"Keeping People From Being Killed": Arizona Governor Bruce Babbitt, Public Safety, and the Phelps Dodge Copper Strike, 1983-1984

James M. Bailey*

IMAGES OF CIVIL DISCORD

On July 1, 1983, more than 2,900 Phelps Dodge employees representing thirteen labor unions struck the copper giant's mining and processing facilities in Ago, Bisbee, Douglas, and Morenci, Arizona. Dissatisfied with the company's latest contract offer, they believed a strike would make the public more aware of their concerns. Some workers, however, decided that economic security took precedence over union solidarity and crossed the picket lines for paychecks. One of those workers was heavy equipment operator Keith Tallant of Ajo.[1]

For this economic security Tallant and his family paid a grievous price. Almost a month later, on July 27, someone fired a .22-caliber bullet at his home. Passing through two walls, a fragment entered the brain of his sleeping three-year-old daughter Chandra. An enraged Tallant blamed the incident on escalating threats by strikers toward replacement workers who "crossed the line;" according to Tallant, his family had suffered incessant public harassment and threatening phone calls because he was the first worker in Ajo to cross the line.[2]

To help preclude the possibility of further violence, strikers, replacements, and Arizona Governor Bruce Babbitt hoped to bring Phelps Dodge officials and union leaders to the negotiating table to reach a labor agreement. Hopes for a swift agreement, however, proved overly optimistic, because as late as June 30, 1984, Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) officers were using tear gas, wooden bullets, and batons to suppress a violent labor-related melee in Clifton. Review of the media's film coverage stuns the senses: a pregnant woman, staggering under the effects of tear gas, was handcuffed and detained; angry demonstrators hurled anything they could get their hands on at law-enforcement officials; citizens and officers exchanged blows with fists and batons; and a frustrated Bobby Andazola confronted a phalanx of shielded DPS officers by stripping off all of his clothes. "In the name of Lord God, Lord Jehovah," the naked Andazola screamed, "would you do this to your own brothers and sisters?"[3] As fascinating as they are disturbing, these images represent truly graphic examples of civil discord.

Still, the question remains: how could this labor situation have degenerated during the year to the point of forced riot suppression? Recent studies have examined the causes, events, and personalities surrounding this labor dispute, focusing on Phelps Dodge, the strikers, their families, union solidarity, and the seething hatred of "scabs" by strikers. These studies have described in vivid detail how the strike partitioned communities, divided families, decertified the unions, and created a dangerous environment for all concerned. On the whole, however, these analyses proffer fervent prolabor stands in their narratives and downplay alternative interpretations of the strike.[4]

On the other hand, Bruce Babbitt's position and response to this problematic labor situation has received very little attention. As Arizona's top elected official his involvement with the events surrounding the strike merits careful consideration. From the beginning of his governorship in 1978, Babbitt placed public safety high on his list of priorities. For example, in his 1983 inaugural address he proclaimed a "constitutional obligation to provide for the common welfare," a "moral obligation to do so with compassion," and a "civic obligation to do so with thrift and

* James M. Bailey, a Colorado native, is a Ph.D. candidate in History at Arizona State University. The author would like to thank Robert Autobee, Robert W. Larson, Karen L. Smith, and Susan C. Walters for their perceptive criticisms of earlier drafts.

efficiency."[5] All Babbitt needed was a sufficient reason to carry out this promise, and he found her recovering in a Phoenix hospital.

Chandra Tallant's shooting provided Babbitt with sufficient justification for increased public safety. During his visit with the recovering toddler, Babbitt promised Chandra's mother he would take decisive steps to prevent further serious injury; he was clearly moved by the youngster's condition. Reflecting on the events in a 1987 interview with AFL-CIO officials, he responded honestly: "Let me be blunt . . . I held a three-year-old girl in my arms who had been shot in the head--a victim of random violence. Her mother asked me what I would do to make sure she was the last victim. I had to do what leaders do . . . [I told her that] public safety comes first."[6]

Unfortunately, during the strike's first year, Babbitt found himself mired in an unenviable position between his policy for providing public protection and his appearing to have sided with Phelps Dodge, mostly due to his activation of the Arizona National Guard to protect the company's replacement workers. Available evidence, however, suggests no such alliance existed between the governor and the copper giant; on several occasions Babbitt criticized Phelps Dodge management for their uncompromising stance on negotiations. Moreover, much of the public supported his controversial decisions, reflected in positive letters to his office, reassuring editorials and letters in local newspapers, and favorable poll responses. "The issue of the copper strike involves basic issues of keeping people from being killed," Babbitt told a Wyoming newspaper in 1986.[7] Therefore, Babbitt acted with decisive, nonpartisan dispatch to check widespread civil turmoil.

Governor Bruce Babbitt addresses a group of reporters at the Greenlee County Courthouse in Clifton on August 9, 1983. "We came too close to real violence," he said. To prevent the possibility of further violence, Babbitt pressured Phelps Dodge to shut down their Morenci facility for ten days, while union and company negotiators sought a peaceful contract settlement. (Mike Ging photo courtesy of the *Arizona Republic*)

Before detailing Governor Babbitt's role during the strike's chaotic first year, it is important to examine briefly Phelps Dodge's controversial labor-relations record in Arizona, the U.S. copper industry's problems in a depressed world market, and key causal determinants behind the 1983 strike. This background helps to clarify why his declared state of emergency on August 10, 1983, resulted in the largest-ever deployment of a military force in Arizona.

COPPER AND LABOR: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

The most infamous example of Phelps Dodge's dealings with organized labor prior to 1983 is the Bisbee deportation of 1917. Concerned with increased antiwar activism among its workers in the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), Phelps Dodge hired an armed vigilante force to round up and expel militant union members and their potential allies. Then, under direct order of Phelps Dodge President Walter Douglas, the company shipped, via boxcar, over 1,200 workers into New Mexico. Labor analyst-journalist

Jonathan Rosenblum calls the Bisbee deportations a "company-enforced 'trail of tears' . . . the largest forced migration by a private corporation in American history."[8]

After Arizona's copper workers successfully organized during the 1930s, Phelps Dodge continued its anti-union practices. The company experienced a setback and made labor-law history in 1941, however, when the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruled in favor of two alleged "troublemakers" in the Morenci Mine-Mill union. Phelps Dodge had refused to rehire the unionists after a brief strike, but the NLRB directed the company to rehire them. Phelps Dodge appealed the case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. Upholding the NLRB decision, Justice Felix Frankfurter stated that no company could discriminate against any union worker because of alleged activism; to do so was a direct violation of federal labor laws. As a result, the "Phelps Dodge rule," according to Rosenblum, became "a touchstone in American labor law and history."[9]

In 1967-68, the longest industrial strike in U.S. history closed all Phelps Dodge properties in Arizona. Much had changed since 1917, however. The company, although strongly opposed to union demands, chose not to hire replacement workers--even though it had the legal support to do so under the 1938 U.S. Supreme Court decision NLRB vs. Mackay Radio. According to Rosenblum, the 1967-68 strike was "remarkable for its civility. Just as there were no replacement workers, there was also no violence at the gate."[10] International competition, however, was about to transform labor-management relations in the American copper industry, mostly because of a surplus of cheap copper and a reduced demand for the metal on a global market.

