331 and becomes a CLC direct charter local at the mines of J. R. Brody, now owned by Manalta corporation.

1964-1989: Roche Percée Miners Union, Local 1623, becomes a CLC direct charter local with recognition by Manalta corporation.

1990-1998: United Steelworkers of America, Local 9279 replaces the CLC direct charter locals in the Manalta mines.