

# The Kohler Strike of 1954: Lessons on Conflict and Compromise

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*“Conflict is the gadfly of thought. It stirs us to observation and memory. It instigates to invention. It shocks us out of sheeplike passivity, and sets us at noting and contriving.”<sup>1</sup>*

- John Dewey

The Kohler Strike of 1954 was the longest strike in American history.<sup>2</sup> Over a decade of conflict occurred before a final settlement was reached.<sup>3</sup> It happened at a time when organized labor was at its strongest.<sup>4</sup> The long, drawn-out course of the strike was a result of Kohler Company president Herbert Kohler’s unwillingness to compromise.<sup>5</sup> This occurred in an era in which collective bargaining and the right of workers to arbitrate were previously effective mechanisms for compromise and improvement for the working class.<sup>6</sup> The striking laborers persevered and ultimately succeeded in receiving concessions. However, it was a turning point in American labor history in which smaller, often family owned companies would aggressively try to undermine unions and debase organized labor.<sup>7</sup> It gave rise to new challenges for laborers which continue to plague workers in America today. The lessons learned from this sentinel strike in history can inform the people of today and guide them to protect American laborers so that conflict is not stifled, but instead can lead to conversation, negotiation, and compromise.

### **Rise of Union Power**

Organized labor in America has long fought for fundamental rights for workers. Early unions were formed in response to poor and inhumane wages, hours, and working conditions

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<sup>1</sup> Dewey, John. *Human Nature and Conduct: an Introduction to Social Psychology*. Henry Holt and Company, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> Bybee, Roger. Phone Interview. 8 January 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Uphoff, Walter. *Kohler on Strike Thirty Years of Conflict*. Saunders, 1966, pp. 413-21.

<sup>4</sup> Lichtenstein, Nelson. Phone Interview. 8 January 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Perlstein, Rick. *Before the Storm*. Nation Books, 2009, p. 35.

<sup>6</sup> Library of Congress Teachers. *Great Depression And World War II, 1929-1945*. Accessed 14 January 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Lichtenstein, Phone Interview, 8 January, 2018.

endured by laborers during the rapid industrial growth in the United States in the late 1800s.<sup>8</sup>

Workers often met resistance and had little protection when fighting for their basic rights.

However, in the 1930s, great strides were made in improving workers' rights as a result of Franklin Roosevelt's pro-union New Deal legislation.<sup>9</sup>

The New Deal empowered laborers to advocate for themselves. In 1935, the National Labor Relations Act was passed. It gave workers the right to choose their own unions. It banned intimidating, firing, and blacklisting of union members as well as the use of company spies. It gave workers the right to collectively bargain and mandated that companies arbitrate with unions. It also allowed laborers to strike, boycott, and picket.<sup>10</sup> Strikes over conflicts between workers and companies with subsequent bargaining and compromise were effective in bettering the lives of union workers and all workers in the coming years.<sup>11</sup>

A few years later, in 1939, World War II started.<sup>12</sup> After the war ended in 1945 there was an economic boom in the United States.<sup>13</sup> Postwar wealth rose as a result of New Deal politics and America's new role as a leading world power. Family income increased resulting in economic security and a population boom. Two new dominant forces influenced the economy in this era, the strong labor movement, and the large military efforts due to the Cold War which began in 1946.

Unions recruited more members in this era than in any other era in the history of the country. This resulted in almost 35 percent of America's labor force being enrolled in unions in 1953. The unions were a powerful economic influence. Wage increases negotiated by unions set

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<sup>8</sup> Ozanne, Robert. *The Labor Movement in Wisconsin*. The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1984, pp. 4-7.

<sup>9</sup> Library of Congress Teachers. *Great Depression And World War II, 1929-1945*. Accessed 14 January 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Lichtenstein, Nelson, Susan Strasser, and Roy Rosenzweig. *Who Built America?, Volume Two*. Bedford St. Martin's, 2000, pp. 431-32.

<sup>11</sup> Library of Congress Teachers. *Great Depression And World War II, 1929-1945*. Accessed 14 January 2018.

<sup>12</sup> Lichtenstein, *Who Built America*, pp. 535-37.

<sup>13</sup> Lichtenstein, *Who Built America*, pp. 570.

the standard for both union and nonunion workers. Arms production due to the Cold War promoted growth in manufacturing. Union and military endeavors helped maintain high wages, employment rates and consumption.<sup>14</sup> However, union strength and progress were being challenged.