By the late 1970s, an industry-wide financial disaster occurred because of a decreasing demand for expensive American copper, and the increasing availability of the inexpensive, foreign-mined metal. As a result, Arizona's copper producers laid off thousands of workers in June 1977. Testifying before the U.S. International Trade Commission on May 28, 1978, Governor Babbitt voiced concern over the depressed copper market's economic impact on Arizona's mining communities. "Increased imports have been a major causal factor in creating and sustaining the crisis," Babbitt said. "In sum, we are faced with low prices, oversupply, and escalating costs." He urged the commission to recommend possible economic relief measures to President Jimmy Carter.[11]

Historian Michael Malone suggests international competition was the main cause of the decline of western metals mining. According to Malone, copper workers in Chile and Zaire worked for much lower wages, while also mining larger quantities of the red metal. Furthermore, the nationally owned companies continued to mine at (or beyond) capacity in order to "keep their populations fed and pay their burdensome foreign debts."[12] Human welfare and the need for government revenue transcended the efficiency and careful management required in the capitalist market economy.

This economic quandary of domestic versus foreign copper climaxed on the eve of the 1983 labor contract negotiations. If the unions rejected Phelps Dodge's contract offer and went on strike, the action might force the company to hire replacement workers to stay afloat in the depressed national copper market.

Citing losses of nearly $74 million for 1982, Phelps Dodge asked the unions to accept a wage cut, minor concessions on medical benefits, and a freeze on future cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) before the contract expiration date of June 30, 1983. One central concern to Phelps Dodge, however, was the contract the nation's largest copper producer, Kennecott, had recently penned with the unions: a three-year wage freeze, but continued COLAs. Phelps Dodge strongly opposed Kennecott's agreement. Compared with Phelps Dodge, the number two copper corporation, Jonathan Rosenblum viewed Kennecott as

> more congenial to . . . the union coalition. Kennecott directors actually preferred the bargaining discipline of settling all the contracts with the unions at once, at one table. Phelps Dodge had long resisted such a bargaining process, preferring to whipsaw the unions against each other and cut costs. . . .[13]

By June 30, the other major copper producers--Magma, Inspiration Consolidated, and ASARCO--had signed labor contracts. Known as "pattern contracting," these labor agreements were signed every three years by Kennecott, establishing a pattern then agreed to by the other companies. Because Phelps Dodge refused to consider incremental COLAs, even after the unions agreed to a wage freeze and certain concessions on medical benefits, the deadline approached with no contract. Rosenblum viewed the 1983 events as a repeat of the 1980 negotiations, when Phelps Dodge rejected Kennecott's model. This stalemate resulted in a ninety-day strike before Phelps Dodge finally acquiesced to the industry pattern.[14] Consequently, several causal factors initiated the 1983 strike: Phelps Dodge's refusal to follow industry-wide pattern contracting, its

steadfast rejection of COLAs, and its hard-line, no compromise negotiation philosophy with union leaders.

TENSIONS MOUNT: STRIKERS VERSUS SCABS

At one minute past midnight on July 1, 1983, more than 2,900 Phelps Dodge workers walked off their jobs to protest the company's rejection of COLAs. Novelist Barbara Kingsolver, in her firsthand account of the strike's earliest moments, described how union supporters lined the road leading from Phelps Dodge's Morenci mine, cheering on workers as they emerged from the gate. "The normal cacophony of mining and smelting noises," Kingsolver observed, "went dead still."[15]

Nevertheless, Phelps Dodge continued production. During the strike's first month, the company depended on supervisors, staffers, and nearly 100 nonunion workers--like Chandra Tallant's father Keith--who defied the unions and crossed picket lines. This nonunion audacity fueled the strikers' animosity; consequently, random acts of violence and sabotage increased in mining communities such as Clifton, Morenci, and Ajo.[16]

The mysterious shooting of Chandra Tallant one month later, Rosenblum maintains, "only drew more attention to the strike." He continues:

> In addition to the human tragedy, the shooting was a public relations nightmare for the unions. If a striker was responsible, whatever public sympathy [for unions] in this right-to-work state might evaporate. If a striker was not responsible, the unions needed to establish that quickly.[17]

Clearly, the situation transcended routine rhetorical threats, and Babbitt understood the potential for increased violence. In a 1990 interview, he admitted that Chandra's shooting was the galvanizing point in his attempt to check further strike-related turmoil. Although he acknowledged the routine nature of picket-line threats and acts of intimidation in mine strikes, Babbitt stressed that "this incident said . . . you've got to think about how to handle violence when it gets beyond . . . scuffling on the picket line."[18]

As Babbitt contemplated increased labor violence, Phelps Dodge decided to return its operations to prestrike production levels. Since a settlement seemed impossible--due to the company's stubborn refusal to consider any incremental COLAs--the only way to operate at optimal levels (or full capacity) was to either entice the strikers back to work, or hire nonunion replacement workers. Both options, however, created more dilemmas.

On August 2, Phelps Dodge warned strikers in an open letter that "they will not have a job" once the company filled 1,500 positions statewide. "Too many people for too few jobs is like a game of musical chairs," the company warned. "Have you thought what it means to you and to your family if you don't have a chair when the music stops? The time has come."[19] Cass Alvin, spokesperson for the United Steelworkers of America (USW), claimed the letter was a ploy to get workers to cross the picket lines and, therefore, to "split mining communities." Union member Ernie Valenzuela threatened heightened violence if Phelps Dodge brought in replacements. "It's just going to be one hell of a mess if they bring in people off the street," he warned. "It's going to be a battle."[20]

Nevertheless, Phelps Dodge continued to restaff their facilities statewide with replacements, known among unionists as "scabs." As a result, incidents of intimidation and vandalism increased in Morenci. More than 100 strikers, for example, drove through nearby Clifton, throwing rocks through the windows of replacement workers' homes. On August 8, several hundred strikers armed with baseball bats and chains blocked the entrance to the Morenci mine, smashed a motorcycle and a car, chased replacements out of a company office, and forced the mine's shutdown. The same day, in an attempt to insure public safety and enforce the replacements' legal right to work, the Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) bolstered its Morenci force with sixty new officers. In addition, Greenlee County Sheriff Robert Gomez asked Babbitt for a contingent of National Guard troops.[21]

