

Miners celebrate small wins in struggle

Price: Backers of a strike at a Kingston-owned mine get together to talk worker dignity

By CHRISTOPHER SMART
The Salt Lake Tribune

PRICE — The workers' struggle for economic justice goes on.

About 90 supporters of striking coal miners from the Co-Op Mine in Huntington Canyon gathered in Price on Sunday to chew on some barbecue and the state of labor in Utah's coal mines — particularly the one owned and operated by the polygamous Kingston clan.

"If we were looking for total victory, it would be for this group to be working under a UMWA contract in that mine," said union organizer Bob Butero. "This is going to be an ongoing battle that we're going to have to fight."

Although none of the 75 miners who struck the Co-Op Mine in September 2002 now work there, organizers said they have some things to celebrate.

In May, the C.W. Mining Co., owned by the Kingstons, dropped its defamation suit against the miners, the United Mine Workers of America, *The Militant* newspaper that is affiliated with the Socialist Workers Party, and others. In exchange, UMWA gave up its efforts to establish a union local at the mine.

Bill Estrada said he worked at the mine for \$5.50 an hour in questionable safety conditions. He and 26 others were fired for attempting to

See **UNION, D8**

Strike backers decry miners' status

Continued from D1

organize a union. Later, the National Labor Relations Board ordered the mine to re-hire him and five other miners.

The remaining 21 could not establish legal-worker status and were deemed outside the protection of labor laws. But those strikers nonetheless had won respect and dignity, Estrada told the gathering.

"We don't regret a single thing we've done," he said. "It puts other miners in a better

position to fight for better conditions."

The strikers held a picket line in front of the mine for 10 months. The Kingston's lawsuit was act of revenge, Estrada said. "Let it be an example to other workers that we can do this."

Mike Dalpaz, the director of UMWA's District 22 in Price, said that immigrants had built America and that their struggle for economic justice must go on.

"This didn't start six months ago or six years ago," he said, citing waves of immigrants since the country's founding who labored in mines, railroads, steel mills, as well as in kitchens and laundries.

He then lashed out at the Kingstons.

"They talk about illegal immigrants, but our

congressmen forget about an illegal thing that's going on at that mine — and that's polygamy."

Among those at the party was 78-year-old Lucie Cook, whose husband, Byron, was a coal miner for 38 years.

"I stood on the picket line with those guys to help those miners get what they deserved," she said. "They were treated like they didn't have any dignity or say-so over what they were doing."

Treyvn McCoy, a long-shoreman from San Francisco, made the trip to Utah for the celebration.

"The struggle is always going to be there for workers," he said. "Our young workers aren't being educated to what our fathers did 50 and 100 years ago to fight for better wages and working conditions. We all need to get together and educate them."



PHOTOS BY LEAH HOGSTEN/*The Salt Lake Tribune*

Above, Rick Trujillo, ex-president of the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, wipes away tears as he remembers organizing Latino organizations to come to the aid of miners who struck at the Co-Op Mine in Huntington Canyon. The mine is owned by the Kingston family. Below, Mike Dalpiaz – international vice president of United Mine Workers of America – points to miners who stood up to the Kingstons.