### **Changing Sentiments**

During the Cold War, the world was divided into two opposing sides: the United States and its allies and the Soviet Union and the countries it controlled. The McCarthyism movement occurred in the United States during this time period. This “witch hunt” for communists and their supposed threat to the “internal security” of the nation created a repressed atmosphere for unions. Many businesses suggested communist subversion as an explanation for labor conflict and accused them of “infiltrating” labor organizations. This resulted in division within the labor movement.

In the post World War II era, there was also a political shift against unions. Successful wartime production led to greater trust in capitalism and company leadership. Company leaders made compromises during wartime but became resistant to this after the war. The Taft-Hartley Act was passed in 1947. It limited the National Labor Relations Act of 1935 by making strikes and boycotts more difficult to carry out. This political shift reflected anti-union attitudes by the American public and government. The Kohler Company epitomized this anti-union sentiment.<sup>15</sup>

### **Kohler Suppresses Union**

The Kohler Company was founded in the small town of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, in 1873 by John F. Kohler. The company produced bathroom and kitchen fixtures.<sup>16</sup> It was started as a company town which housed laborers and provided corporate welfare programs for them such as

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<sup>14</sup> Lichtenstein, *Who Built America*, pp. 572-75.

<sup>15</sup> Lichtenstein, *Who Built America*, pp. 555-58.

<sup>16</sup> Bybee, Roger. *The Longest Strike*, Z Magazine. Accessed on 5 December 2017.

group life insurance and a pension plan.<sup>17</sup> The Great Depression, lasting from 1929-1935,<sup>18</sup> resulted in deterioration of labor relations at Kohler.<sup>19</sup> This was followed by a long history of conflict. The company was hostile towards unions but allowed participation in a local union affiliated with the AFL-CIO in order to gain contracts during World War II. It later established a company union, the Kohler Workers Association. However, these unions were essentially powerless.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, in 1952, Kohler workers voted to join the United Auto Workers Local 833 (UAW) in order have a voice.<sup>21</sup>

Joining the UAW allowed Kohler workers greater resources and strength to advocate for themselves.<sup>22</sup> In 1954, the union requested a standard arbitration-grievance procedure, full seniority protection, a pay increase to bring Kohler rates more in line with others in the industry, pensions, a twenty minute lunch period for the enamel shop workers consistent with that of the other laborers, and other provisions.<sup>23</sup> Company leader Herbert V. Kohler refused to negotiate. He was hostile to the union and was not willing to recognize the union as the legal representative of the Kohler workers.<sup>24</sup> A compromise could not be made. Therefore, on April 5, 1954, Kohler employees went on strike.<sup>25</sup>

### **Conflict Without Compromise Leads to Strike**

The Kohler Strike of 1954 began with over 2,000 employees picketing in a close walking formation called "belly to back". This helped prevent non-strikers from penetrating the line. They

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<sup>17</sup> Green, Hardy. *The Company Town*. Basic Books, 2010, pp. 193-94.

<sup>18</sup> Lichtenstein, *Who Built America*, p. 336.

<sup>19</sup> Green, *The Company Town*, p.194.

<sup>20</sup> Bybee, Roger. *The Longest Strike*, Z Magazine. Accessed on 5 December 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Uphoff, *Kohler on Strike Thirty Years of Conflict*, pp. 116-17.

<sup>22</sup> Bybee, Roger. *The Longest Strike*, Z Magazine. Accessed on 5 December 2017.

<sup>23</sup> Uphoff, *Kohler on Strike Thirty Years of Conflict*, pp. 142-43.

<sup>24</sup> Meyer, Larry. Phone Interview. 20 January 2018.

<sup>25</sup> Uphoff, *Kohler on Strike Thirty Years of Conflict*, p. 45.

halted plant operations for fifty-four days. The company argued that mass striking was illegal and referred to the striking laborers as "criminals and goons".<sup>26</sup> The Wisconsin Labor Relations Board declared the union guilty of mass picketing and ordered the union to cease and desist from what they referred to as "coercive" activities<sup>27</sup>. The workers were forced to rely on other strategies to address the conflict and strive for compromise.

The union implemented a more long term approach. They continued to picket but not mass picket. They built community support through news articles<sup>28</sup> and meetings with the press. The union communicated daily with their members to keep them informed. They worked with other veteran strikers such as auto workers from Detroit who mentored them. They launched nationwide outreach to other laborers including the Plumbers Union and other building-trade unions. Many of these groups informally boycotted the purchase of Kohler products across the country. However the conflict continued.<sup>29</sup>

### **Kohler Crusade: Local and National, Corporate and Political**

Herbert Kohler responded by still refusing to compromise. He hired non-union laborers.<sup>30</sup> Many of these new employees came from Michigan where the mining industry was declining and Wisconsin where the lumber business was declining.<sup>31</sup> Kohler attempted to prevent strikers from securing other employment in the community by considering those who hired strikers to be on his "bad list".<sup>32</sup> Strikers received funds from the UAW as well as nationwide donations of food and

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<sup>26</sup> Uphoff, *Kohler on Strike Thirty Years of Conflict*, pp. 145-47.