In an attempt to defuse the volatile situation in Morenci, Babbitt flew to Clifton the evening of August 8 to meet with union leaders, state and local law enforcement officials, and Phelps Dodge management. After a series of meetings, Babbitt convinced Phelps Dodge to shut down the Morenci facility for a ten-day "cooling off" period. He also asked union members to continue labor discussions and not to block the gates when the mines reopened. On the other hand, Babbitt asked Phelps Dodge to stop hiring replacements. "It appears that hiring employees from outside this community has been a source . . . of friction [that] directly led to . . . violence and tragedy this afternoon," he said. Babbitt also mentioned his constitutional obligation as governor to provide and maintain public safety. "We cannot allow any further drift into violence and lawlessness," he warned.[22]

On August 10, the *Arizona Daily Star* ran a scathing editorial criticizing both sides for chasing "fool's gold" and exacerbating the labor impasse. The editorial argued that Phelps Dodge's "divide and conquer" strategy would result in further damage to the company's reputation in Arizona, and that the striker's "enthusiastic" actions--destroying property and interfering with the replacement's right to work--would damage labor's public image as well: "It's obvious that no one involved in any of these events will emerge a winner." The editorial, however, praised Babbitt in his attempt to seek a peaceful settlement.[23]

In the end, Babbitt chose public safety over his image as a labor-friendly politician, for on August 10, he declared a formal state of emergency in Arizona. The proclamation authorized the Arizona Adjutant General to mobilize the National Guard--at a cost of $50,000--to "assist civil law enforcement agencies to preserve order, and to protect lives and property in the State of Arizona."[24]

Predictably, GOP criticism soon followed the governor's decision. Arizona Republican Party chair John Munger criticized Babbitt for being "grossly-negligent in his inexcusable failure to act decisively" to uphold the right-to-work law in Morenci. Munger, however, seemed more concerned with the shutdown's estimated $8 million in lost revenues. Furthermore, in a letter to the *Arizona Republic*, Pima resident Joy McBride also questioned Babbitt's sluggishness in enforcing Arizona's right-to-work law. "If Governor Babbitt had stood firm in upholding the law," she noted, "the 431 men and women who crossed the picket lines in Morenci would still be there working."[25]

Most letters in the same *Republic* edition, however, chastised the strikers for their violent actions and disregard for Arizona's right-to-work law. Miner Donald Capra, who applied for replacement work at the Morenci facility, recalled the violent opposition by strikers to his legal right to work:

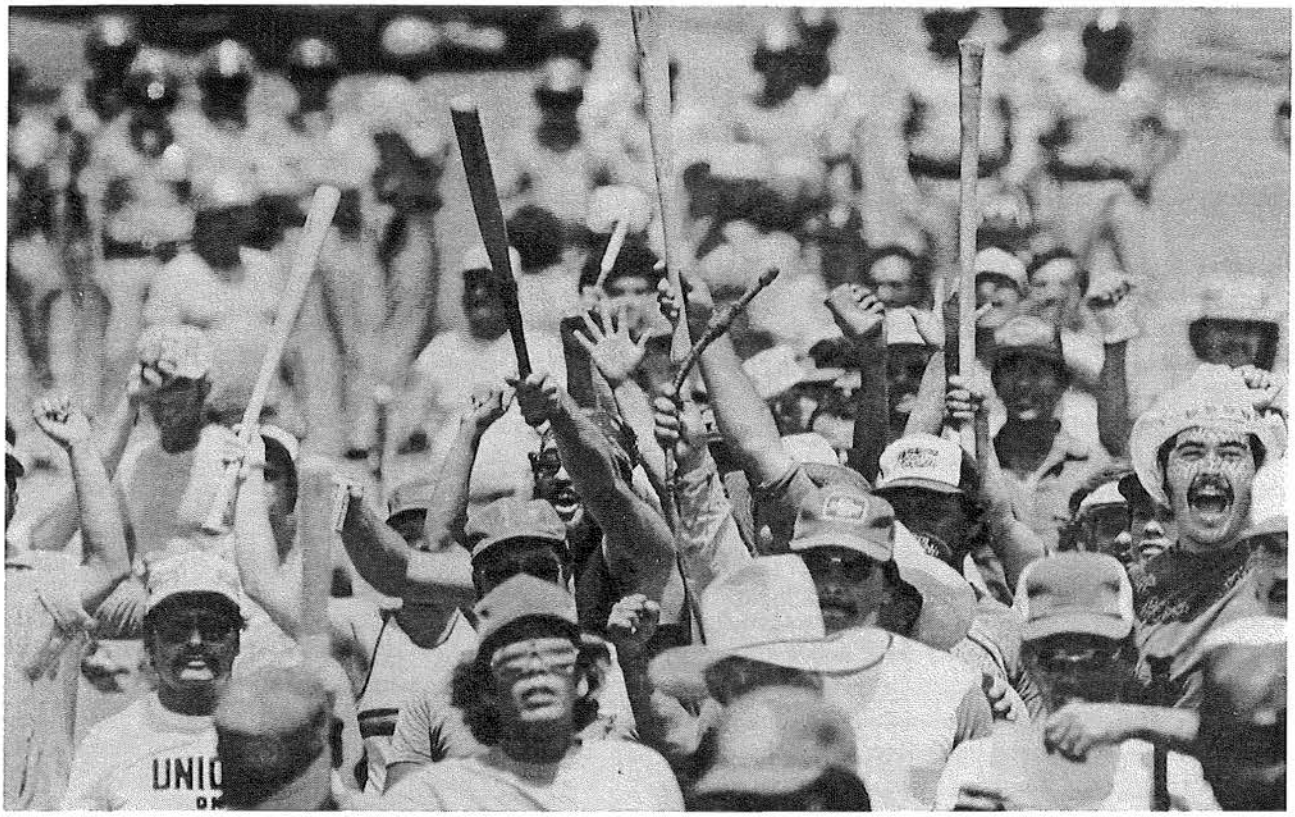
> While I was there, strikers threw hot coffee at me and three rocks, one . . . hit my shoulder, the other two broke two windows of my car. As a victim of . . . the terrorists in Morenci, here are my observations: Phelps Dodge has a right to operate their mine. . . . Non-strikers have a right to work without harassment. . . . Strikers have the right to strike, but not to intimidate or harm others. . . . Law enforcement has the responsibility of protecting these rights without succumbing to mob rule.[26]

Controversial actions by Phelps Dodge only made the situation worse. On August 15, the company mailed eviction notices to Morenci strikers fired for misconduct on the picket lines, giving them thirty days to vacate company housing. Later that month, Babbitt sent a letter to Phelps Dodge CEO George Munroe, requesting that the company hold off on the evictions. Citing "human costs," Babbitt wrote that "it makes no sense . . . to uproot these families and add to the human tragedy of this situation. I am therefore asking Phelps Dodge to withdraw all pending eviction notices." Munroe, however, ignored Babbitt's plea, stating notices only went out to strikers fired for picket line misconduct.[27]

More protests followed that day. Two hundred replacement workers marched on the capitol in Phoenix to request that Babbitt send in the National Guard for protection. "We had to do something because these people fear for their lives," declared Robert Morris, head of Arizona's Right-To-Work committee. Art Pritchard, a nonunion boilermaker at the Morenci plant, dumped baseball bats, a logging chain, and a sledge hammer--the striker's weapons of intimidation--on the capitol floor to illustrate his point. "This is what we go through every day on our way to work," Pritchard told the crowd.[28]

The demonstration moved Babbitt. Consequently, the next day he gave the Department of Public Safety broad discretionary power to impose curfews and close public places, streets, and businesses. A day later, the governor activated seven guard units to support law enforcement officers stationed in the strike towns.[29] In the meantime, Babbitt continued to oversee negotiations between union officials and Phelps Dodge management, only to experience frustration over their intransigence--especially the company's. "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make them drink. I have been very close . . . to whacking them over the head to make them drink," Babbitt said, adding that the situation "could be the makings of a great tragedy."[30] As the final day of the ten-day moratorium approached, the governor faced another security problem if Phelps Dodge reopened: what provisions should he implement to protect replacement workers.

On August 19, seven National Guard units--a total of 325 soldiers--travelled to Morenci to support 425 DPS officers, more than half of Arizona's state trooper force. In addition, sixty-two sheriff deputies from Pinal, Gila, and Greenlee counties joined them. "This is not a military operation. It's a law-enforcement operation," stressed DPS Director Ralph Milstead. Union spokesperson Cass Alvin, however, denounced Babbitt's decision, claiming that the governor would never "shake this one off. Phelps Dodge just knighted



Union strikers, angry at Phelps Dodge's policy of hiring nonunion replacement workers, retreat from police barricades in front of the company's Morenci facility on August 9, 1983. The strikers, armed with baseball bats, sticks, and chains, intended to regroup and crash the gates, but were urged back at the last minute by union officials with bullhorns. (Mike Ging photo courtesy of the *Arizona Republic)*

another Arizona Governor to their order of the copper collar." Alvin also accused Babbitt of "back pocket" favoritism toward the company, to which the governor responded, "I'm in the back pocket of the American judicial system."[31]

The next day, Phelps Dodge reopened their Morenci facility under the watchful eyes of several hundred heavily armed National Guard and DPS officers. The picket lines were peaceful; there were no incidents. As a result, most of the National Guard left the area during the next five days, leaving the DPS to maintain civil order.[32]

Meanwhile, frustrations mounted during the renewed contract negotiations. The stubbornness displayed by both sides tested Babbitt's patience, and he expressed his displeasure by declaring: "If six companies can settle [referring to the pattern bargaining contracts negotiated previously], there's no reason why Phelps Dodge and these unions can't . . . settle."[33] Regardless, throughout the remainder of 1983, negotiations between the company and the unions continued to sputter along with minimal progress.

Despite these prolonged and unsuccessful negotiations, Babbitt's intervention met with widespread approval, according to a statewide poll. Conducted by Phoenix's Behavior Research Center, the poll showed that 79 percent of Arizonans questioned agreed with the governor's actions, while 14 percent disagreed, and 7 percent had no opinion. The poll of political affiliates was even more telling: 89 percent of Republicans supported Babbitt's decision, as did 75 percent of Democrats, and 78 percent of independents.[34]

Still, Babbitt could not fend off his critics. On November 25, the legendary labor activist Cesar Chavez visited Clifton miners to show his support. He claimed it was time to "take the Phelps Dodge strike out of the hills of Arizona and into the cities of America" through a nationwide campaign of "corporate social responsibility." Chavez then railed against Babbitt as "that disgrace who called out troops on working men and women fighting for justice. . . . I don't think the people of Arizona are going to forgive him."[35]

Four days later, an *Arizona Daily Star* editorial suggested that Chavez's anti-Babbitt barbs may have hurt the strikers' cause. Chavez should have directed his inflammatory rhetoric toward Phelps Dodge, the editorial opined, because the (then-New York-headquartered) company treated their employees like "colonists" and their company towns as "fiefdoms." In reality, Chavez made a grave mistake assailing Babbitt because Arizonans, including many union

families, opposed violence and supported Babbitt in his swift National Guard mobilization. "Babbitt . . . isn't anti-labor, he's anti-violence," the editorial proclaimed. "When the strikers resorted to violence and threatened more, the governor had no choice. He had to keep the peace."[36]

At his annual year-in-review press conference, Babbitt justified the use of troops:

> It [mobilization] has created problems, no doubt about it. But that's the way life is . . . We had a situation in which innocent men, women, and children could have gotten killed--strikers and workers alike. None of them was. I swore when I took office to uphold the law, and I'd do it again.[37]

To insure public safety, Babbitt risked jeopardizing his political career in the face of possible public opposition, and the governor proved he could act swiftly. Events in the upcoming year, however, further tested his fortitude and, ultimately, his patience.

NO COMPROMISE: TENSIONS ESCALATE

As 1984 dawned, Phelps Dodge and the thirteen unions seemed to be working hard at not reaching a compromise. The stalemate heightened company, striker, and community tensions to precarious levels. As a result, Babbitt placed public safety at the top of his list of political priorities for 1984.