<sup>27</sup> Uphoff, *Kohler on Strike Thirty Years of Conflict*, pp. 150-60.

<sup>28</sup> United Auto Workers. *You Can't Beat the Kohler Strikers!*. Eau Claire Leader. Accessed on 2 April 2018.

<sup>29</sup> Bybee, Roger. *The Longest Strike*, Z Magazine. Accessed on 5 December 2017.

<sup>30</sup> Lichtenstein, Phone Interview. 8 January 2018.

<sup>31</sup> Potter, Cal. Phone Interview. 26 March 2018.

<sup>32</sup> Meyer, Phone Interview. 20 January 2018.

money from supporters to help sustain them and their cause. They were given a stipend of \$25 per week, received money to pay interest on home mortgages, and had strong legal representation.<sup>33</sup>

Kohler also retained the non-strikers or “scabs,” totaling about 500 of the 3,300 employees. Violence intermittently occurred over the course of the strike between the strikers and non-strikers. Kohler Company charged opponents with over 1,000 counts of vandalism and hundreds of arrests.

<sup>34</sup> The city was divided. Families and friends were often against one another. The strike “tore people apart”. Law enforcement was divided with Kohler police favoring Kohler and the Sheboygan County police favoring the union.<sup>35</sup> Kohler used the McCarthyism tactics of the times to try to villainize unions.<sup>36</sup> His portrayal of unions as violent differed from the previous depictions in the 1930s when laborers were viewed as victims of employer attacks on picket lines.<sup>37</sup> He spread this idea in Wisconsin and beyond.

Herbert Kohler traveled throughout the country during the years of the strike speaking to different business groups. He criticized unions and promoted the notion that they were violent. He instilled the idea that unions were trying to take over management’s control of working hours, shop rules, merit pay and subcontracting of work.<sup>38</sup> In addition, he championed his anti-union movement in the political arena.

Kohler’s family had long held political power in Wisconsin. Herbert Kohler also aligned himself with national anti-union politicians such as Senator Barry Goldwater.<sup>39</sup> Goldwater opposed

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<sup>33</sup> Conrardy, Charles. Phone Interview. 26 March 2018.

<sup>34</sup> Bybee, Roger. *The Longest Strike*, Z Magazine. Accessed on 5 December 2017.

<sup>35</sup> Meyer, Phone Interview. 20 January 2018.

<sup>36</sup> Bybee, Roger. *The Longest Strike*, Z Magazine. Accessed on 5 December 2017.

<sup>37</sup> Lichtenstein, Nelson. *State of The Union*. Princeton University Press, 2002, p. xx.

<sup>38</sup> Green, *The Company Town*, p. 194.

<sup>39</sup> Bybee, Roger. *The Longest Strike*, Z Magazine. Accessed 5 December 2017.

the New Deal.<sup>40</sup> In 1957 he became directly involved with the strike by demanding that the senate investigate the violence and boycott practices being used.<sup>41</sup> Kohler used his many connections to fight the strike and organized labor not just locally but nationally.

The union was ultimately successful in securing some of the strike requests of the Kohler workers. After years of conflict, Kohler was forced to compromise. On December 17, 1966, the final settlement was approved by the U.S. Court of Appeals.<sup>42</sup> Laborers' jobs were reinstated and pay increases and back-pay for lost wages were retroactively provided.<sup>43</sup> However, the company resisted the demand for a union shop and claimed they won the strike because they provided their workers with the "right to join or not join a union."<sup>44</sup> The landscape for collective bargaining was changing.

### **Nationwide Change**

Herbert Kohler's unyielding refusal to arbitrate and compromise was a brazen response to the union's requests. The workers' experience in this conflict provided a lens into the future. Many company leaders considered Herbert Kohler to be a hero and emulated him.<sup>45</sup> For example, in the Cone Mills Strike of 1959, a labor conflict broke out and resulted in a strike which stopped the production of cotton at the Cone Mills. The company would not compromise and instead closed the mill. This was one of many subsequent labor conflicts in which a company refused to negotiate.<sup>46</sup> This resistance against organized labor was evident in political goals of these companies as well.

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<sup>40</sup> Perlstein, Rick. *Before the Storm*. Nation Books, 2009, p. 34.

<sup>41</sup> "Senate Committee May Investigate Kohler Strike". *Sheboygan Press*, 16 July 1957.