The first two weeks of the year proved especially troublesome in Clifton. Local police responded to more than fifty-five incidents of random vandalism, equipment sabotage, and gun-play threats. On January 13, Clifton police arrested eleven strikers on unlawful-assembly charges after they hurled rocks and bottles at replacement workers' cars during shift changes. Three days later, local police arrested five strikers on charges of disorderly conduct and vandalism. As a result, Department of Public Safety Director Ralph Milstead dispatched forty additional officers to Clifton for reinforcement, declared a state of emergency, and imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew.[38]

At the end of January, the governor's office received a massive petition--forty pages of signatures at approximately thirty-two signatures per page--from Phelps Dodge replacement workers and their families. Citing escalating incidences of rock throwing, gun play, and death threats, the petition pleaded for Babbitt to increase law enforcement protection in Greenlee County, undoubtedly because of mid-January's tide of violence.[39]

Meanwhile, after contract talks stalled, Babbitt flew to New York to meet with chief union negotiator Frank McKee--the man who coined the term "Governor Scabbitt" during the events of August 1983. He described his meeting with McKee as productive. "[McKee] urged me to continue to see if I can use my office to try and bring about some kind of negotiation or settlement." Babbitt also announced he would meet with federal mediator Sam Franklin to help bring the two sides together. "I can't settle the strike," he added. "All I can do is to . . . try to persuade them to meet."[40] For the next two months, tensions remained extreme in the mining towns. In the meantime, Arizona Republicans introduced legislation to curb the picket line protests, with no success.

On April 20, Babbitt vetoed House Bill 2310, which would have prohibited peaceful picketing by "bona fide" labor organizations that interfered with the public's access to streets, sidewalks, or other "public ways." In justifying his veto, he called the bill a "thinly disguised attempt to ban the legitimate exercise of protected First Amendment rights by labor unions." Babbitt continued:

> I am loathe to sign a bill which would place in the hands of local authorities the ability to stifle protest by groups simply because their peaceful picketing activities make it a little more difficult for pedestrians to use a public sidewalk. Such inconvenience is a small price to pay for a free society.[41]

This veto is recognized as one of the most beneficial prolabor moves made by Babbitt during his nine-year tenure as governor.

Less than three weeks later, however, the situation in Clifton and Morenci deteriorated. After a peaceful Cinco De Mayo rally by pro-union demonstrators, strikers and their supporters pelted DPS officers and Phelps Dodge employees with rocks and bottles when the DPS failed to arrest a Phelps Dodge employee for brandishing a gun during the rally. After using tear gas to disperse the crowd, the DPS arrested nine people on charges of aggravated assault, unlawful assembly, and disorderly conduct.[42]

The next day, Babbitt lashed out at the company and the strikers, and reordered forty National Guard troops back to Clifton and Morenci for logistical support. He was especially critical of Phelps Dodge, charging the company with "the worst record in labor relations of any company that has ever operated in Arizona." Continuing his verbal assault, the governor urged Phelps Dodge to discard their hard-line negotia-

tion tactics and immediately settle on a contract without "ripping the towns apart." And, although Babbitt sympathized with "the sense of frustration" felt by union members, he warned them that "lawlessness will not be tolerated," and that citizens should talk to the union "hotheads" to avoid further violence.[43]

Editorials in the state's two largest dailies cast further doubts about the strike. The *Republic* agreed with Babbitt that the "issues that triggered the strike are still there, and they aren't resolved by rock-throwing." The editorial concluded that although copper prices were still depressed, Phelps Dodge lacked incentive to settle since the replacements kept operations going. The Daily Star also suggested it was time to "promote compromise, and not divisiveness," in the copper strike, denounced GOP criticism of Babbitt's efforts, and gave the governor good marks for his actions.[44]

Letters to the governor's office from local citizens also praised Babbitt for his efforts. Some voiced appreciation of Babbitt for the increased law enforcement, while others declared support for the governor's deployment of the National Guard. In addition, many residents hoped Babbitt would keep the guard stationed in Morenci until after July 2 to keep the peace.[45] Why he did not keep the troops there, however, remains a mystery.

On May 11, Babbitt met with union officials in Los Angeles to reach an agreement. Union leaders, however, rejected his proposal for concessions, stating that Babbitt's efforts were nothing more than a "publicity gimmick." When asked about a possible solution to the strike, the governor replied: "It may not be possible. The parties may be absolutely irreconcilable."[46]

Babbitt accurately sensed the continuing stalemate. On May 30, Phelps Dodge withdrew its final contract offer, but talks resumed on June 8 when the unions offered concessions on medical benefit copayments and the COLAs, in exchange for putting the strikers back to work. Again, Phelps Dodge rejected the union offer, based on Kennecott's recent request to renegotiate its previously approved union contract.[47] In a meeting with angry strikers at the capitol on June 21, Babbitt rejected their demands to pull DPS officers from Clifton. Again citing his constitutional obligation to uphold the peace--and his unwavering support for the efforts by law enforcement officials--the governor stood firm: "I am not going to back down one inch." A few days later, in a visit to Clifton, Babbitt appealed to strikers to maintain calm at their upcoming one-year anniversary rally in Clifton on June 30. When asked about whether he would dispatch the National Guard that weekend, Babbitt responded he did not "anticipate that being necessary. I was encouraged by the discussion."[48] Unfortunately, circumstances dictated otherwise. Although the festivities on June 30 started peacefully with the usual union speeches, rallies, picnics, and marches, the situation soon degenerated into the most frenzied melee yet in the year-old strike.

THE POLICE VERSUS THE PEOPLE: ANALYSIS OF A RIOT

At around four o'clock in the afternoon, former Phelps Dodge physician Jorge O'Leary, an ardent strike supporter, led a large group of followers from the Clifton Social Club to his People's Clinic for a rally. Although O'Leary called for a peaceful demonstration, he warned that after 5 p.m. (when the DPS planned to reopen U.S. route 666, which was closed off for the rally) the demonstrators were "on your own." In response, Clifton vice-Mayor Edward Marquez shouted to the crowd: "after five o'clock, give them hell." Simultaneously, a contingent of 119 riot-clad DPS officers assembled on the hill, with the stated intent of keeping the highway open through town. After O'Leary's march, DPS officers opened U.S. 666, allowing Phelps Dodge replacements to drive home. This act initiated the widespread mayhem.[49]

Analyses of the riot suggest three reasons for the swift actions by the DPS: the swatting of a replacement worker's vehicle by a striker armed with a stick; the slapping of a striker's fist on the trunk of an unmarked DPS vehicle; and the refusal by many of O'Leary's supporters to disperse after repeated bilingual warnings. As the riot-shielded DPS phalanx approached, they fired a smoke bomb to test wind direction and to warn of impending tear gas usage. At this time, the naked Bobby Andazola confronted the officers, pleading for them to reconsider their actions; an officer handcuffed Andazola and hauled him off. Soon after, the crowd started hurling rocks and bottles at DPS officers, who countered with tear gas canisters and wooden bullets, advancing slowly into a volley of rocks, gravel, full beverage cans, and bottles. It was the police versus the people; the riot was now in full swing.[50]

As the DPS approached Clifton Liquors--where they believed some rioters were hiding--they lobbed a tear gas grenade inside. Several people stumbled out, including the owner, Alice Miller. Officers handcuffed the screaming, disoriented retailer and placed her inside an Arizona Department of Corrections bus, even though she was eight-and-a-half months pregnant.