<sup>42</sup> Uphoff, *Kohler on Strike Thirty Years of Conflict*, p. 413.

<sup>43</sup> Uphoff, *Kohler on Strike Thirty Years of Conflict*, pp. 405-410.

<sup>44</sup> The New York Times. *The Kohlers of Wisconsin*. Accessed 24 January 2018.

<sup>45</sup> Lichtenstein, Phone Interview. 8 January 2018.

<sup>46</sup> Goodson, Mike. *Gone But Not Forgotten*. Accessed 22 January 2018.

Joining with Herbert Kohler, leaders of other smaller companies, often family owned, contributed organizational support for the National Right-to-Work Committee. Some of these companies included Thompson Products, Lone Star Steel and Allen-Bradley. They also made large financial contributions to this effort. They were a pivotal force in putting the “right-to-work” referenda on the ballot in industrial states in 1958 and thus weakening organized labor.<sup>47</sup>

### **Enduring Effects**

The long term impact of the Kohler Strike of 1954 is far reaching. At the height of the union’s membership and power in the United States, Herbert Kohler defied the law and precedents pertaining to organized labor. In the face of conflict, he refused to compromise and crusaded nationwide to debilitate unions. In doing so, he undermined the platform on which workers could have a voice and arbitrate. This marked the beginning of the decline of union power that was followed by decades of weakening for unions. The percentage of the workforce who were union members decreased from its peak of about 35 percent at the time of the strike<sup>48</sup> to 10.7 percent in 2017.<sup>49</sup> The number of strikes in the United States decreased from 3,468 in 1954 to 15 in 2016.<sup>50</sup> Pro-labor New Deal legislation became fragmented throughout the country.

The legacy of the union laborers in the Kohler Strike of 1954 extends well beyond the concessions they achieved in their workplace. Their tireless persistence throughout the conflict matched that of Herbert Kohler’s. Their strength in numbers and solidarity sustained them so that they could persevere. Their outreach to the community helped them gain community support.

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<sup>47</sup> Lichtenstein, *State of The Union*, p. 138.

<sup>48</sup> Bybee, Phone Interview. 8 January 2018.

<sup>49</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, (Economic News Release) Last Modified January 2018. Accessed February 2nd 2018.

<sup>50</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, (Work Stoppages) Last Modified January 2018. Accessed 2 February 2018.

Their recruitment of assistance throughout the country helped fortify them. These strategies enabled them to persist, inform and inspire others both past and present.

One example of effective implementation of similar initiatives was The Delano Grape Strike of 1965 in California. Filipino and Latino agricultural workers joined forces by striking together. They travelled across America sharing their stories and organizing an informal boycott. They generated mass support and families stopped buying grapes. This resulted in the first union contracts for table grape growers.<sup>51</sup> These policies of solidarity, engagement of the community and organization of nationwide initiatives have been and will continue to be insightful for laborers when considering further self advocacy now and in the future.

### **Moving Forward**

The fight for fair and humane treatment of all workers in America is not over. Many laborers in the United States lack sufficient wages to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing. According to a recent report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are about 9.5 million “working poor” in America who are living below the poverty level.<sup>52</sup> They are working and yet not making enough money to secure the most rudimentary things needed for survival. This contradicts fundamental American principles.

The United States is built on the ideals of democracy and the belief that the American Dream is attainable for people of all races, religions, and genders. Organized labor has long been a vehicle for improvement in the lives of the nation’s workers so that with hard work, motivation and commitment, economic security is achievable. It has enabled laborers to address conflicts with discourse followed by mutual compromise. The key to compromise, however, is that those parties

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<sup>51</sup> Kim, Inga. *The 1965-1970 Delano Grape Strike and Boycott*. Accessed 22 January 2018.

<sup>52</sup> Bureau of Labor. (Economic News Release). Accessed 24 January 2018.

involved in the conflict must have a voice in order to engage in conversation and work together to facilitate change. If there is no opportunity for dialogue, then compromise cannot occur and the party in power dictates or rules, as it does in a dictatorship, not a democracy. In the Kohler Strike of 1954, conflict ultimately resulted in forced compromise through the judicial system. Americans must continue to learn from this strike and move forward remembering that it is their responsibility to protect democracy. Through hard work, determination, and initiative all people in the United States should have not just a theoretical opportunity but a true and real opportunity to achieve the American Dream. To accomplish this, Americans must have the political willpower to ensure that all laboring people have a voice so that conflict can lead to conversation, negotiation and compromise.

“No America without democracy, no democracy without politics, no politics without parties, no parties without compromise and moderation.”<sup>53</sup>

-Clinton Rossiter

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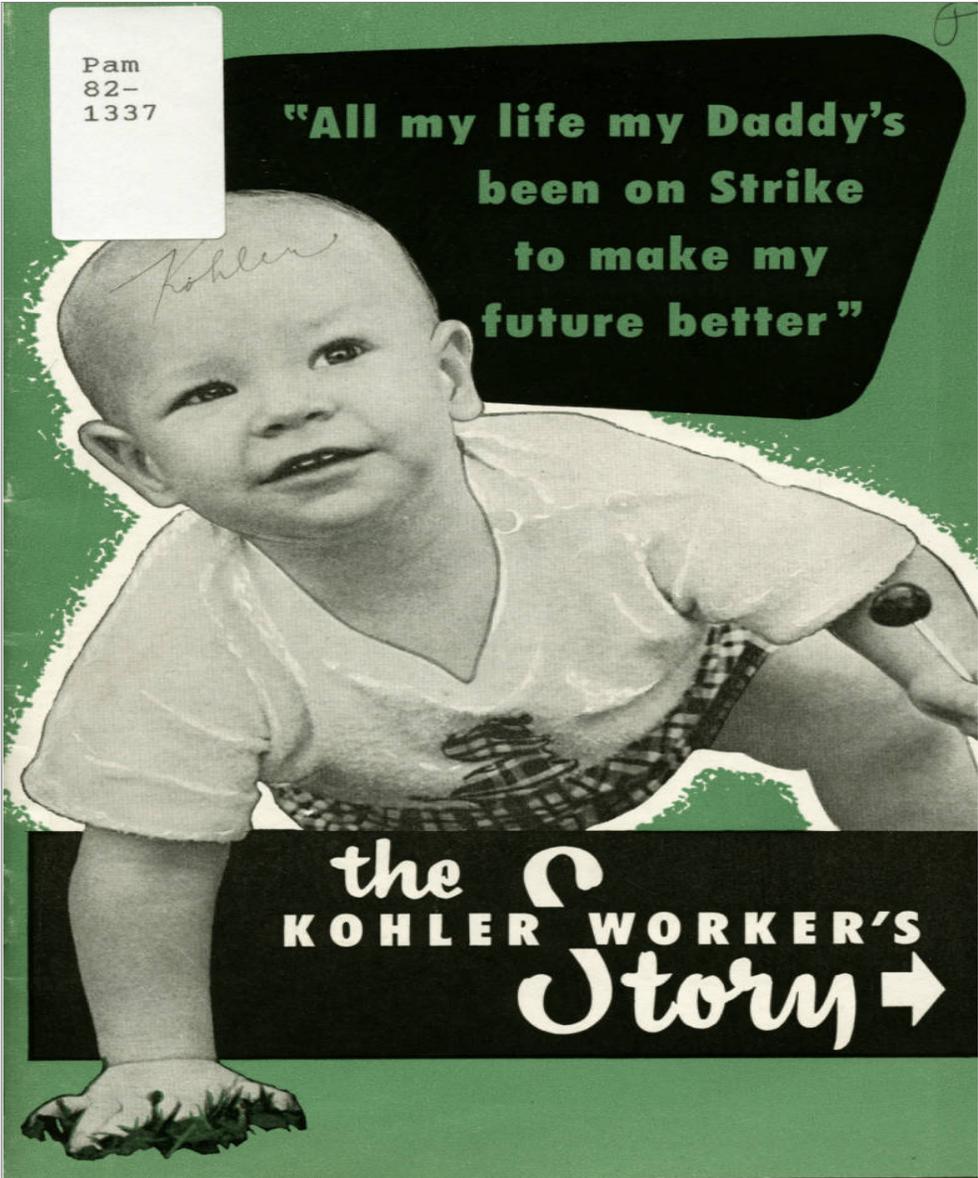
<sup>53</sup> Rossiter, Clinton. *Parties and Politics in America*.

Appendix 1



This shows Kohler workers in a picket line outside Kohler Company during the strike.

Appendix 2



This shows the cover of a pamphlet distributed by the strikers to inform the community.

Appendix 3



This shows strike supporters advocating for the boycott.

## Annotated Bibliography

### Primary Sources

“All My Life My Daddy's Been on Strike to Make My Future Better : the Kohler Worker's Story.”

*Turning Points in Wisconsin History,*

[content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm/ref/collection/tp/id/63679](http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm/ref/collection/tp/id/63679).

This is a pamphlet published by the union showing the point of view of the workers and the union. It helped me understand their goals, feelings and struggles.

Conrardy, Charles. Telephone Interview. 26 Mar. 2018.