Then, the DPS retreated toward the opposite end of town through a cascade of flying objects and needling taunts, in an attempt to give the rioters time to cool down. The rioters, however, erected two crude barricades across U.S. 666 with tires, drums, railroad ties, rocks, barrels, and an old pickup bed. At 6:30 p.m., the DPS approached once again with more tear gas and wooden bullets.[51]

During the second encounter, officers managed through brute physical force to push the recalcitrant crowd back. The DPS then moved the barricades off the highway and retreated again to their position at the other end of town. Meanwhile, more rioters returned, building fires in the middle of the highway and erecting more barricades throughout Clifton. The officers, however, did not respond for fear of their lives. Clifton belonged to the rioters for the evening: looting prevailed, Clifton Liquors provided booze, and the Western Auto store contributed guns and ammunition. In addition, rioters smashed many business windows, including the town's only Circle K store.[52] On a hot summer night in Clifton, anarchy reigned.

The next day, an eerie calm hung over Clifton. Front-end loaders removed the strikers' barricades, the DPS opened U.S. 666, and business owners returned to assess damages. Fortunately, casualties were minimal: several citizens and DPS officers were treated for minor cuts and abrasions, mostly due to flying debris. Police arrested twenty demonstrators on charges ranging from disorderly conduct to rioting, but later released them on their own recognizance. Moreover, for the first time in a year, shift changes took place at the mine--without picket line violence. As Western Auto manager and Clifton Chamber-of-Commerce President Tom Green surveyed the remains of his looted store, however, he wondered why the guard had not helped enforce the law this time. "They brought in [the guard] twice before," Green noted.[53]

In response, the governor defended actions by the DPS, suggesting it could have been much worse. "My confidence rests with the law enforcement officials . . . who have done an effective job for one year," he told reporters at a televised press conference. When asked about whether he would have done things differently, however, Babbitt responded that it was not his duty as governor "to be standing on the line second-guessing a difficult situation. [The DPS] did a very impressive and professional job."[54]

More positive letters from local citizens to Babbitt's office support his assessments. Gene Bocardo voiced his gratitude to the governor for the increased worker protection and characterized the strikers as nothing

A naked Bobby Andazola confront Arizona Department of Public Safety riot-squad officers during the one-year anniversary of the Phelps Dodge strike on June 30, 1984. Andazola pleaded with the officers to reconsider their actions, but was handcuffed and hauled away in an Arizona Department of Corrections bus. (Peter Schlueter photo courtesy of the *Arizona Republic*)

more than lingering "hooligans." G.K. Pace believed that each individual participating in the riot violence was to blame, not the DPS, Phelps Dodge, or the governor. And, Sue Robillard thanked the DPS and Babbitt, stating the officers were just "doing their jobs" in providing public protection.[55]

Another statewide poll conducted two months later showed Babbitt's popularity at an all-time high. Overall, 75 percent of those polled gave the governor favorable marks; politically, 90 percent of the state's Democrats, 84 percent of the Republicans, and 82 percent of the independents agreed. And, the adjusted ratings (discarding the "don't know" and "no opinion" responses) reflected positive support of more than 83 percent for Babbitt.[56]

Yet, the strike continued, although the June 30 incident stood as the final event in strike-related violence. On October 9, 1984, replacement workers voted 1,908 to 87 to decertify all thirteen unions involved in the strike. The unions appealed, but the National Labor Relations Board upheld the vote. The legal end of the strike finally transpired on February 19, 1986, when the NLRB rejected the union's final appeal.[57] In essence, Phelps Dodge successfully broke the strikers--and decertified their unions--through the actions of replacement workers.

EPILOGUE: BRUCE BABBITT AND PUBLIC SAFETY

After visiting Chandra Tallant, governor Babbitt committed the state's resources to a strong stand for public safety. It mattered little to him whether the toddler was a victim of a random bullet, or if someone fired the shot at her home with intent to harm: all that mattered was that she was in a hospital bed with a bullet lodged in her brain, and that he had to act quickly. Moreover, Babbitt fully understood this labor conflict had the potential for escalated violence beyond the commonplace verbal picket line intimidation.

The governor realized his constitutional obligation to provide for the common welfare of Arizona's citizens: adult or child, striker or scab, Anglo or Hispanic. In this, Babbitt drew no preferential lines; he had to protect all citizens. Furthermore, questionable claims that he acted as an agent for Phelps Dodge economic interests cannot be substantiated. On several occasions, Babbitt publicly expressed vehement disgust at the company's (and the union's) intransigence at the bargaining table and consistently urged them to settle.

Nevertheless, Babbitt's activation of National Guard forces damaged his reputation in the eyes of American labor--but only temporarily. In 1986, the governor played a key role as the primary mediator in management-labor copper contract negotiations; many labor leaders believed his role in this settlement mended his image among unionists. Darwin Aycock of the Arizona AFL-CIO suggested that any politician who "calls out the National Guard pays a price somewhere down the road." But, when asked about Babbitt's chances for labor's support in a presidential contest, however, Aycock quickly replied: "Oh, my God, yes!" In addition, Mike Bielecki, president of the Central Arizona Labor Council, believed Babbitt's mediation in the 1986 settlement eradicated any damage done in 1983-1984. He reflected:

> Was Bruce Babbitt malicious toward labor? I don't think so. Were mistakes made? That could be. Much of the damage has been mediated away. He tried to play a positive role last time [in 1983-1984]. This one [in 1986], I think, vindicates him.[58]

Thus, any political damage for Babbitt, because of his role in the 1983-1984 strike, must be considered temporary.

The same year, in a *Republic* interview, Babbitt reflected on his role in the strike. Although considered the darkest event during his two-term governorship, he expressed no regrets:

> Look, nobody was seriously injured or killed. Phelps Dodge taught me that when public safety is the issue, you . . . have to step straight up to it. . . . I took the heat on the front end. There was no room to equivocate.[59]

And, as he made his intentions clear in his (futile) 1987 bid for the Democratic nomination for president, questions about his actions in the strike surfaced. Babbitt, however, repeated what he had voiced all along: his civic and constitutional obligation to provide for the common welfare as Arizona's governor made the decision for him.

As such, Babbitt's actions must be evaluated within the appropriate context. Faced with plunging copper prices and exacerbated by a volatile labor situation, the governor found himself obliged to insure adequate civil protection for all citizens. Moreover, he refused to allow union rhetoric or Phelps Dodge's pleas of economic poverty to alter his steadfast position on public safety.