Mr. Conrardy was a Kohler employee working in the engine plant at the time of the strike. He participated in the strike and had first hand insight into what really happened from his perspective. I interviewed him later in the process of writing the paper and learned things from him that I had not seen in any book or article.

Dewey, John. *Human Nature and Conduct: an Introduction to Social Psychology*. Henry Holt and Company, 1922.

The author of this book was a philosopher and this was the source of my opening quote. It helped show the meaning and significance of conflict.

Henderson, Dion. “Kohler Strike in 20th Week.” *The Lubbock Evening Journal*, 19 Aug. 2018.

When searching for primary source newspaper articles, I found that this article from Kohler published in this Texas newspaper also was published in many other newspapers throughout the country. Once again, it demonstrated to me the magnitude of the strike and how it was of significance throughout the United States.

*Kohler Co. v. NLRB*. 20 Apr. 1965. *LexisNexis*.

This is a report of some of the court decisions and opinions related to the strike. These along with the other similar documents were hundreds of pages long and showed the long drawn out course of the strike and court proceedings.

*Kohler Co. v. NLRB*. 2 Sep. 1965. *LexisNexis*.

This also is a report of more court decisions and opinions related to the strike. It also demonstrated the complexity of the legal issues.

*Kohler Co. v. NLRB*. 18 Jan. 1961. *LexisNexis*.

This also is a report showing more court decisions and opinions. It again demonstrated the complexity of the legal issues.

*Kohler Co. v. NLRB*. 7 Mar. 1955. *LexisNexis*.

This also is a report showing more court decisions and opinions. It again showed the complexity of the legal issues.

“Kohler Products Unfair.” *Wisconsin Historical Society* ,

[images.wisconsinhistory.org/700099990651/9999009984-1.jpg](https://images.wisconsinhistory.org/700099990651/9999009984-1.jpg).

This is a poster about boycotting Kohler products. It brought to life for me some of the actions the union took to help their cause.

Manly, Chesly. “Union Losing Strike Fight With Kohler.” *The Chicago Tribune*, 16 Sept. 1954.

This newspaper article had some excellent quotes reflecting Kohler’s refusal to compromise, implications of union activities as being violent and illegal, hiring of new workers and suggestion that production was up, losses were low and morale in the plant was good.

“Marathon Strike.” *The Biloxi Daily Herald*, 9 Apr. 1958.

This Mississippi newspaper had an article about the strike. When researching I found thousands of articles had been published in newspapers in almost all 50 states across the country. The vastness of news coverage of strike proceedings throughout the United States was a testament to the significance of the strike nationwide.

Meyer, Larry. Telephone Interview. 20 Mar. 2018.

Mr. Meyer was employed by Kohler and worked in the enamel warehouse at the time of the strike. He was the first person I interviewed who had actually been there and the whole thing came alive while I was listening to him share the story.

“People Participating in Secondary Boycott.” *On Wisconsin*,

[bloximages.chicago2.vip.townnews.com/host.madison.com/content/tncms/assets/v3/editorial/5/4a/54a8f903-c42a-5a6a-8e06-fd75d9d52e5e/5675f1fc8e50c.image.jpg?resize=1200%2C976](https://bloximages.chicago2.vip.townnews.com/host.madison.com/content/tncms/assets/v3/editorial/5/4a/54a8f903-c42a-5a6a-8e06-fd75d9d52e5e/5675f1fc8e50c.image.jpg?resize=1200%2C976).

This is a picture which helped me appreciate the protest activities which were occurring at

“People Picketing in Front of Kohler Factory.” Z Communications, Roger Bybee,

[zcomm.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Bybee-picket.jpg](https://zcomm.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Bybee-picket.jpg).

This is a picture which brought to life the strike and how it must have been at that time. It helped me realize just how extensive the participation really was among workers.

Potter, Cal. Telephone Interview. 20 Mar. 2018.

Mr. Potter’s father was an employee of Kohler and his father participated in the strike. He was nine years old at the time and it was interesting to hear what he observed and experienced as a family and community member during the duration of the strike, which lasted through the whole second half of his childhood.

“A Profile of the Working Poor, 2014.” *Bureau of Labor Statistics* , 19 Apr. 2016, [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov).  
This is a report that showed statistics from recent times. It helped me understand the poverty some workers still endure today.

Reuther, Walter P. “People Holding Signs and Striking against the Kohler Company.” *Walter P. Reuther Library* , [reuther.wayne.edu/files/images/7458.preview.jpg](http://reuther.wayne.edu/files/images/7458.preview.jpg).  
This is a photo which gave me a more real appreciation of all that was going on at the time of the strike. It helped tell the story of the workers and how they were fighting for their rights.