Furthermore, Babbitt stood his ground fully cognizant of the possible damage to his political career;

Democratic governors have rarely called on troops to quell labor disputes. In a letter to the iconoclastic Phoenix weekly newspaper *New Times*, a concerned reader summarized her feelings on Babbitt's activation of the National Guard for civil protection in light of the potential political fallout:

> [Babbitt] must have made the decision because he . . . felt it was the best thing for the people. What more could anyone ask of a politician than to put . . . ambition aside and act as a fellow human being? Whether or not it was bad for . . . [his] future remains to be seen, but I know . . . he has some true human feelings.[60]

In the end, Governor Babbitt's nonpartisan public safety policy during the chaotic labor conflict of 1983-1984 reflects altruistic leadership based on strength of principle, rather than political expediency. Furthermore, Republican and Democratic leaders must have agreed with Babbitt's actions, at least publicly, because his role in the Phelps Dodge strike never surfaced during the 1993 congressional debate over his nomination as President-elect Bill Clinton's Interior secretary, or in his subsequent candidacy for a seat on the U.S. Supreme Court.[61]

It was as if the strike had been forever buried in the tumultuous annals of Arizona labor history, destined only to be retold time and again locally as the story of a wounded toddler, a naked protester, and a determined governor.

NOTES

1. Although a majority of the strikers were members of the United Steelworkers of America, other unions--including the Boilermakers, Operating Engineers, and Chemical Workers--also participated. For a detailed analysis on the causes, events, personalities, and politics surrounding the Phelps Dodge copper strike, see Jonathan D. Rosenblum, *Copper Crucible* (Ithaca, 1995).
2. Arizona Daily Star, July 28, 1983, 1A, 12A; July 29, 1983, 1A, 4A. Phelps Dodge immediately offered a $100,000 reward for information on who shot Chandra. No one, however, was ever indicted for the shooting.
3. "The Anatomy of a Riot," *Arizona Daily Star*, July 8, 1984, special section; images of the riot taken from local media film coverage in "Phelps Dodge Copper Strike," videocassette #535, Chicano Research Collection, Dept. of Archives and Manuscripts, University Libraries, Arizona State University. (hereafter ASU-SC); Bobby Andazola quote from Rosenblum, *Copper Crucible*, 3.
4. For mixed-quality analyses on strikers, their families, and the tensions between them and Phelps Dodge's replacements, see Barbara Kingsolver's impressionistic *Holding the Line* (Ithaca, 1989); Judy Aulette and Trudy Mills' feminist-theory-based study "Something Old, Something New: Auxiliary Work in the 1983-1986 Copper Strike," *Feminist Studies* 14 (Summer 1988): 251-68; Joe Canason's prolabor treatise "Copper War: A Company and a Union Fight to the Death," *Village Voice*, March 19, 1985; and David North's anticorporate, antigovernment "Class War at Phelps Dodge," *Bulletin*, September 30, 1983. For a concise, yet objective overview of the strike's main events and issues, see "The Strike: One Year on the Line," *Arizona Daily Star*, July 1, 1984, special section, 2-12.
5. Inaugural address by Bruce Babbitt dated January 28, 1983, located in box (B) 2, folder (F) 169, Bruce Babbitt Papers, MS 246, Special Collections, Cline Library, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff (hereafter Babbitt Papers, NAU.) Bruce Edward Babbitt was born June 27, 1938. He graduated magna cum laude from Notre Dame University with a degree in geology, earned his MS in geophysics from University of Newcastle, England, and graduated from Harvard Law School in 1965. Babbitt was elected Arizona attorney general in 1974, and became governor by succession in March 1978 when Governor Harvey Wesley Bolin died of a heart attack. Babbitt was officially elected to office in the fall of 1978, and served two full terms before deciding to seek the democratic nomination for president in 1987.
6. Bruce Babbitt to the AFL-CIO, as quoted in the *Arizona Daily Star*, May 7, 1987, 9B. Also located in Babbitt Papers, B11-F609, NAU.
7. Babbitt quote in Casper (Wyoming) *Star-Tribune*, March 2, 1986, B1.
8. See James Byrkit, *Forging the Copper Collar* (Tucson, 1982), for a good discussion of events leading up to and including the Bisbee deportation. For Phelps Dodge's history, consult Robert Glass Cleland, *A History of Phelps Dodge, 1834-1950* (New York, 1952); Rosenblum quote from *Copper Crucible*, 26.
9. Rosenblum, *Copper Crucible*, 32-33. Phelps Dodge eventually rehired the two workers, known only as "Curtis" and "Daugherty."
10. For details on this metal industry-wide strike, see Rosenblum, *Copper Crucible*, 41, passim. Rosenblum also details the smaller strikes against Phelps Dodge between 1930-1960.
11. Bruce Babbitt, "The Arizona Copper Crisis and the Need for Import Relief," unpublished manuscript delivered to the USITC, May 22, 1978, B2-F61, Babbitt Papers, NAU.
12. Michael Malone, "The Collapse of Western Metal Mining: An Historical Epitaph," *Pacific Historical Review 55* (August 1986): 455-464.
13. Rosenblum, *Copper Crucible*, 68. For detailed discussions on COLAs and the nation's copper industry, see George Hildebrand and Garth Mangum, *Capital and Labor in American Copper* (Cambridge, 1992.)
14. Rosenblum, *Copper Crucible*, 69; Hildebrand and Mangum, *American Copper*, 250-273 passim.
15. Kingsolver, *Holding the Line*, 15.
16. "The Strike: One Year on the Line," *Arizona Daily Star*, July 1, 1984, special section passim; Rosenblum, *Copper Crucible*, 88-93 passim.
17. Rosenblum, *Copper Crucible*, 89.
18. Bruce Babbitt as quoted in Rosenblum, *Copper Crucible*, 90.
19. Text of Phelps Dodge letter to strikers found in the *Arizona Daily Star*, August 8, 1983, 1A, 6A.
20. Cass Alvin quoted in Ibid., 6A; Valenzuela quote from *Arizona Daily Star*, August 7, 1983, 5A.
21. *Arizona Republic*, August 8, 1983, A1; *Arizona Daily Star*, August 8, 1983, 4A; *Arizona Republic*, August 9, 1983, A1. At this point, the focus shifts exclusively to Clifton-Morenci, due to its preeminent position as the hotbed of union and anti-union violence.
22. *Arizona Daily Star*, August 9, 1983, 1A, 2A; *Greenlee County Copper Era*, August 10, 1983, 6; Babbitt quote from statement dated August 9, 1983, B3-F262, Babbitt Papers, NAU.
23. "Both Sides in Copper Strike Chasing Fool's Gold," *Arizona Daily Star*, August 10, 1983, 15A. Antilabor forces passed Arizona's Right-to-Work law in 1946 to make union shops and closed shops illegal in Arizona. Byrkit, *Copper Collar*, 328.
24. State of Arizona, *Administrative Digest*, Vol, 3, Issue 9 (September 1, 1983): 182. For a detailed account of the meeting which

took place as Babbitt made the decision, see Rosenblum, *Copper Crucible*, 107-109. Babbitt's proclamation marks the third time in Arizona's history where a governor activated the National Guard in a labor dispute: George W.P. Hunt in 1915 (also at the Morenci mines), and Sidney Osborn in 1947 against striking lettuce workers in Phoenix. (*Arizona Daily Star*, August 20, 1983, 10A.)