Rossiter, Clinton. *Parties and Politics in America*. Cornell Paperbacks, 1964.  
This is a book by Clinton Rossiter. He was a political scientist in the United States and I felt this quote resonated with the theme of the paper.

“Senate Committee Investigate Kohler Strike.” 16 July 1957.  
This newspaper article helped me to appreciate the far reaching effect of the strike and Kohler’s efforts against unions.

“Strike Enters 2nd Week.” *People*, 14 Apr. 1954.  
This magazine article helped me get a feel for what was actually going on at the time. It made me realize that the strike gained national attention and the whole country was following along with the proceedings.

“UAW-CIO Strikes.” *Kohler of Kohler News*, 5 Apr. 1954.  
This news piece helped me understand what was going on with the strike. It painted a good picture of how things were at that time.

“Union Membership (Annual).” *Bureau of Labor Statistics* , 19 Jan. 2018, [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov).  
This is a labor report which helped me understand the status of union enrollment in recent times. I gained a greater perspective on how things have changed by reviewing past and present statistics.

United Auto Workers. “You Can't Beat the Kohler Strikers!” 29 Oct. 1954.  
This was an article about a family who was working together to win better working conditions for their father. It is an example of the initiative the union took to gain support by educating the community about their goals and challenges.

“Union Calls Strike.” *People*, 7 Apr. 1954.  
This magazine article helped me understand what was happening at that time. It again helped me appreciate that the effects of the strike were vast and countrywide, not just local.

“Who are the Working Poor in America, 2014.” *Bureau of Labor Statistics*, 19 Apr. 2016, [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov).

This report helped me understand the concept of working poor in America. It was eye opening to realize that so many people work for a living and yet still live in poverty.

“Work Stoppages.” *Bureau of Labor Statistics*, 19 Jan. 2018, [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov).

This report helped me understand the lack of strike activity in today’s times. It helped me understand how much change has occurred since the strike.

## Secondary Sources

Bybee, Roger. Telephone Interview. 8 January 2018.

Mr. Bybee is a freelance writer and visiting professor of labor education at the University of Illinois. He has extensively covered labor events in the state of Wisconsin both past and present. This interview helped me gain a broader understanding of the strike and all it entailed.

Bybee, Roger. “Will Kohler Strike Ignite 3rd Major Labor War?” *The Progressive Populist*, 16 Jan. 2016, Kohler Strike of 1954.

This article had some good information about the history of multiple strikes at Kohler. It helped me understand the long history of Kohler’s anti-union stance.

Bybee, Roger. “ZCommunications » The Longest Strike.” *Z Communications*, [comm.org/zmagazine/the-longest-strike/](http://comm.org/zmagazine/the-longest-strike/).

This magazine article was a detailed account about the strike. It gave an insightful overview of the history before and during the strike as well as ideas for the future of organized labor.

DeSilver, Drew. “American Unions Membership Declines as Public Support Fluctuates.” *Pew Research Center*, 20 Feb. 2014,

[www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/02/20/for-american-unions-membership-trails-far-behind-public-support/](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/02/20/for-american-unions-membership-trails-far-behind-public-support/).

This report helped me understand the state of union membership in current times. It demonstrated how much things have changed since the 1950s.

Farmer, Brian. “The Kohler Strike of 1954.” *The New American*,

[www.thenewamerican.com/culture/history/item/4821-the-kohler-strike-of-1954](http://www.thenewamerican.com/culture/history/item/4821-the-kohler-strike-of-1954).

This article shared information about the strike and was one of many conservatively written articles with an anti-union tone. It was helpful to read articles from different perspectives.

Germanson, Kenneth. "Nation's Longest Strike at Kohler Offers Lessons for Today's Unions." *Wisconsin Labor History Society*, 21 May 2014, [wislaborhistory.wordpress.com/2014/05/21/nations-longest-strike-at-kohler-offers-lessons-for-todays-unions/](http://wislaborhistory.wordpress.com/2014/05/21/nations-longest-strike-at-kohler-offers-lessons-for-todays-unions/).

This article included a lot of insightful historical information from before, during and after the strike.

Goodson, Mike. "Gone, But Not Forgotten." *Gadsden Times*, 5 July 1980.

This article told the story of the Cone Mill closing. It helped me understand the trend that started occurring in the labor movement during the strike.

Great Depression and World War II, 1929-1945." *Library of Congress*, [www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentation/timeline/depwwii/unions/](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentation/timeline/depwwii/unions/).

This website article gave me some perspective on what was happening in history leading up to the time of the strike.

Green, Hardy. *The Company Town: the Industrial Edens and Satanic Mills That Shaped the American Economy*. Basic Books, 2010.