25. Munger quoted in *Arizona Daily Star*, August 12, 1983, 2A; Joy McBride letter to the *Arizona Republic*, August 14, 1983, A6.
26. Ibid.
27. *Arizona Daily Star*, August 16, 1983, 1A; letter from Bruce Babbitt to George Munroe dated August 30, 1983, B3-F262, Babbitt Papers, NAU; letter from George Munroe to Babbitt dated September 1, 1983, found in B3-F262, Babbitt Papers, NAU.
28. *Arizona Daily Star*, August 16, 1983, 2A.
29. Letter from Governor Babbitt to DPS Director Ralph Milstead and ANG Adjutant General John Smith dated August 16, 1983, B26-F "National Guard," Office of the Governor (RG-1), Bruce Babbitt (SG-23), Arizona State Archives, Phoenix. (Hereafter Gov. Babbitt Papers, ASA.)
30. *Arizona Republic*, August 18, 1983, A1.
31. *Arizona Daily Star*, August 19, 1983, 1A; "back pocket" quotes by Alvin and Babbitt in Rosenblum, *Copper Crucible*, 121.
32. *Arizona Daily Star*, August 25, 1983, 1A.
33. Ibid., August 24, 1983, 1A.
34. Poll results published in the *Arizona Daily Star*, November 23, 1983, 2B.
35. "Chavez's Tough Talk Bolsters Miners," *Arizona Daily Star*, November 26, 1983, 1A, 2A.
36. "Chavez's Digs at Babbitt Won't Help Miner's Cause," in Ibid., November 30, 1983, 19A.
37. "Of Rocks and Hard Places," undated briefing paper, B3-F262, Babbitt Papers, NAU.
38. *Arizona Republic*, January 16, 1984, B3; January 18, 1984, A16.
39. Petition located in B413-F4401, Gov. Babbitt Papers, ASA.
40. *Arizona Republic*, February 1, 1984, A1.
41. "Actions by the Babbitt Administration Beneficial to Labor," unauthored, undated manuscript, B3-F262, Babbitt Papers, NAU.
42. *Arizona Republic*, May 6, 1984, A1, A2; *Greenlee County Copper Era*, May 9, 1984, 1. See also Kingsolver, *Holding the Line*, for more detail on the 1984 Cinco De Mayo fracas.
43. *Arizona Republic*, May 5, 1984, A1, A12.
44. "Games Played In Strike," *Arizona Republic*, May 8, 1984, A18; "Blame in Clifton," *Arizona Daily Star*, May 10, 1984, 12A.
45. Various letters to Babbitt located in B381-F4085, Gov. Babbitt Papers, ASA.
46. "Strikers Say 'No Soap' to Babbitt Effort," *Arizona Daily Star*, May 12, 1984, 1A, 4A.
47. Manuscript "Of Rocks and Hard Places," Babbitt Papers, NAU.
48. Babbitt quote in the *Arizona Republic*, June 22, 1984, A1, A2.
49. "The Anatomy of A Riot," *Arizona Daily Star*, July 8, 1984, Special section; see also *Arizona Republic*, July 1, 1984, A1, 14-15; Kingsolver, *Holding the Line*, 157-162.
50. "Anatomy of a Riot," *Arizona Daily Star*, July 8, 1984, passim; "Phelps Dodge Copper Strike," (see note #3), videocassette #535, ASU-CRC. Many rioters were the teenage children of strikers.
51. Ibid., passim. Alice Miller later filed and won a civil lawsuit against the DPS for use of unnecessary force and for violating her civil rights (Kingsolver, *Holding the Line*, 195.) Although she delivered a healthy baby boy shortly after the riot, Miller died of a heart attack in 1991 at the age of 47. (*Arizona Republic*, September 9, 1991, 8B.) The transcripts of Alice Miller's court deposition can be found in the "Alice Miller Papers, 1983-1988," MSS 126, ASU-CRC.
52. "DPS, Enraged Strikers Clash in Clifton," *Arizona Republic*, July 1, 1984, passim.
53. Ibid., July 2, 1984, A2.
54. Televised press conference in "Phelps Dodge Copper Strike" videocassette #535, ASU-CRC.
55. Letter from Gene Bocardo to Babbitt dated July 12, 1984, B381-F4084, Gov. Babbitt Papers, ASA. G.K. Pace and Sue Robillard letters in the *Greenlee County Copper Era*, July 18, 1984, 2.
56. Memorandum to Governor Babbitt dated October 5, 1984, B11-F690, Babbitt Papers, NAU.
57. For details on the decertification process, see Rosenblum, *Copper Crucible*, 195-198. In the interim, the Arizona Department of Health Services levied a $400,000 fine against Phelps Dodge for violation of the clean water act. And, on December 14, 1984, the company announced the shutdown of most of their Morenci operation; the Ajo facility had already been closed due to the company's claim of $20 million in second-quarter 1984 losses. Kingsolver, *Holding the Line*, 168-170.
58. See the *Arizona Daily Star*, July 20, 1986, pp. B1, B3 for more on this issue.
59. "Take-Charge Governor," *Arizona Republic*, December 28, 1986, C2, passim.
60. *New Times*, October 26-November 1, 1983, 10, emphasis hers. See also Jana Bommersbach, "Has the Copper Strike Ruined Bruce Babbitt?", *New Times*, October 12-18, 1983, 6.
61. Congress, Senate, various Senators voicing support for and nominating Bruce Edward Babbitt as Secretary of Interior, 103rd Cong., 1st Sess., *Congressional Record* (21 January 1993), vol. 139, pt. 8, S90, S161-162; see also Rosenblum, *Copper Crucible*, 216.