This book helped me understand the idea of the "company town". It gave me perspective on what this entailed and helped me imagine what Kohler was like in the past.

Higgins, Sean. "Appeals Court Upholds Wisconsin Right-to-Work Law." *Washington Examiner*, Washington Examiner, 19 Sept. 2017, [www.washingtonexaminer.com/appeals-court-upholds-wisconsin-right-to-work-law/article/2634965](http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/appeals-court-upholds-wisconsin-right-to-work-law/article/2634965).

This article helped me understand how things have changed in Wisconsin for the labor movement in recent years. It demonstrated that the anti-labor movement continues to be strong and successful in today's times.

Kim, Inga. "The 1965-1970 Delano Grape Strike and Boycott." *The 1965-1970 Delano Grape Strike Boycott – UFW*, [ufw.org/1965-1970-delano-grape-strike-boycott/](http://ufw.org/1965-1970-delano-grape-strike-boycott/).

This article helped me draw parallels between the Kohler strike and future strike successes. The same strategies were successfully used in future strikes such as the Delano Grape Strike.

"Kohler Strike in 1954." Photograph. *Madison.com*, 18 December 2015.

[host.madison.com/kohler-strike-in/image\\_54a8f903-c42a-5a6a-8e06-fd75d9d52e5e.html](http://host.madison.com/kohler-strike-in/image_54a8f903-c42a-5a6a-8e06-fd75d9d52e5e.html). This picture helped me understand and bring to life the strike.

Lichtenstein, Nelson. *State of the Union*. Princeton University Press, 2002.

This book provided good information on the history of the labor movement and its decline. It also gave information on the future of the labor movement.

Lichtenstein, Nelson. Telephone Interview. 8 January 2018.

Dr. Lichtenstein is a labor historian who has written multiple books, some of which I used as references. This interview helped me gain a more comprehensive global understanding of the labor movement in the United States. I learned about the strike and its far reaching effects across the country both past and present.

Lichtenstein, Nelson. *What's next for Organized Labor?: Report of the Century Foundation Task Force on the Future of Unions*. Century Foundation Press.

This book provided a good overview of the status of the labor movement in recent times. It gave some good historical information as well.

Lichtenstein, Nelson, et al. *Who Built America?: Working People and the Nation's History*. Bedford/St. Martins, 2008.

This book was one of my most valuable resources because it had many chapters which helped me understand the history of the United States and even the world. It put everything in context and helped me understand how international and national events in history all affected American labor.

Lintereur, Josh. "Kohler's Past Marked by Bitter Labor Fights." *Sheboygan Press Media*, Sheboygan Press, 22 Nov. 2015, [www.sheboyganpress.com/story/news/2015/11/22/kohlers-past-marked-bitter-labor-fights/76050622/](http://www.sheboyganpress.com/story/news/2015/11/22/kohlers-past-marked-bitter-labor-fights/76050622/).

This article gave perspective on the conflict between Kohler company and its workers. It helped me understand the long history and deeply opposing opinions each side held.

Nicsteable. "History of Kohler." *YouTube*, YouTube, 15 Apr. 2013, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=vydsIPdNu-4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vydsIPdNu-4).

This video described the history of Kohler and the strike activity from the perspective of a scab and helped me gain a more broad understanding.

Ozanne, Robert W. *Labor Movement in Wisconsin: a History*. Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2014.

This book helped me understand some basic history about union activity during industrial growth of the late 1800s.

Perlstein, Rick. *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus*. Nation Books, 2009.

This book helped me understand more about the conservative movement against the New Deal. Dr. Lichtenstein referenced Goldwater when I interviewed him and this gave me insight into what he was conveying.

Petro, Sylvester. "The Kohler Strike Union Violence and Administrative Law."

This report had a lot of detailed information about the strike. It helped me gain more of an understanding the complexities of the legal system as it related to the strike violence.

Staff, LII. "Collective Bargaining." *LII / Legal Information Institute*, 6 Aug. 2007,  
[www.law.cornell.edu/wex/collective\\_bargaining](http://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/collective_bargaining).

This article had good information on the meaning of collective bargaining. It helped me better understand the concept.

Steve, Omaha. "Today in Labor History, January 5th." *Today in Labor History, January 5th - Democratic Underground*, [www.democraticunderground.com/10026043705](http://www.democraticunderground.com/10026043705).

This article recalled information about the strike and recalled the significance of the strike events.

Uphoff, Walter H. *Kohler on Strike: 30 Years of Conflict*. Beacon Press, 1966.

This book was one of my most helpful sources. It gave a very detailed account of the history of the Kohler strikes.

